TYCHE: FORTUNE AND CHANCE IN EURIPIDES AND FIFTH-CENTURY HISTORIOGRAPHY

VASILIKI GIANNOPOULOU, SOMERVILLE COLLEGE

D.PHIL. MICHAELMAS TERM 2001

TYCHE: FORTUNE AND CHANCE IN EURIPIDES AND FIFTH-CENTURY HISTORIOGRAPHY

VASILIKI GIANNOPOULOU, SOMERVILLE COLLEGE
D.PHIL. MICHAELMAS TERM 2001

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of *τύχη* (success, good or bad fortune, chance, unexpected circumstances) and fortune talk in Greek literature, especially fifth-century tragedy and historiography. This concept is examined as part of popular beliefs about gods and other powers of fate, as an agent in contexts of causation, and as part of fortune talk and the rhetoric of success and failure (exhortation and consolation). It emerges that *τύχη* language, *μοῖρα* language and god talk constitute alternative ways of expressing human uncertainty, ignorance and frailty in the face of the unforeseen future, danger or critical circumstances. The choice of word is important, as it expresses an attitude to events as well as an intellectual explanation of them. Calling events *τύχη* points to their lack of any purpose or shape, and may also suggest the randomness of human life or the transience of all things mortal. Calling events 'god-sent' or 'fated' points to their acceptance as inevitable and as universal markers of the limits of the human condition. In Homer we find a distinction between broad, or large-scale, patterns of events – which tend to be attributed to the divine – and the small details which occur in their working out, which may be seen as chance circumstances. Similar instances of this juxtaposition of long-term and short-term causation can be found in Herodotus and Euripides. This juxtaposition often takes the form of different perspectives: an 'as-it-happens' limited perspective tends to be linked with *τύχη*, whereas an 'in-retrospect' and *post eventum* perspective tends to be linked with the divine or *μοῖρα*. The *τύχη-γνώμη*, *τύχη-τέχνη* and *τύχη-πρόνοια* tensions occur in a variety of contexts and form part of fifth-century intellectual debates. Euripides, in his use of both fortune talk and god talk as well as in his adaptation of earlier ideas about them, turns out to be the most inclusive and inconclusive tragedian.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction 1

i) Important doxography on *tyche* 4

ii) *tyche* from Homer down to the fourth century BC: An outline

a) From the archaic to the classical period 7

b) Categorising the occurrences of *tyche* in tragedy 34

1) Fortune talk involving vivid or metaphorical *tyche*-language 35

2) Tyche personified to a greater or lesser degree 43

3) *tyche* as an abstraction crystallising ideas expressed in the context 46

4) Passages classifying gods and *tyche* in degrees of power or with an antithetical dilemma about the power of gods and *tyche* 47

c) Tyche as a goddess on stage 51

d) *tyche* in fifth-century inscriptions 52

iii) Conclusions 55

2. Fortune, chance and the divine in Herodotus 56

i) Previous and contemporary thought on *tyche* and causation 60

ii) *tyche* and *tyche*-related words in the *Histories* 61

iii) The Solon-Croesus story 66

iv) Croesus' fall 74

v) Foundlings and lucky babies 86

vi) Cyrus' end 90

vii) The various different strands of the mutability of fortune (rhetorical argument or open causation) 93

viii) Divine-related events or causes 95

ix) Divine luck 97

x) Chance-related events or causes 99

xi) Alternative lines of causation 100

3. Fortune and chance in Thucydides 103

i) The short-lived luck of the Athenians at Pylos 109

ii) The *etyche* and participle construction 114

iii) *tyche* and important themes in the *History* 119

4. Divine intervention, human uncertainty and the unexpected
in Euripides 128

i) The contexts of *tyche* in *IT, Helen* and *Ion* 140

ii) *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 148

iii) *Helen* 158

iv) *Ion* 181

5. Causation and theology in Euripides' *Heracles* 199

6. Conclusions 225

Bibliography 227

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This is a study of *τύχη* (success, good or bad fortune, chance) in fifth-century Greek literature, especially tragedy and historiography. My main focus remains Euripides, Herodotus and Thucydides, represented by individual chapters. But the discussion extends to pre-classical and (sometimes) fourth-century literature to establish important connections. This study of *τύχη* is the first one that seeks to profit in earnest from both tragedy and historiography. These are two genres different in nature and function, although quite similar in their tragic outlook, their emphasis on human pathos, on gods, fortune and the unexpected, and on the fragility and instability of all things mortal. The wider implication emerging from this thesis is that talking only about fatalism or determinism constitutes an incomplete description of the Greek experience of life. Fortune, the imponderable and the unexpected should also come into consideration, so that we get a fuller picture of the Greek outlook, which accommodates such opposites as fate and 'what must be', on the one hand, and fortune and randomness, on the other.[1]

Why is the study of *τύχη* important? First, there exists a very rewarding richness and variety in the meanings and usage of this concept. *τύχη* denoting success, good or bad fortune linked with the divine or random chance occurs as part of popular beliefs about gods and other powers of fate, as product of poetic invention, as an agent in contexts of causation or as part of the rhetoric of success and failure, and of 'fortune talk' concerning consolation or exhortation.

Second, in the earliest Greek literature we find a distinction between broad, or large-scale, patterns of events, and the small details which occur in their working out. In Homer the result of the Trojan War is planned by Zeus, but a fallen warrior 'chances' to fall into deep sand. Similarly, Herodotus' large and long-term views on such matters as the fall of Croesus or the disaster of Xerxes tend to be explicitly religious. On the other hand, in the detailed

---

[1] H. R. Trevor-Roper has drawn our attention to the importance of fortune, human accident and imagination in the formation and study of history. See his valedictory lecture *History and Imagination*, (Oxford, 1980). I owe this reference to Dr. Oswyn Murray.

and short-term accounts of events Herodotus often does not invoke divine motivation but instead limits his perspective to *τύχη* (fortune, misfortune, chance), *συντυχίη* (incident, circumstance), *συμφορή* (event,chance, misfortune) and their cognate verbs. The defeat of Croesus was planned by heaven. In Herodotus natural frontiers and rivers form part of a morally intelligible pattern; crossing the Hellespont by Xerxes is seen as transgressing the limits of human nature. But the sinking of one of Artemisia's ships was perhaps *κατὰ τύχην*, 'by accident' (viii.87.3). Further instances of this juxtaposition of long-term and short-term causation can be found in tragedy. What is exemplified in literature seems to reflect typical features of Greek culture and religion. Far from attributing all events in human life to divine purpose or some sort of predetermination, pagan Greeks were also very well aware that things can just happen for no obvious reason; and that is why they thought of *τύχη* as one of the unseen powers, or as an undefined cause. In fact, *τύχη* language, *μοῖρα* language and god talk constitute alternative ways of expressing human uncertainty, ignorance and frailty in the face of the unforeseen future, danger or critical circumstances. The choice of word is important, as it expresses an attitude to events as well as an intellectual explanation of them. Calling events *τύχη* points to their lack of any purpose or shape, and may also suggest the randomness of human life or the transience of all things mortal. Calling events 'god-sent' or 'fated' points to their acceptance as inevitable and as universal markers of the limits of the human condition.

Third, the development from the linguistic usage and poetic imagery of *τύχη* in the course of the fifth century to personification, deification and cultic worship of *Ἀγαθὴ Τύχη*, from the first half of the fourth century onward, seems to exemplify the general idea that state cults lag behind individual and popular beliefs. This development of *τύχη* seems to exemplify Burkert's general observation that Archaic Greek personifications "appear first in poetry, move into the visual arts and finally find their way into the realm of cult". Burkert connects the rise of the personifications with the scepticism about the gods created by poets towards the end of the sixth century BC. "Of the existence and actuality of the Homeric gods there can be no proof, but no

man of intelligence can dispute the importance of the phenomena and situations designated by abstract terms. *Tyche*, the lucky hit, enjoyed the swiftest rise to fame".[2]

Robert Parker points out in his chapter on fourth-century Athenian religion that Agathe Tyche "more immediately, perhaps, than other gods, … is a product of language, a translation from word into form of the fixed appeal for good luck that was made at the start of decrees of the assembly and in many other contexts".[3] Language contexts are significant for the examination of *tyche* in the preceding century as well. My main purpose is to show how *tyche* in a static or dynamic sense gains importance in the fifth century through its employment in a variety of literary contexts and through its involvement in contemporary intellectual debates.

The new emphasis on the mutability of fortune and uncontrollable chance towards the end of the fifth century is another aspect of my study. Can this phenomenon be partly due to the deep social and political upheaval caused by the Peloponnesian War, or is it merely a stylistic feature? Thucydides tells us how war and great disasters happening in wartime change drastically individual and public mores and lead men to cynicism, nihilism and despair. The great plague, the stasis in Corcyra, and the Athenian catastrophe in Sicily, give the historian the opportunity to drive home the erosion of all values and the crisis of religious feeling accompanying such predicaments, even though any interruption in the normal function of civic religion is only temporary.[4] The experience of war and what it brings in its wake highlights the mutability of, and the lack of control over, human fortune, an idea also frequently expressed in tragedy.

Although fortune was traditionally associated with the gods, and these links continue to hold strong in the fifth century, another group of ideas comes to the surface, setting the power of fortune or chance against the gods. Is it the gods or impersonal fortune that control human affairs? This question can be expressed as part of criticism of divine justice and morality, a common feature

---

[2] W. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, tr. J. Raffan, (Oxford, 1985) 185-6.
[3] R. Parker, *Athenian Religion: A History*, (Oxford, 1996) 231-2.
[4] Parker (1996) 200 with notes.

of Greek literature powerfully exploited by Euripides.[5] Although this tension between divine agency and *tyche* should be put in the traditional religious framework,[6] Euripides presses this tension to its limits without ever resolving it. But could it ever be resolved? The question whether our unlikely and extraordinary universe was created through some kind of divine purpose or by chance still haunts and divides twenty-first-century science and religion.

i) Important doxography on *tyche*

This section provides a short and general description of the most important treatments of *τύχη* or of works on related issues that have influenced my study. References to relevant points in other studies will be made in the subsequent discussion.

Over a century ago F. Allègre presented his thesis on the Greek goddess Tyche.[7] He starts from Hesiod and ends with Polybius, including inscriptional, archeological and numismatic evidence until as late as the Roman period. This is a useful collection of material. But the study, spanning a formidable amount of time, inevitably stops on the surface level and does not examine any of these periods in real depth. Allègre takes it for granted that the evidence from Pausanias points to an established cult of the goddess Tyche in the fifth century BC. We miss a couple of significant distinctions from Allègre's work. He does not distinguish, first, between static and dynamic uses of the word *tyche* and, second, between *tyche* as a supernatural force and Tyche as cultic divinity.[8]

The first study that makes use of these distinctions is H. Meuss' article on *tyche* in Attic tragedians.[9] Indeed, he has avoided the weaknesses of Allègre's rather rambling thesis. Meuss observes that about nine tenths of the tragic occurrences of the appellative *tyche* denote the *media vox* 'fortune' or 'fate', "Geschick", whereas in Pindar the meaning 'good luck' predominates.

---

[5] Parker (1996) 210 and n. 46.

[6] As Parker (1996) 209-10 reminds us "a wide variety of opinions <*and attitudes, too* [my addition]> about the gods could be comfortably accommodated in a religion that lacked dogma and revelation".

[7] F. Allègre, *Étude sur la déesse grecque Tyché, sa signification religieuse et morale, son culte et ses représentations figurées*, (Paris, 1889).

[8] See also A. Bouché-Leclerq's review of this study entitled "Tyché ou la Fortune", in *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 23 (1891) 273-307.

Meuss argues that in Aeschylus *tyche* can sometimes be seen as an "Augenblicksgottheit", a personification of success (successful outcome), but nowhere as a major, independent divinity. Similarly, in Sophocles *tyche* can sometimes be perceived as the goddess of good fortune ("Glücksgöttin"). The new element in Sophocles, Meuss thinks, is the opposition against the tendency to regard fortune or chance, not the gods, as the director of human life. For Meuss, Euripides differs from the previous two tragedians in one important respect: for him *Tyche* as a goddess of good fortune does not exist. Instead, *tyche* occurs as an impersonal power of fate, "Schicksalsmacht", and stands (with more or less independence) next to the gods, but with no implication of atheism. According to Meuss, this blurred viewpoint was not restricted only to intellectuals, but was also popular in the wider circles of the Athenian society.

F. Wehrli has argued that the Hellenistic ideal of quiet, secluded and carefree living has its roots in Archaic and Classical poetry.[10] Similarly, the commonplace of the Hellenistic philosophy that blind chance determines all that happens in human life harks back to similar ideas expressed in earlier stages of Greek culture. Wehrli discusses a variety of texts, from Homer, ancient lyric, and popular novellas, to Pindar, Herodotus, Aeschylus and Sophocles. He examines themes such as human fragility, the brevity of life, the urge to enjoy life or to endure the strokes of fortune, and seeks to follow a line from the ancient beliefs in divine envy to the realisation of man that one lives in a world of blind arbitrariness. This is an important study that has influenced my thesis.

G. Busch's study of *tyche* in Euripides has a linguistic character.[11] She examines, for example, the connections of this word with epithets, verbs and with other concepts, powers of fate, or gods. However, she devotes very little space to the discussion of the role of *tyche* in the actual dramatic action.

---

[9] H. Meuss, "Tyche bei den attischen Tragikern", *Programm Königliches Gymnasium zu Hirschberg* (1899) 3-17.

[10] F. Wehrli, *ΛΑΘΕ ΒΙΩΣΑΣ. Studien zur ältesten Ethik bei den Griechen*, (Leipzig and Berlin, 1931).

[11] G. Busch, *Untersuchungen zum Wesen der τύχη in den Tragödien des Euripides*, (Heidelberg, 1937). See also W. C. Greene's review in *AJP* 59 (1938) 364-67.

E. G. Berry examines the concepts of θεία μοῖρα and θεία τύχη in Plato and in preceding Greek literarure.[12] He argues that the long history of these expressions, which before Plato are used without any doctrinal implication, finds its continuation in the new particular place the philosopher gives them in his system. Although this study contains interesting points and intertextual associations, it is far from discussing thoroughly all the relevant important sources. For example, he states that he aims to show that "the θεία τύχη of the literary tradition has no close connection with the scientific *tyche* of the philosophers", but he does not discuss the atomists at all.

H. Strohm's valuable study places *tyche* in the framework of the archaic outlook on fate, and more particularly in the context of the tension between the divine and the limitations of human knowledge and achievement.[13] He discusses mostly Pindar, but his brief examination of archaic lyric back to Homer is also important. Strohm does not find a neat pattern or a development in the way *tyche* is employed. The common element in the archaic poets is that the divine element is always strong, and no one seems to see *tyche* as part of a chaotic, purposeless and chance-ridden world, a belief which gains currency in Hellenistic times.

Almost fifty years passed[14] before the next significant study on *tyche* appeared. G. Vogt-Spira examines the role of fortune and chance in the action of five comedies by Menander (*Aspis*, *Perikeiromene*, *Dyskolos*, *Samia*, *Epitrepontes*).[15] Vogt-Spira finds that τύχη interrelates closely with human will and divine purpose in the dramatic action. τύχη refers just as much to the autonomous laws as to the limitations of human action.

---

[12] E. G. Berry, *The History and Development of the concept of ΘΕΙΑ ΜΟΙΡΑ and ΘΕΙΑ ΤΥΧΗ down to and including Plato*, (Chicago, 1940). This topic for a dissertation was suggested to him by W. Jaeger. For the latter's views on *tyche* see W. Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* I, transl. by G. Highet (Oxford, 1945) 124ff. and 255ff.

[13] H. Strohm, *TYCHE. Zur Schicksalsauffassung bei Pindar und den frühgriechischen Dichtern*, (Stuttgart, 1944).

[14] P. Joos, *ΤΥΧΗ, ΦΥΣΙΣ, ΤΕΧΝΗ. Studien zur Thematik frühgriechischer Lebensbetrachtung*, (Zurich, 1955) does not examine in detail all three concepts. He concentrates on *techne*, and only occasionally refers to *tyche* and *physis*. H. Herter, "Tyche" in *Kleine Schriften*, (Munich, 1975) is an important comprehensive treatment. M. McDonald, *Terms for Happiness in Euripides*, Hypomnemata 54 (Göttingen, 1978) deals with εὐδαίμων, εὐτυχής, μάκαρ and ὄλβιος, but also briefly discusses τύχη (see especially her chapter on *Hecuba*, *Troades*, *Ion* and 252f).

[15] G. Vogt-Spira, *Dramaturgie des Zufalls. Tyche und Handeln in der Komödie Menanders*, Zetemata 88, (Munich, 1992).

M. Nussbaum explores the role of human exposure to luck in the ethical thought of the tragic poets, Plato and Aristotle.[16] She supports the view that Greek literature, in general, and tragedy, in particular, is a very fertile (and indeed indispensable) ground in the examination of important questions about luck and ethics: the exposure of human beings to situations they cannot control; the vulnerability of the good human life and its values; the search for self-sufficiency through reason and the realisation of the latter's limits.

From this brief overview of significant studies on *tyche* it emerges that a detailed examination on the role of fortune, luck and chance in fifth-century tragedy and historiography is lacking.[17] This thesis argues that such an examination is not an idle task. On the contrary, the tension between fortune, human reason and the gods, and its employment by historians and tragedians, can give us valuable insights into fifth-century intellectual debates and into different ways of understanding the interaction between mortals and the external world.

ii) *tyche* from Homer down to the fourth century BC: An outline

a) From the archaic to the classical period

In Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic Greek τύχη (as a common noun, personification, or divinity) occurs in a wide range of meanings.[18] It can denote the lucky hit in archery or shooting, success, good or bad fortune, (unexpected) event, or unplanned, chance happening, and the outcome of an event. It appears also in the plural, although it is difficult to attach any secure, specific meaning to this plurality. (Does this suggest the intensification of its sense or the diversity of individual vicissitudes?). The term's fluidity makes its translation problematic. The fundamental distinction is between a static sense, that is, *tyche* as *factum* (seen as a state, a condition or an event), and a more dynamic sense, that is, Tyche (with a capital T) as *agens* (seen as an indefinite, supernatural agent capable of effecting changes in human life).

---

[16] M. C. Nussbaum, *The fragility of goodness. Luck and ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, (Cambridge, 2001)^2.

[17] S. P. Kershaw, *Personification in the Hellenistic World: Tyche, Kairos, Nemesis* (Ph.D Bristol, 1987) chapter two, 1-39 discusses τύχη in Greek culture before the Hellenistic period.

This distinction[19] -- which of course could not be marked by the use of small *versus* capital letters in early Greek-- can help us decide which translation of *tyche* is more appropriate in any given case,[20] although it does not represent an absolute and clear-cut dichotomy. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish *tyche* (as what happens to somebody or a state of being, happy or unhappy) from Tyche (as an indefinite power, external to human control and comprehension, which may be personified to a greater or lesser degree).[21] One reason for this might be the Greek readiness to personalise and transfer to the supernatural level what was perceived to be the source of an evil or generally of changes in one's life.[22] Hence, not only Tyche as a personification of fortune but also gods or an unspecified *daimon* could be seen as responsible for both happy and unhappy changes in one's state. We have no clear evidence of Tyche raised above the level of poetic personification or corresponding to a cultic reality before the fourth century BC, and even then only Agathe Tyche (Good Fortune or Good Luck) was worshipped, a phenomenon exemplifying Wilamowitz's observation that "das Böse oder der Böse ist dem Hellenen kein Gott".[23] On the other hand, the Roman Fors Fortuna (Chance Fortune) seems to have been a more ambivalent goddess, as she consists of both the dark and the benevolent aspects of fortune.[24]

---

[18] See *LIMC* VIII.I, 115-125 and VIII.II, 85-88.

[19] Introduced by A. A. Buriks, *ΠΕΡΙ ΤΥΧΗΣ. De ontwikkeling van het begrip tyche tot aan de Romeinse tijd, hoofdzakelijk in de philosophie*, (Leiden, 1948).

[20] For example, at Eur. *Ion* 67 we have to do with *tyche* as *factum*, whereas at *Ion* 1514 I am inclined to take Tyche as *agens*. At Eur. *Hec*. 491 the sense of *tyche* is dynamic, while at *Hec*. 498 it is static. Cf. also *TrGF* 57/58 F 1 (Patrocles). See further in Chapter Four.

[21] Herter (1975) 77 talks of 'the state of suspense, the in-between state' of *tyche*: "...wir finden das Nomen von vornherein in einem Schwebezustand zwischen beidem, Abstractum und Concretum, einem Zustand, der ein Entweder – Oder entwicklungsgeschichtlich gar nicht zuläßt und praktisch immer wieder vor die Frage stellt, ob man das Wort jeweils groß oder klein schreiben soll".

[22] See J. Mikalson, *Honor Thy Gods*, (Chapel Hill, 1991) 12-19 and 22-29; M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* I, (Munich, 1955) 774-79; K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the time of Plato and Aristotle*, (Berkeley, 1974) 138-44.

[23] U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Der Glaube der Hellenen* I, (Berlin, 1931) 27.

[24] For a comprehensive treatment of the different scholarly views on this issue see S. Billington, "Fors Fortuna in Ancient Rome", in S. Billington and M. Green (eds.) *The Concept of the Goddess*, (London, 1996) 129-40. At 138 she concludes: "Therefore, instead of arguing that Fors Fortuna was worshipped in Rome as though she were a fertility-goddess, I would suggest that what might have been an earlier fertility ritual was adapted by the Romans into a more precise reflection of their understanding of Fors Fortuna. The evidence provided by Ovid, Cicero and the wheel-cakes supports the conclusion that midsummer was the time to celebrate mutable Fors as a part of, or responsible for, the mutability of the seasons and of life. ... the cult Ovid and Cicero wrote about, and which was practised in Rome between 10 BC and AD 50, is in honour of an ambivalent goddess on an ambivalent day of the year".

In this section I am dealing mainly with the Archaic and Classical occurrences of *tyche* and will attempt to show that the occurrences of this abstraction are a product of poetic language and individual invention within the framework defined both by polytheism and by popular beliefs about powers of fate. That exposure to fortune was a central theme in Hellenistic literature and philosophy has never been doubted. But the extent to which our remains of archaic literature shared the preoccupation of classical poets and thinkers with fortune's role in shaping the lives that humans manage to live is less widely acknowledged, as are many related lines of continuity between the poets, historians and philosophers. To recover those continuities (especially those between tragedy and history) is a central aim of this study.

The original meaning of *tyche*, 'hitting the mark' or 'meeting with success', is intrinsic to any kind of action. Everybody wants to be successful and always favoured by good luck. Naturally, the original answer to the question 'Where does good luck come from?' was 'From the gods'. The connection of *tyche* with the divine constitutes a vital continuity in Greek morality. Subsequent to this principal association a plethora of relations comes into being. Poetic language and individual invention create novel links of *tyche* with other concepts, while later poets and thinkers redefine and readjust these links to serve their own purposes.

The common noun does not appear in Homer,[25] while Tyche appears as a minor divinity, an Oceanid, in Hesiod. We have no proof of the first occurrence of the common noun, but its absence from the two epics should not necessarily mean that it did not exist in Homer's time. We should bear in mind that neither *Iliad* nor *Odyssey* nor their creator are securely dated, and that Hesiod's work may predate the final form of the Homeric texts.[26] In the epics it may well be the case that *tyche* is subsumed by *moira* to fit into the

---

[25] See Pausanias, iv 30,5; Macrob. *Sat.* v 16,8 and Eustathius' note on *Il.* 11.684 in M. van der Valk, *Eustathii Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem Pertinentes*, Vol. III (Leiden, 1979) 878, p. 302. Plutarch, *How the young man should study poetry* 23e-f tells us that Zeus' name was used by Hesiod as a synonym for the power of Fortune, before the noun τύχη existed; cf. also 24a-c.

[26] See M. L. West, *Hesiod: Theogony*, (Oxford, 1966) 46ff., opposed by R. Janko, *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns* (Cambridge, 1982) 188ff. See also R. Osborne, *Greece in the Making 1200-479 B.C.* (London and New York, 1996) 156-60 and the bibliographical notes in 367-68 and H. J. van Wees, "Introduction: Homer and Early Greece", in I. J. F. de Jong (ed.), *Homer: Critical Assessments*, Vol. II (London and New York, 1999) 1-32.

poet's general outlook. Fate always seems to bring itself to completion according to a plan, behind which some sort of supernatural or divine power must be assumed. "Indeed, the chief element of the idea of fate is not the notion of power but of a certain order of things…As an order fate becomes in a sense something superior to the gods. The gods do not direct the course of events arbitrarily", as E. Ehnmark points out.[27]

The first seeds of the later senses and nuances of *τύχη* exist in the different uses of the verb *τυγχάνειν* in Homer.[28] It is interesting to note that the meaning 'hitting the mark or striking somebody', the lucky hit,[29] is of great importance, despite the fact that Zeus' will can be the cause of a man's failure to hit the mark.[30] 'Striking somebody or some part of his body' is represented by Aorist forms of *τυγχάνειν* (*τυχὼν*, *τυχήσας*).[31] In the *Iliad* the great majority of *τυγχάνειν*-occurrences falls in this group. This is obviously dictated by the content of the epos; book 5 alone, a long book of fighting, has five examples of this type (98, 279, 582, 653, 858), while in the whole *Odyssey* the similar *τυγχάνειν*-occurrences are considerably fewer (19.452; 22.7). A person aims and hits the mark; the implication of human action, skill and success are clear. So the sense of 'meeting with success, getting something good' crops up. In the *Iliad* we find this sense only at 11.684, where Nestor narrates how happy was his father when young Nestor after a raid upon Elean herds had won richly.[32] But human skill and success recede into the background at 5.587, where we find a single occurrence of an accidental *τυχεῖν*. It describes the dramatic moment and the circumstances around the fall of a soldier, Mydon, a charioteer, who was struck by Antilochos (*Il.* 5.585-8):

---

[27] E. Ehnmark, "The Gods and Fate", in I. J. F. de Jong (ed.) (1999) 359-68, at 360-61. This article was originally part of E. Ehnmark, *The Idea of God in Homer*, (Uppsala, 1935). See also W. C. Greene, *MOIRA. Fate, Good, and Evil in Greek Thought*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1944) and B. C. Dietrich, *Death, Fate and the Gods*, (London, 1965).

[28] As H. Strohm has established in his study *TYCHE. Zur Schicksalsauffassung bei Pindar und den frühgriechischen Dichtern*, (Stuttgart, 1944) especially pages 83-90. My presentation here owes a lot to this book.

[29] Alexander of Pherae dedicated his lance to the temple under the name *Τύχων* = 'Lucky Hitter' as if it was a god. See Plutarch, *Pelop*. 29 and H. Usener, *Götternamen*, (Bonn, 1895) 286. For *Τύχων* as a proper name see below.

[30] For example, see *Il*. 17.629-33; cf. 17.175ff and 13.222ff. *ἁμαρτάνειν* is the Homeric opposite of *τυγχάνειν* (e.g. *Il*.5.287: "to miss the mark" (of a spear throw)); its other opposite *ἀποτυγχάνειν* comes into use from c. 400 BC.

[31] *Il*. 5. 99, 279, 579; 12.189; 13.371; 23.726.

αὐτὰρ ὅ γ' ἀσθμαίνων εὐεργέος ἔκπεσε δίφρου
κύμβαχος ἐν κονίῃσιν ἐπὶ βρεχμόν τε καὶ ὤμους.
δηθὰ μάλ' ἑστήκει--τύχε γάρ ῥ' ἀμάθοιο βαθείης--
ὄφρ' ἵππω πλήξαντε χαμαὶ βάλον ἐν κονίῃσι.

"gasping, he tumbled headlong from the well-made chariot to land head and shoulders in the dust. For some time he stuck there – he had landed in deep sand – until the horses kicked him over and trampled him down in the dust".[33] It is not obvious that there is a case of "rein zufälliges *τυχεῖν*" here, as Herter has argued.[34] Hammond does not even translate *τυχεῖν*, apparently considering it to be neutral. It seems right to say that the force of the verb *τύχε* in the above context consists mainly of an unlucky, unplanned and instantaneous aspect. It highlights the actuality of that moment (falling into deep sand) and, hence, could be translated by "in fact" or "actually". The description of the unusual circumstances of this death gives this scene a peculiar colouring. Finally, Mydon, the charioteer, is knocked down by the very horses he used to control. There is only a mild tone of pathos in this passage, but it belongs to the same category with many other, more strikingly emotional Iliadic scenes where "lesser heroes are shown in all the pathos of their death".[35]

In the rich fabric of life presented by the epics there appear to be moments of seeming chance, of unplanned and surprising happenings.[36] But the poet never chooses to highlight the chance element in these events. Rather, both in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* divine intervention, and planning or patterns of warning and foretelling, present any potential chance occurrence as part of a divine plan or as already foretold. For example, in the context of the funeral games Achilles held in honour of Patroclos, the last contest, the archery competition, constitutes a surprising story containing an element of

---

[32] *Il.* 11.683-4: *...γεγήθει δὲ φρένα Νηλεύς, / οὕνεκά μοι τύχε πολλὰ νέῳ πόλεμόνδε κιόντι.* Compare *Odyssey* 6.290; 14.231; 15.158; 19.314.

[33] All the translations from the *Iliad* are based on Hammond (with occasional minor adaptations), unless otherwise stated. M. Hammond, *Homer: The Iliad*, (London, 1987).

[34] Herter (1975) 76. For Strohm (1944) 86 the meaning 'chance' "as a conscious emptying of content (als einer bewußten Sinnentleerung)" is not suitable for *τυγχάνειν* in Homer. Compare 88f.

[35] See J. Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death*, (Oxford, 1980) 143 and the whole chapter pp. 103-43.

[36] As Griffin (1980) 165 points out, "In the *Odyssey* what appears to the characters to be chance is seen by the audience to be divine planning, as with Nausicaa's impromptu suggestion of laundry and a picnic".

chance that is in fact envisaged by Achilles (*Il.* 23, 850-83). The first archer, Teucros, misses the dove (because he had not vowed to Apollo to offer him a sacrifice), but apparently by chance cuts through the cord by which it is tied. This unlikely eventuality is already preempted by Achilles who says beforehand that the second prize will go to anyone who cuts the cord (23, 857-8).[37]

In book 8 Zeus sends Iris to threaten Hera and Athena and stop them from doing the forbidden thing, helping the Greeks. The threat of horrible consequences has an immediate effect on Hera; ready to submit to Zeus' power, she says to Athena: "Oh now, daughter of Zeus who holds the aegis, I can no longer agree that we should fight against Zeus for mortals' sake. Let them die or live as fortune has it (*τῶν ἄλλος μὲν ἀποφθίσθω, ἄλλος δὲ βιώτω, / ὅς κε τύχῃ·*): and he can keep his own plans in his heart and make whatever decision is right between Trojans and Danaans (*κεῖνος δὲ τὰ ἃ φρονέων ἐνὶ θυμῷ / Τρωσί τε καὶ Δαναοῖσι δικαζέτω, ὡς ἐπιεικές*)" (427-31). For Hera at this point Zeus' will is of greater importance than helping mortals. They should be left to live or die, however either state comes to pass. This does not mean that human life or death is decided by chance or in an irrational way. The whole issue is put by Hera in the wider perspective of Zeus' plan and his right decision about Trojans and Greeks.

When one meets with something unfavourable the meaning 'befalling somebody' is appropriate (*Il.* 5.652-4). If the emphasis falls on an actual moment a form of *τυγχάνειν* with participle is used (*Il.* 11.75; *Od.* 14.334, 19.291). This construction resembles the English present continuous ('to be actually' or 'to be in the course of doing something'). Furthermore, the name of the maker of Ajax's shield is *Τύχιος* (*Il.*7.220f.), which means 'Maker' and

---

[37] R. Heinze, *Virgil's Epic Technique*, transl. by H. and D. Harvey and F. Robertson (Bristol, 1993) 165 notes that "Virgil very sensibly discarded the speech" which spoils the chance element in the story. Heinze (n. 15) gives the scholion on 23.857: "scholars have marked this passage as spurious because it would be better if Achilles did not say this beforehand, as though he knew in advance what was going to happen by chance (*ὥσπερ προγιγνώσκοντος τὸ ἀπὸ τύχης συμβησόμενον*)". However, the poet of the *Iliad* does not seem to share the scholiast's preoccupation with *τύχη*. This example proves the general rule that patterns of foretelling leave little room for chance. Later scholars were ready to see the operation of *τύχη* where Homer saw only divine intervention; for the example of Aelius Aristides see H. Lehrs, *Populäre Aufsätze aus dem Alterthum*, (Leipzig, 1856) 153. For a modern cultural perspective on chance and danger in the *Iliad* see D. C. Hammer, "The cultural construction of chance in the *Iliad*", *Arethusa* 31 (1998) 125-143.

comes from *τεύχειν* ('to arrange suitably, usefully; to fix; to produce'), a verb etymologically connected with *τυγχάνειν*.[38] There seems to be a connection between the idea of meeting, hitting the mark, or being successful and the idea of making things meet, matching things together, making things, arranging things suitably and successfully.

Etymologically *tyche* is connected with the Indo-European root ***deugh-*** meaning 'to touch, reach or meet, to be lucky, fortunate, to give freely, generously, and – a very concrete sense – to milk'.[39] In Indo-Iranian ****dhaugh-*** means to milk, a root reflected in the word ***Kama-dua(a)***, the wish-cow, the freely, generously giving one, the bountiful cow. Could Tyche be a non-Olympian fertility and perhaps theriomorphic goddess? We cannot answer this question with certainty but it is a plausible and intriguing possibility.

In the first occurrence of the noun in Hesiod *Theogony* 360, *Τύχη* is personified as an Oceanid, daughter of Ocean and Tethys, who are also the parents of the rivers:

Τηθὺς δ' Ὠκεανῷ ποταμοὺς τέκε δινήεντας

.....

Τίκτε δὲ θυγατέρων ἱερὸν γένος, αἳ κατὰ γαῖαν
ἄνδρας κουρίζουσι σὺν Ἀπόλλωνι ἄνακτι
καὶ ποταμοῖς, ταύτην δὲ Διὸς πάρα μοῖραν ἔχουσι,

.....

Εὐδώρη τε Τύχη τε καὶ Ἀμφιρὼ Ὠκυρόη τε 360
καὶ Στύξ, ἣ δὴ σφεων προφερεστάτη ἐστὶν ἁπασέων.
αὗται δ' Ὠκεανοῦ καὶ Τηθύος ἐξεγένοντο
πρεσβύταται κοῦραι· πολλαί γε μέν εἰσι καὶ ἄλλαι.

(Hes. *Theog*. 337ff)

As one of the Oceanids who have been appointed by Zeus to foster young men (345-8) Tyche here seems to mean good, bountiful fortune or success; she is more closely connected with Doris (350), Polydore (353), Eudore (360) and Plouto (355). Beyond this general remark we cannot be certain about the

---

[38] *Τύχιος* is the name of the potter inscribed on an Athenian vase from c. 525 BC; see J. D. Beazley, *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters*, (Oxford, 1956) 350.
[39] J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, (Bern, 1959) 271. See also H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol.II (Heidelberg, 1970) *s.v. τυγχάνω*.

precise meaning of Tyche's presence here. Allègre sees Tyche here as a rural goddess of fertility and prosperity; Hamdorf tentatively proposes that the link between Ocean and the working of Tyche was brought to the forefront of human experience through the insecurity of sea travel; West in his commentary suggests that Hesiod "presumably classifies her as an Oceanid because she is a desirable patroness of the young".[40] West cites Tyche as an example proving Usener's argument that " 'abstractions' in fact *begin* as daimones, and only become genuine abstractions at a later stage".[41] Tyche is included in West's list of the most surprising words that occur in Hesiod and not in Homer.[42]

There is certainly a link between *Τύχη* and the idea of fertility and prosperity. This is obvious in the *Hymn to Demeter* (420), where Tyche stands side by side with *Μηλόβοσις*, 'the one who pastures the herds, sheep-pasturer':

ἡμεῖς μὲν μάλα πᾶσαι ἀν' ἱμερτὸν λειμῶνα,
Λευκίππη Φαινώ τε καὶ Ἠλέκτρη καὶ Ἰάνθη

.....

Μηλόβοσίς τε Τύχη τε καὶ Ὠκυρόη καλυκῶπις

(*Hymn to Dem.* 417ff)

Persephone is here recounting to Demeter how Hades carried her off while she was playing with her companions, a group of Oceanids, in a meadow. This list of the Oceanids is a shortened version of the catalogue in the *Theogony*, from which it may be borrowed directly; but "it may equally well be a traditional feature"[43] — a formulaic element inherent in oral poetry.

In *Hymn* 11 to Athena the common noun *tyche* is coupled with *eudaimonia* and denotes good fortune, good luck or success:

Παλλάδ' Ἀθηναίην ἐρυσίπτολιν ἄρχομ' ἀείδειν,
δεινήν, ἣ σὺν Ἄρηι μέλει πολεμήια ἔργα
περθόμεναί τε πόληες ἀϋτή τε πτόλεμοί τε,

---

[40] Allègre (1889) 7ff.; F. W. Hamdorf, *Griechische Kultpersonifikationen der vorhellenistischen Zeit*, (Meinz, 1964) 37; M. L. West, *Hesiod: Theogony*, (Oxford, 1966) on line 360; compare also his note on line 347.
[41] West (1966) 33-4.
[42] West (1966) 78.
[43] Compare the catalogue of Nereids in *Il.*18.39-49 to Hes. *Theog.* 243-62. See N. J. Richardson, *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, (Oxford, 1974) 287.

καί τ' ἐρρύσατο λαὸν ἰόντα τε νισσόμενόν τε.

Χαῖρε, θεά, δὸς δ' ἄμμι τύχην εὐδαιμονίην τε. 5

The goddess Athena is asked here to give to humans ('us', l. 5) good fortune or success and happiness. We do not know the date of this tiny poem.

Archilochus puts Tyche and Moira side by side as the powers who give everything to man: *πάντα Τύχη καὶ Μοῖρα Περίκλεες ἀνδρὶ δίδωσιν* (16 West).[44] There is really no way of telling whether these are something more than instantaneous personifications. They seem to be generated by the vivid expression of a life experience: that mortals can never be certain that they will get what they wish and hope to get. They know neither what is decided for them by fate (*moira*) nor what is going to befall them (*tyche*). Elsewhere the fragility and mutability of human life is connected with the gods: "Everything is …for (to, by) the gods (*τοῖς θεοῖς † τ' ἰθεῖά παντα·*).[45] Often when men are lying prostrate on the dark earth, they raise them upright from their misery, and often they overturn on their backs even those whose stance was very firm. Then much misery is theirs, and a man wanders about in need of livelihood and distraught in mind" (130 West).[46] This general description of changes in human condition (the gods raise the miserable to a better state and throw the safe and well off to misfortune) reflects the uncertainty of both the destitute and the fortunate in the face of unexpected divine action. The focus seems to be on the miserable life of the once fortunate who have lost their means of livelihood (4-5).

Archilochus often refers to unexpected change and how it affects human feelings. The allegory likening war to a storm at sea concludes with the idea that "from the unexpected comes fear (*κιχάνει δ' ἐξ ἀελπτίης φόβος*)"(105 West). The main idea in fragment 122 is that anything is to be expected in human life: "Nothing is to be unexpected or sworn impossible or marvelled at, now that Zeus father of the Olympians has made night out of the noonday, hiding away the light of the † shining sun, and baneful[47] † fear came over people. From now on men can believe and expect anything (*ἐκ δὲ τοῦ καὶ*

---

[44] M. L. West, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, (Oxford, 1989).

[45] Compare fragment 111 West: *καὶ νέους θάρσυνε· νίκης δ' ἐν θεοῖσι πείρατα*; *Il.* 7.102: *νίκης πείρατ' ἔχονται ἐν ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι*; *Il.* 17.632: *Ζεὺς δ' ἔμπης πάντ' ἰθύνει.*

[46] Translation by D. E. Gerber, *Greek Iambic Poetry*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1999).

[47] Gerber (1999) translates 'clammy' with a question mark.

πιστὰ πάντα κἀπίελπτα γίνεται / ἀνδράσιν)..." (122 West). The realisation of the mutability of the human condition leads to the exhortation for moderate rejoicing and grieving in good and bad times respectively: "My heart, my heart, confounded by woes beyond remedy, rise up (?) and defend yourself, setting your breast against your foes (?) as they lie in ambush (?) and standing steadfastly near the enemy. Do not exult openly in victory, and in defeat do not fall down lamenting at home, but let your rejoicing in joyful times and your grief in bad times be moderate (*ἀλλὰ χαρτοῖσίν τε χαῖρε καὶ κακοῖσιν ἀσχάλα / μὴ λίην*). Know what sort of pattern governs mankind (*γίνωσκε δ' οἷος ῥυσμὸς ἀνθρώπους ἔχει*)" (128 West). Rudolf Kassel sees this poem as belonging to the tradition of consolation literature.[48]

In another Archilochean fragment Zeus is named as being behind the changeability that affects human feelings: "Glaucus, son of Leptines, such is the disposition of mortals as the kind of day Zeus brings (*τοῖος ἀνθρώποισι θυμός, Γλαῦκε, Λεπτίνεω πάϊ, / γίνεται θνητοῖς, ὁποίην Ζεὺς ἐφ' ἡμέρην ἄγῃ*)" (131 West).[49] These lines are reminiscent of traditional reflective passages about human fragility, and the gods' grip on the human frame of mind as they give mortals sometimes happiness and sometimes misfortune. Odysseus' words to Amphinomus in *Odyssey* 18.130-37 are a case in point: "Of all the creatures that earth feeds, that breathe and creep about it, there is none so feeble as a man. As long as gods grant him prosperity and his limbs have power to move, he never thinks that he will suffer anything bad in the future. Yet when the blessed gods work out baneful suffering he is constrained to bear it with his enduring soul. In fact, such is the mind of the people on earth as the kind of day the father of men and gods brings (*τοῖος γὰρ νόος ἐστὶν ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων, / οἷον ἔπ' ἦμαρ ἄγῃσι πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε*)".

J. Russo notes on these lines: "Man's mind, his thoughts and feelings, are subject to as much change as the succession of days brings: life is unpredictable, a wheel of fortune".[50] Russo also sees a change in Odysseus's reasoning from lines 132-40 to lines 142-50; "from the more archaic 'wheel of

---

[48] R. Kassel, *Untersuchungen zur griechischen und römischen Konsolations-Literatur*, Zetemata 18 (Munich, 1958) 93f.
[49] My translation.
[50] J. Russo, M. Fernandez-Galiano and A. Heubeck, *Homer's Odyssey*, Vol. III, (Oxford, 1992) on 18.137.

fortune' conception of the universe seen in 132-40 and summarized epigrammatically in 136-7 where man's fortune changes almost with the weather, to a morally conceived system where people receive their 'just deserts'... It is interesting that this moral cosmic model of justice can coexist with the relatively amoral one of 132-40".[51] However, it is doubtful whether the 'wheel of fortune' conception of the universe is the more archaic one, and whether it can be used in this context. The poet in the above lines does not refer to "the wheel of fortune", an idea akin to Herodotus' notion of the mutability of human fortune. Russo's use of this expression can be misleading, since after all the mutability of fortune is due to the gods or to Zeus (133, 134, 137). As in the above Archilochean fragment, Zeus is behind the changeability that affects the human mind and feelings.

Homeric passages such as these, connected with ideas about human fragility, could have suggested the development of the adjective *ἐφήμερος* which means 'to be in the power of the day'.[52] As H. Fränkel has argued, *ἐφήμερος* connotes to be exposed to or subject to any current event that may occur, and from this it follows that the human condition is formed and transformed through changing circumstances.[53] Fränkel shows that *ἐφήμερος* in early Greek literature is closer to 'precarious', 'unstable' than 'short-lived'.

This is a main theme in Semonides fragment 1: "Boy, loud-thundering Zeus controls the outcome of everything there is and disposes it as he wishes. There is no intelligence among men, but we live like grazing animals, subject to what day brings (*ἀλλ' ἐπήμεροι / ἃ δὴ βοτὰ ζώομεν*), with no knowledge of how the god will bring each thing to pass. Yet hope and confidence nourish all in our eagerness for the impossible (*ἐλπὶς δὲ πάντας κἀπιπειθείη τρέφει / ἄπρηκτον ὀρμαίνοντας*). Some wait for the morrow to come, others for the revolving seasons, and there is no one who does not expect that he will arrive at the next year as the friend of wealth and prosperity" (Gerber's translation). Semonides goes on to talk of the constant causes of death: old age, illnesses,

---

[51] ibid. on 18.141-50.

[52] The close correspondence between the adjective *ἐφήμερος* and a related prepositional phrase can be seen in Pindar, *Nem.* 6.6, where *ἐφαμερίαν* = 'by day' *(στάθμαν)* is juxtaposed to *μετὰ νύκτας* = 'in the night'.

[53] H. Fränkel, *Wege und Formen frühgriechischen Denkens*, (Munich, 1968)[3] 23-39. For an earlier English version of this chapter see H. Fränkel, "Man's 'ephemeros' nature according to Pindar and others", *TAPA* 77 (1946) 131-45.

turbulent sea, suicide (11-19). The obvious conclusion is that "thus nothing is without misery, but countless death spirits and unforeseen sorrows and disasters exist for mortals" (20-22). Gerber translates *ἐπήμεροι* as 'subject to what day brings'. This meaning of being in the power of the day is also reflected by the Homeric expressions *δούλιον* and *ἐλεύθερον ἦμαρ* ('the day of slavery, of freedom')[54], which suggest that the events of a day may be decisive for one's future state. Although alongside changeability, the brevity and frailty of human life are also aspects of the ephemeral, mutability and precariousness remain the most important facets of the *ἐφήμερος* concept. This is clear in Pindar: "But he who has been allotted a new success is inspired by hope at his great splendor and takes flight on the wings of manly deeds, having aspirations superior to wealth. In a short time the delight of mortals burgeons, but so too does it fall to the ground when shaken by a hostile purpose. Creatures of a day! What is a man, what is he not? A dream of a shadow is a man (*ἐπάμεροι· τί δέ τις; τί δ' οὔ τις; σκιᾶς ὄναρ | ἄνθρωπος*)"[55] (*Pyth*. 8. 88-96). The ephemeral here is linked with the ups and downs as well as the futility of the short and often frustrated human life.

To sum up: of the Archilochean fragments we have, only one refers explicitly to *τύχη* (16 West), but his emphasis on the fragility and mutability of human life, on the one hand, and the urge to react to happiness and suffering with a cool head, on the other, are of immediate relevance. The inherent changeability in the human condition can be seen either as a *ῥυσμὸς*, the pattern whereby good fortune and misfortune alternate, or as the power of the gods to send mortals both good and bad things. Closely associated with this outlook is the cluster of ideas around *ἐφήμερος*.

For Alcman, Tyche is the sister of *Εὐνομία* (Good Order) and *Πειθώ* (Persuasiveness) and daughter of *Προμάθηα* (Forethought).[56] These personifications are presumably Alcman's own creation. They seem to make

---

[54] *Il*.6.455, 463; 16.831.

[55] Translation by W. H. Race, *Pindar* I, (Cambridge, Mass., 1997).

[56] See Alcman 64 in M. Davies, *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorun Fragmenta*, Vol. I (Oxford, 1991); this is quoted by Plutarch in *De fort. Rom.* 4, 318a: "For Fortune (*ἡ Τύχη*) is not 'inflexible' (*ἀπειθής*), as Pindar has it, nor 'plying a double steering-paddle' (*δίδυμον στρέφουσα πηδάλιον*); rather she is "sister of Good Order and Persuasion and daughter of Foresight", as in Alcman's account of her lineage" [Translation by D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric* II, (Cambridge, Mass., 1988)].

more vivid what he wants to express: the idea that when one thinks correctly, observes the law and has powers of persuasion, then one can be successful.[57]

Already from the late seventh century BC variations of the good omen formula *τύχῃ ἀγαθῇ* are in evidence. In a badly damaged fragment by Sappho the expression *τ]ύχᾳ σὺν ἔσλᾳ, λί]μενος κρέτησαι,* "with the help of good fortune…to gain (the harbour?)" occurs, apparently in a context of sea journeying (fragment 20 Page). In a similar context one finds *σὺν] τύχᾳ λίμ[ενος* "(with good fortune?)…(harbour)?" (15 Page). It is likely that this expression of good fortune has its origin in popular thought and belief. "'With good fortune' one says, whether one wishes to start or to end something, in order to bless expectations or undertakings, the commencement or the accomplishment of something".[58] A little folk song preserved by a scholiast of Theocritus presents *ἀγαθὰ τύχα* and *ὑγίεια* (health) as coming from the goddess Artemis (*PMG* 882):

δέξαι τὰν ἀγαθὰν τύχαν
δέξαι τὰν ὑγίειαν,
ἃν φέρομες παρὰ τᾶς θεοῦ
† ἃν ἐκλελάσκετο † τήνα.

"Receive the good fortune, receive the good health, which we bring from the goddess (in accordance with her instructions?)".[59] The scholiast says that these words of good omen were sung by defeated singers in the wake of the competition at a festival of Artemis in Syracuse, and finds the origins of bucolic poetry in these competitive songs.[60]

---

[57] According to U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, "Lesefrüchte", *Hermes* 64 (1929) 458-90, at 487, "Wenn man richtig überlegte und dabei auf dem Boden der Gesetzlichkeit bliebe und *πειθώ* hätte, die Menschen richtig zu nehmen wüßte, so glückte einem der Erfolg". For Wilamowitz both fragment 16 West and Alcman 64 have the same "Form der scheinbaren Personifizierung". A. Andrewes, "Eunomia", *CQ* 32 (1938) 89-102, at 89 n. 2 notes in relation to Alcman 64, "It is difficult to be certain, without the full context, what Alcman meant by this, but in the context of the quotation (Plutarch, *mor.* 318a) it is opposed to the view that Fortune is blind and unstable, and I believe the thought is that good luck will come most readily to those who use foresight and live, or perhaps fight, in a disciplined and orderly way".

[58] "'Mit guter Tyche' sagte man, mochte man etwas beginnen oder endigen, das erwartete oder unternommene, das eingetretene oder vollbrachte zu gesegnen" Lehrs (1856) 156f. There is ample evidence of this not only in fifth-century literature but also in inscriptions. See below.

[59] Translation by D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric* V, (Cambridge, Mass., 1993).

[60] C. Wendel, *Scholia in Theocritum vetera*, (Leipzig, 1914) 3.

Of similar nature and purpose is the formula *θεὸς τύχη* or *θεὸς τύχην (ἀγαθὴν)*, "God and fortune" or "God [grant] good fortune", which explicitly juxtaposes the divine and good fortune, reflecting their close relation. We find this formula in an inscription from Petelia (Magna Graecia) tentatively dated to the sixth or the fifth century BC (*IG* 14. 636). This short document starts with *θεὸς τύχα* and contains a kind of will or donation together with the names of the witnesses.

The bond between the gods and good fortune is present also in the poetry of Solon and Theognis. For Solon *tyche* is always given to men by a god. Moira (Fate) brings good and ill to mortals, who are in the dark about future developments of things. Compare Solon 13 West, 63-70:

Μοῖρα δέ τοι θνητοῖσι κακὸν φέρει ἠδὲ καὶ ἐσθλόν,
δῶρα δ' ἄφυκτα θεῶν γίγνεται ἀθανάτων.
πᾶσι δέ τοι κίνδυνος ἐπ' ἔργμασιν, οὐδέ τις οἶδεν
πῇ μέλλει σχήσειν χρήματος ἀρχομένου·
ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν εὖ ἔρδειν πειρώμενος οὐ προνοήσας
ἐς μεγάλην ἄτην καὶ χαλεπὴν ἔπεσεν,
τ�ῳ δὲ κακῶς ἔρδοντι θεὸς περὶ πάντα δίδωσιν
συντυχίην ἀγαθήν, ἔκλυσιν ἀφροσύνης.

"Fate[61] brings good and ill to mortals and the gifts of the immortal gods are inescapable. In all actions there is risk and no one knows, when something starts, how it is going to turn out. The man who tries to act rightly falls unawares into great and harsh calamity, while to the one who acts badly the god gives success in all things, an escape from his folly".[62] One's ignorance with respect to the outcome of one's endeavours is further supported by a 'paradox', a condition that runs against normal human expectations: right conduct is followed by catastrophe, whereas bad conduct is granted success (*συντυχίην ἀγαθήν* = literally, successful event) by the god.[63] A fragment by Hermolochus contains similar ideas [*PMG* fr. 846 (=Stob. 4.34.66, *περὶ τοῦ βίου ὅτι βραχὺς κτλ*)]:

ἀτέκμαρτος ὁ πᾶς βίος οὐδὲν ἔχων πιστὸν

---

[61] In Mimnermus *μοῖρα* is often connected with death. E.g. 6 West; 2 West, 5-7; cf. Solon 27 West, 18 and Stesichorus 222A West, 211-16; 282A West, 11-14.
[62] Translation by D.E. Gerber, *Greek Elegiac Poetry*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1999).
[63] Compare Theognis 585-90,161-4, 149-50, 639-40, 1075-8.

πλανᾶται
συντυχίαις· ἐλπὶς δὲ φρένας παραθρασύνει· τὸ
δὲ μέλλον ἀκριβῶς
οἶδεν οὐδεὶς θνατὸς ὅπᾳ φέρεται·
θεὸς δὲ πάντας † ἐν κινδύνοις θνατοὺς † κυβερνᾷ·
ἀντιπνεῖ δὲ πολλάκις εὐτυχίᾳ δεινά τις αὔρα.

"Man's whole life is baffling, without security, sent astray by events. Hope[64] emboldens his heart; but as for the future no mortal knows for certain where he is bound, and it is god who steers all men amid dangers, and often a grim breeze blows in the face of success (happiness)".[65] It is a god or Zeus who controls human lives, makes their undertakings successful or frustrates them. In a fragment quoted by Plutarch (*Sol.* 3.5) Solon's laws put in dactylic hexameters are said to begin with a prayer (31 West): *πρῶτα μὲν εὐχώμεσθα Διὶ Κρονίδῃ βασιλῆϊ | θεσμοῖς τοῖσδε τύχην ἀγαθὴν καὶ κῦδος ὀπάσσαι.* "First let us pray to Zeus the king, son of Cronus, to grant these laws success (good fortune) and fame".

Wealth, fortune and the gods are frequent themes in the lines attributed to Theognis. In 129-30 good fortune is set against excellence and wealth: "Don't pray for outstanding excellence or wealth, Polypaides; the only thing a man needs to have is luck (*μοῦνον δ' ἀνδρὶ γένοιτο τύχη*)".[66] In contrast, in 149-50 excellence seems to be prized more highly: "God (fortune) (*δαίμων*)[67] gives even an utterly wicked man riches, Cyrnus, but excellence is allotted to few as their companion (*ἀρετῆς δ' ὀλίγοις ἀνδράσι μοῖρ' | ἕπεται*)". Both translations of *daimon* are possible. In 161-4 *daimon* with a qualifying adjective clearly means 'fortune', whereas at 166 it seems to connote divinity. At 157-8 it is Zeus who inclines the scales, now giving people wealth, now taking it away. For Theognis 133-4 the gods give both ruin and profit to men and "bring everything to pass according to their own intent" (143). Hence, I am inclined to think that Theognis would see a god rather than fortune behind the act of giving. As far as we can tell, *τύχη* is not depicted as an active power in his

---

[64] In Theognis 637-8 *ἐλπίς* and *κίνδυνος* are called *χαλεποὶ δαίμονες*, while in 1135-6 *Ἐλπίς* is said to be a goddess to whom sacrifices should be made (1145-6).
[65] Translation by Campbell (1993), with some modifications.
[66] Translation by Gerber (1999). I have modified the second clause.
[67] Gerber (1999) translates 'Fortune'.

poetry. By contrast, an epigram of Simonides, probably the epitaph of the Athenians in Plataea, presents Tyche in dynamic terms [VIII Page (cf. Paus. 9.2.5)]:

εἰ τὸ καλῶς θνήσκειν ἀρετῆς μέρος ἐστὶ μέγιστον,
ἡμῖν ἐκ πάντων τοῦτ' ἀπένειμε Τύχη·
Ἑλλάδι γὰρ σπεύδοντες ἐλευθερίην περιθεῖναι
κείμεθ' ἀγηράντῳ χρώμενοι εὐλογίῃ.

"If the greatest part of virtue is to die nobly, then Good Fortune granted it to us above all others; for we strove to crown Greece with freedom and lie here in possession of unaging praise".[68] In this encomiastic context Good Fortune confers on the virtuous Greek soldiers the highest excellence: a noble death. So good fortune seems here to be in agreement with virtue and excellence. But other contexts present good fortune and moral goodness as being at odds with each other. For instance, Simonides employs conflicting ideas and takes part in a debate about virtue and badness in human life. Fragment 541 Page 6-7 reads: "But god grants only to a few that they have virtue to the end; for it is not easy to be virtuous (*ἀλλ'] ὀλίγοις ἀρετὰν ἔδωκεν ἔ[χειν θεός | ἐς τ]έλος, οὐ γὰρ ἐλαφρὸν ἐσθλ[ὸν ἔμμεν*)". Man is forced to depart from goodness either by greed for profit, or by wile-weaving Aphrodite, or by ambitions (8-11). In fact, it was one of Pittacus' sayings that it is difficult to be morally good. A poem by Simonides to Scopas, preserved in Plato's *Protagoras*, refers to this saying only to question its truth and to present the more 'extremist' view that in bad circumstances a man cannot avoid being bad (542 Page, 11-18):

οὐδέ μοι ἐμμελέως τὸ Πιττάκειον
νέμεται, καίτοι σοφοῦ παρὰ φωτὸς εἰ-
ρημένον· χαλεπὸν φάτ' ἐσθλὸν ἔμμεναι.
θεὸς ἂν μόνος τοῦτ' ἔχοι γέρας, ἄνδρα δ' οὐκ
ἔστι μὴ οὐ κακὸν ἔμμεναι,
ὃν ἀμήχανος συμφορὰ καθέλῃ·
πράξας γὰρ εὖ πᾶς ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός,
κακὸς δ' εἰ κακῶς [

---

[68] See D. L. Page, *Further Greek Epigrams*, (Cambridge, 1981) 197-9. The date and the authorship of this epigram are controversial. See P. A. Hansen, *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca*, Vol. II (Berlin, 1989) 83-5.

"Nor does that saying of Pittacus ring true to me, although it was spoken by a wise man: he said that it was difficult to be good. Only a god could have that privilege: a man cannot avoid being bad, when he is in the grip of irresistible misfortune. When his luck is good, any man is good; when it is bad he is bad".[69] Such passages give us an insight (though fragmentary) into the debates of the sixth century onward. M. Nussbaum rightly emphasises that "in the fifth and early fourth centuries, it was the poets who were regarded as the most important ethical teachers…Plato's interlocutors, when in search of illumination about virtue or choice, turn naturally to the words of Homer, Hesiod, Simonides, Pindar, the tragic poets…Platonic philosophy has to define itself, above all, in opposition to these texts, which embody a deeply shared tradition of reflection about excellence, praise and blame".[70] In general, lyric poets emphasise the instability of all things human and look for stability and happiness in abiding by justice and mortal limits, while avoiding any kind of excess. On the other hand, Plato's answer to the instability of human life is to seek happiness in the transcendence of earthly limits through soul and mind.[71]

The traditional bond between the gods and *tyche* holds strong in Pindar. In his odes a man's good luck, success or victory is seen as *τύχα* coming from a *daimon* or a god.[72] But alongside the divine links of human fortune, Pindar often refers to the vicissitude of mortal life. Thus, in the same encomion one can find the abiding good fortune of the gods or of a family juxtaposed to the vicissitudes that beset individuals.[73] It is this co-existence of fortune linked with the divine and fortune associated with vicissitude that characterises Pindaric *τύχα*.

Isthmian 4 provides an example of this combination. The victory of Melissos in the pancratium at the Isthmos has recalled to mind the

---

[69] Translation by D. A. Campbell, *Greek Lyric* III, (Cambridge, Mass., 1991).
[70] Nussbaum (2001)[2] 124.
[71] On this see A. Spira, " 'Stabilität' und 'Instabilität' in der Ethik der Griechen", *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 36 (1984) 115-30.
[72] *Ol.* 8.67; *Ol.* 13.115; *Pyth.*8.53; *Nem.* 6.24; *Nem.* 10.25.
[73] *Isth.* 3.15-18; *Isth.* 4.4-21; *Ol.* 2.35-47; *Pyth.* 5.54-55; *Pyth.* 7.19-21. On the theme of vicissitude as part of the archaic outlook and as further developed by Pindar, see G. M. Kirkwood, "*Nemean* 7 and the theme of vicissitude in Pindar", in *Poetry and Poetics from Ancient Greece to the Renaissance*, Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 38 (Ithaca, 1975) 56-90. Also J. Krause, *Ἄλλοτε ἄλλος. Untersuchungen zum Motiv des Schicksalswechsels in der griechischen Dichtung bis Euripides*, (Munich, 1976), esp. 91-138. On the topos of 'a

Cleonymids' (i.e. his family's) earlier victories (18-27), but has also reawakened thoughts of their failure to win at the Panhellenic games (28-33). In the gnomic context of 31 to 33 Pindar speaks of the uncertainty of the outcome of a contest as *ἀφάνεια τύχας*, "which gives some of this and some of that"; this act of giving makes *tycha* appear as an actual agent. It is made responsible for the failure of the Cleonymids to win a Panhellenic chariot race, while Pindar adds that often the craft (*techne*) of less good men has caught and tripped the stronger[74] (*Isth.* 4.31-35):

ἔστιν δ' ἀφάνεια τύχας καὶ μαρναμένων,
πρὶν τέλος ἄκρον ἱκέσθαι·
τῶν τε γὰρ καὶ τῶν διδοῖ.
καὶ κρέσσον' ἀνδρῶν χειρόνων
ἔσφαλε τέχνα καταμάρψαισ'(α)·

"But when men strive, fortune remains hidden before they reach the final goal, for she gives some of this and some of that, and the skill of inferior men can overtake and bring down a better man".[75] Here *techna* is seen as an agent but only partly; like *tycha* in the previous sentence, *techna* is the subject of *ἔσφαλε* and *καταμάρψαισα*, but still is a quality that belongs to a person, *ἀνδρῶν χειρόνων...τέχνα*, 'the skill of less good men'. Wilamowitz has observed how nicely *tyche* is first presented as an abstraction and then as a person.[76] In this ode Pindar faced the special problem of glorifying men who competed in the games but did not win. This seems to have dictated leaving the source of the Cleonymids' ill-luck open and indefinite, and, hence, giving a special role to *tyche*. Surely this forms part of the *leitmotiv* of vicissitude in human life. *τύχη* is felt here to be an independent and indefinite power without any direct connection with gods. In fact, it introduces the gnomic reflections (31-35) Pindar employs to tackle the difficult point of the failure of the Cleonymids, in the wake of an unblemished record of prowess and virtue.

---

bitter experience' proving to be 'a boon of fortune' see E. L. Bundy, *Studia Pindarica*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986) 52.

[74] This is the standard Pindaric contrast of Ajax and Odysseus, who beats him, but should not have.

[75] Translation by W. H. Race, *Pindar* II, (Cambridge, Mass., 1997).

[76] U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Pindaros*, (Berlin, 1922) 338, n.2. See also W. J. Verdenius, *Commentaries on Pindar* I, (Leiden, 1987) 91-2, where he talks of the stylistic feature of 'abrupt transition from person to thing' in Pindar.

The blend of success and vicissitude in Pindar's treatment of *τύχη* is also to be seen in *Olympian* 12. Actually, this short ode contains the single occurrence of Tycha as a personified divinity in Pindar. *σώτειρα Τύχα* (saviour *Tyche*) is invoked as the daughter of Zeus Eleutherios, the Deliverer, when Himera has been delivered from the tyranny of the Deinomenidai.[77]

Λίσσομαι, παῖ Ζηνὸς Ἐλευθερίου,
Ἰμέραν εὐρυσθενέ' ἀμφιπόλει, σώτειρα Τύχα.
τὶν γὰρ ἐν πόντῳ κυβερνῶνται θοαὶ
νᾶες, ἐν χέρσῳ τε λαιψηροὶ πόλεμοι
κἀγοραὶ βουλαφόροι. αἴ γε μὲν ἀνδρῶν 5
πόλλ' ἄνω, τὰ δ' αὖ κάτω ψεύδη μεταμώνια τάμνοισαι
κυλίνδοντ' ἐλπίδες·

σύμβολον δ' οὔ πώ τις ἐπιχθονίων
πιστὸν ἀμφὶ πράξιος ἐσσομένας εὗρεν θεόθεν,
τῶν δὲ μελλόντων τετύφλωνται φραδαί.
πολλὰ δ' ἀνθρώποις παρὰ γνώμαν ἔπεσεν, 10
ἔμπαλιν μὲν τέρψιος, οἱ δ' ἀνιαραῖς
ἀντικύρσαντες ζάλαις ἐσλὸν βαθὺ πήματος ἐν μικρῷ
πεδάμειψαν χρόνῳ.

υἱὲ Φιλάνορος, ἦτοι καὶ τεά κεν,
ἐνδομάχας ἄτ' ἀλέκτωρ, συγγόνῳ παρ' ἑστίᾳ
ἀκλεὴς τιμὰ κατεφυλλορόησεν ποδῶν, 15
εἰ μὴ στάσις ἀντιάνειρα Κνωσίας ἄμερσε πάτρας.
νῦν δ' Ὀλυμπία στεφανωσάμενος
καὶ δὶς ἐκ Πυθῶνος Ἰσθμοῖ τ', Ἐργότελες,
θερμὰ Νυμφᾶν λουτρὰ βαστάζεις, ὁμιλέων παρ' οἰκείαις
ἀρούραις.

"I pray you, daughter of Zeus of Freedom, keep in your care Himera in her widespread might, o saviour Fortune. Yours is the piloting of swift ships on the sea, and on land of rapid warfare and gatherings where men give counsel; while men have their hopes tossed often up, and now down, as they cleave a

---

[77] For the historical events behind this epinikion see W. S. Barrett, "Pindar's twelfth *Olympian* and the fall of the Deinomenidai", *JHS* 93 (1973) 23-35.

sea of vain illusion, and none yet on earth has found a sure token from the gods about an issue that is to be, and their perception of what is to come is blind. Men have found many a thing fall out contrary to their judgement, to the reverse of delight; while others have met with grievous squalls and then in a moment got abundant good in place of hurt. Son of Philanor, so it is with you: by the hearth of your kin, like a cock that fights at home, the glory of your feet would have shed its leaves without renown, if civil strife that sets man against man had not bereft you of your native Knossos. But now, instead, you have taken a garland at Olympia, and twice from Pytho, and at the Isthmos, Ergoteles; and you take in your hands the hot waters of the nymphs and consort with fields that are your own" (Barrett's translation).

Pindar starts his glorification of Ergoteles with an allusion to the delivery of his town Himera. Therefore, one important idea behind the personification of saviour Fortune (*σώτειρα Τύχα*) would be the turn of events to Himera's deliverance. 'Saviour Tycha' gains in importance from her connection with Zeus the Deliverer. "Here the genealogy of Tyche emphasises the fact that she is no arbitrary power but forms part of the world-order governed by the gods".[78] The epithet *σώτειρα*, although it can have sacral connotations, does not suggest here a cult of Tyche, but rather refers "to a salutary maintenance of the whole political situation".[79] As Barrett puts it, "The Himerians are free at last, after long years of subjection to tyrants, domestic and foreign; whether or no they have signalled their gratitude by a cult, it is to Zeus Eleutherios and his aid that they owe their freedom, and the Fortune who is besought to guard it hereafter is named for that purpose as his daughter".[80] In Pindar fragment 39 Tycha is called *φερέπολις* (upholder of the city), but neither this nor the epithet *σώτειρα* constitute conclusive evidence pointing to an actual cult of Tyche. Even Cicero's reference to Fortune's "fanum antiquum" (*Verr.* iv.119) in Syracuse raises questions about how old

---

[78] Verdenius (1987) 89.
[79] See Verdenius (1987) 90-1 on *σώτειρα*.
[80] Barrett (1973) 35, where he also mentions that a new cult of Zeus Eleutherios at Himera after the fall of the Deinomenidai "would be easy to understand", as a similar development is said to have taken place in Syracuse (Diod. xi 72.2).

this cult could really have been; it may or may not go back to the fifth century BC.[81]

Olympian 12 reveals further associations that make the personification of Tyche appropriate. After the genealogy and the apostrophe, an indication of the deity's sphere of influence follows; she controls the main areas of human activity: sailing, war and assemblies (3-5).[82] Although Tyche is not mentioned again after line 5, she is implicitly linked with the following gnomic reflections (5-12) as well as with Ergoteles' changing fortune and his final success (13-20). There is no certainty about men's hopes and judgement; these can be successful or they can lead men to disaster (5-6 and 10-12). "In part, of course, this is looking forward to Ergoteles' own case: his disaster in Knossos, turning, against all expectation, into security and distinction at Himera. But in part it is looking back to Himera herself and to all the unforeseen vicissitudes of recent years".[83] Tyche in this ode is closely related to both vicissitude and success. Behind both misfortune and success stands Tyche who "steers a double rudder" (*δίδυμον στρέφοισα πηδάλιον*, fr. 40).

This victory ode is exceptional in the sense that it is lacking in myth, a traditional feature of the *epinikia*. Tyche had no mythology, but this deficit seems to be made good by the gnomology in lines 5 to 13.[84] Thus Tyche is here connected with men's false hopes, the unknowability of the future and abrupt changes from prosperity to misfortune and the other way round. It is actually remarkable that we find such an involved and full-range account of the power of Tyche so early and from a poet who is not often associated with questioning the Homeric outlook and his picture of the Olympians.[85] Yet the

---

[81] However, for Verdenius (1987) 91 Cicero's reference suggests that "this cult in Sicily was considerably older" than the fourth century BC. See also E. Thummer, *Die Religiosität Pindars*, (Innsbruck, 1957) 29.

[82] F.J. Nisetich, "The leaves of triumph and mortality: Transformation of a traditional image in Pindar's *Olympian* 12", *TAPA* 107 (1977) 248 compares line 3 with Pindar fragment 214, where "we find *Ἐλπίς* performing exactly the function performed by Tycha in *Olympian* 12. In the ode Tycha is at the helm, guiding the ship (*κυβερνῶνται*); in the fragment *Ἐλπίς* guides (*κυβερνᾷ*) the thought of mortal man who turns this way and that".

[83] Barrett (1973) 35.

[84] As O. Becker, "Pindars Olympische Ode vom Glück", *Antike* 16 (1940) 38-50, at 48-9 observed.

[85] However, in the case of the Cleonymids Pindar is forced to explain their failure in an un-Homeric way.

new is placed in the traditional framework.[86] Tyche here is the daughter of Zeus and in *Iliad* 24.527-33 it is he who gives to men both good and bad things from his two urns.[87]

In Pindar fragment 41 (=Paus. 7.26.8) Tyche is one of the Moirai and even more powerful than her sisters. Moira spins the fate of men already on their birth at *Iliad* 24. 209, and seems to restrict even the power of gods. However, this does not form a dogma of Greek religion, so to speak. Rather, a conflict created by the relationship between *moira* and the gods is rarely observed. Even in Euripides, where we do find antithetical dilemmas about the power of gods and *tyche*, the most important effect of it seems to be rhetorical, drawing attention to the dramatic plight of the characters. Once the new attention to the power of fortune is established, poets relate her to other abstractions or set her against the traditional powers of fate and gods. *τύχη* as good luck, unexpected event, or chance, is sometimes neither a divinity nor dependent upon the gods, but without atheism being implied. As we have seen and will see, there are many examples classifying the power of *tyche* with relation to the power of gods or to other *Schicksalsmächte* and abstractions in Archaic and Classical literature.[88] Along with gods and *moira*, *tyche* can be held responsible for changes in human life; in this respect, they interchange, associate or dissociate freely according to the will of the author. There is no contradiction or incompatibility in expressing simultaneous belief in all these powers.

In Bacchylides 10.45-7 Fortune tips the scales (... *τὸ μέλλον | δ' ἀκρίτους τίκτει τελευτάς,| πᾶ τύχα βρίσει...*), while in the *Iliad* it is always Zeus who weighs the fortunes of men in the scales.[89] An adespoton tragic fragment reads: "anomalous are the scales of unstable fortune", *ἀνώμαλοι πλάστιγγες ἀστάτου τύχης* (fr. ad.179 N). In Bacchylides 17 both *μοῖρα παγκρατὴς* (all-powerful fate) and *ἐσθλῶν τύχαν* (fortune of blessings) come from gods (line

---

[86] Nisetich (1977) 235-64 discusses the links of *Olympian* 12 with previous poets and observes: "The connection between *τύχα* and man's ignorance of the future does emerge more clearly in Pindar than in earlier poetry, but this may be due to the scanty survival of the latter" (241).

[87] Compare also Hes. *Erga* 1-8; *Odyssey* 4.236-7 and 8.62-4.

[88] On *tyche* and other powers of fate in Archaic poetry see Strohm (1944) 46-82.

[89] *Il*.8.69, 22.209, 16.658, 19.223. Cf. Aesch. *Pers*. 346, Theognis 157 and also the scales of Justice in *H.Herm*. 324 and Bacchylides 17.25.

24 and 132, respectively). This bond between the divine and fortune is omnipresent in Archaic and Classical literature. But despite dynamic occurrences of *tyche*, Tyche as an independent, fully-fledged goddess never appears before the fourth century BC. In this light, one is inclined to place the adespoton lyric fragment[90] presenting Tycha as the most supreme of the gods (*προφερεστάτα θεῶν*) in the fourth century. K. Ziegler has proposed that the author of this hymn is Sophocles.[91] To support his proposal he refers to the information Menander the Rhetor preserves that Sophocles wrote a hymn of the 'questioning type' to Fortune: *ὥσπερ καὶ τὴν Τύχην Σοφοκλῆς ὕμνησε διαπορῶν [ὑμνεῖ].*[92] As H. Lloyd-Jones comments, "Menander in his rhetorical handbook is discussing hymns 'of puzzlement and questioning', in which the poet raises questions about the subject's genealogy, or the nature of his power, or some similar topic".[93] But apart from the fact that we do not know anything else about this Sophoclean hymn to Tyche, its supposed 'questioning' content does not seem to square with the above lyric poem, which is outright, enthusiastic eulogy of Tycha. More similar to this is a hymn to *Hygieia* by Ariphron in the fourth century BC (*PMG* fr. 813).[94]

The scanty evidence we have from the Presocratics shows that in their cosmogonies *tyche* signifies cosmic chance, a kind of non-teleological causality, which together with necessity plays a role in the creation of the universe. Chance may seem to be at odds with necessity, but, in fact, these two are not incompatible. Characteristically Plato in *Laws* 889 b uses the expression *κατὰ τύχην ἐξ ἀνάγκης* with reference to the Empedoclean theory of the formation of the universe. J. Barnes elucidates the implications of this passage: "Plato plainly ascribes to his opponents the view that everything happens *both* by nature or necessity *and* by chance; and the sense he gives to 'by chance' indicates how he can do so. '*E* happens by chance' means '*E* happens and *E* was not brought about by design'; no mind, no god, no art planned or executed the event. That is the normal sense of 'chance' in

---

[90] *PMG* 1019 (=Stob. 1.6.13 *περὶ τύχης ἢ τοῦ αὐτομάτου...*).
[91] *RE*, vol. VII (Stuttgart, 1948) s.v. *tyche* col. 1653.
[92] D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor*, (Oxford, 1981) treatise I, 343.25.
[93] H. Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles: Fragments*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1996) fr. 809.
[94] See R. M. Rosado Fernandes, "A propósito de um verso do hino a *Τύχη* (v.5, Frag. Adesp. 101 Page)", *Boletim de Filologia* XX-XXI (1961-3) 207-11.

English, and evidently it was a normal sense of '*tuchê*' in Greek: in that sense, every event in a wholly deterministic world might occur by chance".[95]

Empedocles fragment 103 D-K reads: "Thus by the will of chance everything possesses thought", *τῇδε μὲν οὖν ἰοτήτι Τύχης πεφρόνηκεν ἅπαντα.* It is deplorable that we do not know the context of this line, but, as it stands, it presents a link between *Τύχη* and *φρόνησις.* Ion of Chios (1 D-K) believed that the excellence (*ἀρετή*) of each man depends on the trinity of intelligence or comprehension (*σύνεσις*), power (*κράτος*) and luck or good fortune (*τύχη*). In Ion fragment 3 D-K luck (*τύχη*), though very different from skill (*σοφία*), can create things very similar to it. Democritus B 119 D-K stresses the importance of thought over chance: "Men have formed an image of *tyche* (fortune, chance) as an excuse for their own thoughtlessness. For only rarely does chance (*τύχη*) fight against thought (*φρόνησις*). Well-understanding sharp-sightedness directs most things in life". Again we do not know the context of this passage, but it suggests a tension between chance and human knowledge or perception. According to Aristotle, "some think that chance is a cause, but one unclear to human intelligence, being something divine and somewhat demonic[96]" (*Phys.* 196b5). Democritus may be part of these 'some' (see A 70 D-K). J. Barnes notes that "when we say '*E* occurs by chance' we may mean only 'We cannot tell why *E* occurs'. That use is, I think, found in English; and I assume that Aristotle speaks with authority for Greek"; so, Barnes concludes, the above passage "becomes an honest confession of the weakness of the human mind— a weakness which...Democritus was quick to notice and to emphasise".[97]

---

[95] J. Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, (London, 1982)^2 425 and his whole discussion on 'Chance and necessity' 418-26. See also C. C. W. Taylor, *The Atomists: Leucippus and Democritus*, (Toronto, 1999) 188ff.

[96] For the Pythagorean school also *tyche* is *daimonion*; see 58 D 11 D-K, vol.i p.478 (=Stob. *Ecl.* I 6, 18): *περὶ δὲ τύχης τάδ' ἔφασκον· εἶναι μέν τι καὶ δαιμόνιον μέρος αὐτῆς· γενέσθαι γὰρ ἐπίπνοιάν τινα παρὰ τοῦ δαιμονίου τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐνίοις ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον ἢ ἐπὶ τὸ χεῖρον καὶ εἶναι φανερῶς κατ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο τοὺς μὲν εὐτυχεῖς, τοὺς δὲ ἀτυχεῖς. καταφανέστατον δὲ εἶναι τοῦτο τοὺς μὲν ἀπροβουλεύτως καὶ εἰκῇ τι πράττοντας πολλάκις κατατυγχάνειν, τοὺς δὲ προβουλευομένους καὶ προνοουμένους ὀρθῶς τι πράττειν ἀποτυγχάνειν.* For a similar view see, Eur. *Helen* 718-9: *σπεύδων δ' ὅτ' ἔσπευδ' οὐδὲν εἶχε· νῦν δ' ἔχει | αὐτόματα πράξας τἀγάθ' εὐτυχέστατα.* A. M. Dale, *Euripides: Helen*, (Oxford, 1967), comments at 115: "Menelaus suffered and toiled for years and got nothing for it; now a curious turn of fortune throws everything into his lap, so capricious is the power that controls our destinies".

[97] Barnes (1982)^2 425-6. For Democritus on *tyche* as luck or good fortune see B 3, 176, 210, 269, 275, 293 D-K.

Considering *tyche* and its random reversals as something supernatural and daimonic seems to have been common in both philosophical thought and popular wisdom. One of the sayings of Kleoboulos, the sage, reads: "One should pray to fortune", *τύχῃ εὔχεσθαι* (D-K 10,3*a*, no.13; cf no. 20 of his sayings). We cannot be certain how to interpret this. It may not be a serious acknowledgement of the power of *tyche*, but a rather cynical remark. On the other hand, it is likely that this saying corresponds to similar popular ideas.[98] The *dictum* of another sage, Chilon of Lacedaemon, reads: "Do not laugh at the unfortunate; for fortune (the change of fortune) is common (to all people)", *ἀτυχοῦντι μὴ ἐπιγέλα· κοινὴ γὰρ ἡ τύχη.*[99] Fragment 293 of Democritus is also of immediate relevance: "Those who take delight in the sufferings of their neighbours do not understand that the change of fortune is common to everybody (*τὰ τῆς τύχης κοινὰ πᾶσι*); they are also in want of joy at their own home". Diogenes Laertius (1.33) tells us about Thales' or Socrates' saying about fortune. "In his biographies Hermippos tells a story about Thales, a story which others tell about Socrates: that he used to say there were three reasons why he was grateful to Fortune (*τριῶν τούτων ἕνεκα χάριν ἔχειν τῇ Τύχῃ*): 'First, because I was born a human being and not a beast; next, because I was born a man and not a woman; third, because I was born a Greek and not a barbarian' ".[100] It is said that Diagoras of Melos, though generally held to be an atheist, composed poetry with no hint of impiety; two lines addressed to Nicodorus of Mantineia read: "It is in accordance with destiny (fate) and fortune that all deeds of mortals are performed", *κατὰ δαίμονα καὶ τύχαν | τὰ πάντα βροτοῖσιν ἐκτελεῖται.*[101]

---

[98] Wehrli (1931) 18 notes with regard to the polemic poem of Simonides against the saying of Pittacus (see above): "...*χαλεπὰ τὰ καλά*. Solche Sprüche sind herrenloses Gut, bevor sie einem Weisen in den Mund gelegt werden".

[99] As preserved by Stobaeus; see O. Hense, *Ioannis Stobaei Anthologii*, Vol. III (Berlin, 1912) p. 1010 in the chapter entitled *ΟΤΙ ΟΥ ΧΡΗ ΕΠΙΧΑΙΡΕΙΝ ΤΟΙΣ ΑΤΥΧΟΥΣΙΝ*. Diels-Kranz print a similar version of this saying of Chilon, but without the explanatory *gar*-clause on *tyche*; see no. 11 of Chilon's sayings (D-K 10, 3*γ*): *τῷ δυστυχοῦντι μὴ ἐπιγέλα*. On the subject of 'common fortune' compare also grave epigrams 543, 546 and 557 in W. Peek, *Griechische Vers-Inschriften*, Vol. I, (Berlin, 1955). Cf. Aesch. fr. 389 N: *κοινὸν τύχη, γνώμη δὲ τῶν κεκτημένων*.

[100] Translation by J. Bollansée editor of F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* IV A, Fasc. 3 (Leiden / Boston / Köln, 1999) Hermippos of Smyrna F 13; see also Bollansée's commentary on F 13 (186-9).

[101] See F. Jacoby, *Diagoras ὁ Ἄθεος. Abhandlungen der deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Klasse für Sprachen, Literatur und Kunst* 3 (Berlin, 1959) 5 and

In Gorgias *Helen* 6 "the wishes of Chance" stand side by side with "the purposes of the gods and the decrees of Necessity" to exonerate Helen from the guilt for eloping with Paris (*ἢ γὰρ Τύχης βουλήμασι καὶ θεῶν βουλεύμασι καὶ Ἀνάγκης ψηφίσμασιν ἔπραξεν ἃ ἔπραξεν...*). According to Gorgias, chance and god remove responsibility from Helen (*εἰ οὖν τῇ Τύχῃ καὶ τῷ θεῷ τὴν αἰτίαν ἀναθετέον, ἦ τὴν Ἑλένην τῆς δυσκλείας ἀπολυτέον*). This issue of *tyche* versus responsibility occurs also in other fifth-century orators.[102] Antiphon's Second Tetralogy is about the accidental killing of a boy by a javelin. Some young men were practising javelin-throwing when the boy who ran out on the field to pick up the javelins was accidentally struck and killed. The man who threw the javelin is now charged with unintentional homicide. The defendant here avoids blaming fortune, while the plaintiff argues that even if the death was caused by fortune, the blame still falls to the accused (3.3.8). In contrast, in Antiphon's *On the Chorus Boy*, the accused Choregos is keen to blame fortune (15). In this case, one day when the Choregos was absent a chorus boy was given a drug to drink, which caused his death. Presumably the Choregos would have been less inclined to blame fortune if he had given the drink himself. The opposition between chance (*τύχη*) and prearrangement (*πρόνοια*) occurs twice in Antiphon's *On the Murder of Herodes* (6 and 21);[103] in 92 an unintentional error belongs to *tyche*, whereas an intentional one belongs to *gnome*. The *tyche-gnome* and *tyche-techne* tension forms part of a fifth-century intellectual debate, as ample evidence from Thucydides and the

---

item 5 in his list of biographical and anecdotic evidence about Diagoras. Cf. Th. Gomperz, *Philodem über Frömmigkeit*, Herculanische Studien, zweites Heft (Leipzig, 1866) 85-6, col. 18-19. However, D. Obbink, *Philodemus On Piety*, (Oxford, 1996) does not include this anecdotic piece of information in his edition.

[102] M. Gagarin refers to the story told by Plutarch in *Pericles* 36.3 (when a competitor was killed in a javelin –throwing contest, Pericles and Protagoras spent the whole day discussing whether the javelin or the thrower or the organisers of the competition were responsible) and concludes: "Whether or not an actual incident gave rise to these discussions, the story indicates that the issue of cause and responsibility with regard to accidents occupied the attention of intellectuals at this time": M. Gagarin and D. M. MacDowell, *Antiphon and Andocides*, (Austin, 1998) 30. On gods and fate in the Attic orators see H. Meuss, "Die Vorstellungen von Gottheit und Schicksal bei den attischen Rednern", *Jahrbücher für klassische Philologie* 139 (1889) 445-76.

[103] M. Gagarin, *Antiphon: The Speeches*, (Cambridge, 1997) 179 notes on *On the Murder of Herodes* 6 that "although "chance" is mentioned at the beginning of Antiphon's other court speeches (1.2, 6.1), it has a special point in Euxitheus' argument that *τύχη* not *πρόνοια* shaped the facts of this case". Lamenting one's fortune as the general cause of events is seen by Gagarin as a *captatio benevolentiae* (see his note on 2.2.1, p. 130).

Hippocratics suggests.[104] This tension lies also at the heart of sophistic thought,[105] while Plato's philosophical system depends on the elimination of human exposure to unpredictable and uncontrolled fortune. As Nussbaum notes, "Plato's elaboration of radical ethical proposals is motivated by an acute sense of the problems caused by ungoverned luck in human life. The need of human beings for philosophy is, for him, deeply concerned with their exposure to luck; the elimination of this exposure is a primary task of the philosophical art as he conceives it".[106] The tension between cosmic random movement and some supreme intelligence can be exemplified through two Heraclitean fragments. Fragment 52 reads: "Destiny (lot) is a child at play, moving pieces in a game. The kingship belongs to a child" (*αἰὼν παῖς ἐστι παίζων, πεσσεύων· παιδὸς ἡ βασιληίη*); fragment 32 proclaims: "The wise is one alone, unwilling and willing to be spoken of by the name of Zeus" (*ἓν τὸ σοφὸν μοῦνον λέγεσθαι οὐκ ἐθέλει καὶ ἐθέλει Ζηνὸς ὄνομα*).[107]

This tension between uncontrollable randomness and controllable order, or the similar one between *τύχη* and *τέχνη*, obtains different colouring in different contexts. In Plato's *Protagoras* the creation of human civilisation through human intelligence and skill is emphasised. But one of the tragic hymns to human culture, the first stasimon of Sophocles' *Antigone*, contains also more ambiguous or sombre tones. In general, *τύχη* seems to have gained a new momentum as well as a particularly grim colouring through its use by the tragedians.[108] They employ vivid or metaphorical language about fortune, which they tend to connect with the precariousness and transitoriness of human life. At the same time they make full use of gnomic wisdom. This was already developed in lyric poetry and the sayings of the sages, and it came to

---

[104] See also below, in Chapters Two, Three and Four. For the Hippocratic corpus see *Περὶ τέχνης* chapter 4 and *Περὶ ἀρχαίης ἰητρικῆς* chapter 1. F. Heinimann, *Nomos und Physis*, (Basel, 1945) 86f. and W. Nestle, "Hippocratica", *Hermes* 73 (1938) 1-38, at 11 and 21. Cf. Eur. *Alc.* 785 and *Hipp.* 670ff.

[105] Joos (1955) 36-108. See also Nussbaum (2001)^2 89ff. and n. 2.

[106] Nussbaum (2001)^2 90.

[107] Translation by C. H. Kahn, *The art and thought of Heraclitus*, (Cambridge, 1979), with some changes. See no. XCIV and CXVIII, and his commentary on these fragments.

[108] This ambiguous and grim colouring is in agreement with a general characteristic of the tragic genre: behind everything positive in human life lies something negative. As K. Reinhardt puts it with regard to the change between 'image and opposite image' ('Bild und Gegenbild') in the *Oresteia*: "Hinter jedem Positivum menschlicher Erfahrung, Haltung, Handlung, Urteils zeigt sich ein verborgenes, alsbald offenbar werdendes Negative" [*Aischylos als Regisseur und Theologe*, (Bern, 1949) 80].

form an indispensable part of popular beliefs. In this way, the tragedians seem to follow the path already opened up by Pindar, who compensated for *tyche*'s lack of mythology by connecting it with a rich gnomology.

b) Categorising the occurrences of *tyche* in tragedy

It is helpful to organise the discussion of *tyche* in tragedy under similar contexts. *τύχη* as a suprahuman entity blended with metaphorical language, as a supernatural power (personified or not) connected with or set against the gods, occurs in all the tragedians. I will resist drawing general conclusions about the role of *tyche* in the plays mentioned in passing in the following categories. This is the task of the discussion of whole plays in subsequent chapters, which concentrate on the detailed examination of four Euripidean dramas (*IT*, *Helen*, *Ion* and *Heracles*). Comparisons with the two older tragedians will also be pursued, but the focus will remain on Euripides since his plays "provide an extraordinarily rich source for the often contradictory ideas and reactions of religious thinkers in the classical period"[109], and this is also the case with *tyche*-related ideas. It will emerge that Euripides often extends the pre-existing ways in which *tyche* is perceived and represented, but stops short of presenting her as a goddess on stage; this development has to wait till Menander's *Aspis*.

It is doubtful how valid general pronouncements are when they are based on a single occurrence of *tyche*. This approach brings the dangers of reductivism with it. For instance, A. Rivier sees a difference between Euripides' *Heracles* and *Ion* in their perception of human life; he comes to this conclusion by contrasting *Heracles* 1357, where *tyche* means fate, destiny and has the full tragic sense of a devastating power, to *Ion* 1512-15, where *tyche* means chance, fortune, luck.[110] But how can one choose a single occurrence of a word and invest in it a perception of human life representative of a whole play?

---

[109] As rightly observed by S. C. Humphreys, "Dynamics of the Greek breakthrough: the dialogue between philosophy and religion", in S. N. Eisenstadt (ed.) *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilisations*, (New York, 1986) 100.

[110] A. Rivier, *Essai sur le tragique d' Euripide*, (Lausanne, 1975)^2 142, a view supported by R. G. A. Buxton, *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy. A Study of Peitho*, (Cambridge, 1982) 149.

Four broad categories seem to stand out: a) Fortune talk involving vivid or metaphorical *tyche* language; b) Tyche personified to a greater or lesser degree; c) *tyche* as an abstraction crystallising ideas expressed in the context; d) passages classifying gods and *tyche* in degrees of power or with an antithetical dilemma about the power of gods and *tyche*. These groupings of tragic passages are by no means exclusive. There is a great amount of overlapping in these categories, which are meant to be only one possible way of setting out some common features in these tragic contexts.

1) Fortune talk involving vivid or metaphorical *tyche*-language

The expressive force of tragic language often gives *tyche* personal characteristics. In Aeschylus' *Agam*. 567ff. the herald puts an end to his description of the hardships of the Greek army in Troy; his tone is very down-to-earth, almost cynical: the pain has gone and the dead will not rise again.[111] In this context, *tyche* appears to have feelings: "Why should we count the number of the dead in the total, / why should the living grieve for the spitefulness of fortune?", *τί τοὺς ἀναλωθέντας ἐν ψήφῳ λέγειν,/ τὸν ζῶντα δ' ἀλγεῖν χρὴ τύχης παλιγκότου;* (572-3). This remarkable expression, 'spiteful fortune', clearly presents *tyche* as capable of feeling wrath, almost in a daimonic light, although it acts as the object of *ἀλγεῖν*. Hence, *tyche* is not seen as an active agent.

A similar expression is found in Demosthenes *On the Crown* 207; here the expression *τῇ τῆς τύχης ἀγνωμοσύνῃ* "through fortune's unkindness" spells out more clearly a daimonic, cruel and personal aspect in *tyche*. The precise event behind 'the unkindness of fortune' here is the defeat of the Athenians at the battle of Chaironeia. In this speech Demosthenes has repeatedly put part of the blame for the defeat on suprahuman and vague powers, such as *ὁ δαίμων* (§192), *ὁ θεός* (§193) and *ἡ τύχη* (§194). As H. Yunis notes, "When Demosthenes first considered fortune, it was overwhelming but impersonal (§194); when it recurs here in opposition to Athens' noble intentions, *ἀγνωμοσύνῃ* adds a note of tension, as if fortune, like the gods in tragedy, were

---

[111] Reinhardt (1949) 81 has observed the change of the Messenger's speech here to a more cynical tone: "...die Verdeckung wird Gebärde: vergessen sollen die Toten sein! Die Gnomik der Verdrängung wird fast zynisch: 'Aus ist alle Not! Aus für die Toten selbst, daß sie je wieder auferstehen! So wenig die mitzählen, die's gekostet hat, so wenig zählen Leiden, die vorüber, wenn der Zorn der Tyche sich gewandt hat! So gilt denn für uns Überlebende...' ".

cruel and took pleasure in crushing them (§306 *τὴν [τύχην] οὕτω τὰ πράγματα κρίνασαν*, Soph. *Trach.* 1266 *θεῶν ἀγνωμοσύνην*)".[112] In fact, a personal and malignant aspect can also be felt in the Aeschylean *τύχη παλίγκοτος*. The tragedian also employs the adjective *παλιντυχής* (*πάλιν, τύχη*) "with a reverse of fortune" at *Agam.* 465, where it describes the *modus operandi* of the Erinyes. At 456-68 the Chorus ominously sings with reference to Agamemnon and the Greeks coming back from Troy: "The city's angry words are dangerous. They pay the debt due for the people's curse. I'm waiting anxiously to hear the truth the murky night conceals: the gods unfailingly mark out those who've killed many, and the black Furies in time cast into darkness anyone who's built success (*τυχηρὸν ὄντα*) by unjust means; by turning his fortune round and wearing his life away (*παλιντυχεῖ τριβᾷ βίου*) they cause him to grow faint and dim. And then when he has gone among the shades there is no help".[113] The above occurrence of the adjective *τυχηρός* (lucky, fortunate, successful) is one out of a total of three appearances in classical Greek, though it is more frequent in the Hellenistic period. The other two classical occurrences involve the adverb *τυχηρῶς* in Aristophanes and, more precisely, in a context of prayer (*Ach.* 250, *Thesm.* 305). According to E. Fraenkel's tentative suggestion, this "indicates perhaps that the word originated in religious language".[114] Where the above Aeschylean passage is concerned, it seems clear that the tragedian tends to give fortune talk dark undertones.

Similarly, in *Choephori* 969-71 the Chorus sings just before Orestes enters to reveal his killing of Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus: "Fortunes have turned: they will be of fair face and welcome back the rightful lord into the house", *τύχαι δ' εὐπρόσωποι † κοίται † τὸ πᾶν / ἰδεῖν πρευμενεῖς / μετοίκοις δόμων πεσοῦνται πάλιν.* There is often a sinister side in things that have a fair appearance. The delightful lion cub that brings disaster on the household that has raised it is a prominent example (*Agam.* 725ff).

---

[112] H. Yunis, *Demosthenes: On the Crown*, (Cambridge, 2001) 225.
[113] Translation by M. Evans, *Aischylos: The Oresteia*, (London, 1995). I have modified line 465-6 following Headlam's translation of *τιθεῖσ' ἀμαυρόν*.
[114] E. Fraenkel, *Aeschylus: Agamemnon*, Vol. II (Oxford, 1978) [reprinted with corrections] on line 464.

Sophocles also employs *τύχη* in contexts with gnomic and metaphorical force. In *Oedipus at Colonus* Theseus addresses the now helpless Creon: "Come, show the way! Know that you, the captor, are captured and fortune (the outcome of the events) has caught you, the hunter; for what is gained by unrighteous cunning is not kept", *ἀλλ' ἐξυφηγοῦ· γνῶθι δ' ὡς ἔχων ἔχῃ / καὶ σ' εἶλε θηρῶνθ' ἡ τύχη· τὰ γὰρ δόλῳ / τῷ μὴ δικαίῳ κτήματ' οὐχὶ σώζεται* (1025-7). It is *ἡ τύχη* that has taken Creon into her power. Inanimate and indefinite fortune is the agent here and the subject of *εἶλε*.[115] The mode of expression is terse and indefinite, and it has a proverbial ring. Theseus does not explain what kind of fortune this is that has caught Creon, although it is clear that unjust behaviour (*τῷ μὴ δικαίῳ*) leads to one's fall.

We find a similar indefinite and metaphorical expression in *Oedipus Tyrannus*. At 224ff. Oedipus proclaims his total commitment to finding the killer of king Laios. In this context of characteristic Sophoclean irony Oedipus says that he will fight for the dead king as though he had been his father: "But now, since I happen to hold the power which once he held, and to have a marriage and a wife in common with him, and since had he not been unfortunate in respect of issue our children would have had one mother – but now fortune has leapt upon his head (*νῦν δ' ἐς τὸ κείνου κρᾶτ' ἐνήλαθ' ἡ τύχη*); on account of all this I shall fight for him as though he had been my father" (258-64). *ἡ τύχη* is spoken of as something daimonic, leaping on Laios' head. This is meant to be a metaphorical expression denoting the disaster that has hit him. Similar imagery recurs later on in the play. When Oedipus comes on stage, in full knowledge about himself and blind, the Chorus sing: "O grief terrible for humanity to see, O grief most terrible of any I have yet encountered! What madness has come upon you, wretched one? Who is the god that with a leap longer than longest has sprung upon your miserable fate?", *τίς ὁ πηδήσας / μείζονα δαίμων τῶν μηκίστων / πρὸς σῇ δυσδαίμονι μοίρᾳ;* (1297-1302). A variety of suprahuman powers are seen as able to knock mortals down, such as *θεός, πότμος, δαίμων* and *Ἐρινύς*.[116]

---

[115] See *LSJ* s.v. *αἱρέω* A. II "take, get into one's power" in Homer frequently of passions, states (e.g. sleep or forgetfulness) or disease (Pl. *Theat.* 142b).

[116] Soph. *Ant.* 1272-4, 1345-6; Aesch. *Pers.* 516-7; *Sept.* 791. Compare Eur. *Hipp.* 817-21; *Alc.* 889.

In Euripides fortune talk often takes the form of talking about the obscurity, uncertainty and inconstancy of *τύχη*. Heracles in *Alcestis* 782-91 sees a 'carpe diem' outlook on life (the personal enjoyment of every day as it comes) as a response to the brevity of human life and the inability of mortals to control their fortune: "All men must die and there isn't any man alive who knows if he'll live through the coming day. For the way of fortune – how it's all going to turn out – is quite obscure: it can't be taught or mastered by any art at all. Well, then, now that you've heard and learned all this from me, cheer up, drink up, reckon life from day to day your own, the rest as fortune's! Honour Aphrodite as absolutely the sweetest of all the gods for mortals".[117]

βροτοῖς ἅπασι κατθανεῖν ὀφείλεται,
κοὐκ ἔστι θνητῶν ὅστις ἐξεπίσταται
τὴν αὔριον μέλλουσαν εἰ βιώσεται·
τὸ τῆς τύχης γὰρ ἀφανὲς οἳ προβήσεται,
κἄστ' οὐ διδακτὸν οὐδ' ἁλίσκεται τέχνῃ.
ταῦτ' οὖν ἀκούσας καὶ μαθὼν ἐμοῦ πάρα
εὔφραινε σαυτόν, πῖνε, τὸν καθ' ἡμέραν
βίον λογίζου σόν, τὰ δ' ἄλλα τῆς τύχης.
τίμα δὲ καὶ τὴν πλεῖστον ἡδίστην θεῶν
Κύπριν βροτοῖσιν· εὐμενὴς γὰρ ἡ θεός. (*Alc.* 782-91)

Heracles, in a merry mood but ignorant of the truth, addresses these views to the solemn-looking servants of Admetus' house, who have been mourning for the loss of their mistress, Alcestis. But Heracles does not know this yet. He has been entertained as a guest with the impression that the cause of the mourning was the death of an outsider. We have already seen that Pindar refers to the obscurity and uncertainty of fortune (*ἀφάνεια τύχας*, *Isth.* 4. 49), while in Thucydides Diodotus includes *τύχη* (good fortune leading to overconfidence and presumption) in his list of unseen entities (*ἀφανῆ*) under the influence of which men meet with their destruction (Thuc. iii.45.6).[118]

The uncertainty of fortune that opens up a double possibility, either of success or of failure, in every human endeavour is the main element in the phrase *ἐπὶ ξυροῦ τύχης*, literally "on a razor's fortune, chance". This

---

[117] Translation by D. J. Conacher, *Euripides: Alcestis*, (Warminster, 1988).

metaphorical expression, which is employed by Sophocles in *Antigone* 996, is apparently a variation on the common proverbial formulation *ἐπὶ ξυροῦ ἀκμῆς*, "on a razor's edge".[119] In *Antigone* Teiresias warns Creon about the dire consequences of his actions, leaving dead Polyneices unburied and confining Antigone in a tomb (998ff.). The prophet introduces his warning with words that bring horror to Creon. "Think, for you are again upon a razor's chance!" (*φρόνει βεβὼς αὖ νῦν ἐπὶ ξυροῦ τύχης*, 996), Teiresias says, and Creon replies: "What is the matter? Your way of speaking makes me shudder" (997). The Messenger who brings the news of Antigone's and Haemon's death also engages in fortune talk. His introduction has a gnomic and reflective character: "Neighbours of Cadmus and the house of Amphion, there is no human being's life that I would ever praise or blame as being settled; for fortune sets upright (restores to happiness) and makes the fortunate and the unfortunate fall at any given time; and there is no prophet concerning present circumstances for mortals",[120]

Κάδμου πάροικοι καὶ δόμων Ἀμφίονος,
οὐκ ἔσθ' ὁποῖον στάντ' ἂν ἀνθρώπου βίον
οὔτ' αἰνέσαιμ' ἂν οὔτε μεμψαίμην ποτέ.
τύχη γὰρ ὀρθοῖ καὶ τύχη καταρρέπει
τὸν εὐτυχοῦντα τόν τε δυστυχοῦντ' ἀεί·
καὶ μάντις οὐδεὶς τῶν καθεστώτων βροτοῖς. (1155-60)[121]

τύχη is presented here as an active agent, a suprahuman power controlling people's lives. However, at 1173 the Messenger does not assign to *tyche* any responsibility for the death of Antigone and Haemon, but vaguely to "those who are alive". Yet a reference to the agency of *tyche* is used by one character as a means of shedding responsibility. At 327ff the Guard, concluding his report to Creon about the somehow miraculous burial of Polyneices' body, says that finding the perpetrators is not his concern, "for that is something

---

[118] The inscrutability and uncertainty of both the divine and *tyche* is highlighted in Eur. *Helen* 711-9 and 1137-42. See below in Chapter Four, in the section on *Helen*.
[119] See *Il.*10.173; Simon. 97; Hdt. vi.11; Theog. 557; Eur. *Her.* 630.
[120] I have mainly followed M. Griffith's translation; see M. Griffith, *Sophocles: Antigone*, (Cambridge, 1999) on lines 1156-7, 1158-9 and 1160.
[121] Griffith (1999) on lines 1156-60 compares the Messenger's "series of gnomic comments on the mutability of human fortune" to Simonides (*PMG* 521), Sophocles' *Ajax* 131-2 and *Trachiniae* 129-31.

fortune will decide" (*τοῦτο γὰρ τύχη κρινεῖ*, 328).[122] The only thing that matters to him is his safety. He is deeply grateful to the gods for coming out of Creon's anger and threats safe (331). Although Creon has sent him back to the scene of burial, under orders to catch the culprits, the Guard (when Creon is already gone) reveals his intention not to do this (329). Yet at 384 he comes back with Antigone who has been caught burying the body. For the Guard this unexpected capture is "the gift of fortune" that belongs to him and to no other (*ἀλλ' ἔστ' ἐμὸν θοὔρμαιον, οὐκ ἄλλου, τόδε*, 397). Griffith comments that the Guard "trots out seven lines (388-94) of self-important truisms to explain his re-arrival: four more lines (396-7, 399-400) on his own good fortune, and just three lines (395-6, 398-9) about the capture of Antigone".[123] The Guard here wants to be the only beneficiary of good fortune, in the same self-centred way as he tried to avoid any responsibility by referring to an indefinite fortune at 328.

Euripidean characters employ even bolder images to express the mutability and arbitrariness of fortune. Hecuba in the *Troades* reflects in gnomic style: "A man who imagines he is secure in his prosperity and rejoices is a fool. For our fortunes leap about in different directions like a mad man, and good fortune does not abide by the same man for ever", *θνητῶν δὲ μῶρος ὅστις εὖ πράσσειν δοκῶν / βέβαια χαίρει· τοῖς τρόποις γὰρ αἱ τύχαι, / ἔμπληκτος ὡς ἄνθρωπος, ἄλλοτ' ἄλλοσε / πηδῶσι, † κοὐδεὶς αὐτὸς εὐτυχεῖ ποτε †* (1203-6). M. Heath has noted with regard to Euripidean references about women that the younger tragedian's style is "more sententious" and "easier to extract"; "the same view [i.e. women's cunning] is implicit in the work of other tragedians, if less often made explicit. It was presumably because he articulates the common view most clearly that Euripides acquired the comic stereotype reputation as a misogynist".[124] Similar observations can be made about fortune talk in Euripides. His numerous sententious references to *tyche* are often thrown into relief and made more explicit than the occurrences of *tyche*

---

[122] In Aeschylus *Seven against Thebes* 414 it is Ares who decides the outcome of the fight by the dice, i.e. by chance: *ἔργον δ' ἐν κύβοις Ἄρης κρινεῖ.* As G. O Hutchinson notes here, "the collocation suggests that Ares' decisions are arbitrary. More commonly the metaphor describes merely the unstable and unpredictable" [G. O. Hutchinson, *Aeschylus: Seven against Thebes*, (Oxford, 1985) on line 414]. Compare also Soph. fr. 895 Radt.

[123] M. Griffith (1999) on lines 388-400.

[124] M. Heath, *The Poetics of Greek Tragedy*, (London, 1987) 160, n.83.

in his predecessors. A quick look at Stobaeus' *Anthologium* can show that the majority of the excerpts related to fortune comes from Euripidean plays.[125]

In Sophocles *tyche* often occurs as some kind of supernatural force, the nature of which remains obscure and indefinite or is seen as coming from the gods. For example, in Sophocles' *Philoctetes* 1326 Neoptolemus explains to Philoctetes that the latter's affliction (being bitten by a snake) is god-sent: "It is by divine fortune that you are sick with this pain", *σὺ γὰρ νοσεῖς τόδ' ἄλγος ἐκ θείας τύχης*,[126] because he entered Chryses' temple (1327-8). In fact, only so late in the play does Philoctetes learn about the divine purpose of his suffering, as Neoptolemus links it with Helenus' prophecy (1324-42). Jebb notes on line 1326: "Philoctetes has shown no consciousness that his misfortune was anything more than an ordinary accident (cp. 267, 632). He now learns that it was ordained by the gods, – in order that he might not reach Troy before the time appointed for that city's fall (197ff.)".[127]

The connection between the gods and fortune is frequent in contexts of wish or in passages referring to *daimon* and *tyche* as powers exerting control over human life. In Aristophanes' *Peace* 939-41 the Chorus encourages Trygaios to sacrifice, assuring him that he has divine favour and fortune on his side: "See how everything that God wills and that fortune prospers goes as one desires, and one such success leads to another at the right moment!", *ὡς πάνθ' ὅσ' ἂν θεὸς θέλῃ / χἡ τύχη κατορθοῖ / χωρεῖ κατὰ νοῦν, ἕτερον δ' ἑτέρῳ / τούτων κατὰ καιρὸν ἁπαντᾷ*.[128] In Euripides' fragment 901 N^2 fortune and god are presented as the alternative powers capable of controlling human lives: "The question has often crossed my mind whether (some) fortune or a god governs human affairs (*εἴτε τύχα ⟨τις⟩ εἴτε δαίμων τὰ βρότεια κραίνει*)[129], beyond hope and justice he (or she) leads some to lose their houses without god (*τοὺς μὲν ἀπ' οἴκων καταπίπτοντας / ἄτερ θεοῦ*), but others to happiness". Nauck prints

---

[125] C. Wachsmuth, *Ioannis Stobaei Anthologii*, Vol. I (Berlin, 1884) pp. 90-93 and vol. 3 (Berlin, 1912) pp. 927-948 and 957-992.

[126] Compare Soph. *Phil.* 1316-7, *OC* 1585 and fr. 201f Radt: (*πῶς οὖν μάχωμαι θνητὸς ὢν θείᾳ τύχῃ; / ὅπου τὸ δεινὸν, ἐλπὶς οὐδὲν ὠφελεῖ*).

[127] R. C. Jebb, *Sophocles: The Play and Fragments, Part IV, The Philoctetes*, (Cambridge, 1898).

[128] Translation and division of lines according to A. H. Sommerstein, *Aristophanes: Peace*, (Warminster, 1985). Consider also Eur. *Phoen.* 1202, *IA* 1403 and *IT* 909-11.

ἐναπίπτοντας / ἀτάρ θεοῦ, which does not make sense; I follow Gesner's conjecture (*καταπίπτοντας / ἄτερ θεοῦ*), listed in Nauck's apparatus criticus. In Euripides' fragment 153 N^2 only god is presented as responsible for the change to the worse. The decline of fortune is the effect of this: "He used to be prosperous, but the god hides prosperity from those who were once illustrious; life declines, fortune declines (*νεύει δὲ τύχα*) according to the blast of the winds". In fact, everything that one does not recognise as resulting from one's own responsibility can be attributed to a god or *moira* or *tyche*. Agamemnon in Euripides' *Iphigeneia at Aulis* 1136 cries in despair: "O revered fate and fortune and my lot!" (*ὦ πότνια μοῖρα καὶ τύχη δαίμων τ' ἐμός*).[130] Clytaemnestra replies, "And mine and hers, one lot of three unhappy ones!" (*κἀμός γε καὶ τῆσδ', εἷς τριῶν δυσδαιμόνων*, 1137).

Metaphorical language in Euripides' *Electra* presents *tyche* as an active agent. At 401-3 the Chorus express vague hopes, while Orestes and Pylades walk into Electra's house as still unrecognised guests: "Now more than before, Electra, we feel our hearts warming with joy; perhaps your fortune may gradually advance till it stands in good stead",[131] *νῦν ἢ πάροιθε μᾶλλον, Ἠλέκτρα, χαρᾷ / θερμαινόμεσθα καρδίαν· ἴσως γὰρ ἂν / μόλις προβαίνουσ' ἡ τύχη σταίη καλῶς*. Fortune is said here to be able to proceed and stand well. After the recognition scene, *tyche* is more clearly linked with Orestes' operation of killing Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra. According to the Old Man at 610 everything depends on Orestes' hand and on fortune (*ἐν χειρὶ τῇ σῇ πάντ' ἔχεις καὶ τῇ τύχῃ*) if the latter wants to regain his ancestral home and city. When Orestes asks for clarification how he could achieve this goal (612), the Old Man replies "by killing the son of Thyestes and your mother" (613). Further when Orestes asks why he could accomplish both killings (646), Electra suddenly intervenes to take over the arrangement of the matricide (647), while Orestes in a vaguer, less committed way adds: "Yes; and those matters (i.e. Aegisthus' killing) fortune will well dispose", *καὶ μὴν*

---

[129] Compare frg. adesp. 547 N, line 13: *σφάλλει δ' ἐκείνους οὓς ἂν ὑψώσῃ τύχη*. In Lysias *Against Andocides* 25 the two alternatives are the gods and mere chance or what comes of itself (*τὸ αὐτόματον*).

[130] This harks back to the famous 'disclaimer' of the Iliadic Agamemnon with regard to his attitude towards Achilles: *...ἐγὼ δ' οὐκ αἴτιός εἰμι, / ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς καὶ Μοῖρα καὶ ἠεροφοῖτις Ἐρινύς* (*Il.*19.86-7).

ἐκεῖνά γ' ἡ τύχη θήσει καλῶς (649). However, in Euripides' *Heracleidai* 934-5 *tyche* is under the control of a *daimon*. The Servant puts the fall of Eurystheus in metaphorical language: "But god (fate) has cast its vote against him and changed his fortune", ... *ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐναντίαν | δαίμων ἔθηκε καὶ μετέστησεν τύχην.*

To sum up: the tragic passages we have discussed in this section suggest that *τύχη* as some sort of indefinite power often occurs in contexts employing metaphorical or vivid fortune talk to express the precariousness and mutability of human life.

2) Tyche personified to a greater or lesser degree

τύχη occurs as a personification several times in tragedy, that is, it is spoken of as embodying qualities that characterise active agents. At least this is the way in which a modern reader or spectator can perceive Tyche when she is said to have saved a ship from rough seas (Aesch. *Agam*. 664-6), or when a character sees himself as the son of *Τύχη* who gives success (Soph. *OT* 1080-1), or when she is invoked as having effected sudden reversals in one's life (Eur. *Ion* 1512-15). Scholars have tried to discern different degrees of personification, but there can be no certain and definitive answer to the problem of how classical Greeks perceived the personification of abstract concepts.[132] Although we cannot be sure about the degree of personification of a concept, what counts as a personification will be relative to the context in which this mode of expression and thought occurs. It is registered through linguistic means in the immediate context, such as connection with an active verb, genealogy, or apostrophe. Where the personification of *tyche* in Archaic and Classical literature is concerned, one can say with a fair amount of certainty that it never constitutes cult personification, since Tyche as a minor divinity in literature has no correspondence in the world of cult.

The Herald in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* 661-6 describes how only Agamemnon's ship was saved from the storm. Some power, divine not human, stole them away or made an intercession for their preservation, laying

---

[131] Translation by M. J. Cropp, *Euripides: Electra*, (Warminster, 1988).

[132] For a good analysis of this set of problems see E. Stafford, *Worshipping Virtues: Personification and the Divine in Ancient Greece*, (London and Swansea, 2000) 1-44. See also Kershaw (1987) chapter 1, pp. 9ff., who talks of a 'sliding scale' or a 'spectrum' to approach the problem of defining a personification and its degree.

a hand on the ship's helm. It was 'Saviour Fortune' who willed to sit aboard so that their ship would be saved:

ἡμᾶς γε μὲν δὴ ναῦν τ' ἀκήρατον σκάφος
ἤτοι τις ἐξέκλεψεν ἢ 'ξητήσατο
θεός τις, οὐκ ἄνθρωπος, οἴακος θιγών,
Τύχη δὲ σωτὴρ ναῦν θέλουσ' ἐφέζετο
ὡς μήτ' ἐν ὅρμῳ κύματος ζάλην ἔχειν
μήτ' ἐξοκεῖλαι πρὸς κραταίλεων χθόνα (*Agam.* 661-6).[133]

A relief of Fortune (*Τύχη*), "holding a helm with her left hand and with her right touching a trophy" is placed above an inscription of the Arcadian league dated to the 360's BC.[134] The image of *Τύχη σωτήρ* harks back to Pindar's *σώτειρα Τύχα* and anticipates the Old Man's short invocation to *Τύχη* to save Iphigeneia in *Iphigeneia at Aulis* 864: "O Fortune and my forethought, save those I wish you to save", *ὦ Τύχη πρόνοιά θ' ἡμή, σώσαθ' οὓς ἐγὼ θέλω.* Especially, the agency of *τύχη* seems to have been felt more palpably at turning points in one's life, at important cross-roads where things take a turn to a more favourable or a more unfavourable direction. A good example of this is Ion's apostrophe to *μεταβαλοῦσα Τύχη* in *Ion* 1512-15.[135]

τύχη σωτήρ for *σώτειρα* occurs also in *OT* 80-1 where Oedipus wishes as Creon is coming back from Delphi: "Lord Apollo, may he come with some preserving fortune, like a bright eye!", *ὦναξ Ἄπολλον, εἰ γὰρ ἐν τύχῃ γέ τῳ / σωτῆρι βαίη λαμπρὸς ὥσπερ ὄμμα τι.* Here *tyche* forms part of a prepositional phrase and is not personified, as it is later in the same play where the still ignorant Oedipus calls himself the son of Good Fortune (1080-1) or in the above Aeschylean passage. The epithet *σωτήρ* often occurs as a title of personal gods, among others of Zeus.[136] Sacrifices were offered to *Ζεὺς σωτήρ* after a safe voyage (Diph. *PCG* fr.42.24-5; cf. Strabo 9.1.15), and the third cup of wine was dedicated to him (Pind. *Isth.* 6.8; Aesch. Fr.55; Arist. *Thesm.* 1009). The idea of preservation, deliverance is close to that of good fortune,

---

[133] West, Page, Mazon and Hermann capitalise *Τύχη* at 664, whereas Fraenkel, Wilamowitz and Dindorf print it with a small 'T'. Fraenkel, however, translates "Saving Fortune".
[134] M. N. Tod, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions*, Vol. II (Oxford, 1946) no. 132.
[135] On this see below the section on *Ion* in Chapter Four.
[136] See *LSJ* s.v. *σωτήρ* 2.b. on other gods with this title.

good luck.[137] It comes as no surprise then that to drink the third cup of wine became a symbol of good luck, and the third time to denote the lucky time (Aesch. *Cho*. 1073). According to *LSJ*, this connotation is reflected in the proverb *τὸ τρίτον τῷ σωτῆρι*, "the third (i.e. the lucky) time to the saviour".[138]

From the above examination of the personification of *tyche* in some tragic passages it emerges that personified fortune is predominantly a rhetorical and literary construction. There is no correspondence between this and the world of cult. Furthermore, in fifth-century literature *tyche* is almost never placed above the gods, but the sort of language used of gods or an unspecified *daimon* is applied to *tyche* as well. There is actually a variety of attitudes, beliefs and gnomic utterances from which this or that view could be selected according to the context and the purposes of the person involved. *Tyche* as 'chance' is sometimes neither a divinity nor dependent on the gods, but without atheism being implied. In this case, especially, it seems that fortune talk is not part of a religious outlook but rather a more or less naturalistic way of talking about success or failure, happiness, misfortune and the accidental in human life. It may also be that *tyche* as chance or an impersonal power of fortune (set against the traditional gods or opposed to *techne* or *gnome*) was part of fifth-century intellectual debates.

In particular, the emphasis on *tyche* towards the end of this period can be partly explained by a tendency towards secularisation and rationalisation. As S. H. Humphreys observes with regard to late fifth-century cult personifications, "There is a gradual shift of emphasis in cult, impossible to date precisely, but clearly perceptible in the long run, from archaic aspects of the gods which had come to seem incomprehensible to personifications of the blessings which men hoped for. A cult of Democracy was inaugurated in 403 after the expulsion of the junta of the Thirty, and a cult of Peace in 374".[139] Arguably, victory or health or democracy or peace is a much more palpable

---

[137] Pausanias tells us that there was an image of the god Sosipolis holding a cornucopia in the temple of Tyche at Elis (6.25.4). For more on *Ζεὺς σωτήρ* in the *Oresteia* see S. Scullion, "'Saviours of the father's hearth': Olympian and Chthonian in the *Oresteia*", forthcoming in Robin Hägg, (ed.), *Greek Sacrificial Ritual, Olympian and Chthonian. Proceedings of the Sixth International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult* (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet I Athen, Paul Åströms Förlag, Stockholm).

[138] Pl. *Rep*. 583b, *Phileb*. 66d, *Charm*. 167a.

[139] Humphreys (1986) 102.

and specific blessing for men to hope for than general good fortune. We know that sacrifices were made to Athena Nike, goddess of victory, and Athena Hygieia, goddess of health in Pericles' Athens.[140] However, we know of no cult of good fortune in this period. It was only in the 330's that the politician Lycurgus introduced sacrifices to Good Fortune.

3) *tyche* as an abstraction crystallising ideas expressed in the context

Elsewhere *tyche* seems to be an abstract expression crystallising ideas that have just been expressed. In Aeschylus' *Supplices* the king of Argos has for long hesitated to give to the suppliants the right of asylum. At the beginning, he is preoccupied by fear of pollution or of any harmful effect on his city: "I am perplexed and fear possesses my soul whether to act or not to act and take my chances", *ἀμηχανῶ δὲ καὶ φόβος μ' ἔχει φρένας | δρᾶσαί τε μὴ δρᾶσαί τε καὶ τύχην ἑλεῖν,* 379-80. Then he decides to act, talk to the people of Argos favourably about the case of the suppliants:

> *σὺ καὶ λέγων εὔφραινε καὶ πράσσων φρένα.*
> *ἀλλ' οὔτι δαρὸν χρόνον ἐρημώσει πατήρ·*
> *ἐγὼ δὲ λαοὺς συγκαλῶν ἐγχωρίους*
> *σπεύσω, τὸ κοινὸν ὡς ἂν εὐμενὲς τιθῶ,*
> *καὶ σὸν διδάξω πατέρα ποῖα χρὴ λέγειν.*
> *πρὸς ταῦτα μίμνε καὶ θεοὺς ἐγχωρίους*
> *λιταῖς παραιτοῦ τῶν σ' ἔρως ἔχει τυχεῖν.*
> *ἐγὼ δὲ ταῦτα πορσυνῶν ἐλεύσομαι·*
> *πειθὼ δ' ἕποιτο καὶ τύχη πρακτήριος.* (515-23)

The king's wish at 523 ("May persuasion and effective fortune attend me", *πειθὼ δ' ἕποιτο καὶ τύχη πρακτήριος*) is expressed in abstract terms; *πειθὼ* and *τύχη* seem to crystallise the main idea of the immediate context. *τύχη πρακτήριος* picks up *πράσσων* (515) and *τυχεῖν* (521), while *πειθώ* corresponds to *λέγων* (515), and to the king's attempt at disposing the Argives well towards the suppliants, and to his instructing Danaus what to say (518-9). We cannot be certain whether we should print upper or lower case letters in the case of *peitho* and *tyche* at 523, although I favour lower case letters because the wish they are involved in does not make them persons necessarily. After all, as S. P. Kershaw notes, the 'upper or lower case' dilemma "would be meaningless

---

[140] See *I.G.* ii^2 334, quoted by Humphreys (1986) 103.

to Aeschylus: the lack of orthographical distinction between upper and lower case lettering means *a fortiori* there was no semantic distinction based on such orthography; the polarity 'Personification / Abstract' is always fluid in antiquity. Thus there is no perspicuous division between Tyche and *tyche* …they may be thought of as standing at two ends of a spectrum".[141]

In Sophocles' *Ichneutae* 'god Success' seems to be invoked mainly as a reinforcement of Silenus' prayer to succeed: "Divinity Success and guiding *daimon*, grant that I may succeed in the quest at which my course is aimed, to track down the loot, the spoil, the plunder, the stolen cattle that Phoebus has lost", *θεὸς Τύχη καὶ δαῖμον ἰθυντήριε,/ τυχεῖν με πράγους οὗ δράμημ' ἐπείγεται, / λείαν ἄγραν σύλησιν ἐκκυνηγέσαι / Φοίβου κλοπαίας βοῦς ἀπεστερημένου* (79-85). The personification, or fleeting deification, of Tyche here is a product of the language and the situation, as the vague "guiding *daimon*" also suggests.

At *Seven against Thebes* 426 *tyche* connotes the course of events, but also it is the subject of an active verb (*krainoi*); the herald wishes: "May the event not grant him (i.e. Capaneus) success". In the same context there is a connection with religious feeling: the herald wishes that the gods give Eteocles good luck (422):

τούτῳ μὲν οὕτως εὐτυχεῖν δοῖεν θεοί·
Καπανεὺς δ' ἐπ' Ἠλέκτραισιν εἵληχεν πύλαις,
γίγας ὅδ' ἄλλος τοῦ πάρος λελεγμένου
μείζων, ὁ κόμπος δ' οὐ κατ' ἄνθρωπον φρονεῖ,
πύργοις δ' ἀπειλεῖ δεῖν', ἃ μὴ κραίνοι τύχη· (422-6)

Although the examples in this category could be considered to represent personifications of *tyche*, it appears that the vividness of fortune here could be better described as a concomitant feature of the linguistic situation.

4) Passages classifying gods and *tyche* in degrees of power or with an antithetical dilemma about the power of gods and *tyche*

Euripidean characters sometimes see *tyche* and the gods as alternatives, or wonder which of the two is more powerful. This may suggest contemporary debate on the extent to which gods or chance control human affairs. In general, when Euripides makes his characters express an antithetical dilemma about the power of gods and *Tyche*, he apparently aims at the rhetorical effect

[141] Kershaw (1987) chapter 1, p. 7.

of stressing their plight. For example, Talthybios in *Hecuba* wonders whether it is not Zeus who rules human affairs but chance (488-93). He can find no pattern in Hecuba's ever renewed sufferings. In other words, it looks as if not Zeus but purposeless chance rules. A relation between this emphasis on a *Tyche* dissociated from gods and the climate of scepticism about soothsayers, prophets, and the divine in Athens after the plague of 430 BC or after the Athenian disaster in Sicily at 413 is likely but not verifiable.

In Euripides' *Electra* 890-2 Orestes' moderate words strike a more prudent note immediately after Electra's exultation over the killing of Aegisthus (880-89): "Put first the gods, Electra, as the authors of this event; then praise me with them, as servant of the gods and fortune's power", *θεοὺς μὲν ἡγοῦ πρῶτον, Ἠλέκτρα, τύχης | ἀρχηγέτας τῆσδ', εἶτα κἄμ' ἐπαίνεσον | τὸν τῶν θεῶν τε τῆς τύχης θ' ὑπηρέτην* (890-2). In particular, Orestes' cautious remark seems to revise the meaning of Electra's jubilant wish ("May I see you ever prospering" 889). There is a hint that after all it is in the hands of gods or of fortune whether they will be happy forever after. Although Orestes acknowledges two supernatural powers (gods and fortune) he sees the gods as the principal leaders (*ἀρχηγέτας*) in the killing of Aegisthus. Gods are also considered to be more important in Euripides' fragment 974 N^2: "The god engages in the important issues and leaves the unimportant ones to fortune", *τῶν ἄγαν γὰρ ἅπτεται | θεὸς, τὰ μικρὰ δ' εἰς τύχην ἀφεὶς ἐᾷ.*

In Euripides' *Cyclops* 599-607 Odysseus addresses an unconventional prayer to Hephaestus and Hypnus, in his attempt to gain their help against the Cyclops: "Hephaestus, lord of Aetna, burn out the bright eye of this pest, your neighbour, and be done with him once for all! And you, Sleep, child of dark Night, come with undiluted force against this god-detested beast! After his glorious deeds at Troy do not let Odysseus himself and his men die at the hands of a man who cares neither for gods nor for men; otherwise, we will have to regard chance (i.e. an indefinite power of fortune) as god and the gods weaker than chance",

Ἥφαιστ', ἄναξ, Αἰτναῖε, γείτονος κακοῦ
λαμπρὸν πυρώσας ὄμμ' ἀπαλλάχθηθ' ἅπαξ,
σύ τ', ὦ μελαίνης Νυκτὸς ἐκπαίδευμ', Ὕπνε,
ἄκρατος ἐλθὲ θηρὶ τῳ θεοστυγεῖ,

καὶ μὴ 'πὶ καλλίστοισι Τρωϊκοῖς πόνοις
αὐτόν τε ναύτας τ' ἀπολέσητ' Ὀδυσσέα
ὑπ' ἀνδρὸς ᾧ θεῶν οὐδὲν ἢ βροτῶν μέλει.
ἢ τὴν τύχην μὲν δαίμον' ἡγεῖσθαι χρεών,
τὰ δαιμόνων δὲ τῆς τύχης ἐλάσσονα.

The last two lines present a threat to the gods, which is employed by Odysseus in order to reinforce his prayer: "If you, the gods, let us, the Greeks, perish, then chance (fortune) is stronger that you! We, mortals, have an alternative, you know!". This type of unconventional thinking was popular among fifth-century intellectuals. Here it seems to fit well in the topsy-turvy world of the *Cyclops*.[142]

A similar disjunctive conjunction between Zeus and chance occurs in Euripides' *Hecuba* 488-91, where Talthybios wonders: "Zeus, what am I to say? Whether that you watch mankind, or that you have got this reputation merely, without effect [false, (the gods) seeming to be a race of deities], while it is fortune which oversees all man's affairs?",[143] *ὦ Ζεῦ, τί λέξω; πότερά σ' ἀνθρώποις ὁρᾶν / ἢ δόξαν ἄλλως τήνδε κεκτῆσθαι μάτην / [ψευδῆ, δοκοῦντας δαιμόνων εἶναι γένος,] / τύχην δὲ πάντα τἀν βροτοῖς ἐπισκοπεῖν;* (488-91). The precariousness of fortune is one of the main themes of the *Hecuba*. In fact, it has been rightly noticed that the heroine exemplifies the unpredictability of fortune in the play itself.[144] Hecuba with a long speech at 786ff. starts her attempt at gaining Agamemnon's help in her plan to punish Polymestor. Agamemnon wants to help but fears that the Achaeans may disapprove of killing Polymestor (850-63). At 864ff. Hecuba responds: "Oh! Cruel! There is no man who is free; either he is slave to money or chance (random fortune), or the city-masses or written law prevents him from following his bent as he decides", *φεῦ / οὐκ ἔστι θνητῶν ὅστις ἔστ' ἐλεύθερος· / ἢ χρημάτων γὰρ δοῦλος ἐστιν ἢ τύχης / ἢ πλῆθος αὐτὸν πόλεος ἢ νόμων γραφαὶ / εἴργουσι χρῆσθαι μὴ κατὰ γνώμην τρόποις* (864-7). Hecuba's introduction to her response consists of general reflections, two of which (dependence on wealth and fortune) are not

---

[142] Compare Cyclops' bold assertion at 316-7: "Wealth is the only god for the wise; the others are boasts and fine forms of words".
[143] Translation by C. Collard, *Euripides: Hecuba*, (Warminster, 1991). For other parallels see his note on 488-91, where he also remarks that this passage "seems the earliest recognition of fortune, i.e. random chance". On this passage see also below in Chapter Four.
[144] J. Mossman, *Wild Justice: A study of Euripides' Hecuba*, (Oxford, 1995) 110-11.

strictly relevant to her main subject, that is, Agamemnon's dependence on public opinion. The explanation of the statement 'there is no man who is free' starts with reference to man's dependence on wealth and chance, which do not directly apply to Agamemnon's case here, but constitute important themes of the play.[145]

τύχη as random fortune or chance is set against the gods in three fragments whose meaning cannot be assessed as it is impossible to put them in context. Lydus in *De mensibus* 4.7 (Wünsch p.72) quotes the following passage from Euripides *Hypsipyle* to exemplify the view that fortune has no security (*οὐδὲν γὰρ ἀσφαλές ἐστι τῆς τύχης, ὡς Εὐριπίδης ἐν Ὑψιπύλῃ*):

ὦ θνητὰ παραφρονήματ' ἀνθρώπων, μάτην
οἵ φασιν εἶναι τὴν τύχην ἀλλ' οὐ θεούς.
εἰ γὰρ τύχη μὲν ἔστιν, οὐδὲν δεῖ θεοῦ,
εἰ δ' οἱ θεοὶ σθένουσιν, οὐδὲν ἡ τύχη.

"O mortal, deranged people, those who without reason say that there is chance but not gods. For if there is chance, then there is no need for god, but if the gods have power, chance is nothing". Bond in his edition of the *Hypsipyle* follows Petersen who suggested that these lines preserved by Lydus were spoken by Dionysus *ex machina*.[146] Fragment ad. 167 N presents us with a similar dilemma: "If the gods have power, there is no chance. If they have power, Tyche as a goddess is nothing", *εἰ μὲν θεοὶ σθένουσιν, οὐκ ἔστιν τύχη· / εἰ δ' οὐ σθένουσιν, οὐδέν ἐστιν ἡ Τύχη.* Austin takes the following fragment,[147] which is quite similar to the Lydus fragment, as coming from Euripides' *Phrixus*:

ὦ θνητὰ παραφρονήματ' ἀνθρώπων, μάτην
οἵ φασιν εἶναι τὴν τύχην ἀλλ' οὐ θεούς·
ὡς οὐδὲν ἴστε κεἰ [λ]έγειν δοκεῖτέ τι.
εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἡ τύχη 'στιν οὐδὲν δεῖ θεῶν,
εἰ δ' οἱ θεοὶ σθένουσιν οὐδὲν ἡ τύχη.

"O mortal, deranged people,those who without reason say that there is chance but not gods. You do not know anything although you think you say something. For if there is chance there is no need for gods, but if the gods

---

[145] See the index of Mossman (1995) on 'wealth' and 'Fortune'.
[146] G. W. Bond, *Euripides: Hypsipyle*, (Oxford, 1963).

have power chance is nothing". The above fragments and all the examples assembled in this category suggest that a 'friction' between the gods and the power of fortune must have been in the air and influencing intellectual circles towards the end of the fifth century BC. Similar conflicting views on this subject continue to appear in the fourth century. There are New Comedy fragments that put human responsibility above Tyche, which in this case does not figure as the all-powerful Menandrian goddess.[148]

c) Tyche as a goddess on stage

The appearance of Tyche as a goddess in Menander's *Aspis* corresponds to the Hellenistic conception of Fortune as a divine force dominating human affairs.[149] In the *Aspis*, although the action is, in detail and as we see it, exclusively humanly motivated, Menander makes Tyche express her absolute control over the dramatic situation: "What's left is to tell you my name. Who am I, the arbitrator and controller of all this? Tyche", *λοιπὸν τοὔνομα / το]ὐμὸν φράσαι, τίς εἰμι, πάντων κυρία / τούτων βραβεῦσαι καὶ διοικῆσαι· Τύχη* (146-8). But Menander is still an Athenian dramatist, and in his use of *tyche* looks backward as well as forward. The traditional links of *tyche* with gnomic as well as tragic language are made to serve the comic situation in the *Aspis*. In the 'game' Daos plays with Smicrines he presents the feigned events as being caused by Tyche, while he is unaware that Goddess Tyche earlier described herself as the director of the dramatic situation (213-5 and 407-14).

Discussions of fortune figure prominently in fourth-century intellectual life. Although the power of fortune formed part of intellectual debates, proverbial wisdom and gnomology already in the fifth century, the definition of *τύχη* and *τὸ αὐτόματον* (literally, 'what comes by itself') becomes part of the Aristotelian philosophical discussion of causation.[150] It seems that before Aristotle nobody considered the issue of chance versus purpose in the terms in

---

[147] Fr. 154 in C. Austin, *Nova Fragmenta Euripidea in Papyris Reperta*, (Berlin, 1968).
[148] See Vogt-Spira (1992) 61f. and the passages collected by Stobaeus under the chapter *Περὶ τῶν ἐφ' ἡμῖν*; see chapter viii in Wachsmuth (1884) Vol. II.
[149] For *tyche* beliefs in the fourth century and the Hellenistic period see M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* II (Munich, 1961)^2 200ff. For the role of *tyche* in Menander see F. H. Sandbach, *Menander: A Commentary*, (Oxford, 1973) 73-4, 711; R. L. Hunter, *The New Comedy of Greece and Rome*, (Cambridge, 1985) 11, 141-4; N. Zagagi, *The Comedy of Menander*, (London, 1994) 143ff., 161f.; Vogt-Spira (1992); Kershaw (1987).

which it came to be posed by him. Plato raises questions about human responsibility, about predetermination and chance (not least in the Myth of Er in *Republic* 10),[151] and prophecy of the future versus seemingly chance happenings plays a part in the plots of many Greek tragedies. But this is not the same as the Aristotelian analysis of the different strands of causation in an event. The related concept of fate presents a similar case. Although Moira or the Fates (Moirai) occur often in fifth-century literature, and Moira seems to have enjoyed some restricted cult under Zeus,[152] "*universal* determinism does not become a philosophical issue before the fourth century".[153] Demetrius of Phaleron, a friend of Menander, was apparently the first to write a treatise on Fortune (*ΠΕΡΙ ΤΥΧΗΣ*, *FGrHist* 228, F 39) around 317 BC. He engages in dialogue with his predecessor Euripides on the fragility and mutability of all things human. The Hellenistic statesman, pushing even further the view expressed in Euripides that "one day has many changes",[154] remarks that it would have been better if Euripides had said not "one day" but "one moment" (fr. 79 Wehrli).

d) *tyche* in fifth-century inscriptions

We have considerable epigraphic evidence for *tyche*-related proper names from several parts of the Greek world before the fourth century BC. This type of proper name first appears around the last quarter of the sixth century BC and becomes very popular in the Hellenistic period. We find the following proper names: *Τύχιος* (a potter), *Τύχανδρος*, *Τύχων* and *Τυχήσιππος* (Attica),[155] spanning from c. 525 to late fifth century BC; *Τύχιος*, *Τυχαρέτα* and *Τύχων* (the Aegean islands, c. fifth century);[156] *Τυχαῖος*, *Τύχων* and *Τυχώς* (the Peloponnese and Sicily, c. sixth or fifth century).[157] The name *Τύχων* seems to

---

[150] See Aristotle *Phys*. II 4-6.

[151] On *tyche* in Plato see A. Zimmerman, *Tyche bei Platon*, (unpub. diss., Bonn, 1966).

[152] Hermippos' invective against Pericles was called *Moirai* (see scholion on Aristophanes' *Frogs* 320). For sacrifices to Moirai and Zeus Moiragetes see *IG* I^3 7.12.

[153] As R. W. Sharples, *Cicero: On Fate and Boethius: The Consolation of Philosophy IV.5-7,V* (Warminster, 1991) 186 notes.

[154] Fr. 420 N, 549 N; cf. Eur. *Phoen*. 558. F. Wehrli, *Demetrios von Phaleron*, (Basel, 1968).

[155] M. J. Osborne and S. G. Byrne (eds.), *A Lexicon of Greek Proper Names*, Vol. II (Oxford, 1994) 436. Cf. also *s.v. Εὔτυχος*. Henceforth abbreviated as *LGPN*.

[156] *LGPN*, Vol. I (Oxford, 1987) 449-50.

[157] *LGPN*, Vol. IIIA (Oxford, 1997) 437-8. The name *Τυχαῖος* occurs in an inscription (sixth or fifth century BC) from Sicyon (*SEG* XI 244, 16). Sicyon is one of the cities in the

be the more widespread; it even occurs in a stele from Panticapaeum (North Black Sea), dated to the second half of the fifth century.[158] It emerges that *Τύχων* first appeared as a proper name and then became attached to Hermes; this has not so far been noticed.[159]

It appears that all the references to *τύχη* in grave epigrams come from the fourth century onward.[160] The employment of *τύχη* in the context of the inescapability of death is comparable to that of *μοῖρα*.[161] On the other hand, ideas of good luck and health are often expressed by words such as *ὄλβιος, εὐδαίμων* and *ἄνοσος*.[162]

The phrase *ἀγαθῇ τύχῃ* in the dative case, familiar in Athenian decrees from the second half of the fifth century, sees a rapid increase in the second half of the fourth century.[163] This formula of good omen can be seen as a means to ward off danger and unfavourable outcome, elements linked with any new and risky enterprise, be it an alliance between states or wartime building projects or the Sicilian expedition. R. L. Pounder has rightly argued that the *agathei tychei* formula first appears in Athenian decrees, not as a heading but in the text, with the meaning "with favouring fortune" (e.g. *IG* I^2 39, from c.446-5 BC), and that it then moves up to the position of a heading.[164] Pounder stresses the adverbial role of the heading "with good fortune", which is applied to the entire inscription, and rules out any direct link between the formula *agathei tychei* (which appears first) and the cult of

---

Peloponnese in which Pausanias says that ancient sanctuaries and cult statues of Tyche existed [Sicyon (2.7.5); Titane (2.11.8); Elis (6.25.4) and Argos (2.20.3)]. However, for want of more decisive and concrete evidence Pausanias' accounts should be viewed with scepticism.

158 P. A. Hansen, *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca*, Vol. I (Berlin / New York, 1983) 95.

159 *LSJ* s.v. *Τύχων* lists it as a name of Hermes, but not as a proper name.

160 See W. Peek, *Griechische Grabgedichte*, (Berlin, 1960) no. 88, 91, 95, 142, 198, 204, 301, 308, 324, 431, 471. The case of no. 16 (which Page attributes to Simonides) is controversial. See above.

161 See the index of Peek (1960) 367, 375.

162 For example see Tables I-IV in C. Bauer, *Reliefs und Epigramme griechischer Privatgrabmäler*, (Köln, 1995).

163 See R. Meiggs and D. Lewis, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions*, (Oxford, 1988)^3 no. 52, 54, 60, 78a, 78b and M. N. Tod, *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions* II (Oxford, 1946) no. 123, 124, 132, 136, 144, 147, 152, 157. See also S. V. Tracy, "*IG* II^2 1195 and Agathe Tyche in Attica", *Hesperia* 63 (1994) 241-4. He notes that the use of the 'with good luck' formula radically increases in the second half of the fourth century in agreement with the establishment of the worship of Agathe Tyche (243), and proposes that this formula in Attic inscriptions from the fourth century onward should be translated as "under the auspices of the Goddess of Good Fortune" (243-4).

164 R. L. Pounder, *The Origin and Meaning of ΘΕΟΙ in Greek Inscription Headings*, (Ph.D. diss. Brown University, 1975) 39-40 and 55-9.

Agathe Tyche (which follows in the second half of the fourth century). In the second half of the fifth century the acclamation *agathei tychei* is part of contemporary everyday language, as can be seen in Aristophanes and Plato.[165] Parker has observed another popular belief with regard to luck in comedy: "the contagiousness of bad luck".[166] It is uncertain how popular (if at all) was the private worship of *Αὐτοματία* (literally, 'Self-movingness', Chance) in the fourth century, but Plutarch tells us the general Timoleon of Corinth had in his house a shrine for sacrifice to her (*Timoleon* 36.3). One would expect sacrifices made to Agathe Tyche and not to Chance. Yet it looks as if Timoleon's Chance lived in the realm of divine providence and not of randomness; he was thankful to the god for having given him the title of saviour of Sicily, and his house, which contained the shrine of Chance, was consecrated to his sacred *daimon*.

The image of Tyche occupies the relief above the Arcadian inscription of the 360's which is headed by the phrase *ΘΕΟΣ ΤΥΧΗ*.[167] This image of Fortune, "holding a helm with her left hand and with her right touching a trophy", as I mentioned earlier, is reminiscent of passages in Pindar and Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. We seem to see here the first signs of the full deification as "Divinity Tyche" of the fleeting personification of *θεὸς Τύχη* we met with in Sophocles' *Ichneutae*. There is no doubt that Agathe Tyche is a cultic divinity in the 330's, when Lycurgus instituted her cult in Athens (*IG* II^2 333c, lines 19-20). It is possible to trace a clear development from the linguistic usage, the poetic imagery and the personification of *tyche* to deification and cultic worship, though it is interesting that in the case of Agathe Tyche we have no evidence for an intervening personification. From the fourth century onward Agathos Daimon is often linked with Agathe Tyche and seems to form her male counterpart.[168]

---

[165] For example, see *Birds* 435, 675; cf. 544-5 and 1315. K. Dover, *Plato: Symposium*, (Cambridge, 1980) comments on *τύχῃ ἀγαθῇ* at 177e5: "a verbal obeisance to good fortune"; compare also *Crito* 43d.

[166] R. Parker, *Miasma*, (Oxford, 1983) 219 and n. 63.

[167] See F. Hiller von Gaertringen, "Die Phylarchosinschrift von Tegea", *Mitteilungen des deutschen Instituts in Athen* 36 (1911) 349-60.

[168] See *LIMC* on Agathodaimon.

iii) Conclusions

The evidence surveyed in this chapter points to the following conclusions:

First, the absence of mythology in the case of *tyche* is compensated for both by gnomology and its rich associations with popular beliefs about gods and powers of fate.

Second, in Archaic and Classical Greece the personification of *Tyche* is a product of individual creation to serve particular poetic contexts and needs. Only from the fourth century onward can we speak of the cult-personification or deification of Tyche. However, this does not diminish the strong hold of *tyche* on Greek mentality and sensibility in the Classical period. The growing importance of this abstraction in the fifth century culminates in the worship of Tyche in the fourth century BC. Tyche's career as a universal goddess in the Hellenistic and imperial periods is another story, discontinuous in many respects with her role in Greek society of the Classical period. In fact, she more than overcame her origins as an abstraction rather than a mythical figure. The Tyche of Antioch, the crowned city-goddess, sculpted by Eutychides (*sic*) in about 296 BC is a prominent example.[169]

Third, the eternal quest for good fortune and success and, on the other hand, the realisation of their precariousness, are two important common denominators of all the multiform manifestations of *tyche*.[170] "I have escaped the evil, I have found the better". This incantation was used in marriage ceremonies (Suda s.v. *ἔφυγον*) and perhaps also in Dionysiac rites.[171] It was intended to give hope for happiness in the present and in the future. Yet the Greeks were very well aware that this incantation often went unfulfilled.

---

[169] See T. Dorn, *Die Tyche von Antiochia*, (Berlin, 1960).

[170] Cf. Eur. Fr. 271 N (*Auge*): *πτηνὰς διώκεις, ὦ τέκνον, τὰς ἐλπίδας· / † οὐχ ἡ τύχη γε· † τῆς τύχης δ' οὐχ εἷς τρόπος.* I have inserted the *cruces*.

[171] Dem. *De Cor*. 313. Cf. Eur. *Bac*. 902-5 and E. R. Dodds, *Euripides: Bacchae*, (Oxford, 1960)^2 *ad loc*.

CHAPTER TWO
FORTUNE, CHANCE AND THE DIVINE IN HERODOTUS

Chance, accident and coincidence are part of Herodotus' notion of causation and may or may not be connected with the divine. In this chapter I shall argue that his chains of causation are characterised by openness and interrelation, in such a way that it is often impossible for the reader to pinpoint one, clear-cut explanation for the events narrated, and to exclude other possible ones. Surely, the divine plays a prominent role, but not to the exclusion of such factors as *τύχη* (fortune, misfortune, chance), *συντυχίη* (incident, circumstance), or *συμφορή* (event, chance, misfortune). These words stand in a relation of association with or dissociation from the divine, and, I shall argue, this link points to a certain pattern. In the course of this chapter a distinction between *as-one-observes* and *in-retrospect* analyses will emerge. Events that in an as-one-observes perspective seem to be fortuitous or accidental (*κατὰ τύχην*), in an in-retrospect perspective may come to be connected with the divine or fate and 'what must be'. This trade-off between *tyche* and the divine also ties in with human ignorance, an important theme in the *Histories*. Events can be bewildering and patternless until retrospect makes it all clear to the historian and his audience. On the other hand, the choice of word seems to express an attitude or a response to events. To call them *tyche* means 'I deny that there is any purpose or shape to these events'; to call them 'god-sent' or 'fated' means 'I accept them'. So the choice of word suggests an attitude as well as an intellectual explanation.

In Herodotus, more often than not, there is no direct and clear link of events with a divine personality but with an abstract idea of the divine; or, more simply, he refrains from specifying. And this sometimes seems to amount to his awareness of a general natural process by which historical events take place despite and beyond human comprehension and power to control, on the one hand, and are assessed by their outcome, on the other. It is at least debatable whether we should attribute this last aspect to Herodotus' belief in fate and divine predestination. I would rather argue that his notion of fate and predetermination is only a part of the plurality of causes he supplies in

his narration, often without endorsing any of them but presenting them to his audience or readers as an open choice.

The complexity of Herodotus' conception of the divine and its intersection with the natural and the human worlds may be illustrated through his open and relativistic causation. In the *Histories* a plurality of causes exists and intersects. We may distinguish **divine-related** causes (the divine, divine chance, divine envy), **chance-related** causes (chance, coincidence, accident), **human-related** causes (human mistake, overweening pride, excessive / violent / transgressive behaviour) and **nature-related** causes. Herodotus is more interested in alternative explanations than in promoting a single authorial and authoritative explanation.

This alteration of and intersection between divine and naturalistic explanations, which is characteristic of the *Histories*, can also be found -I shall argue- on a smaller scale, that is on the level of individual words such as *τύχη, συντυχίη* or *συμφορή*. In certain places these are connected with the divine, but in others they are clearly independent from it and closer to the more empirical or naturalistic sense of 'chance, coincidence or unexpected circumstances'. For example, Artabanus at vii.10*δ*.2 observes that even when one has deliberated well, there is an incalculable relation between one's plans and the vagaries of chance. This tension between chance and planning calls to mind that in Thucydides: chance is an imponderable quantity that threatens to make even the best deliberation arbitrary and disastrous, especially in wartime.[1] The theme of the conflict of chance and deliberation appears again at vii.49.3, in the discussion of Xerxes and Artabanus at Abydos. The latter's warning statement that "circumstances (*συμφοραί*) rule men and not men circumstances" should not be taken as either fatalism or determinism, as the context shows (49.5): "It is best for men, when they take counsel, to be timorous, and imagine all possible calamities, but when the time for action comes, then to deal boldly". The realisation of the changeable circumstances goes hand in hand with an appeal to bold action at the right time. The *συμφοραί* referred to here are the variables of chance, 'the variability and mutability and general

---

[1] Cf. Thuc. i.140 and also i.78; iii.82;iv.18.3-5, 62.4;vii.60.5; viii.24.5. See Chapter Three.

rumness of things',[2] which, as in Thucydides, can undermine the most acute planning.

Several passages with authorial comments contain the notion of chance,[3] perhaps not in the particular pointed way of Herodotus' comments on the divine,[4] but in a way prominent enough to show the weakness of Schmid's too absolute observation that "von blindem Zufall weiß Herodotos nichts".[5] Of special importance are the historian's own references to *τύχη* and other chance-related concepts. In his telling of the Atys story one of the original meanings of the verb *τυγχάνω* and its concomitant associations with luck are clear: "Adrastus hurled his spear at the boar but missed (*μὲν ἁμαρτάνει*) his aim, and struck (*τυγχάνει δὲ*) Atys" (I.43.2).[6] In fact, in this case *τυγχάνειν* turns out to be the unlucky, not the lucky, hit. At iii.78.5, though, there is a lucky hit. Herodotus relates how in the dark chamber Darius hesitated to strike the Magus because he was afraid he would hurt his companion Gobryas. But after the latter's encouragement Darius "drove his dagger home and somehow struck the Magus" (*ἔτυχέ κως τοῦ μάγου*). The darkness of the chamber makes hitting the right target an uncertain business and the actual hit perhaps even luckier.[7] Even after the Magophonia the issue of the appointment of a king was *prima facie* to be decided by chance: he among the six conspirators whose steed first neighed after the sun was up should have the kingdom (iii.84.3); but actually Darius and his clever groom saw to it that the kingship would not be left to chance (iii.85).

At i.68.1 chance and cleverness are supplementary causes; Herodotus says that Lichas partly by chance or luck and partly by his own cleverness (skill) (*καὶ συντυχίῃ χρησάμενος καὶ σοφίῃ*) discovered the burial-place of Orestes. From the historian's negative observation at ii.42.2 we may gather

---

[2] A phrase from Robertson Davies, *The Manticore* (1972): Penguin edition of *The Deptford Trilogy*, (1990) 513.

[3] See also below, section x.

[4] See below, sections viii and ix.

[5] W. Schmid – O. Stählin, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, I.2 (Munich, 1934) 615 and n.14.

[6] Simplicius *On the 'Physics'* 2.4. 329,30-330,6 contrasts the accidental character of this killing with the deliberate killing of Hector by Achilles.

[7] *κως* might enhance the feeling of uncertainty here, although we cannot be certain how much it adds.

that he surely has a notion of what 'mere coincidence' means.[8] Similarly, he has a notion of what accidental means. Natural death (coming accidentally) at ii.66.4 is expressed by the phrase *ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου*. A similar expression is used by Jocasta in Sophocles' *OT* 948-9 (*πρὸς τῆς τύχης ὄλωλεν*) to denote Polybos' natural death.

Herodotus continues the Homeric tradition of divine intrusion in human life, although in the *Histories* the divine often represents a general power rather than an intervention by a specific god. His more naturalistic explanations suggest links with natural philosophers.[9] His many references to *τύχη* and *τύχη*-related words could imply familiarity with Pindar and other archaic poetry, in which the transience of human fortune is a prominent idea, as we have seen in chapter one. Herodotus continues this tradition as well and makes the mutability and fragility of human fortune one of his over-riding themes.[10] Where his treatment of *τύχη* is concerned, he differs from previous poetic tradition in one respect: he never personifies *τύχη*. In fact, both Herodotus and Thucydides are in agreement on this and in disagreement with Hesiod, Pindar and the tragedians.[11] Herodotus lived and worked at the zenith of Athenian power (450s to 420s), and he was part of Athens' advanced intellectual circles and a friend of Sophocles.[12] Similarities between Herodotean and tragic themes will be noted in the course of this chapter. R. Thomas puts Herodotus in the context of fifth-century debates of natural philosophers, medical writers and sophists. She points out that the historian "was not only familiar with the current discussions of the day, but using them in his own way to create something of his own".[13] Could we argue the same about Herodotus' treatment of *tyche*?

---

[8] "For I can by no means allow that it is by mere coincidence (*οὐ γὰρ δὴ συμπεσεῖν γε φήσω*) that the Dionysiac ceremonies in Greece are so nearly the same as the Egyptian" (ii.42.2).

[9] See, for example, R. Thomas, *Herodotus in Context. Ethnography, Science and the Art of Persuasion*, (Cambridge, 2000) 142-9, where she discusses Herodotus' divine-orientated approach to prolific birth [i.e. it is due to divine foresight (*τοῦ θείου ἡ προνοίη*) that cowardly animals are prolific, whereas violent and aggressive animals have few offspring (iii.108.2)] and concludes, "He seems to share certain lines of interest and knowledge with natural philosophers and medical experts, but offers his own slant" (149).

[10] See below.

[11] For Tyche personified see in Chapter One.

[12] If Plutarch *Should an old man govern?* 3.785b is true, Sophocles wrote a song for Herodotus (5 West).

i) Previous and contemporary thought on *tyche* and causation

Herodotus' rational or naturalistic explanations bring him close to the Presocratics, in whose cosmogonies the notions of chance and necessity occur. According to the theory of Leucippus, which was taken over by Democritus, the world was generated by the coming together of many bodies into a single vortex, which remain together through interweaving or separate motion towards the void.[14] We do not have the details of how this vortex was formed, but Democritus seems to have generated "everything out of initially random interactions of free-floating atoms in an endless void".[15] Aristotle, who promoted the teleological aspect in the creation of the world, objected to the Atomists' tendency to allow chance a part in the formation of the vortex and in the movement which by separation brought everything into its present formation (Arist. *Physics* 2.4.196[a]24-7). Simplicius (*On the 'Physics'* 2.4.330.30-331.14) records a number of things ascribed to chance by Empedocles, especially animal generation, only to dismiss him in his conclusion: "Empedocles, who seems to use chance only in small matters, is not worthy of much attention, not having explained what chance is" (331.15-16).[16]

The tensions between chance and divine providence, chance and human intelligence and chance and science occur frequently in fifth-century literature, especially in drama, Herodotus, Thucydides, the Hippocratics,[17] and a bit later in Plato. These tensions may well have been at the centre of contemporary debate on the extent to which divinity, chance or human intelligence influences the natural and human worlds. Herodotus' complex concept of divinity and his hedging or oscillation between religious and naturalistic explanations (divine chance versus mere chance) could be seen as generated in the environment of such a debate. Plato takes this debate into the

---

[13] Thomas (2000) 149.
[14] See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Philosophers* 9.31 and 67 A I D-K.
[15] See R. J. Hankinson, *Cause and Explanation in Greek Thought*, (Oxford, 1999) 208.
[16] Ibid. p.48-9, where Hankinson defends Empedocles' theory of the evolution of animals by concluding: "The generation is thus initially random, but some of the generated beings prove fit to survive and reproduce…certain chance arrangements of things can turn out to be self-replicating…Empedocles' theory has some claim to be a distant ancestor of the enormously powerful and successful explanatory paradigm of natural selection".
[17] See *On the Science of Medicine* 4.1-8, 6.14-20 and *Places in Man* 46. On the *tyche – gnome* and *tyche – techne* tensions see above in Chapter One and below in Chapter Four.

fourth century. For him, a god is needed for the generation of the world, which cannot be achieved through mere random action of the sort postulated by Democritus and the Atomists. But even religious and idealist Plato raises questions about human responsibility for the course of life, for example in the myth of Er (*Republic* X.613e-620). Here the elements of necessity, chance and free choice coexist, the last one making mortals, and not heaven, responsible for the good and evil in their lives. In fact, Plato seems to have set himself against the popular-philosophical attitude referred to by Herodotus that man is beset by chance and circumstance.[18] The presence of this pessimistic idea in Euripides and the sophists should make us more reluctant to ascribe it exclusively and solely to an archaic and traditionally religious Greek view.

On the other hand, Herodotus was not a philosopher and his *Histories*, for all their diverse geographical and ethnographical contents, were not concerned with the creation of the universe. Therefore, his interest in chance phenomena is bound to be different from that of the Atomists. His employment of *τύχη* and related words focuses on the transience of human prosperity as well as on the way in which things happen in human life unexpectedly, often beyond human control and comprehension. Herodotus' emphasis on unexpected circumstances, accident and chance may be partly due to his liking for naturalistic explanations, although he often relates events with important repercussions to some divine purpose. Surely, the historian's treatment of *tyche* suggests his familiarity with both previous tradition and contemporary debates and is also affected by his liking for open and alternative chains of causation.

ii) *tyche* and *tyche*-related words in the *Histories*

This chapter addresses the question of the role of *τύχη* (fortune, chance) and of other chance-related notions as well as their relation to the divine in the *Histories*. I shall argue that the mutability of fortune is a recurrent theme assuming a variety of forms and expressions throughout the work, since

---

[18] See H. Ryffel, *ΜΕΤΑΒΟΛΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΩΝ. Der Wandel der Staatsverfassungen*, (Bern, 1949) 130ff. and n.300. He sets Plato *Laws* iv. 709 a. 1ff, a. 7ff and 709 b. 7ff against Herodotus vii.49.3 (cf. 46.3), i.32.4 and 207.2, respectively.

Herodotus seems to establish links between this concept, divine intervention, chance and the 'cycle of human affairs', *κύκλος ἀνθρωπηίων πρηγμάτων* (i. 207). H. Immerwahr has opposed the view that "Herodotus is using history to demonstrate the ways of providence, that he has written *acta Dei per barbaros et Graecos*".[19] Immerwahr in this paper shows the importance of historical action and its interrelation with 'a moral or religious complex'. This last element seems to be inherent in Herodotus' own conception of the human condition. For him, I shall argue, divine intervention or the impact of chance on human life does not cancel human action; rather, they often provide forceful reminders of human ephemerality and of the fact that mortals cannot surpass what has been prescribed by the limitations of their existence. An issue connected with this is the question where chance or fortune stands in relation to Herodotus' historical narrative. It seems that the most important thing about his references to chance is not that "they are so scattered"[20] but rather that they apparently form part of his "intuitive" and complex causation, which is flexible and can achieve a large degree of meaningful connection.

The theme of the mutability of human fortune is emphasised by programmatic, authorial statements (i.5.3-4): *ἐγὼ δὲ...τοῦτον σημήνας προβήσομαι ἐς τὸ πρόσω τοῦ λόγου, ὁμοίως σμικρὰ καὶ μεγάλα ἄστεα ἀνθρώπων ἐπεξιών. τὰ γὰρ τὸ πάλαι μεγάλα ἦν, τὰ πολλὰ αὐτῶν σμικρὰ γέγονε, τὰ δὲ ἐπ' ἐμεῦ ἦν μεγάλα, πρότερον ἦν σμικρά. τὴν ἀνθρωπηιήν ὧν ἐπιστάμενος εὐδαιμονίην οὐδαμὰ ἐν τωὐτῷ μένουσαν ἐπιμνήσομαι ἀμφοτέρων ὁμοίως.* Great and small cities matter to Herodotus equally importantly since human prosperity never stays long in the same place. As becomes clear later in the *Histories*, great dynasties, rulers, and common people alike, are all assessed by emphasis on the contrast between their origins and their end. Each of them is shown to be subject to world forces or the cycles of fortune. Hence they are all limited in their duration, success and prosperity. The numerous contexts relating reversals of fortune show that often Herodotus describes events as originating by chance, but then in their causing or interrelating with other events they are

---

[19] H. R. Immerwahr, "Historical action in Herodotus", *TAPA* 85 (1954) 16-45, at 18.
[20] See H. R. Immerwahr, "Aspects of historical causation in Herodotus", *TAPA* 87 (1956) 41-80, at 280 and n. 80. My conclusion involves a re-appreciation and rephrasing of his conclusion.

viewed from different perspectives and often given divine meaning and authority.

Herodotus' large and long-term views, such as the fall of Croesus or the disaster of Xerxes, tend to be explicitly religious. On the other hand, in the detailed and short-term accounts of events he often does not invoke divine motivation but limits his perspective to *tyche*, *symphore*, *syntychie* and their cognate verbs. The defeat of Xerxes was planned by heaven. But the sinking of one of Artemisia's ships was perhaps *kata tychen* (viii.87.3). A similar observation could be made about Homer, though rarely: the result of the Trojan War is planned by Zeus but a fallen warrior 'chances' to fall into deep sand (*Il.* 5.587). It is regrettable that we do not know the context of a similar idea expressed in a two-line Euripidean fragment: "God deals with important matters and condescends to leave to *tyche* smaller (less important) issues" (Eur. fr. 974 N. Cf. Trag. fr. adesp. 353 N).

At the general level, it seems that divine causes are overriding: *τὸ θεῖον* has elaborate plans, the working out of which involves all sorts of *τύχαι* or *συντυχίαι*. Several interrelated facets can be distinguished here. First, a notion of necessity or fate comes to the surface in expressions such as *χρῆν* or *ἔδεε κακῶς γενέσθαι*, *τὸ χρεών* or *πεπρωμένη μοῖρα*. Second, a sense of the unexpected, chance, or coincidence, emerges from expressions such as *συνήνεικε γενέσθαι* or single words such as *συμφορή*, *συντυχίη* and *τύχη*. Bischoff seems right to note that *συνήνεικε*-expressions do not encourage any further attempts at looking for causal links of the event in the past, but rather point to the future development of a story.[21] *tyche* may denote 'mere chance' like *symphore* or *syneneike*.[22] On the other hand, *τύχη* may be divinely determined, or may be accompanied by remarks emphasising 'what must be', or may be an *aoristos aitia*[23], an 'undefined cause' or unspecified entity which is beyond human control and foresight and approaches the sense of mere random chance (in Latin *casus, fors, temeritas*). In expressions such as *θείη τύχη* the divine nature of an occurrence or simply its extraordinary, uncanny

---

[21] H. Bischoff, *Der Warner bei Herodot*, (diss. Marburg, 1932). I have not been able to check the page number as the book has gone missing from the Sackler Library.
[22] E.g. vii.10*δ*.2 and vii.87.3.
[23] Arist. *Rhet.* 1.10,12.

character may be implied. *θῶμα* or *θωμάσιος* are also used of miraculous, extraordinary occurrences. Third, an abstract notion of divinity – which does not suggest a highly theoretical system of beliefs but often means no more than 'I shall not try to specify *which* god was involved in this' – is traceable in the frequent occurrences of an unspecified *ὁ θεός, τὸ θεῖον* or *δαίμων*. It has been observed that named gods, nameless deity (*ὁ θεὸς,* i.32.9; *θεοί,* viii.109.3 and iv.205) and divinity (*θεός, δαίμων*) coexist in Herodotus.[24]

The above distinctions, though admittedly schematic, may point to the fact that Herodotus draws both on his predecessors' views and on folk wisdom, while using his own intuitive conception of the divine.[25] This, I shall argue, is complex and abstract, as it is influenced by a blend of religiousness, empiricism and rational common sense. Herodotus sees the recurrent pattern of the rise and fall of dynasties, states and peoples, sometimes in the light of human limitations or natural order, and at other times as the work of the equalising power of divinity that punishes mortal transgression (*nemesis, tisis*) but often is not specifically ascribed to individual Olympians. This extended perspective seems to incorporate elements of both religious and naturalistic or pragmatic explanation. Together with this goes a fundamental mortal feeling of insecurity and frustration pervading the *Histories* and partly manifesting itself in Herodotus' use of the verbs *ἐλπίζω, δοκῶ* and *πιστεύω* (see, for example, i.22.3-4, 24.2, 27.3, 30.3). These examples seem to imply that Herodotus' religious thought and sentiment go side by side not only with reticence (ii.3.2, 65.2, 171.2), but also with ignorance and uncertainty as to unforeseen, unexpected reversals, whether these happen through divine operation or not.

Alternative causes are also a prominent Herodotean feature. At iii.33 the historian leaves the cause of Cambyses' madness open; it was either caused by his acts of sacrilege against the Egyptian god Apis (as the Egyptians believe, iii.30.1) or "by some other, cause as many misfortunes are

---

[24] See W. Pötscher, "Götter und Gottheit bei Herodot", *WS* 71 (1958) 5-29.
[25] See H. R. Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus*, Cleveland (1966) 314.

accustomed to befall men", *εἴτε καὶ ἄλλως, οἷα πολλὰ ἔωθε ἀνθρώπους κακὰ καταλαμβάνειν* (iii.33).[26]

Things that just happen, initially without the involvement of any intention, human or divine, may later or in retrospect acquire divine dimensions. Herodotus tells us that in the twelfth year of the Lydians' unorthodox siege of Miletus, which consisted only of burning crops and trees, by accident the temple of Athena at Assesus was set on fire and burnt down (*συνηνείχθη τι τοιόνδε γενέσθαι πρῆγμα ... ἀφθεὶς δὲ ὁ νηὸς κατεκαύθη*, i.19.1). But after the return of the Lydian army to Sardis Alyattes fell ill and remained so for some time. Although there was no immediate religious interpretation of his illness, yet the event acquired religious dimensions as eventually Alyattes sent to the Delphic oracle to ask about his illness. The priestess refused to reply until the Lydians had rebuilt the temple. After building two temples instead of one Alyattes recovered his health (i.22.4). In this context the fact that the accident involved a temple may have enhanced the eventual religious associations. Similarly, what in the first place looks like a coincidence or simultaneity in retrospect is seen as a sign of divine operation. The facts that the battles of both Mycale and Plataea were fought near shrines of Demeter, that they were simultaneous and that, despite this, a rumour reached Mycale of the victory at Plataea make Herodotus conclude at ix.100.2 that "the divine nature of affairs is clear by many proofs", *δῆλα δὴ πολλοῖσι τεκμηρίοισί ἐστι τὰ θεῖα τῶν πρηγμάτων*. In fact, in the *Histories* practically everything that is felt to be somehow more than human, beyond human capacity and understanding, does tend to assume religious overtones. This is characteristic of Greek popular morality shared by Herodotus as well.[27]

Two points start to emerge from this preliminary discussion of fortune, fate and religious language: their use by Herodotus as alternative causes and their connection with an as-it-happens *versus* an in-retrospect perspective as well as with human ignorance and fragile prosperity. These points and also the rhetorical aspects of fortune language will become clearer in the following examination of particular contexts. It will emerge that in certain cases *τύχη*

---

[26] Cf. vii.129.4 and vii.189.2-3 which may suggest that Herodotus sometimes writes in terms of different explanations for the presuppositions of different readers. See below, section xi.
[27] See Dover (1974), esp. 133-144.

language constitutes an expressive circumlocution, as characters do not dare to talk to tyrants straight. In this light, the employment of fortune talk seems to support Christopher Pelling's observations on the "distortion of discourse" at an autocratic court.[28]

iii) The Solon-Croesus story

The Solon-Croesus story is of great importance for the understanding of where human happiness stands in relation to the divine or an amoral, chance-ridden universe, the more so as the ideas about divinity and human prosperity Solon sets out to Croesus in i.32 have parallels elsewhere in the *Histories* and seem to form part of Herodotus' *Weltanschauung* as well.[29] The *ἐλπίς*-motif is also used to express Croesus' expectations when he asks Solon who is the happiest man the latter has ever seen (i.30.3): *νῦν ὦν ἵμερος ἐπείρεσθαί μοι ἐπῆλθέ σε εἴ τινα ἤδη πάντων εἶδες ὀλβιώτατον. ὁ μὲν (Κροῖσος) ἐλπίζων εἶναι ἀνθρώπων ὀλβιώτατος ταῦτα ἐπειρώτα...* . Croesus asks this supposing that he is the happiest man, but earlier equivocal employment of the verb *ἐλπίζω* (see above) may give a warning signal here that this may not be the case. Croesus was also mistaken in his belief that he would be at least the next happiest person (i.31.1: *δοκέων πάγχυ δευτερεῖα γῶν οἴσεσθαι*, cf. i.34.1).

According to Solon the happiest of men was Tellus the Athenian who, being wealthy enough, lived in a prosperous city and had fine sons and grandchildren. They all survived, and Tellus himself had a glorious death, after having fought for Athens and routed the enemy, and was buried at the public expense on the spot where he fell. The idea of the appropriateness of death when it comes at the pinnacle of one's felicity and glory is typical of popular wisdom stories. One such is the story of Diagoras of Rhodes who died on the very same day that both his sons, Acusilaos and Damagetos, won

---

[28] C. Pelling in an unpublished talk entitled "Herodotus and Croesus", given at the National Humanities Center, North Carolina (April 2000). He discusses the meeting of Solon with Croesus (i.29-33), the scene of Croesus on the pyre (i.86-90) and the advice Croesus gives to Cyrus on the eve of the fight with the Massagetae (i.207). His readings bring out two themes: first, " the elusiveness of wisdom, the way in which learning from experience is seen to be a very delicate and difficult business" and, second, "the distortion of discourse, the way in which *logos* itself is so often perverted or off-key, particularly at an autocratic court where no-one dares to talk straight".

[29] See S. O. Shapiro, "Herodotus and Solon", *CA* 15 (1996) 348-364.

Olympic victories.[30] Such folk wisdom seems also to underlie Pindar's *Pythian* 10, where happy and glorious in the eyes of the wise is the man who has won victory and has seen his son winning a victory as well. However, he cannot ever scale the brazen heaven (*ὁ χάλκεος οὐρανὸς οὔ ποτ' ἀμβατὸς αὐτῷ*).[31] Cicero transmits the words with which a Spartan congratulated Diagoras on the glorious victories of his sons: "Morere, Diagora" inquit "non enim in caelum ascensurus es". In other words, since *apotheosis*, in the sense of becoming a god due to extreme happiness, is not possible for mortals, only a timely (*eukairos*) death can mark and seal the pinnacle of mortal felicity. Physical prowess, winning glorious victories in the context either of war or of athletic games and seeing your sons being glorious in those as well and honoured by the *polis*: these motifs (values) are central to the idea of human happiness. These reflect the civic scale of Greek life: a citizen honoured by his equals, not like an Oriental despotic monarch. In the Tellus and Diagoras stories a constitutive element of human happiness is also dying at mature age, after having fathered many or glorious sons. This is not the case with Cleobis and Biton, which is probably the reason why they are ranked as second happiest by Solon. Further, the Cleobis and Biton case is a different, deeper kind of story, which probably could not have come first.

What is important in the Cleobis and Biton story is the motif of divine intervention to cut their line of life and to exemplify the point that death is better than life. Like Diagoras' sons Cleobis and Biton were victors in athletics and the Herodotean *λόγος* about them shows their physical strength in an act of filial piety and devotion to both their mother and the goddess Hera. The context of the story is the festival of Hera at Argos and this enhances the specific involvement of Hera. But in fact the origin of the whole story is presented as a chance incident:[32] the oxen did not come back from the fields

---

[30] Cf. Thuc.iii. 8. See Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, iii,15; Pausanias, vi, 7,3; cf. Diogenes Laertius, i,3,72 and Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* i,46,11.

[31] Pind. *Pyth.* 10, 27-29.

[32] However, notice that in a retelling of the story the absence of the oxen may be explained differently. "Cicero and others relate that the ground of the necessity was the circumstances that the youths' mother was priestess of Hera at the time. Servius says a pestilence had destroyed the oxen, which contradicts Herodotus. Otherwise the tale is told with fewer varieties than most ancient stories": see G. Rawlinson (transl.), *Herodotus. The Histories*, [with an introduction by R. Thomas] (London / Everyman's Library 1997) p. 19 note 1. On Servius' version of the story see his commentary on Verg. *Georg.* iii, 532. All the translations

on time, and since the mother of Cleobis and Biton had to drive to the temple in her ox-cart, they harnessed themselves and dragged it.

From a modern point of view, the fact that the god intervenes and takes the brothers' lives may present a problem. We cannot know (or perhaps we are not even meant to ask) whether this would be what they actually wanted to happen to them. To a modern mind the end of the brothers might seem arbitrary and unsettling rather than enviable, especially since the 'apparent' tragedy happens after a prayer to the god. Apparently the goddess Hera answered in surprising fashion an overjoyed mother's prayer that her sons be granted the greatest blessing that can happen to a man (*τὴν θεὸν δοῦναι τὸ ἀνθρώπῳ τυχεῖν ἄριστόν ἐστι*, i.31.5). So after the sacrifice and feasting the two brothers fell asleep and never awoke. But as Herodotus tells us it was the divine power (not only Hera) which in this way proved how much better it is to be dead than alive, *ταῦτα δέ σφι ποιήσασι καὶ ὀφθεῖσι ὑπὸ τῆς πανηγύριος τελευτὴ τοῦ βίου ἀρίστη ἐπεγένετο, διέδεξέ τε ἐν τούτοισι ὁ θεὸς ὡς ἄμεινον τεθνάναι μᾶλλον ἢ ζώειν*, i.31.3.

It is likely that this unspecified god implies divinity as a whole, whereas in the specific context of prayer Hera represents a part of that whole. As Otto Regenbogen has argued, here *ὁ θεός*, as elsewhere in Greek literature, means generally the *numen*, the divine power that has prophetic and normative authority, which in the case of the brothers' death is manifested through the grim Greek folk wisdom that it is better to be dead than alive.[33] Uncanny though it may seem to modern mentality, the end of the brothers illustrates both the authority of divinity and a pessimistic strand of popular or tragic wisdom.[34] In chapter 32 Solon reveals to Croesus some other aspects of divinity and powers which human nature is subject to. These are developed in the three parts of Solon's speech, all of which conclude with the admonition to look to the end of one's life.

The first part contains the idea that divinity is envious and troublesome, *Ὦ Κροῖσε, ἐπιστάμενόν με τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὸν φθονερόν τε καὶ*

---

of Herodotus in this chapter are based on Rawlinson's translation, occasionally with modifications.

[33] See O. Regenbogen, "Die Geschichte von Solon und Krösus", *Gymnasium* 41 (1930) 1-20, reprinted in W. Marg, (ed.), *Herodot*, Wege der Forschung 26 (Darmstadt, 1965) 383-388.

ταραχῶδες ἐπειρωτᾷς ἀνθρωπηίων πρηγμάτων πέρι. This is elaborated by the observation that in the long span of human life many things are to be seen and suffered which one would wish otherwise, *ἐν γὰρ τῷ μακρῷ χρόνῳ πολλὰ μὲν ἔστι ἰδεῖν τὰ μή τις ἐθέλει, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ παθεῖν.* Change predominates and each day brings something different from the previous one. Human nature therefore is utterly subject to chance. *ἡ ἑτέρη αὐτέων τῇ ἑτέρῃ ἡμέρῃ τὸ παράπαν οὐδὲν ὅμοιον προσάγει πρῆγμα. οὕτω ὦν, ὦ Κροῖσε, πᾶν ἐστι ἄνθρωπος συμφορή* (i, 32,4; cf. vii.46.1ff). Solon's conclusion at this point is an astounding idea: literally translated, "humanity is utterly chance". Should this idea be attributed to Herodotus' religiousness and fatalism, as a typical archaic feature of his thought, or to his rationalism, a feature that brings him closer to the sophists? Such a clear-cut distinction is bound to be wrong, since religious and fatalistic features coexist with more rationalistic ones in sophistic thought. This seems also to be the case with Herodotus.[35] Solon ends the general reflections of this part at this point and no explanation of the predominance of chance in human life is given. What follows refers particularly to Croesus. Solon can see that he is rich and powerful now, but there is no guarantee that he will continue to be so. Solon cannot judge Croesus' happiness until he knows that the Lydian king has ended his life well.[36] This section began with the idea of an envious and troublesome divinity affecting human affairs, but elaborated it through unexpected occurrences, constant change and chance.

The second part of Solon's speech focuses on wealth and good luck (*τύχη, ἡ εὐτυχίη*), which may be seen as the benevolent aspect of chance (*συμφορή*) in the earlier section.[37] The moderately wealthy man who is

---

[34] See *The Contest of Homer and Hesiod*, 315-16; Theognis 425-8; Bacchylides 5, 155; Eur. *Bellerophon*, fr. 285 and Sophocles, *OC* 1224ff.

[35] Compare Eur. *Alc.* 802; fr. 449 N and Herodotus v.4.2. Simon Ubsdell rightly points out the similarities between Herodotus and the sophists where religion, the supernatural and rationalism are concerned; "We are in danger of overestimating the divide between Herodotus and the sophists in the matter of religion and the supernatural through an inclination to credit the sophists with a greater rationalism than they by and large professed" [S. Ubsdell, *Herodotus on human nature*, (Oxford D.Phil. 1982) 394 with note].

[36] For the importance of the end of a man's life compare Soph. *O.C.* 583-5 and *Trach.* 1-3. The idea could be attributed to Solon, although often it is impossible to tell whether a saying or proverb should be ascribed to the sages or to a repository of popular wisdom or to an intersection of these two possibilities.

[37] Notice that at vii.10δ.2 (*ἔσσωται δὲ ὑπὸ τῆς τύχης τὸ βούλευμα*) the concept of chance is expressed by *τύχη*, while immediately afterwards (*εἴ οἱ ἡ τύχη ἐπίσποιτο*) *ἡ τύχη* means good luck. See also below.

attended by good luck is, according to Solon, happier than the very rich man who is not so blessed, *οὐ γάρ τι ὁ μέγα πλούσιος μᾶλλον τοῦ ἐπ' ἡμέρην ἔχοντος ὀλβιώτερός ἐστι, εἰ μή οἱ τύχη ἐπίσποιτο πάντα καλὰ ἔχοντα εὖ τελευτῆσαι τὸν βίον ... πολλοὶ δὲ μετρίως ἔχοντες βίου εὐτυχέες* (i.32.5). Here *τύχη* is the subject of the verb *ἐπέπομαι*, used often with the dative to mean 'to attend a person'.[38] The sense is metaphorical, and there is even a whiff of personification, since *τύχη* takes the place elsewhere occupied by a person. The same metaphorical construction is used at vii.10*δ*.2, where Artabanus urges Xerxes not to do anything rash and to think about his attack against Greece more carefully. Even if an enterprise fails, when it has been subject to careful planning, there is still the satisfaction that the defeat came by chance; that is, nobody can be held responsible for it. On the other hand, if without careful planning success comes as a gift of luck, there is a feeling of shame since the plans were ill laid in the first place. One man's chance defeat is the other man's lucky victory, *εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἐναντιῶθηναί τι θέλει, βεβούλευται μὲν οὐδὲν ἧσσον εὖ, ἔσσωται δὲ ὑπὸ τῆς τύχης τὸ βούλευμα· ὁ δὲ βουλευσάμενος αἰσχρῶς, εἴ οἱ ἡ τύχη ἐπίσποιτο, εὕρημα εὕρηκε, ἧσσον δὲ οὐδέν οἱ κακῶς βεβούλευται.* Artabanus' fortune talk here could be seen as an expressive circumlocution. He has difficulty in putting anything to Xerxes straight.

At i.32.5 the maintenance of great affluence until death is explicitly said to be a matter of luck, but this does not exclude divine agency. However, it is doubtful whether Herodotus means this definite statement here. At i.32 it is *ὁ θεός* who gives some men a taste of *ὄλβος* and then destroys them. Luck and *ὁ θεός* are not really opposed. The same seems to be the case later on. At vii.10*δ*.2 unexpected adverse circumstances (*εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἐναντιῶθηναί τι θέλει*) and chance are weighed against thoughtful planning, and ill planning against unexpected good luck (*εὕρημα εὕρηκε*). Although so far Artabanus has not referred to the divine, what follows at vii.10*ε* is naturalistic observation invested with divine meaning. We are told that the god (*ὁ θεός*), envying excessive power and concomitant arrogance, destroys everything, be it animate or inanimate, that becomes great and stands out. The god hurls thunderbolts down on great buildings and tall trees, for it is his way to put

---

[38] See iii.14.11; 31.1; 13.2 and ix.97.

down all the lofty and exalted, *φιλέει γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τὰ ὑπερέχοντα πάντα κολούειν.* This applies also to Xerxes' case. Artabanus warns him that a great army can be destroyed by a little one, and he ascribes this to an envious god, who operates in two ways: either by sending fear into men's hearts or by sending a thunderstorm. This can be the undeserved end of a great army (*ἀναξίως ἑωυτῶν*). It is not the god's fairness or justice, but rather his exclusive privilege of pride, that is here presented as the main divine characteristic, *οὐ γὰρ ἐᾷ φρονέειν μέγα ὁ θεὸς ἄλλον ἢ ἑωυτόν.*

If we follow the progress of Artabanus' argument in the last two paragraphs the tension between *τύχη* (chance or good luck) and *βούλευμα* (purpose, plan) comes into the discussion of divine envy. It seems as though the basic idea of the uncertainty or instability of the human condition is seen here under the perspective of divine envy, and so the emphasis falls on divine intervention to uphold divine pre-eminence in the universe. But in other contexts the same basic idea of the mutability of the human condition is couched in different terms. For example, at i.32.4 Herodotus, justifying the inclusion in the *Histories* of both great and small cities, says that human prosperity never stays long in the same place; or at i.32.4 Solon, summarising the point he is making to Croesus, says that man is utterly subject to chance; or at i.207.2 Croesus, supporting his warning against overconfidence, talks of a wheel of fortune in human affairs which as it revolves does not allow the same men always to be fortunate; or Artabanus, supporting his warning to Xerxes, says at vii.49.3 that circumstance rules men, not men circumstance, *αἱ συμφοραὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἄρχουσι καὶ οὐκὶ ὤνθρωποι τῶν συμφορέων.* Behind the importance of the end for Herodotus' conception of human life and for his historical interpretation seems to lie a realisation of the fact that things change, and that man is subject to change and chance – whether these ideas occur as such, or assume divine overtones and appear under the rubric of divine *φθόνος* (especially in contexts where excess, overweening pride and inconsiderate or violent behaviour predominate). On the other hand, different perspectives may lie behind the alternative ways of expressing the idea of the mutability of things mortal. One expects *τύχη* language more often in a story as events unfold and are viewed by observers, whereas when events are seen in

retrospect (that is, the historian's retrospect), the hand of a god may be more discernible. If we set the (tactfully expressed) Solonian ideas on the mutability of fortune against the explicit authorial comment at i.43.1, that Croesus' arrogant presumption brought down on him great divine vengeance (*ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεσις μεγάλη*), then the difference of the in-retrospect perspective of the historian as well as Solon's roundabout, non-explicit way of communicating the hard truth to the tyrant can be felt.

In the third and final part of Solon's speech any fall from prosperity to ruin is seen as the act of a god, *πολλοῖσι γὰρ δὴ ὑποδέξας ὄλβον ὁ θεὸς προρρίζους ἀνέτρεψε* (i.33). There is no contradiction between this and the idea that man is utterly subject to chance, which focuses on unexpected changes from one day to the other and, hence, the mutability of human fortune, for which nobody is held responsible; except that this time round only downturns are envisaged. At i.33 a 'balanced' change of human condition from wealth to destruction is ascribed to divinity, a nameless deity, which is meant to be closer to abstract divine essence (*τὸ θεῖον*, i.31.2 and *ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεσις*, i.34.1) rather than any named Olympian god.

It is important to note the difference between Solon's poetry and the views the Herodotean Solon expounds here.[39] Zeus as the god of justice, who oversees the outcome of all things and sends ruin (*ἄτη*) to those who acquire wealth beyond proper measure or through unjust deeds or *ὕβρις*, does not appear in Herodotus. He has replaced this image with a much more abstract idea of divinity that "destroys mortal wealth, not to uphold justice as human beings understand it, but to uphold its own position of pre-eminence in the universe".[40] This seems to be expressive of Solon's difficulty in communicating the hard truth to the tyrant. Solon is sidestepping what we expect him to say, but simply cannot say to Croesus. Otto Regenbogen has argued that in the Solon-Croesus story the frequency of 'high', rare words that are fraught with significance reveals Herodotus' attempt at reaching a heightened, theoretical level of expression.[41] Regenbogen lists also several

---

[39] See C. C. Chiasson, "The Herodotean Solon", *GRBS* 27 (1986) 249-262.
[40] Chiasson (1986) 259.
[41] Regenbogen, (1965) 375-403 and especially 389ff.

ἅπαξ λεγόμενα which occur in Solon's speech.[42] To this list *συμφορή* should be added. It is only at i.32.4 that it occurs in the singular and means 'chance',[43] and in the astounding phrase "man *is συμφορή*" defines the human condition. Its cognate impersonal verb *συνήνεικε* is used often to mean 'it happened'.[44]

We have some evidence so far that Herodotus is aware of the role of chance and unexpected circumstances in human life whether he relates them to the divine or not. The mutability of human fortune occurs early in the Herodotean narrative (i.5.3-4) and the Herodotean Solon reflects on unpredictable chance (i.32.4). The idea that man is totally subject to chance is only one strand of the Solonian admonition. Thomas Harrison is right to argue against giving priority to any one of these strands,[45] but he later describes "the force of the divine to disturb human affairs" as the most predominate idea and as operating behind "every demonstration of the mutability of fortune".[46] There is no reason why the mutability and unpredictability of fortune should be necessarily subsumed by divine *phthonos*, especially since such a relation is not expressed in the Solon-Croesus story or elsewhere in the *Histories*. In fact, passages illustrating the mutability of fortune of individuals, cities or countries not only outnumber passages referring to divine *phthonos*, but also are clearly authorial comments.[47] By contrast, Herodotus himself never ascribes *phthonos* to the god(s) (*nemesis* at i.34.1 is a different thing). The different strands of the Solonian ideas or the various strands of Herodotean causation in the *Histories* cannot be placed in a hierarchical order of importance, but simply coexist, whether they are linked or not. From a comparison between viii.13 and viii.66 it seems clear that Herodotus does not give priority to religious causation over a more naturalistic, pragmatic

---

[42] Such as *ζάπλουτος, ἄτη, ἄπηρος, εὐχαρίστως* and the collocation *φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες*. With this last phrase compare Pind. *Pyth.* 10, 19-21.

[43] At vii.49.3 it occurs twice in the plural and has a similar meaning, that is 'circumstances'.

[44] As is also the case with *τυγχάνω, συμπίπτω* and the impersonal *καταλαμβάνει τινά*.

[45] T. Harrison, *Divinity and History*, (Oxford 2000) 40.

[46] Ibid. p. 63.

[47] Mutability of fortune: i.5.4; ii.13-4, 161; iii.33, 57.2, 58.4; v.28, 34, 97.1, 97.3; vi.132-6; vii.27-39, 190, 233; viii.105; ix.108-13, 122. Divine *phthonos*: i.32.1, 34; iii.40.2; iv.205; vii.10ε, 46.4 and viii.109.3. Not much weight should be put on the last one since Herodotus' presentation of Themistocles is ambiguous. On this see further below. G. Schneweiss, "Kroisos und Solon. Die Frage nach dem Glück", in A. Patzer (ed.) *Apophoreta* für U. Hölscher (Bonn 1975) 161-187, at 172 may be right to argue that the particular reasons for Croesus' downfall (for example the crime of Gyges) can be seen as examples of the general uncertainty of life.

explanation. In the first case, before the battle of Salamis, the tempest at Artemisium that destroyed a Persian squadron is explained as a divine act meant to reduce the superiority of the Persian fleet: *ἐποιέετό τε πᾶν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ὅκως ἂν ἐξισωθείη τῷ Ἑλληνικῷ τὸ Περσικὸν μηδὲ πολλῷ πλέον εἴη*, "And everything was done by a god so that the Persian fleet would be brought into equality with the Greek one and not be much greater". A reference to the same tempest is made later at viii.66, with the difference that here Herodotus says nothing of the equalising action of divinity: "In my judgment the Persian forces both by land and sea were just as strong at the time of their entry into Attica as they had been at Sepias and Thermopylae; for as an offset to the losses suffered in the storm at Thermopylae and at Artemisium, I reckon the reinforcements which had subsequently joined them… The further Xerxes advanced into Greece, the more peoples followed him".

There is no inconsistency here necessarily.[48] The comparison between the above two passages shows that there are contexts in the *Histories* where different kinds of reasons are used to explain the same event, but there is no sign that Herodotus values the religious explanations more than the naturalistic ones. In the 'Solon and Croesus' scene the rhetorical situation poses restrictions on Solon. The need for him to avoid being too precise and clear-cut makes him speak in general, tactful terms, blending different strands of ideas. The powerful way Herodotus introduces chapter 34 rouses the reader's expectations to see how Croesus is going to meet his downfall: *Μετὰ δὲ Σόλωνα οἰχόμενον ἔλαβε ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεσις μεγάλη Κροῖσον.*

iv) Croesus' fall

The way Herodotus develops the rise and fall of Croesus has special paradigmatic force. Croesus at first is satisfied with subduing Western Asia, "all those who lived west of the river Halys" (i.28). But then he crosses the river (i.75), attempts to conquer the part held by the Persians, and finally loses everything. Rivers in Herodotus form moral as well as natural boundaries, which once crossed provide both a pragmatic and a symbolic signal that a ruler is well on his way to commit *ὕβρις*, become lofty and bring down on

himself the god's *νέμεσις*, divine vengeance or divine *φθόνος* (envy), which lead him to ruin. So this river motif forms a part of the historian's interest in the psychology and morality of tyrannical excess.[49] But beyond this, in the motivation of Croesus' downfall more emphasis falls on the preexisting oracle about Gyges' crime (i.13, 86), on the warning stories of Solon and Atys and on the tricky oracle Croesus received from Delphi (i.53). Arguably, the future expressions used in relation to the oracles reveal no significant warning but general and vague future references (*τίσις ἥξει*, i.13.2 and *καταλύσειν*, i.53.2).

At i.33 Herodotus concludes the Solon-Croesus story with the king's inability to realise the importance of Solon's moral point. That every human affair should be judged for the way it turns out in the end is met with Croesus' cold indifference and, moreover, is regarded as stupid since it gives no value to present prosperity. Yet before long Croesus' present prosperity turns to calamity. His arrogant presumption that he was the happiest of men brought down on him divine vengeance, as Herodotus tells us, *Μετὰ δὲ Σόλωνα οἰχόμενον ἔλαβε ἐκ θεοῦ νέμεσις μεγάλη Κροῖσον, ὡς εἰκάσαι, ὅτι ἐνόμισε ἑωυτὸν εἶναι ἀνθρώπων ἁπάντων ὀλβιώτατον* (i.34.1). The story of how Croesus' son Atys was killed immediately follows. The authorial reserve of *ὡς εἰκάσαι* is noticeable here and surely applies not to the main or *ὅτι* clause alone but to the whole sentence. *ὡς εἰκάσαι* may be partly due to Herodotus' uncertainty and reserve when referring to divine matters in general, and partly due to his unwillingness to restrict himself to Croesus' presumption or divine vengeance as the only factors causing the king's fall.

The tragic story of Atys starts with the dream Croesus had that his son would be killed by an iron spear. This leads Croesus to get his son a wife to secure a linear successor and to take all the necessary precautions he could think of in order to keep Atys away from weapons of any kind (i.34.3). Croesus' caution suggests a familiar tragic pattern, whereby all precautionary measures simply draw one's downfall closer.[50] The example of the

---

[48] *Contra* J. Jouanna, "Les causes de la défaite des Barbares chez Eschyle, Hérodote et Hippocrate", *Ktéma* 6 (1981) 3-15, at 5. See below in Chapter Five.

[49] The crossing of the Hellespont by Darius and Xerxes is a similar case.

[50] Pelling (April 2000) notes that one feature of Croesus' self-confidence is "how many of his errors are initially stimulated by caution, his caution with Adrastus, his caution in wanting to get in a pre-emptive strike at Cyrus before he becomes too powerful, his caution in wanting to test the oracles before committing himself to their advice".

Sophoclean Oedipus comes readily to mind: being cautious to avoid fulfilling the grim oracle he received from Apollo and thinking that Polybos of Corinth is his father and Merope his mother, he takes the route to Thebes rather than the one to Corinth, thus unwittingly fulfilling the oracle. He kills his actual father Laios and marries his actual mother Jocasta.

Croesus could not take any measures against what he did not expect and any chance occurrence, such as the arrival of a stranger. Adrastus, who had killed his brother involuntarily,[51] came to Croesus and begged him to purify the blood-guilt. The king not only cleansed him but also made him a member of his family, thus unwittingly contributing himself to his son's killing. Meanwhile, another unexpected happening occurred that points to the predetermined end. A boar, coming down from the mountain Olympus in Mysia, was destroying the crops, and the Mysians came to Croesus to help them kill it. Although Croesus, still remembering the ominous dream he had, intended to keep his son at home, it was his son who insisted on participating in the animal hunt and, finally, won his father over.

Again unwittingly Croesus plays a role in Atys' doom. As a return for his generosity, he asks Adrastus to guard his son on the way to and at the actual boar-hunt. Adrastus initially has some reservations: an unlucky man like himself should not associate with people more prosperous than him,[52] *ἄλλως μὲν ἔγωγε ἂν οὐκ ἤια ἐς ἄεθλον τοιόνδε· οὔτε γὰρ συμφορῇ τοιῇδε κεχρημένον οἰκός ἐστι ἐς ὁμήλικας εὖ πρήσσοντας ἰέναι, οὔτε τὸ βούλεσθαι πάρα, πολλαχῇ τε ἂν ἴσχον ἐμεωυτόν* (i.42). A notion of the transferability of bad luck might lurk behind these words.[53] Eventually Adrastus agrees to protect Croesus' son and concludes: *ἀπήμονα τοῦ φυλάσσοντος εἵνεκεν προσδόκα τοι ἀπονοστήσειν*, "As far as his protector goes, you can expect that your son will come back safe and sound". These words are fraught with tragic irony as exactly the opposite happens: the protector is the killer, and Atys returns dead.

---

[51] *ἀέκων*; it is used again at i.45.2 of Adrastus killing Atys.

[52] Interestingly, Adrastus seems to be a *nomen omen*. It could denote either the man who cannot run away from misfortune or the man who has to do with retribution since Adrasteia was a title of Nemesis (Aesch. *Pr.* 936; Pl. *R.* 451a). Could Adrastus in this case embody the divine indignation at Croesus' presumption (i.34.1)?

[53] See Parker (1983) 219-20 and 268 with n. 54.

The actual killing is presented as a hunting accident. Adrastus aimed at the boar, missed it and hit Croesus' son;[54] so the dream came true. *Ἄδρηστος, ἀκοντίζων τὸν ὗν τοῦ μὲν ἁμαρτάνει, τυγχάνει δὲ τοῦ Κροίσου παιδός. ὁ μὲν δὴ βληθεὶς τῇ αἰχμῇ ἐξέπλησε τοῦ ὀνείρου τὴν φήμην* (i.43.2,3). On hearing the news of his son's death Croesus, shocked and devastated, realises his own involvement in the killing: it was the man he had cleansed from the guilt of blood who killed his son. Croesus cannot but pray to Zeus. At this moment of tragic recognition the several aspects of the king's unwitting involvement in the killing of his son are highlighted by corresponding *cognomina*, which point to different spheres of influence and different aspects of the cult of Zeus. Croesus calls on Zeus as the god of purification since the former purified Adrastus, as the protector of the hearth since he accepted and entertained him in his house, and as the god of guest-friendship since he entrusted him with guarding his son (*περιημεκτέων δὲ τῇ συμφορῇ δεινῶς ἐκάλεε μὲν Δία καθάρσιον, ... , ἐκάλεε δὲ ἐπίστιόν τε καὶ ἑταιρήιον, τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον ὀνομάζων θεόν,...*) (i.44.2).

In contexts of prayer or invocation usually a specific god is named, whereas in contexts of causation there is often an indefinite mention of an unspecified god. It is indicative that, when Croesus sees Adrastus being genuinely devastated by what has happened and totally submitting his life to him, he pities Adrastus and refuses to take his life. The king, despite being in a state of deep family grief, acknowledges that Adrastus has paid already, and that after all it was not he who was responsible for the death of his son but some god who forewarned him of what was to happen (*εἷς δὲ οὐ σύ μοι τοῦδε τοῦ κακοῦ αἴτιος, εἰ μὴ ὅσον ἀέκων ἐξεργάσαο, ἀλλὰ θεῶν κού τις, ὅς μοι καὶ πάλαι προεσήμαινε τὰ μέλλοντα ἔσεσθαι*) (i.45.2).

The death of Atys is actually presented as the result of a hunting accident. But beyond this there exists a wider perspective, naturally associated with the divine. The Delphic oracle predicting Croesus' downfall as the result of the crime of Gyges, and the forewarning dream of Croesus,

---

[54] Compare Aristotle, *Rhet.* I.v.17; missing the mark is used as one example of chance being the cause of good things in human life, *ἔστι δὲ καὶ τῶν παρὰ λόγον ἀγαθῶν αἰτία τύχη, οἷον εἰ οἱ ἄλλοι αἰσχροὶ ἀδελφοί, ὁ δὲ καλός, ἢ ... ἢ εἰ τοῦ πλησίον ἔτυχε τὸ βέλος, τούτου δὲ μή ... πάντα γὰρ τὰ τοιαῦτα εὐτυχήματα δοκεῖ εἶναι.* See also above.

belong to this wider divine perspective. On the other hand, only in retrospect is Atys' death connected with the three years' grace which Apollo secured for Croesus. There is no way we could infer that from the narrative of the episode itself. Stahl's view that "we see [Croesus'] success against the background of his expected doom..." seems "untrue to the reading experience".[55]

In the light of this mixture of the apparently accidental and the supernatural in the determination of Atys' killing, Croesus eventually ascribes the responsibility of it to an indefinite god (*θεῶν κού τις*). But even though Croesus spared Adrastus' life, the latter, convinced that he was the most unfortunate man (*βαρυσυμφορώτατος*, literally, subject to the 'heaviest' misfortune) committed suicide on the tomb of Atys (i.45.3). The realisation of the tragic consequences of his act and the suicide could be part of a scene in a tragedy. Herodotus' closure of the Atys-Adrastus story has a sombre, almost epigrammatic ring.[56]

The word *συμφορή* is perhaps the most characteristic word of the Adrastus episode. Not only is it specifically connected with Adrastus' very life and fortune but also the tragic story of Atys seems to be an illustration of Solon's words at i.32.4 that man is utterly subject to chance (*συμφορή*). Two basic meanings seem to coexist in the *συμφέρειν* word-group: a neutral sense of chance, accidental circumstances and the more negatively coloured sense of calamity, misfortune. Fritz Hellmann has analysed well the *συμφορή*-motif in the Adrastus episode.[57] But there is more to be said about this coexistence of neutral and negative connotations in the word. In the Atys-Adrastus story *συμφορή* is translated as 'misfortune' and surely the negative connotation is predominant here. However, this should not make us ignore the possibility that the connotation of chance or unexpected circumstances might also be present. This possibility becomes stronger when we think of the thematic links with the previous story, where Solon used the word to denote chance,

---

[55] As Pelling (April 2000) observes, criticising Stahl's view in H.-P. Stahl, "Learning through suffering? Croesus' conversations in the history of Herodotus", *YCS* 24 (1975) 1-36, at 4, and also Pohlenz's view in M. Pohlenz, *Herodot, der erste Geschichtsschreiber des Abendlandes*, (Leipzig and Berlin, 1937) 61: "Die Schlußworte ... stehen zugleich wie ein Motto über der ganzen folgenden Geschichte".

[56] *συγγινωσκόμενος ἀνθρώπων εἶναι τῶν αὐτὸς ἥδεε βαρυσυμφορώτατος, ἐπικατασφάζει τῷ τύμβῳ ἑωυτόν* (i.45.3).

[57] See F. Hellmann, *Herodots Kroisos-Logos*, (Berlin, 1934) 58-68.

unexpected circumstances; moreover, the Atys story unfolds as a series of unhappy, chance circumstances, presented against a background of divine predetermination.[58] F. Hellmann concludes that: "The recognition of the complex character of events is the common ground on which both Herodotus' idea of the unexpected and of the uncertainty of human life and his pious belief in the guiding hand of divinity (operative in every event) stands". [59] In the Atys-Adrastus story retrospect does seem to leave little doubt that a god is at work. This is surely a case where the as-it-happens and the in-retrospect perspectives are important. However, I do not agree with Hellman that divinity is operative in every event. Accidental, chance events are sometimes not – at least explicitly – seen as stemming from a divine source.

If the story of Atys may be seen as a sign of divine indignation at Croesus' presumption (i.34.1), nevertheless Croesus himself was not yet able to check his ambitions. On the contrary, he went on to develop his plans to campaign against Persia, that is (as it turned out) to bring on the end of the Lydian empire and its subjection to the Persians. In fact, it is *post eventum*, after his defeat by Cyrus, at the climactic moment when he is on the pyre, that Croesus is presented as learning wisdom, as having taken his lesson from what has happened to him. And from that point on, as he becomes a fictional character (the real Croesus was killed in 546 BC), he also becomes an important wise adviser, always sensitive to the uncertainties of human life and the risks of arrogant, violent behaviour.

Croesus' deceptive confidence and drive in his campaign against Cyrus is highlighted at several points of the narrative, mainly through the former's failure to interpret correctly the oracle given to him by both Delphi and the oracle of Amphiaraus, *τῶν δὲ μαντηίων ἀμφοτέρων ἐς τὠυτὸ αἱ γνῶμαι συνέδραμον, προλέγουσαι Κροίσῳ, ἢν στρατεύηται ἐπὶ Πέρσας, μεγάλην ἀρχὴν μιν*

---

[58] Adrastus' misfortune originated from the accidental killing of his brother, i.35.1and 3: *ἀπικνέεται ἐς τὰς Σάρδις ἀνὴρ συμφορῇ ἐχόμενος ... φονεύσας δὲ ἀδελφεὸν ἐμεωυτοῦ ἀέκων.* See also i.35.4: *συμφορὴν δὲ ταύτην ὡς κουφότατα φέρων κερδανέεις πλεῖστον*, 41: *Ἄδρηστε, ἐγώ σε συμφορῇ πεπληγμένον ἀχάριτι, τὴν τοι οὐκ ὀνειδίζω*, 42.1, 44.2, 45.1 and 3, where this recurrent word in the extraordinary form of *βαρυσυμφορώτατος* caps the tragic Atys-Adrastus story.

[59] Hellmann (1934) 60: "Diese Erkenntnis des komplexen Charakters alles Geschehens ist der Boden, auf dem Herodots Anschauung von der Unsicherheit des Menschenlebens ebenso wie

καταλύσειν (i.53.3).[60] The dramatic episode of Croesus on the pyre, which marks his fall and might as well be the end (τελευτή) Solon admonished him to observe, is full of reversals and realisations in the manner of tragedy. As it turns out, the Lydian king does not meet his end here but in a sense is reborn into a wiser, more prudent figure. Significantly, one of the motives of Cyrus' placing him on the pyre was to test how effective his θεοσέβεια (fear of god, religiousness) was: that is, Cyrus wanted to see whether some god would rescue him from being burnt (i.86.2). The only external signs of a god-fearing Croesus Herodotus has given us so far are the king's lavish offerings to the oracle of Delphi, which aimed at winning the oracle's favour.[61] But on the other hand, a more internal, humane quality is in evidence when Croesus spares Adrastus' life and, interestingly, this is reflected in the way Cyrus spares Croesus' life in this episode.

Cyrus' change of mind is brought about after hearing from Croesus the wise admonitions Solon gave him. The considerations that Cyrus himself was a mortal man intending to burn alive another man, who had once been as fortunate as himself, the fear of retribution and the instability of human affairs made him order that the flames be put out at once, and Croesus and the Lydian boys taken down from the pyre. (... *τὸν Κῦρον ... μεταγνόντα τε καὶ ἐννώσαντα ὅτι καὶ αὐτὸς ἄνθρωπος ἐὼν ἄλλον ἄνθρωπον, γενόμενον ἐωυτοῦ εὐδαιμονίῃ οὐκ ἐλάσσω, ζῶντα πυρὶ διδοίη, πρός τε τούτοισι δείσαντα τὴν τίσιν καὶ ἐπιλεξάμενον ὡς οὐδὲν εἴη τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι ἀσφαλέως ἔχον, κελεύειν σβεννύναι τὴν ταχίστην τὸ καιόμενον πῦρ καὶ καταβιβάζειν Κροῖσόν τε καὶ τοὺς μετὰ Κροίσου*) (i.86.6). In

---

sein frommer Glaube an die in jedem Geschehen gegenwärtige lenkende Hand des ordnenden *θεῖον* steht".

[60] This is highly ironical since Croesus' first undertaking before campaigning was to test the oracles (i. 47.1: *ἀπέπεμπε ἐς τὴν διάπειραν τῶν χρηστηρίων*); the result was that Delphi was the only genuine oracle in the world (i.48), although Croesus believed that the oracle of Amphiaraus was also in possession of the truth (i.49). For the recurrent motif of deceptive hope see 54.1 and 55: *πάγχυ ἐλπίσας καταλύσειν τὴν Κύρου βασιληίην πέμψας αὖτις ἐς Πυθὼ Δελφοὺς δωρέεται,... ἐπειρώτα ... εἴ οἱ πολυχρόνιος ἔσται ἡ μουναρχίη*; 56.1: *ὁ Κροῖσος ... ἥσθη, ἐλπίζων ἡμίονον οὐδαμὰ ἀντ' ἀνδρὸς παυσέσθαί κοτε τῆς ἀρχῆς*; 71.1: *Κροῖσος δὲ ἁμαρτὼν τοῦ χρησμοῦ ἐποιέετο στρατηίην ἐς Καππαδοκίην, ἐλπίσας καταιρήσειν Κῦρόν τε καὶ τὴν Περσέων δύναμιν*; 75.2: *καὶ δὴ καὶ ἀπικομένου χρησμοῦ κιβδήλου, ἐλπίσας πρὸς ἑωυτοῦ τὸν χρησμὸν εἶναι, ἐστρατεύετο ἐς τὴν Περσέων μοῖραν*; 79.2: *Κροῖσος ἐς ἀπορίην πολλὴν ἀπιγμένος, ὡς οἱ παρὰ δόξαν ἔσχε τὰ πρήγματα ἢ ὡς αὐτὸς κατεδόκεε, ὅμως τοὺς Λυδοὺς ἐξῆγε ἐς μάχην.* And finally 86.1: *κατὰ τὸ χρηστήριόν τε καταπαύσαντα τὴν ἑωυτοῦ μεγάλην ἀρχήν.*

[61] This element particularly is brought to the surface later when the extinguishing of the fire proved to Cyrus that Croesus was a good man and favoured by the gods, *καὶ θεοφιλὴς καὶ ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός* (i.87.2).

fact, one possible reading has Cyrus understanding Solon's drift more completely than Croesus had done himself.[62] Cyrus is "quick, perhaps unrealistically quick" to realise the underpinnings of Solon's words. Cyrus concludes that nothing is secure in human life, while his emphasis on universal mutability, humanity (*ἄνθρωπος, ἄνθρωποι*) and good fortune (*εὐδαιμονίη*) "picks up Solon's key concepts".[63]

On the other hand, from this point of the narrative onward benign divine action predominates. Herodotus implies that Apollo comes to the rescue of Croesus in response to the latter's prayer and, presumably, in reward to his offerings to the Delphic oracle. In fact, the event that leads to the implied divine rescue is presented as an unexpected turn, happening as if to provide an example of the uncertainty of things human. The fire was already strong and attempts to extinguish it failed. According to the Lydians when Croesus understood the situation he asked for the help of Apollo, *Κροῖσον ... ἐπιβώσασθαι τὸν Ἀπόλλωνα ἐπικαλεόμενον,...,παραστῆναι καὶ ῥύσασθαί μιν ἐκ τοῦ παρεόντος κακοῦ.* Earlier on when Croesus was apparently approaching the end of his life (i.86.3-5) he remembered Solon and his words about the instability of human life and the need to observe the end. Although he was in a state of great misery,[64] Solon's words came to his mind and, moreover, their unique importance and truthfulness were highlighted by a connection with the divine, *ὡς οἱ εἴη σὺν θεῷ εἰρημένον* (i.86.3). No specific god is meant to be understood here; *σὺν θεῷ*, meaning "by divine inspiration", seems rather to be a general expression, a *façon de parler* giving extra weight and validity to what is said.[65] By contrast, at i.87 Croesus called on a specific god, the Delphic Apollo, to come to his rescue. At this point Croesus was not threatened by a man (as earlier on before Cyrus' change of mind), but by a fierce natural element, i.e. fire. Although the fire was actually put out by a violent rainstorm, a connection between Croesus' prayer and the natural phenomenon is evidently

---

[62] Bischoff (1932) 39 and Hellmann (1934) 104-7, both quoted by Pelling (April 2000).
[63] See Pelling (April 2000), where he also adds that Cyrus' point that "he is one human maltreating another, and that this other human had been no less prosperous than himself" is closer to *Iliad* 24.
[64] *καίπερ ἐν κακῷ ἐόντι τοσούτῳ*; a similar phrase is found in i.45.2 in the context of Croesus taking pity on Adrastus and sparing his life.

established, since Cyrus saw in the event a proof that Croesus was both loved by a god and a good man. *τὸν μὲν δακρύοντα ἐπικαλέεσθαι τὸν θεόν, ἐκ δὲ αἰθρίης τε καὶ νηνεμίης συνδραμεῖν ἐξαπίνης νέφεα καὶ χειμῶνά τε καταρραγῆναι καὶ ὕσαι ὕδατι λαβροτάτῳ, κατασβεσθῆναί τε τὴν πυρήν. οὕτω δὴ μαθόντα τὸν Κῦρον ὡς εἴη ὁ Κροῖσος καὶ θεοφιλὴς καὶ ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός*... (87). In what follows god talk rather than fortune talk is prominent.

Once Cyrus realises that Croesus is loved by a god and a good man, he asks him which man persuaded him to campaign against him rather than be his friend. In Croesus' reply to Cyrus' question we hear nothing about Croesus' reasons expressed earlier on, the fact, for example, that he wanted to check Persian expansion (i.46.1) or his desire to punish Cyrus for his treatment of Astyages (i.73.1). In fact, it seems that Cyrus' question is formulated with a look ahead to Croesus' answer; the former's 'which man persuaded you?' corresponds to the latter's 'not a man but a god'. Earlier on there is nothing in the text about anyone trying to persuade Croesus to undertake the attack against Cyrus. On the other hand, much emphasis is laid on Croesus' extravagant sacrifices and gifts to Delphi, intended to win him the favour of the gods and the oracle, as well as on his deceptive belief that the oracles given to him were favourable. Nonetheless, after Croesus' defeat and miraculous rescue a certain moralising effect becomes apparent, in the sense that Herodotus seems to foreground Croesus' goodness; the latter has apparently learnt his moral lesson. Responsibility, therefore, tends to be ascribed to a god or to a *δαίμων* rather than to individual intentions and desires. It is no accident that Croesus' reply starts with *daimon*-related words and is rounded off by a reference to a *δαίμων*. "King, what I did was to your happiness and to my own bad fortune (loss) (*ἐγὼ ταῦτα ἔπρηξα τῇ σῇ μὲν εὐδαιμονίῃ, τῇ ἐμεωυτοῦ δὲ κακοδαιμονίῃ*); The blame rests with the god of the Greeks, who encouraged me to begin the war. No one is so foolish as to prefer war to peace, in which, instead of sons burying their fathers, fathers bury their sons. But some god (*δαίμονί κου*) wanted this to happen so" (i.87.3-4).

---

[65] See Burkert (1985) 272. On the other hand, it may be that *σὺν θεῷ* points to a chance remark which turned out to be truer than the speaker realised: god speaking *through* Solon, rather than a piece of truly divinely inspired *insight*.

δαίμων is sometimes "an occult power, a force that drives man forward where no agent can be named"[66] and determines both good fortune and misfortune in a rather obscure and indefinite way which lies beyond human control. Herodotus' *εὐδαιμονίη* and *κακοδαιμονίη* may be seen as the state of the happy or the unhappy man, respectively, who has a good or a bad *δαίμων*. This connects the passage with the earlier tradition assumed by Burkert, which must have resulted in Plato's idea of *daimon* as a special being watching over each individual's life.[67] In a context where Croesus is not willing to admit any specific, personal responsibility for his campaign against Cyrus, he chooses rather to talk of a specified external power (the Greek god is certainly Apollo) and an unspecified supernatural force (*δαίμονί κου*).[68]

On the same score of putting the blame on the divine, Croesus subsequently asks Cyrus to let him send his chains to Apollo -- the ones Cyrus had earlier ordered be taken off Croesus as a token of his esteem and admiration. This symbolic gesture reveals Croesus' disillusioned attitude towards the oracle: his enslavement to Cyrus is attributed to the emboldening but misleading oracles he received from Apollo, and in this context the only 'appropriate' gift he can send to the god is the chains. Croesus also asks Cyrus to ask the oracle whether it is a custom among the Greek gods to be ungrateful (*εἰ ἀχαρίστοισι νόμος εἶναι τοῖσι Ἕλλησι θεοῖσι*) (i.90): a question which the reader has not the faintest idea how Apollo will answer!

Herodotus concludes the Croesus story with the reply from the Delphic oracle. "It is not possible even for a god to escape that which is fated (*τὴν πεπρωμένην μοῖραν*). Croesus has been punished for the sin of his fifth ancestor, … Apollo was eager that the fall of Sardis should not happen in the lifetime of Croesus, but be delayed to his son's days; he could not, however,

---

[66] ibid. p. 180. *δαίμων* here has a particular force and is not a mere figure of speech. It refers to the anonymous, supernatural power which one's fortunes, good or ill, seem to depend on. This may well be one of the words that preserve something of the old, pre-anthropomorphic conception of the supernatural as undifferentiated power. See M. P. Nilsson, *A History of Greek Religion*, tr. F. J. Fielden (Oxford 1949) 105ff., 227, 282-85. This is quoted by D. J. Conacher, "Religious and ethical attitudes in Euripides' *Supplices*", *TAPA* 87 (1956) 8-26, at 19 and note commenting on Eur. *Suppl.* 552.

[67] ibid. p. 181 with note. But this is neither original nor unique to Plato. See Stevens' comment on *Andr.* 98 [P. T. Stevens, *Euripides: Andromache*, (Oxford, 1971) 106-7].

[68] This is certainly a Homeric use of *daimon*. Apart from *Il.* 3.420 – where the *δαίμων* is actually Aphrodite but *also* surely 'her [i.e. Helen's] destiny' – all the other occurrences of

mislead the Fates (*οὐκ οἷός τε ἐγένετο παραγαγεῖν Μοίρας*).[69] All that they were willing to allow he took and gave to Croesus. Apollo delayed the taking of Sardis three full years, and lets Croesus know that he is thus a prisoner three years later than was his destiny. Moreover it was Apollo who saved him from the burning pile. Nor has Croesus any right to complain with respect to the oracular answer which he received…" (i.91.1-3).

This response from the Delphic oracle is couched in terms of emphasis on the inescapability of a predetermined lot, as often is the case with oracles. The personifications of fate, the powers of fate, *Moῖραι*, are placed above Apollo, and so Croesus has to expiate the crime of his ancestor, Gyges. All this is perhaps invented by the oracle to justify itself, and Herodotus accepts it. In fact, Bacchylides iii confirms that the fall of Croesus made a great impression and forced Delphi and Greek thinkers to excogitate a theology to justify it. This is the only appearance of the personified Moirai in Herodotus – elsewhere *moira* means part, territory, faction or political party. John Gould characterises the personification of Moirai here as "an (almost) irrevocable dispensation made to an individual by a personalized agency". He distinguishes it from *μοῖρα* and *πεπρωμένον αἶσῃ* in *Iliad* 16.426-61, where Zeus is tempted to save his son Sarpedon (although he knows that it is Sarpedon's allotted share to be killed by Patroclus), and Hera tells him off. Here, Gould argues, "the notion of an allotted share is discussed by the gods in such a way as to suggest that it is a notion more like the 'rules of the game' than like a natural law or a Calvinistic predetermination".[70]

In Herodotus only in four other places does *moira* mean fate.[71] Of the expressions used to express predetermination (*μοῖρα, μόρσιμον, πεπρωμένον, δεῖ, χρή, ἀνάγκη*), *μέλλω* followed by future infinitive (meaning what is destined to happen but also what is going to or is likely to happen) is by far the most

---

daimon represent an unspecified divine force. See H. Ebeling, *Lexicon Homericum*, (Leipzig, 1885) *s.v. δαίμων*.

[69] Cf. Eur. *Alc.* 12: *Μοίρας δολώσας*.

[70] J. Gould, *Herodotus*, (London, 1989) 68-9.

[71] i.91.1, 2; i.121; iii.142.3; iv.164.4. Gould (1989) discusses these cases and concludes: "…in these instances the idea of *moira* is not so much an explanation as a means of avoiding the necessity of explanation and the consequent break in the pace and flow of the story. It is certainly no evidence in itself for Herodotus' belief in historical determinism" (73; see 73ff. for the notions of 'what had to be' and 'what was going to happen'. ii.133.3 shows that it is

frequent.[72] Far from invariably connecting fate with strict fatalism and predetermination, Herodotus seems to combine predestination with probability, and fate with futurity; in this also he apparently acts in accordance with Greek popular belief and Homer. In Homer expressions such as *ὑπὲρ μόρον, ὑπὲρ αἶσαν* or *οὐ κατὰ μοῖραν* seem to be used for their rhetorical effect (as a means of emphasising a critical point in the narrative and of increasing tension). They also can point to the idea that it is possible for one to go beyond the normal limit, or to get more than one's due share of something.[73]

To return to i.91.1-3, Apollo – apparently mindful of Croesus' lavish offerings and far from being ungrateful (*ἀχάριστος*) – could do no more than to postpone the capture of Sardis for three years. With his reference to the Fates, Herodotus takes the narrative to a plane higher and more abstract, as it were, than the divine. It is called to Croesus' attention that Apollo saved him from burning on the pyre, and his misinterpretations of the previous oracles are now clarified. Eventually Croesus admits that he himself was responsible for what happened, not Apollo. This proves that Croesus has fully learnt his moral lesson: *ὁ δὲ ἀκούσας συνέγνω ἑωυτοῦ εἶναι τὴν ἁμαρτάδα καὶ οὐ τοῦ θεοῦ* (i.91.6). Yet this can strictly apply only to his mistaken interpretation of the oracles. As for his actual fall, it was inevitable for both human and divine reasons: he was mistaken in his presumption and hopes that he could check the Persian expansion (e.g. i.71.1 and 79.2) and at the same time 'caught with his five-generation curse' (i.13.2 and 91).[74]

---

possible for one "not to do what one 'has to do' [though in that case the consequences will perhaps overtake one]", 74).

[72] i.34.1, 45.2, 108.2, 175, 210.1; ii.133.1, 2; iii.16.6, 43.1, 65.4; v.24.1, 92γ1; vi.27.1, 98.1; vii.57.1, 143.1, 219.1, 221, 223.4; viii.65.6, 96.2; ix.66.2, 100.2. Notice also that *mello* usually in tragedy can mean 'to delay', 'to put off'. According to *LSJ* this sense developed from 'to be always going to do something without ever doing it'.

[73] E.g. *Il.* 3.59, 6.333 and 16.780. See also H.-G. Nesselrath, *Ungeschehenes Geschehen,* (Stuttgart, 1992).

[74] C. Pelling, "Thucydides' Archidamus and Herodotus' Artabanus", in *Georgica: Studies in Honour of G. L. Cawkwell*, M. A. Flower and M. Toher (eds.) *BICS* Supplement 58 (1991) 120-42, at 140 and n. 79. Pelling here points out the similarities between the cases of Croesus and Xerxes. See also C. Pelling, "The urine and the vine: Astyages' dreams at Herodotus 1.107-8", *CQ* 46 (1996) 68-77, at 76 and n.39.

v) Foundlings and lucky babies

The dramatic story of the exposure of baby Cyrus by his grandfather Astyages, his rescue and his rise to power calls to mind folktales[75] or foundling plots such as those of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and Euripides' *Ion*.[76] In this section we will be concerned only with one aspect of this dramatic story, namely the blending of seeming chance, or coincidence, with the divine in the way Herodotus presents the events of Cyrus' early and later life.

The story starts with Astyages and the two dreams he had about his daughter Mandane: first, that she urinated in vast quantities and overflowed the whole of Asia, and, second, that a vine grew from her private parts and spread all over Asia (i.107 and 108).[77] The Magi's interpretation of the dreams was that Mandane's son would usurp Astyages' throne. He, anxious to prevent this, gave his daughter to an undistinguished Persian named Cambyses; then when Cyrus was born Astyages ordered a kinsman of his called Harpagus to get hold of the baby and kill it. Harpagus took the baby dressed in grave-clothes but could not bring himself to kill Cyrus, especially because this baby was the only heir to the throne and Harpagus did not want in any case to imperil his own safety. He therefore decided to give it to one of Astyages' herdsmen named Mitradates and ordered him to expose the baby, let it die and show him evidence of this; otherwise the king would kill him.

Mitradates on returning home with the baby Cyrus was met with an unexpected event; his wife had given birth to a still-born baby on that day, as she revealed to him in her attempt to persuade him that they should keep baby Cyrus. The element of surprise in the story is explicit in the phrase *κατὰ δαιμόνα*, which is similar to *κατὰ τύχην* (by coincidence, chance) and also contains a link with the divine, a nuance that this is a bit more than chance, *τότε κως κατὰ δαίμονα τίκτει* (i.111.1).

---

[75] See J. Marincola's note in *Herodotus: The Histories*, (Penguin Books 1996) p. 557; M. Huys, *The tale of the hero who was exposed at birth in Euripidean tragedy: a study of motifs*, (Leuven, 1995) 62ff., 146-7, 167-8, 342-3.

[76] Pelling (1996) 76 points out, "Such episodes also fit a further mythical schema, whereby a threatening or disastrous child often occupies an ambivalent position, at once central and marginal, at once inside and outside the royal house. That too is familiar from tragedy: one only has to think, in their different ways, of Oedipus, Orestes, Polynices, and Hippolytus".

[77] For a detailed discussion of Astyages' dreams see Pelling (1996).

Mitradates' wife made use of this unexpected happening: she talked Mitradates into exposing their own dead child as proof of the supposed exposure of baby Cyrus. And, in fact, they kept Cyrus and raised him as their own child. Nonetheless, a chance event, an episode caused during a game, led to the disclosure of the truth about Cyrus' origin. At 114 Herodotus relates how the 10-year-old Cyrus, being the king in the game of 'Kings', ordered the other children to beat with a whip the son of a distinguished Mede who refused to obey his orders. Astyages – when Cyrus was brought in front of him and explained why he did that – recognised the boy's real identity, that he was his grandson. Once he had this confirmed by his herdsman Mitradates, he did not punish him but directed his wrath against Harpagus. Astyages' revenge was conducted in an underhand and brutal way. In the context of his secret and insidious plan *τύχη* is ironical and double-edged. What for him at 118.2 is a lucky turn (*τῆς τύχης εὖ μετεστεώσης*) and for Harpagus himself at 119.1 a happy occasion (*ἐπὶ τύχῃσι χρηστῇσι ἐπὶ δεῖπνον ἐκέκλητο*) leads, as it turns out, to Astyages butchering Harpagus' son. It has been noticed that this murder with its 'Thyestes banquet'-character has a particular tragic resonance.[78]

A connection between coincidence and unexpected pregnancy or birth occurs elsewhere, especially in the context of royal successions at Sparta. At v.39ff. the Ephors, in order to solve the problem caused by king Anaxandrides' childlessness, propose that he should get rid of his wife and marry someone else who could bear him children. However, they were met with Anaxandrides' refusal to send his wife away, and so they revised their proposal: he could keep his wife but should marry a second one to bear him an heir. And this was what happened in the end, a practice totally alien to Spartan custom, as Herodotus comments, *ὁ Ἀναξανδρίδης ... ποιέων οὐδαμῶς Σπαρτιητικά* (v.40.2). But apart from human custom and law, the intrusion of unexpected events is also part and parcel of Herodotus' presentation of human life and nature. In effect, not only did Anaxandrides' second wife give birth to Cleomenes[79] but unexpectedly his first wife, who had previously been

---

[78] Pelling (1996) 76 and n. 38.

[79] Herodotus also notes that Anaxandrides' second wife never had another child (v.41.3), whereas paradoxically enough his first wife – who may well have been thought to be barren –

childless, also gave birth to three sons: Dorieus, Leonidas and Cleombrotus; *τότε κως ἐκύησε, συντυχίῃ ταύτῃ χρησαμένη,* "then she somehow became pregnant, enjoying this (lucky) incident (chance, accident)" (v.41.1). Giving birth *κατὰ δαίμονα* (i.111.1) or becoming pregnant *συντυχίῃ χρησαμένη* seem to be similar expressions, both denoting the element of unexpectedness and surprise in the event.[80]

Similarly, at vii.205.1 Herodotus tells how Leonidas, whose birth was presented as an incident beyond expectation (v.41), became a king unexpectedly, *ἐξ ἀπροσδοκήτου*, because his two elder brothers were dead. Thus Leonidas unexpectedly found himself next in the succession when he might never have been a king at all, and eventually this unexpected event turned to good fortune when he emerged as the hero of Thermopylae.

The above cases point to Herodotus' sensitivity to the power of unexpected, uncontrolled circumstances to effect changes in human life. However, there is an important difference. The career of Cyrus surely exemplifies the power of the divine to make very important things happen, much more than the three Spartan princes. Cyrus is unique and a maker of history who started from the desperate position of an exposed infant.

There is no explicit connection with the divine in these occurrences of *συντυχίη*. Explicit links between Cyrus' fortune and the divine occur later and mainly for propagandistic reasons. Mitradates' wife's name, Cyno, 'Bitch', suggested to Cyrus' foster-parents that they could spread the word among the Persians that Cyrus was miraculously saved by a bitch; the implication of divine favour could help Cyrus further his own ends. His foster-parents "wishing to make the Persians think that there was a special providence in his preservation, spread the report that Cyrus, when he was exposed, was suckled by a bitch. This was the sole origin of the rumour", *ἵνα θειοτέρως δοκέῃ τοῖσι*

---

gave birth to three sons. See the comments of Ubsdell (1982) 60 with n. 137: "Herodotus seems to imply that if his [Cleomenes'] father had observed Spartan custom he would never have been born in the first place and Dorieus would have been the king instead. Herodotus is particularly interested in the confusions and contradictions of royal successions, and especially at Sparta: such confusions suggest to him that kingship itself is arbitrary and that it is by no natural right that one man becomes king rather than any other".

[80] Although there is a fine difference: at i.111.1 it is the synchronism which is so startling; at v.41.1 it is the fact that Anaxandrides' first wife unexpectedly conceived at all.

Πέρσῃσι περιεῖναί σφι ὁ παῖς, κατέβαλον φάτιν ὡς ἐκκείμενον Κῦρον κύων ἐξέθρεψε. ἐνθεῦτεν μὲν ἡ φάτις αὕτη κεχώρηκε (i.122.3).

Harpagus made similar use of propagandistic god talk. He – wishing to take revenge upon Astyages – started urging Cyrus to dethrone him and take the throne himself. So in the letter Harpagus sent to Cyrus the latter's good fortune is presented as coming from the gods; he would have been dead if Astyages had achieved his purpose, but due to the gods and Harpagus himself he was rescued: "Son of Cambyses, the gods surely watch over you, or never would you have reached such a point of good fortune – now is the time when you may take revenge on Astyages, your murderer. He wanted your death, remember; to the gods and to me you owe your preservation", *Ὦ παῖ Καμβύσεω, σὲ γὰρ θεοὶ ἐπορῶσι, οὐ γὰρ ἄν κοτε ἐς τοσοῦτο τύχης ἀπίκευ, σύ νυν Ἀστυάγεα τὸν σεωυτοῦ φονέα τεῖσαι. κατὰ μὲν γὰρ τὴν τούτου προθυμίην τέθνηκας, τὸ δὲ κατὰ θεούς τε καὶ ἐμὲ περίεις* (i.124.1).

Herodotus tells us that this letter set Cyrus thinking about how he could persuade the Persians to revolt. The trick he used to display to the Persians the advantages of liberating themselves from the Medes served this purpose (126). And in the context of this propaganda Cyrus relates his birth and survival through what he describes as divine fortune (*θείῃ τύχῃ γεγονὼς*) to his ability to undertake the liberation of the Persians. "For I myself feel that I was born by divine fortune to undertake your liberation …Revolt, therefore, from Astyages without a moment's delay", *αὐτός τε γὰρ δοκέω θείῃ τύχῃ γεγονὼς τάδε ἐς χεῖρας ἄγεσθαι … ὡς ὦν ἐχόντων ὧδε ἀπίστασθε ἀπ' Ἀστυάγεος τὴν ταχίστην* (i.126.6).[81]

The survival of Cypselus is also connected with divine luck (v.92). As Gould notes, "in the case of Cypselus, the Corinthian tyrant, the notion of inevitability of an occurrence is itself presented as an inference from the extraordinary chance that led to his survival".[82] Herodotus narrates that the Bacchiadae in Corinth sent men to kill Eëtion and Labda's son as soon as he was born because prophecies told that this baby boy, Cypselus, would one day rule in Corinth. Although the men intending to kill the baby Cypselus had

---

[81] Similarly, the Sophoclean Oedipus at *OT* 1080-3 sees Fortune who gives happiness as his mother.
[82] Gould (1989) 74.

agreed that whoever took hold of him first should dash him to the ground, an unexpected occurrence made them change their minds. By divine chance the baby smiled at his prospective killer (*θείῃ τύχῃ προσεγέλασε τὸ παιδίον,* v.92*γ*.3) and, as a result, he first and all the rest after him, moved by the baby's smile, could not bring themselves to kill him and so returned him to his mother.

The expression 'divine chance' may imply the operation of a god in the background, while it is also used to denote an unexpected incident having an important outcome: the rescue of Cypselus and, moreover, his harsh rule in Corinth. His destructive career has already been divinely foretold (v.92): he must survive. Both the authorial comments about *θείῃ τύχῃ* and about the misfortunes that were destined for Corinth from the child of Eëtion (*ἔδει δὲ ἐκ τοῦ Ἠετίωνος γόνου Κορίνθῳ κακὰ ἀναβλαστεῖν,* v.92*δ*.1) supply a link with some divine operation or predetermination and point to the important future consequences of Cypselus' survival.

Summing up, in the above stories about foundlings and lucky babies a blend of the unexpected and the divine is discernible. In Cyrus' career, divine connections become part of propaganda. But overconfident in his 'divine' birth and his good fortune he takes the way leading to his end.

vi) Cyrus' end

Ironically enough Cyrus, driven on by his supposedly more than human birth and by his good fortune in all his previous wars, attacked the Massagetae and met his death. ... *οἱ Μασσαγέται, ἐπ' οὕς ὁ Κῦρος ἔσχε προθυμίην στρατεύεσθαι· πολλά τε καὶ μεγάλα τὰ ἐπαείροντα καὶ ἐποτρύνοντα ἦν, πρῶτον μὲν ἡ γένεσις, τὸ δοκέειν πλέον τι εἶναι ἀνθρώπου, δευτέρα δὲ ἡ εὐτυχίη ἡ κατὰ τοὺς πολέμους γενομένη*... (i.204.2). All these motives are naturalistic and based on the psychology of success in particular. We hear nothing of divine intervention in this authorial comment.

The queen of the Massagetae too, Tomyris, referred to the end (*ταῦτα τελεόμενα*). She warned Cyrus that he should stop the attack, for he could not know if this enterprise would be of real advantage to him in the end (i.206.1). Her open offer to Cyrus (inviting him either to cross the river to her side or to let her come over safely to his side of the river) set the Persians thinking. And although all the others voted to give battle on Persian ground, Croesus

proposed to Cyrus that they should cross the river and get the better of the Massagetae by setting a trap. Croesus starts his proposal with a group of general statements on the limitations of Cyrus and his army, on the mutability of fortune and the cycle in human affairs:

"My king, I promised you long since, that, as Zeus had given me into your hands, I would, to the best of my power, turn away any mistake that I see in your house. My experiences have turned out to be unwelcome lessons for me. If you think you are yourself immortal and lead an army of immortals, there would be no need for me to give you my advice. But if you recognise that you are human and you lead others who are human too, your first lesson should be that there is a cycle in human affairs and that as it revolves it does not allow the same man to be always fortunate (*εἰ δ' ἔγνωκας ὅτι ἄνθρωπος καὶ σὺ εἶς καὶ ἑτέρων τοιῶνδε ἄρχεις, ἐκεῖνο πρῶτον μάθε ὡς κύκλος τῶν ἀνθρωπηίων ἐστὶ πρηγμάτων, περιφερόμενος δὲ οὐκ ἐᾷ αἰεὶ τοὺς αὐτοὺς εὐτυχέειν*). Now concerning the matter in hand, my judgement runs counter to the judgement of your other counsellors" (i.207.1-2).

But how do these prudent insights tie in with Croesus' bold and aggressive proposal that follows? Some scholars argue for confusion on Herodotus' part: perhaps the speech combines two versions, one with Croesus arguing against the whole campaign, one with simply giving strategic advice.[83] Stahl argues that the incoherence of the introductory prudent insights with the following aggressive proposal points to Croesus' failure to learn the obvious lesson from his past experience and, in general, to "man's narrow learning capacity".[84] But, I think, Pelling makes better sense of this apparent inconcinnity.[85] He argues that this "narrow learning capacity" lies less in a blindness to the lessons of one's experience (Stahl's view) and "more in a difficulty in isolating the correct lesson to learn. Croesus may be reliving his own past too closely, extrapolating too mechanically from his own experience". Surely the rhetorical situation also influences Croesus' advice. "We should also be alert to man's narrow teaching capacity, especially at an

---

[83] Thus K. von Fritz, *Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung*, (Berlin, 1967) 236-8. Stein suggests *ad. loc.* that the opening is a survival from one of Herodotus' earlier drafts [H. Stein, *Herodotos*, (Berlin, 1881-96)].
[84] Stahl (1975) 29-30.
[85] Pelling (2000).

autocratic court", as Pelling notes. There are "limits on what a wise adviser can achieve, and even limits on what he can usefully say: despite the obvious implications of Croesus' own Solonian generalisations, it is simply not possible for him to try and deflect the whole expedition. The momentum of events is simply too great".

From this it follows that there are also limits to what a wise adviser can actually predict in his limited as-it-happens perspective. Croesus is simply not able to predict any unexpected factors that could turn against his stratagem – and, even if he could, the pressure to act would have kept him from taking them into account. Even a wise adviser who claims to have learnt from his bitter experiences remains a mortal and hence subject to mistake and caught in 'the cycle in human affairs'. As it turns out, only one third of the Massagetae went into the trap of the pleasure feast, while Tomyris' son was among the prisoners. Especially these two unexpected occurrences rendered the stratagem ineffective and also led the enemy to show even greater ferocity against Cyrus.

The way in which Herodotus constructs Cyrus' attack against the Massagetae and his cruel end at the hands of Tomyris shows more the importance and pitfalls of human counsel and action than a strict divine determination. Admittedly, Herodotus himself talks of the dream Cyrus had as a divine forewarning that he was going to die during his fight against the Massagetae, and that Darius was to take the throne: "Thus Cyrus spoke, in the belief that he was plotted against by Darius; but the god was forewarning him that he was to die then and there and that his kingdom was to fall to Darius", *Κῦρος μὲν δοκέων οἱ Δαρεῖον ἐπιβουλεύειν ἔλεγε τάδε· τῷ δὲ ὁ δαίμων προέφαινε ὡς αὐτὸς μὲν τελευτήσειν αὐτοῦ ταύτῃ μέλλοι, ἡ δὲ βασιληίη αὐτοῦ περιχωρέοι ἐς Δαρεῖον* (i.210.1). Nevertheless, it was through acting according to Croesus' advice that Cyrus met his end (as Cambyses goes on to point out in iii.36.3), and, in particular, under the unforeseen and imponderable circumstances of the stratagem the former proposed.

The only divine manifestation in the narration of Cyrus' end is the dream sent to and, in a typically human manner, misinterpreted by Cyrus (i.209-210.1). This is another example of the limitations of human knowledge in the face of the unknown future. On the other hand, fortune talk and the

mutability of all things human are employed as persuasive arguments, to talk somebody into action.

vii) The various different strands of the mutability of fortune (rhetorical argument or open causation)

The instability of human life, fortune and prosperity is presented from many different aspects and viewpoints in the *Histories*. In the course of Solon's long admonitory speech (i.32) this very idea assumes many different facets, such as, for example, 'the divine is envious and troublesome', 'man is utterly subject to chance', 'always look to the end of one's life to assess one's happiness', 'good luck may not attend a wealthy man's life', 'no man is ever self-sufficient' or 'god having given to many a glimpse of happiness overthrows them utterly'. All these seem to have the same implications when applied to Croesus' own case. Far from reflecting the historian's determinism, they either serve rhetorical purposes or are inherent in the openness and relativity of Herodotean causation.

Similarly, in the letter Amasis sent to Polycrates to express his uneasiness at the latter's ever-mounting prosperity, the idea of the gods' jealousy of success coexists side by side with the observation that in human life success alternates with failure (iii.40.2-4). A similar idea is used by the Greek envoys who urge the Locrians and Phocians to send troops to Thermopylae and try to preempt their fear with the following words: "There was no cause why they should fear; for after all the invader was not a god but a man; and there never had been, and never would be, a man who was not liable to misfortunes from the very day of his birth, and those misfortunes greater in proportion to his own greatness.[86] The assailant therefore, being only a mortal, has to fall[87] from his glory" (vii.203.2). Indeed, the argument proved to be rhetorically successful as the Locrians and Phocians came with their troops. A more religious version of this idea is rhetorically and ironically exploited by Themistocles at viii.109. Herodotus talks of Themistocles' *volte face* from arguing that the Greeks should chase the Persians to the Hellespont and break down the bridges there (108.2) to arguing that they should abandon

---

[86] Note again the motif of 'balance' in this sentence.
[87] I have changed Rawlinson's translation ('must needs fall') only at this point. Rawlinson (1997).

the pursuit of the Persians. Herodotus makes Themistocles speak in the following way: "I have often myself witnessed occasions, and I have heard of many more from others, where men who had been conquered by an enemy, having been driven quite to desperation, have renewed the fight, and retrieved their former disasters. We have now had the great good luck (*εὕρημα γὰρ εὑρήκαμεν*) to save both ourselves and all Greece by the repulse of this vast cloud of men; let us be content and not press them too hard, now that they have begun to fly. Be sure we have not done this by our own might. It is the work of gods and heroes, who were jealous that one man should be king at once of Europe and of Asia – more especially a man like this, unholy and presumptuous – a man who esteems alike things sacred and things profane; who has cast down and burnt the very images of the gods themselves; who even caused the sea to be scourged with rods and commanded fetters to be thrown into it. At present all is well with us – let us then abide in Greece and look to ourselves and to our families…" (109.2-4).

Themistocles starts with the idea that they should be wary lest the vanquished may become victors and goes on to attribute the Greek victory only to external factors (good luck, gods and heroes) and in particular gods who resented unholy and presumptuous Xerxes. *Prima facie* these ideas come close to passages implying Herodotus' own religious outlook. However, the author himself informs us that these very words of piety and restraint were actually meant to serve Themistocles' private purposes – to establish a claim upon the king so that he could have a retreat in Persia in case things go wrong for him in Athens (109.5). His quasi-pious rhetoric was successful, while his dispatch of Sikinnos to inform Xerxes of the service he had done him leaves no doubt about his duplicitous and self-seeking motives. This is a repetition of the model of the speeches before Salamis, where again Themistocles is not quite speaking his mind openly in council (viii.59-60), but his disingenuous words touch a real truth.

Most of the above passages are rhetorical in the sense that Herodotus' speakers make use of the idea of the changeability of human life and fortune in order to talk others into a particular course of action. On the other hand, different possibilities in relation to why things happen are typical of the

historian's open causation. The following four sections are meant to exemplify this.

viii) Divine-related events or causes

It seems clear that for Herodotus the divine is not only responsible for establishing natural laws (iii.108.2) but also intervenes in and influences the course of particular human lives. Several passages in the *Histories*, which contain authorial comments endorsing the notion of divine intervention, can illustrate this in a particularly pointed way. Gods often intervene to secure a particular moral equilibrium[88] and to punish human impiety or injustice.[89] A case in point is the wrath of Talthybios (vii.137).

Similar cases of the divine intervening to punish human injustice or impiety are the following Herodotean comments. At ii.120.5 he argues that actually the Trojans had no Helen to deliver and they told the Greeks so; but the latter would not believe what they said, as divinity willed so that the Trojans might receive great punishments from the gods for their great wrongdoings. This is Herodotus' view: *τοῦ δαιμονίου παρασκευάζοντος ὅκως πανωλεθρίῃ ἀπολόμενοι καταφανὲς τοῦτο τοῖσι ἀνθρώποισι ποιήσωσι, ὡς τῶν μεγάλων ἀδικημάτων μεγάλαι εἰσὶ καὶ αἱ τιμωρίαι παρὰ τῶν θεῶν. καὶ ταῦτα μὲν τῇ ἐμοὶ δοκέει εἴρηται* (ii.120.5; cf. iv.205).

At ix.65 Herodotus relates the marvel (*θῶμα δέ μοι*) that took place near the grove of Demeter at Plataea; although the battle had been fought around that area, not a single dead Persian was found in the consecrated ground. The historian accompanies his speculative explanation of the goddess' reaction with a reservation about the limitations of human perception: "I think, if one should think anything about divine matters, that the goddess herself did not receive them because they had burnt her dwelling at Eleusis", *... δοκέω δέ, εἴ τι περὶ τῶν θείων πρηγμάτων δοκέειν δεῖ, ἡ θεὸς αὐτὴ σφεας οὐκ ἐδέκετο ἐμπρήσαντας [τὸ ἱρὸν] τὸ ἐν Ἐλευσῖνι ἀνάκτορον* (ix.65).

---

[88] In the same way as they intervene at iii.108.2 to secure a natural equilibrium. Compare the expression *θεῶν τὰ ἴσα νεμόντων* at vi.11.3 and 109.5.

[89] Other manifestations of divine will include dreams, prophecies and portents. For the last category see Herodotus' comments at vi.27.1-3: *φιλέει δέ κως προσημαίνειν, εὖτ' ἂν μέλλῃ μεγάλα κακά ἢ πόλι ἢ ἔθνεϊ ἔσεσθαι...σημήια μεγάλα,* and at vi.98: *Δῆλος ἐκινήθη ... καὶ τοῦτο μέν κου τέρας ἀνθρώποισι τῶν μελλόντων ἔσεσθαι κακῶν ἔφηνε ὁ θεός.*

This type of religious reflection is sometimes set against rationalistic or naturalistic explanation (see above). Passages such as viii.13 and viii.66 are examples of the coexistence of divine and naturalistic explanations. For all the divine manifestations in the Herodotean work, it remains clear that he feels it necessary in several places to take up a rationalist position: not everything in the world, he seems to say, is the result of divine intervention. vii.129.4 is an interesting passage, which can cater for both religious and rationalist audience responses. Herodotus' apparently rationalist view that an earthquake was responsible for the formation of the mountains in Thessaly (*ἔστι γὰρ σεισμοῦ ἔργον, ὡς ἐμοὶ ἐφαίνετο εἶναι, ἡ διάστασις τῶν ὀρέων*) comes after an acknowledgement that there are people who believe that Poseidon shakes the earth and that they are welcome to continue to think so. Poseidon may work through earthquakes, although this does not mean that he is reducible to 'earthquake', or that every earthquake comes from him.

One feels tempted here to presuppose that the gods in Greek religion have acquired their attributes and functions by a recognisable process: men saw the natural phenomena of storms, earthquakes, and the like, and came to think of them as the manifestations of gods, just as in Democritus' theory of the origins of religion (D-K 68 A75). However, Herodotus did not share the Democritean view that gods do not influence the world we live in, and his attitude seems more complex in the sense that he commits himself neither to a divine nor to a rationalist view. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that at viii.129.3 he agrees with the interpretation of the Potideans that Poseidon was responsible for the tidal wave that destroyed the army of Artabazos: the Persians had acted profanely against the temple and image of the god.

At vii.56.2 Herodotus offers us a glimpse into contemporary popular thought. He refers to the comment of a Hellespontine on seeing Xerxes' huge army crossing the Hellespont: "Why, O Zeus, do you lead the whole race of mankind to the destruction of Greece, in the likeness of a Persian man, and with the name of Xerxes instead of your own? It would have been as easy for you to destroy it without their aid". Everything extraordinarily great or generally anything impossible of explanation by human standards was readily ascribed to the supernatural. But it is difficult to decide whether any one case of god talk is genuinely an instance of that. On the other hand, there is no

doubt that the unknowability of divinity, the limitations of human wisdom and the mutability of fortune constitute universal themes in the *Histories*, truths that are attributed to both Greeks and Persians by Herodotus. A prominent example is the reflections of Xerxes at Abydos; a while after reviewing his vast troops and congratulating himself on his good fortune (ἑωυτὸν ἐμακάρισε) he burst into tears. In reply to Artabanus' question why he wept Xerxes said: " 'There came upon me a sudden pity when I thought of the shortness of human life and considered that of all this host, so numerous as it is, not one will be alive when a hundred years are gone by'. 'And yet there are sadder things than that' Artabanus replied. 'Short as our time is, there is no human being, whether it be here among this multitude or elsewhere, who is so happy, as not to have felt the wish – I will not say once, but many times – that he was dead rather than alive. Calamities fall upon us; sicknesses vex and harass us, and make life, short though it be, to appear long. So death, through the wretchedness of our life, is a most sweet refuge to humanity. And god, who gives us the tastes that we enjoy of pleasant times, is seen, in his very gift, to be envious' " (vii.46.2-3; cf. 49 and 50).

John Gould's apt remarks on this are worthy to be quoted in full. "This is a fleeting realization which only for a moment holds up the unstoppable forward momentum of the vast expedition; it has none of the finality of the dialogue between Priam and Achilles in the last book of the *Iliad*. But it is unforgettable nonetheless because, like that dialogue, it gives expression to a universal truth which overrides enmity and cultural difference: in their openness to chance all men are one. That is not 'the meaning of events' in Herodotus' *History*, but it is the backdrop against which events are understood to have meaning".[90]

ix) Divine luck

There are several occurrences of the expression θείη τύχη in Herodotus, which deserve discussion (see also above). In the broad thematic unit of Darius' conquest of Samos (iii.139-49) Herodotus starts his narrative of the capture of the island with the chance encounter and the incident between Darius and

---

[90] Gould (1989) 134.

Syloson, the exiled brother of Polycrates, in Egypt. While Syloson was there he had an extraordinary stroke of good luck, *κατέλαβε εὐτυχίη τις τοιήδε* (iii.139.2): he was hanging about Memphis wearing a flame-coloured cloak when Darius, at that time serving in Cambyses' guard, saw his cloak and liked it so much that he came up to him to buy it. Syloson, seeing Darius' great longing to get the cloak, 'by some divine luck' (*θείῃ τύχῃ χρεώμενος*), as Herodotus comments, decided to give his cloak to Darius for nothing. The above expression might seem a bit exaggerated, but the point of it is to show that Syloson was unaware what his generous offer might lead to, and that hence there was no *πρόνοια* on his part. Surely, there is a hint of the divine here, however weak or indefinite. It is telling that where we would say uncanny, Herodotus would find it normal to hint at the gods.

Here again, as in v.92*γ*.3, *θείῃ τύχῃ* is rather a general expression, coloured favourably by the preceding *εὐτυχίη* (iii.139.2) and so looking ahead to an outcome favourable to Syloson, with some implication of a divine link. The as-it-happens perspective at this point does not allow further elaboration on the divine component. This actually seems to lay emphasis partly on the lack of any foreknowledge, foresight or conscious planning on Syloson's part at this point, and partly on the extraordinary character of the event which, as Herodotus goes on to explain, set in motion unprecedented, important developments in relation to Darius' conquest of Samos. It is only in retrospect that the momentous, 'divine' element in the above incident becomes clearer. When Syloson heard that Darius had become king of Persia he made use of his earlier good-natured and perhaps foolish (*δι' εὐηθίην*) offer to Darius. As a reward he asked the king to restore him in Samos. And so it happened, but as it turned out only after the Persians had exterminated the whole population of the island (iii.149).

The collocation *θείῃ τύχῃ* blends the unexpected and the divine and hints at future momentous events. These may start as accidental incidents, but the big consequences arising from them tend to link them with the divine.

x) Chance-related events or causes

Herodotus' use of the impersonal verb *συνήνεικε* and similar forms to introduce an unexpected, chance event is remarkable (iii.14.7, 129.1; v.35.2, 36.1; vi.86.3). What is originally described as an accidental event may later lead to connections with the divine, but this should not be taken to cancel its accidental origins.[91] This seems to be the case with Cyrus' birth and survival.

The story of Polycrates and the ring too is introduced by the expression: *τάδε οἱ συνήνεικε γενέσθαι*. The fact that a fisherman caught a fine fish and presented it to Polycrates is seen as a chance event. Only later Polycrates, on hearing that the ring he had tried to get rid of was found in the belly of the fish, thought that the incident had to do with the divine (iii.42.1-4). But at iii.43.2, where Amasis explains why he decided to end the pact between Polycrates and himself, there is no explicit connection between *συντυχίη* and the divine: "He did this, so that when the great and terrible misfortune came, he might escape the grief which he would have felt if the sufferer had been his bond-friend (*ἵνα μὴ συντυχίης δεινῆς τε καὶ μεγάλης Πολυκράτεα καταλαβούσης αὐτὸς ἀλγήσειε τὴν ψυχὴν ὡς περὶ ξείνου ἀνδρός*) ". In this rhetorical context tact may again have something to do with the absence of an explicit divine reference: it is hard to tell someone straight that you think the gods have got it in for him.

At v.33.2 we find that what had (was bound) to happen – that is the destruction of Naxos – is averted by a chance event, the incident between Megabates and Aristagoras: *καὶ οὐ γὰρ ἔδεε τούτῳ τῷ στόλῳ Ναξίους ἀπολέσθαι, πρῆγμα τοιόνδε συνηνείχθη γενέσθαι*. Here the unexpected incident blends with something cosmic in *ἔδεε*. Further intrusions of the accidental into human life introduced by *συνήνεικε* include Darius calling Democedes, the doctor from Croton, to his court (iii.129.1), as well as the king's death at vii.4.[92] What comes out of this section is the readiness, but not inevitability, with which *συνήνεικε*-language can link with something more explicitly suggesting the divine.

---

[91] Compare vi.134 and 135: the accidental is inextricably linked with the religious and the Pythia's explanation is couched in the familiar terms of 'what has to happen'.

xi) Alternative lines of causation

For Herodotus, *πρόνοια* (either human or divine) and *τύχη* represent two alternative lines of causation. This is clear in book viii, where he relates the lucky escape of Artemisia at the battle of Salamis. After the Persian fleet had lost its order and while her ship was being chased by an Athenian one, she rammed a Calyndian ship which was on the Persian side. Herodotus in his explanation of this incident expresses his inability to say if Artemisia had had some quarrel with the Calyndian king and, therefore, had acted deliberately (human *pronoia*), or if the Calyndian ship happened to be in her way: *οὐ μέντοι ἔχω γε εἰπεῖν οὔτε εἰ ἐκ προνοίης αὐτὰ ἐποίησε, οὔτε εἰ συνεκύρησε ἡ τῶν Καλυνδέων κατὰ τύχην παραπεσοῦσα νηῦς* (viii.87.3). In any case, the incident benefited her doubly, since the captain of the Athenian ship thought that her ship was a Greek one and abandoned the chase, whereas Xerxes thought that she had rammed an enemy ship and this raised her even more in his esteem. *τοῦτο μὲν τοιοῦτον αὐτῇ συνήνεικε γενέσθαι διαφυγεῖν τε καὶ μὴ ἀπολέσθαι, τοῦτο δὲ συνέβη ὥστε κακὸν ἐργασαμένην ἀπὸ τούτων αὐτὴν μάλιστα εὐδοκιμῆσαι παρὰ Ξέρξῃ* (viii.88.1). The accidental character of Artemisia's double benefit from this lucky incident is emphasised by the verbs *συνήνεικε* and *συνέβη*. Indeed, Herodotus at 88.3 repeats the former verb to say that she was lucky in every way (*τά τε γὰρ ἄλλα... αὐτῇ συνήνεικε ἐς εὐτυχίην γενόμενα*), and also in the fact that nobody survived from the Calyndian ship to accuse her.

If Artemisia was lucky in this chance incident, in the intricate fabric of the *Histories* one meets also with the unlucky side of chance. In the context of the failure of the Ionian campaign against Persia, Herodotus speaks of the Chians who scorned to abandon the fight like the rest of the confederate fleet and continued to fight until all their ships were destroyed (vi.15ff). Even the Chians running ashore at Mycale (who – as it happened – entered the territory of Ephesus during the night while the women there were celebrating the Thesmophoria) were killed by the Ephesians who took them for brigands coming after their women. Herodotus concludes: *οὗτοι μέν νυν τοιαύτῃσι περιέπιπτον τύχῃσι* (vi.16.2). It is rather a chance event and unexpectedness that are emphasised here and not inevitability or something preordained.

---

[92] For another unlucky accident see vii.88.1: *ὡς γὰρ ὁρμῶντο ἐκ Σαρδίων, ἐς συμφορὴν ἐνέπεσε ἀνεθέλητον.*

Therefore, we are closer to the context if we translate "such were the (bad) circumstances which they fell into" or "such were the accidents which befell them" rather than "such was their fate".

A juxtaposition of human will and a blend of chance with divine action occurs at ix. 90ff. Herodotus relates that when the stranger from Samos asked the Greeks to help the Ionians revolt against the Persians, Leotychides asked for his name: "either because he wanted to hear an omen or also by chance, as a god was acting (or making him do it)", *εἴτε κληδόνος εἵνεκεν θέλων πυθέσθαι εἴτε καὶ κατὰ συντυχίην θεοῦ ποιεῦντος* (ix.91). This is a striking *εἴτε ... εἴτε* pattern of *dubitatio* not only because of the extraordinary expression "by (some) chance (coincidence) as a god was being active" but also because *κληδών* means 'omen, presage contained in a chance utterance'.[93] The element of chance exists in both parts of the *dubitatio*. Significantly, the first part expresses the possibility that Leotychides asked for the stranger's name because he hoped that his more or less accidental question may produce a favourable *nomen omen*,[94] while the second part presents the possibility of a god being at work behind this chance incident. Herodotus expresses two possibilities without committing himself to a single, clear-cut answer. The *καί* in the second clause shows that the first explanation is primary, but that Herodotus is also willing to recognise a secondary, divine cause. This passage, therefore, is another example of his open, pluralistic causation.

Similarly, at iii.121 Herodotus gives the less common of the two alleged reasons for Oroetes' wish to kill Polycrates. When the former sent a herald to Samos to make a request Polycrates spoke not a word to the herald; "..Polycrates, either out of studied contempt for the power of Oroetes (human *pronoia*), or it may be merely by chance, was lying with his face turned away towards the wall", *καί κως εἴτε προνοίης αὐτὸν κατηλογέοντα τὰ Ὀροίτεω πρήγματα, εἴτε καὶ συντυχίη τις τοιαύτη ἐπεγένετο... τυχεῖν γὰρ ἀπεστραμμένον πρὸς τὸν τοῖχον* (iii.121.1-2). It is indicative of the historian's open-minded causation that although he goes on to relate a more reliable reason for

---

[93] According to *LSJ* which quotes among others *Od.* 18.117, 20.120; *Hdt.* 5.72; A.*Pr.* 486; cf. S. *El.* 1110.

[94] As was actually the case, since the name of the stranger was Hegesistratos, "army-leader".

Polycrates' death, he points out at 122.1: "Such are the two reasons alleged for the death of Polycrates; it is open to all to believe which they please".

It emerges that Herodotus' emphasis on unexpected circumstances, chance and the divine is characteristic of his pluralistic, open causation. The as-it-happens *versus* in-retrospect analyses are also important, especially since the historian relates events with important repercussions to some divine purpose.[95] The unknowability of divinity and the transience of all things human are also significant recurrent themes in the *Histories*, as kings rise and fall unable to interpret correctly oracles or dreams as well as to extract the correct lesson from their past experiences. 'What must be' as opposed to 'what happens randomly' is on the one hand better suited to Herodotus' sense of things, and on the other contributes to his presentation of historical events with a sense of order and logical explanation. If a historian's desire is to gather and record facts, their causes and results, Herodotus is surely occupied by this kind of desire. The great variety of causes and explanations he tends to give (divine-related, chance-related, naturalistic, human or psychological) serves his narrative purposes rather than revealing a religious, fatalist or naturalist system of beliefs. Admittedly, he several times presents 'what happened' as 'what had to be'. But this sense of inevitability – far from effacing the importance of chance circumstances – lends to the narrative an ordered, 'balanced' pattern which random happenings lack.

---

[95] S. Swain, "Plutarch: Chance, Providence, and History", *AJP* 110 (1989) 272-302 argues for something similar in Plutarch.

CHAPTER THREE
FORTUNE AND CHANCE IN THUCYDIDES

This chapter discusses the role of *τύχη*-language in Thucydides' *History*.[1] *τύχη* in whatever meaning it might take ('success, good or bad fortune, chance or unexpected circumstances') constitutes an integral part of several wider themes: the unexpected and coincidence as factors in daily life, especially in time of war; the precariousness of human fortune and the limitations of intelligence and planning; the rhetoric and psychology of success and failure, and the tension between perceived hopes and actual reality; the fatal danger inherent in overestimating one's power and chances of success. All these themes are interrelated and presented either by speakers or by Thucydides himself as correlatives of significant turning points, such as the success of the Athenians at Pylos and their disaster in Sicily. My examination of Thucydides' employment of *tyche* concentrates on these two far-reaching events. As one proceeds from the one to the other it becomes gradually clear that the Athenian overconfidence and presumption due to the unprecedented success at Pylos leads to the resounding catastrophe of Sicily.

It is important to make it clear from the outset that Thucydides' use of *tyche* sets him apart from the body of prior and contemporary literary practices in one important respect. The historian himself never connects *tyche* with the divine. Only twice in the whole *History* are these two factors linked, both times by speakers (the Melians at v.104 and Nicias at vii.77.3). This lack of divine associations in authorial judgements about *tyche* is accompanied by a similar lack of authorial statements presenting *tyche* as an active power or agent. Nevertheless, there is ample evidence that the speakers couch fortune in dynamic terms. The historian is always behind his speakers and in this sense he must have been aware that contemporaries often thought of *tyche* as coming from a divine source or as an active power. He apparently chooses not to foreground these qualities in his own narrative. From this point of view, Cornford's capitalising of Fortune in his discussion of the Pylos episode,[2] and

---

[1] For a very brief introduction to this see J. Classen and J. Steup, *Thukydides*, (Berlin, 1897) xliv-xlvi and also the fifth edition reproduced in 1966 (Berlin, Zurich, Dublin, 1966) lxii-lxiii and n. 87.

[2] See F. M. Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus*, (London, 1907) 88ff.

in general his colourful and metaphorical language when he talks about fortune, suits better the dynamic way in which *tyche* is sometimes presented in tragedy than in Thucydidean narrative. The fact that Thucydides does grant some role to *tyche* presupposes the existence of the mentality which in the fifth century BC acknowledged the double-edged power of *tyche* either as a random, indefinite entity connected with unexpected reversals, or as a source of good things. However, good fortune and success have to be treated cautiously and wisely, because they do not last forever. This is intrinsic to the human condition, "for all things must diminish" (ii.64.3).[3]

Tim Rood offers a well-balanced analysis of the events at Pylos[4] and demonstrates the importance of discussing narrative techniques in our attempt to make sense of Thucydides' explanations of events. Rood, *contra* Cornford, does not think that the historian gives *tyche* a major role in his exposition of the incidents at Pylos, or that he sees it as a supernatural agency; rather "he uses *τύχη* at times of a turn of events (e.g. 12.3), more commonly of aspects which evade the grasp of human foresight, but may be still open to rational explanation".[5] I totally agree with Rood's position. Presumably, the historian himself is aware of the usage of *tyche* as a supernatural power, although he chooses not to let it surface in his narrative. As in his treatment of the divine, Thucydides downplays *tyche* as an active or supernatural agent in his narrative. On the other hand, he foregrounds *tyche* as linked with natural phenomena, external circumstances or emotions that influence human action and planning. For example, he puts into the mouth of Diodotus a striking description of this entity's potential fatal effect on humans.

At iii.45.5-7 Diodotus, trying to dissuade the Athenians from choosing a severe penalty for Mytilene, refers to three important unseen powers: hope (*elpis*), desire (*eros*) and fortune (*tyche*)[6]: "Hope and desire, in every case, the

---

[3] Compare Macleod's excellent comment on this passage: "Amid all these superlatives of quantity which exalt the city stands the sobering 'all things must diminish' ": C. Macleod, *Collected Essays*, (Oxford, 1983) 153. From this point of view "the imperial city is not more secure than the tragic hero" (ibid. p.152).

[4] T. Rood, *Thucydides: Narrative and Explanation*, (Oxford, 1998) 24-57.

[5] Ibid. p. 27.

[6] At iii.39.3-4 Cleon refers to a similar idea, though for different purposes: the commonplace that "great good fortune coming suddenly and unexpectedly tends to make people insolent" serves to condemn the Mytilenean revolt and to propose a heavy punishment. On the other

one leading, the other following, the one originating the enterprise, the other suggesting the feasibility of success, are most harmful (*πλεῖστα βλάπτουσι*), and though invisible, outweigh the visible dangers (*καὶ ὄντα ἀφανῆ κρείσσω ἐστὶ τῶν ὁρωμένων δεινῶν*). Fortune again (*ἡ τύχη*) supplements in no less degree their intoxicating influence; for sometimes, by her unlooked-for favour, she induces a man to face danger even at a disadvantage; and this is especially the case with states, because they play for the highest stakes, freedom or empire over others, and when all are acting together, each man irrationally magnifies his own capacity".[7]

Here *ἡ τύχη* is not explicitly described as a kind of power, in the way it is referred to by Plutarch as a force of causation, *ἡ αἰτίας δύναμις* (*How the young man should study poetry*, 24a). But, like hope and desire, fortune is linked with active verbs and, from this point of view, they are spoken of as active agents that under certain circumstances can cause harm to individuals and cities. In particular, their exceptionally dangerous nature derives from their invisibility, as they are linked with the future, the invisible and uncertain factors *par excellence*. Hope, desire and good fortune point to future benefits, which are also invisible, *ἀφανῆ* (ii.42.4; cf. v.103.2).[8] At vi.9.3 Nicias, trying to dissuade the Athenians from undertaking the Sicilian expedition, acknowledges that his argument is weak: to avoid risking what they have for future and uncertain advantages, *περὶ τῶν ἀφανῶν καὶ μελλόντων*, could not appeal to the Athenian frame of mind, which at that point was influenced by their hope, cupidity and good fortune.

Diodotus in the above passage links the indefinite, outward entity of fortune with the inward, psychological states of hope and desire.[9] All three can lead men to unreasonable or presumptuous behaviour; men can be equally intoxicated with their hope, cupidity or good fortune and endeavour to achieve things far greater than their real abilities can cope with. Even in this context

---

hand, Diodotus elaborates on the disastrous effects of hope, desire and good fortune in order to argue against the imposition of a heavy penalty.

[7] Translation by A. W. Spratt, *Thucydides: Book III* (Cambridge, 1905) with some changes.

[8] Compare also i.42.2, 138.3: Themistocles had the extraordinary ability to predict the good and evil which lay hidden in the unseen future; iv.62.4, 63.1; v.113; vii.75.4.

[9] On this see W. Müri, "Beitrag zum Verständnis des Thukydides", in H. Herter (ed.) *Thukydides*. Wege der Forschung xcviii (Darmstadt, 1968) 135-70 [*Museum Helveticum* 4 (1947) 251-75].

where *τύχη* is couched in dynamic terms, it is not presented as a sort of supernatural agent but rather as an indefinite, invisible entity whose power is most manifest in the effect it has on human psychology and behaviour. It is telling that Diodotus concludes chapter 45 with a general statement about human nature, *ἀνθρωπεία φύσις*. It is impossible for any kind of deterrent force to prevent human nature from doing what it has set its mind upon. Everything Diodotus has said so far looks ahead to this conclusion. He has argued for the ineffectiveness of any severe punishment, since powerful motives and passions (such as poverty, wealth, hope, desire and good fortune) drive men to the delusion that their plans will be successful. Therefore, what he says about *τύχη* forms part of his observations on human nature and behaviour.

This is also true of the historian himself, although in his narrative he never presents *tyche* as a non-human agency or *in abstracto*. His emphasis is not on demonstrating to his contemporaries and to posterity that *tyche* is an active agent. Rather, he focuses on the impact unexpected circumstances can have on human agents. Two main categories of such imponderable phenomena can be distinguished in the Thucydidean narrative: outward circumstances (natural phenomena, *τύχη, τὰ τῆς τύχης, ὁ παράλογος, ἀνάγκη*)[10] and inward psychological states (emotions, passions).[11] This distinction is schematic and valid only to the extent that it helps us to see how Thucydides uses *τύχη*. In the narrative itself external and internal factors intersect, as the historian shows that unexpected external circumstances can either frustrate or foster certain states of mind or emotions. He tends to refer to uncontrollable fortune or chance and unexpected circumstances (*τύχη, τὰ τῆς τύχης, τύχαι*) or to (mis)judgement and emotions in a comparable way, in the sense that these factors may be employed as explanations of or comments on a state of

---

[10] See iii.49.4 and iv.3.1 (*tyche* and natural phenomena); iv.12.3, 14.3, 55.3, 73.3, v.16.1, 37.3, 75.3, vii.33.6 (*tyche* and outward circumstances); ii.85.2, iii.16.3, vii.28.3, 55, viii.24.5 (*paralogos* and unexpected circumstances; cf. v.14.3); i.49.7 (*anagke* and events leading to a certain outcome inevitably, despite the will of those involved); 99.1 (*anagke* and subjugation), i.23.6, ii.17.1-2, iii.82.2, iv.40.1, v.17.1, 99, 105.2, vi.44.1, vii.27.4, 57.1, 57.4, 57.5, 57.7, 57.11, 70.6, 70.8, viii.2.3 (*anagke* and war); viii.38.3 (*anagke* and imposition of an oligarchy); i.84.4, cf. ii.64.2, iii.45.4, iv.58.5-6 (*anagke* as inherent in human nature). See H. Schreckenberg, *Ananke. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Wortsgebrauchs*, (Munich, 1964) and M. Ostwald, *ΑΝΑΓΚΗ in Thucydides*, (Atlanta, 1988).

[11] See iii.97.2; iv.14.3 and 55.3; vi.78.2-3 (*tyche* and emotions)

affairs.[12] Stahl sees in the course of events a causality manifest in the interaction between human action and external circumstances. Yet, he tends to assess everything through the filter of mutable contingency, which may suggest downplaying the elements of necessity, intelligence or any constancy in human life and nature.[13] Both *ἀνάγκη* (necessity) and *τύχη* are used by Thucydides to express the limitations presented to human agents by circumstances;[14] these are felt to impose some kind of compulsion when described as *ἀνάγκη* or *ἀνάγκαι*, and to mark a decisive turning point when described as *τύχη* or *τύχαι*. The distinguishing feature of the latter lies, on the one hand, in its link with the unexpected and the incalculable in contexts where extraordinary or unhoped-for turns of events occur, and, on the other, in its frequent distinction from *gnome*. In fact, the *techne-tyche* and *gnome-tyche* antitheses play an integral role in sophistic thought and in Thucydides.[15]

Fickle fortune is mutable, whereas people want to believe that inner moral qualities remain unchanged in the midst of ever-changing circumstances. The historian couches the moral effect of the Spartan victory in Mantinea (418 BC) in terms of the opposition between external *tyche* and internal *gnome*. One single victory made the accusations of cowardice, mismanagement or slowness (cast upon the Spartans by their allies) look out of place. The Spartans "might have been wronged, it was thought, by fortune (*tyche*) [or might have been reproached because of their bad fortune], but where inner character (*gnome*) was concerned they were the same as ever" (v.75.3). The run of blows they have suffered at the hands of the Athenians

---

[12] See C. Schneider, *Information und Absicht bei Thukydides. Untersuchung zur Motivation des Handelns*, Hypomnemata 41, (Göttingen, 1974), 97: "Das Zufällige ist für ihn [Thucydides], wie Irrtum und Affekte, ein Element der Erklärung". Accordingly, Schneider points out that "In der Anlage der Darstellung hat der Zufall so wenig wie der Irrtum die Funktion eines handelnden Subjekts: wie dieser erscheint er stets nur als Negation einer hypothetisch postulierten Rationalität" (97-8).

[13] H.-P. Stahl, *Thukydides: Die Stellung des Menschen im geschichtlichen Prozess*, Zetemata 40, (Munich, 1966) 16ff, 78-9, 96-102, 138-9, 148 and 155-6. Stahl does not explain why he thinks that Thucydides' use of *ἀνάγκη* and cognate words does not allow it to be "hypostasised" (p.139, n.31). See also Brunt's review of Stahl's book in *Classical Review* 17 (1967) 278-80 [reprinted in P. A. Brunt, *Studies in Greek History and Thought*, (Oxford, 1993) 394-8].

[14] Compare Eur. *Hec.* 864-7 and *Alc.* 962-6.

[15] On this see L. Edmunds, *Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1975), especially chapter three. This proves how mistaken is H. A. Shapiro, *Personifications in Greek Art*, (Zurich, 1993) 227 in saying that "In the second half of the fifth century, Tyche

(Pylos, Cythera. cf. iv.55.3) are attributed to their bad luck (an external factor). On the other hand, their recent success in Mantinea is ascribed to their *gnome*, their inner disposition or character, as this term can refer to intellectual, spiritual or emotional qualities such as intelligence, courage, zeal or will.

The abnormal situation resulting from the Spartan assault on the Athenian fortification at Pylos is described by Thucydides as *tyche*: "The situation was so completely reversed (*ἐς τοῦτό τε περιέστη ἡ τύχη*) that Athenians were fighting from the land, and from Laconian land too, against Spartans coming from the sea; while the Spartans were trying to land from shipboard in their own country, now become hostile, to attack the Athenians, since the former were chiefly famous at the time (*ἐπὶ πολὺ γὰρ ἐποίει τῆς δόξης ἐν τῷ τότε*) [16] as an inland people and superior by land, the latter as a maritime people with a navy that had no equal" (iv.12.3).[17]

Here *ἡ τύχη* essentially means 'fortune', but in such an indefinite sense that it approximates the meaning of 'situation or circumstances',[18] or better "the unexpected aspect of the situation". The verb *περιίστημι* in the active or passive form is commonly used with *tyche* to denote unexpected reversals (i.78; vi.24). In particular, iv.12.3 is about an extraordinary and unexpected turn of events, a reversal of the normal order (the Athenians fighting from Lacedaemonian land against Lacedaemonians attacking from the sea), which resulted in success for the Athenians (iv.14.3). Thucydides is particularly sensitive to reversals of normal order and never fails to emphasise the inversions of normally expected relationships, such as between a sea-power and a land-power or between leaders and led. Here, I think, lies the

---

was elevated to the status of a major goddess, especially in the writings and teachings of the Sophists", and in quoting Edmunds (1975), who does not support this view.

[16] Gomme's view that Thucydides' concluding *γάρ*-clause is a brief and superficial summary of "what he had profoundly and in detail already made so clear" does not seem to be wholly justified (A.W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, Vol. III (Oxford, 1981) p. 449). Admittedly, the whole passage mentioned above seems to have the look of an artificial contrast, played up rhetorically in a Gorgianic way. However, the *gar*-clause is no more brief and superficial (if at all) than any general conclusion containing the general repute (*δόξα*) of the Athenians and the Spartans at the time. *LSJ s.v. ποιέω* B.II.2 points out the peculiar, impersonal usage of the phrase *ἐπὶ πολὺ ἐποίει τῆς δόξης ... εἶναι*, "It was the general character of...", and the fact that it was imitated by later historians.

[17] All translations are Crawley's with minor changes, unless otherwise stated. R. Crawley, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, (London / Everyman's Library, 1910).

importance of the above passage. It marks the extraordinariness of the incident and looks ahead to even more unheard-of developments such as the surrender of the Lacedaemonians on Sphakteria (iv.40.1).

In the context of Demosthenes' first known operations in Western Greece in 426 BC Thucydides narrates that the Athenian general "led by his advisers and trusting in his own success (*τῇ τύχῃ ἐλπίσας*), as he had met with no opposition … advanced and stormed Aegitium" (iii.97.2). The risks involved in Demosthenes' underestimation of the Aetolians and his subsequent rash assumption that he will be successful have been implied before 97.2 and are disastrously realised in 98. The historian stresses the role of the Messenians in persuading Demosthenes that he could easily subdue the Aetolians (iii.94.3 and 95.1), even without waiting for help (iii.94.4). Although reinforcements of light-armed darters from the Ozolian Locrians were thought to be important (95.3 and 97.2), Demosthenes --being under the constant urging of the Messenians--[19] attacked the Aetolians without waiting for them to arrive. The result of all this sinister advice was the disastrous defeat of the Athenians by the Aetolians. Demosthenes, who before the battle was confident of his success, after his defeat did not dare to return to Athens, being afraid of their reaction (98.5). The expression *τῇ τύχῃ ἐλπίσας* describes the general's psychological state before the battle and as such constitutes an explanation for his defeat: his overconfidence and failure to take into account all the decisive factors opened the way to disaster. He behaved in a way typical of human nature, according to Diodotus: carried away by his hope, belief in success and misinformation.

i) The short-lived luck of the Athenians at Pylos

In 425 the Athenian generals Eurymedon and Sophocles sailed for Sicily, with instructions to stop over at Corcyra and help the pro-Athenian party in the town, which was harassed by plunderers from the mountains (iv.2.3). Demosthenes, who the previous year had been defeated by the Aetolians

---

[18] In Greek *τὸ πρᾶγμα* or *τὰ πράγματα*. *τύχη* in the singular or plural can also have the meaning of 'state of affairs, circumstances'; see, for example, vii.33.6. Compare also vi.24 and i.78; Dem. 21.111 and 37.10; Isoc. 6.47, 5.55 and 8.59; Aeschines 3.82.

[19] Although they knew that the Aetolians had been preparing to face Demosthenes, they did not change their advice to him (97.1).

(iii.97-8) but had been victorious over the Ambraciots (iii.112), sailed with the other two generals, having obtained permission to use the fleet, if he wished, around the coast of the Peloponnese (iv.2.4). The phrasing is significant: *Δημοσθένει δὲ ὄντι ἰδιώτῃ μετὰ τὴν ἀναχώρησιν τὴν ἐξ Ἀκαρνανίας αὐτῷ δεηθέντι εἶπον χρῆσθαι ταῖς ναυσὶ ταύταις, ἢν βούληται, περὶ τὴν Πελοπόννησον.* Some kind of purpose on the part of Demosthenes is clearly implied here; it was at his own request that permission to use the fleet was granted. The parenthetic condition seems also to reflect Demosthenes' reasoning or plan: that he actually wanted somehow to use the fleet around the Peloponnesian coast. Thucydides does not say anything more on this at this stage, and goes on to narrate the events around Pylos as they must have appeared to those who experienced them at the time of their occurrence. This narrative technique of relating an event as it happens puts the reader more or less in the same position as the actual historical agents. However, the above hints are enough to suggest that at the very initial stage of the discussion in the assembly Demosthenes had a plan in mind, although this was not fully revealed until an accidental storm forced the Athenian fleet to put in at Pylos.

They were off Laconia when the news that the Peloponnesian ships had reached Corcyra caused different reactions from the generals. On the one hand, Eurymedon and Sophocles wanted them to hurry to the island, but, on the other, Demosthenes urged them to touch at Pylos and "having done what was necessary, to continue their journey", *πράξαντας ἃ δεῖ τὸν πλοῦν ποιεῖσθαι* (iv.3.1). Again, the vague "what was necessary" points to Demosthenes' plan without giving details. The next sentence introduces the element of the unexpected and shows how human intentions and plans are liable to accidental and uncontrollable natural phenomena. "While the generals were arguing a storm chanced to come on and drove the fleet to Pylos", *ἀντιλεγόντων δὲ κατὰ τύχην χειμὼν ἐπιγενόμενος κατήνεγκε τὰς ναῦς ἐς τὴν Πύλον* (iv.3.1). Thucydides uses the expression *kata tychen* here in relation to the unexpected outbreak of the storm, which marks a turning point in the sense that it opens up the opportunity for Demosthenes to put his plan into effect. The genitive absolute *ἀντιλεγόντων* provides the temporal background against which the unexpected takes place.

The other accident that favoured the Athenians in the Pylos affair was the fire on Sphakteria: it broke out as a soldier by mistake set fire to a small portion of the wood. But then the fire was fanned by wind and burnt down the whole wood (iv.30.2). As in iv.3.1, we have to do here with an accidental natural phenomenon, which at some crucial moment randomly occurs and creates new circumstances for the human agents. But this does not mean that chance incidents cancel human intelligence and planning. Rather, in Demosthenes' case the accidental burning down of the wood on the island helped him see more clearly the advantages of attacking the Spartans stranded there and the possibility of an Athenian victory (iv.30.3; cf. 29.2). Similarly, at the investment of Plataea in 429 the Peloponnesians attempted to fire the town using wood, sulphur and pitch, and the result was "a fire greater than anyone had ever yet seen produced by human hand" (ii.77.4). In fact, the spontaneous conflagrations (*ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου πῦρ καὶ φλόγα*) caused by the wind in forests, Thucydides adds, would be comparable to that but not quite as great. In the last two examples, we see how both human agency and unpredictable or spontaneous natural phenomena can be responsible for a fire. What emerges from the above cases is not *tyche* as a random supernatural power that rules people's lives but, more precisely, as the intrusion of unexpected and imponderable circumstances which help or thwart human plans. The first is true of the Athenians and the latter of the Spartans (iv.3.1 and 30.2, respectively).

The anecdote in connection with the surrender of the Spartan army could suggest that archery was subject to a 'valour *versus* chance' debate. Thucydides narrates that, when an Athenian ally asked one of the Spartan prisoners if those who had fallen were men of honour, he received the following answer: "The *ἄτρακτος* – that is, the arrow – would be worth a great deal if it could tell men of honour from the rest; in allusion to the fact that the killed were those whom the stones and the arrows happened to hit (*ὁ ἐντυγχάνων τοῖς τε λίθοις καὶ τοξεύμασι διεφθείρατο*)" (iv.40.2). From the point of view of the defeated, arrows happen to hit indiscriminately, men of valour or not. Lycus in Euripides' *Heracles* scorns Heracles' valour by arguing that the bow is for cowards (159-64). In reply, Amphitryon defends the bow. The

archer is independent from the chances of close fighting; he can defend himself and is not "moored to chance" (*...τοῦτο δ' ἐν μάχῃ / σοφὸν μάλιστα, δρῶντα πολεμίους κακῶς / σώζειν τὸ σῶμα, μὴ 'κ τύχης ὡρμισμένον*, 201-3). In Aristotle's *Rhetoric* the arrow hitting one who stood by and not the man aimed at is one example exemplifying the idea that "fortune is a cause of those goods which are beyond calculation", *ἔστι δὲ καὶ τῶν παρὰ λόγον ἀγαθῶν αἰτία τύχη* (I. v. 17).

In Thucydides iii.49.4 *kata tychen* refers again to a natural phenomenon. The historian narrates how the second ship the Athenians sent off to Mytilene "by lucky chance" did not meet with any adverse wind (*κατὰ τύχην δὲ πνεύματος οὐδενὸς ἐναντιωθέντος*), and so it arrived at Mytilene a little after the first ship, just in time to prevent the intended massacre. Considerations of timing, human intentions and contingency interrelate at both Pylos and Mytilene. At v.37.3 the expression *kata tychen* is used to denote a lucky coincidence. The Boeotian envoys were pleased to hear the two Argive officials asking them to become allies of Argos, since "by lucky coincidence", *κατὰ τύχην*, the Argives asked them to do what their friends at Sparta had told them to do. The re-phrasing of this in the reaction of the Boeotarchs shows that the element of coincidence is prominent: they were very pleased with the idea and all the more enthusiastic as both sides, the Argives and the Spartans, coincided (*ἀμφοτέρωθεν ξυνεβεβήκει αὐτοῖς*) in asking them to do the same thing. We conclude that although the above three passages (iv.3.1, iii.49.4, v.37.3) share the primary meaning of 'chance' in the expression *kata tychen*, this can mean also "lucky coincidence" (v.37.3).

The historian presents accidents and lucky coincidences favouring the Athenians, especially in the Pylos affair. Their success there recurs in the subsequent narrative, but, ironically enough, only to foreshadow or highlight an Athenian disaster. It is telling that in 424 BC the Athenians punished the commanders of the first fleet to Sicily, who returned empty-handed after the unification of the Sicels, "for having taken bribes to depart when they might have subdued Sicily". Thucydides comments: "So thoroughly had the present prosperity (*τῇ [τε] παρούσῃ εὐτυχίᾳ χρώμενοι*) persuaded the citizens that nothing could withstand them, and that they could achieve what was possible

and impracticable alike, with means ample or inadequate it mattered not. The responsibility for this lay with their general extraordinary success (*ἡ παρὰ λόγον τῶν πλεόνων εὐπραγία*), which made them confuse their strength with their hopes" (iv.65.4).

The historian knows that the Athenian "general extraordinary success" informing their reaction in 424 was not bound to last for ever. At 422, as Cleon advanced to Amphipolis, Thucydides talks of the general's psychology in terms of his success at Pylos: "Cleon's temper was what it had been at Pylos, his success on that occasion having given him confidence in his capacity", *καὶ ἐς τὴν Πύλον εὐτυχήσας ἐπίστευσέ τι φρονεῖν* (v.7.3). But this time he was not successful. The Athenians were defeated and both generals, Cleon and Brasidas, were killed.

As iv.65.4 shows, it was not only the Athenian general who overestimated his abilities after the success at Pylos. Confidence in the power of their city was inspired in the Athenians and made them blind to the realistic possibility that things might change.[20] Indeed, after the defeats at Delium and Amphipolis the general feeling in Athens, as Thucydides narrates, was one of fear, lack of confidence and repentance that they had not exploited the opportunity for peace which the aftermath of the Pylos affair had offered, *μετεμέλοντό τε ὅτι μετὰ τὰ ἐν Πύλῳ καλῶς παρασχὸν οὐ ξυνέβησαν* (v.14.2).

Moreover, the historian concludes his harrowing account of the final battle at the harbour of Syracuse (vii.71) with a retrospective look at Pylos. The seriousness of the Athenian defeat is couched in terms of a comparison with what the Spartans had suffered at Pylos. The comparison contains a tragic reversal: "Indeed, the panic of the present moment had never been surpassed. They now suffered very nearly what they had inflicted at Pylos; as then the Spartans with the loss of their fleet lost also the men who had crossed over to the island, so now the Athenians had no hope of escaping by land,

---

[20] Compare their presumptuous and almost superhuman attitude in the Melian dialogue. Although the Athenians are right to argue that invisible hopes deceive the weak (v. 103), they are blind to the reality that this applies to all humans, as Diodotus argues at iii. 45. In fact, it was hope and desire for more which had partly inspired the Sicilian expedition. Although the Athenians are more realistic than the Melians when arguing for the natural law of power *versus* fairness and justice, and that the gods favour the strong (v. 105), the degree of Athenian shortsightedness and infatuation with their power becomes tragically evident in the following

without the help of some extraordinary accident, *ἤν μή τι παρὰ λόγον γίγνηται*"(vii.71.7).

ii) The *etyche* and participle construction

Synchronicity is the predominant element in the *ἔτυχε* and participle construction.[21] Thucydides often uses this to introduce a new event that takes place while something else is in progress. For example, in vii.73 after the defeat of the Athenians in the final naval battle in the Syracusan harbour Hermocrates' plan was that the Syracusans should march out and cut off the roads as the Athenians would try to retreat by land. The authorities agreed to this plan, but thought that the people of Syracuse "would not want to obey, as they were just then (*ἄρτι*) rejoicing and resting after a great battle at sea and at the same time they were celebrating a festival (*καὶ ἅμα ἑορτῆς οὔσης*) --for they had on that day a sacrifice to Heracles (*ἔτυχε γὰρ αὐτοῖς Ἡρακλεῖ ταύτην τὴν ἡμέραν θυσία οὖσα*)" (vii.73.2). Here the *etyche* and participle construction is used as an explanation (epexegetic *gar*-clause) of the preceding participial clause and the contemporaneous aspect is manifest: the context is full of temporal markers underlining simultaneity (*ἄρτι, ἅμα, ταύτην τὴν ἡμέραν*).

Occasionally there is an implication that the event described by the *etyche* and participle construction takes place unexpectedly and with no design on the part of those involved. For example, Gylippos arrived in the nick of time to save Syracuse from complete investment: "He happened to arrive at a critical moment (*ἔτυχε δὲ κατὰ τοῦτο τοῦ καιροῦ ἐλθών*) when the Athenians had already finished a double wall of six or seven furlongs to the great harbour, with the exception of a small portion next to the sea, which they were still building; and in the remainder of the circle towards Trogilus on the other sea, stones had been laid ready for building for the greater part of the distance and some points had been left half finished, while others were entirely completed. So great was the danger Syracuse came close to" (*παρὰ τοσοῦτον μὲν αἱ Συράκουσαι ἦλθον κινδύνου*) (vii.2.4).

---

chapters of the *History*; "in the Sicilian disaster it is their turn to reach out vainly for hope and to the gods when all else has failed", to use Macleod's turn of phrase [(1983) 62].

[21] See Gomme (1981) 488-9.

There is an element of unexpected and, to some extent, accidental reversal in the expressions *κατὰ τοῦτο τοῦ καιροῦ, παρὰ τοσοῦτον ... κινδύνου* and in the adverb *αἰφνιδίως* (vii.3.1) which gives the Athenian reaction to Gylippos' sudden attack. Moreover, his whole trip to Italy and Sicily was quite eventful and dramatic. When he was off Leucas false information that Syracuse was already completely invested made Gylippos abandon all hope for saving Sicily (vi.104.1). However, he continued his journey to Italy, leaving the Corinthian ships behind to follow him later on. While he was off the Terinean gulf, he was badly hit by rough weather (vi.104.2). Then more correct news reached him: that Syracuse was not completely invested. His decision to sail to Himera and then go to Syracuse by land proved to be a good one. He avoided risking sailing in by sea with Sicily on his right; in other words, having taken his lesson after the bad weather he had met off the Terinean gulf he was loath to expose himself to the chance of changeable weather. Either by persuasion (vii.1.3) or through favourable circumstance (vii.1.4) he managed to raise additional forces. The fact that the Corinthian commander Gongylos, the last to set out from Leucas, was the first to arrive at Syracuse seems to be another unexpected circumstance, favourable for Gylippos. The Syracusans were told of his approach and took courage on the very moment they were on the brink of disaster. All the above observations concerning the narrative before vii.2.4 point to the conclusion that the expression *etyche...elthon* contains not only a temporal but also a fortuitous aspect.[22] These seem to interrelate and, hence, it is often unclear whether the first predominates and the latter faintly accompanies. The way in which events are described and their context can indicate that temporal and accidental aspects interact.

---

[22] I agree with Gomme [(1981) 488] that there is both a fortuitous and a fortunate aspect in the use of *etyche* and participle at iv.9.1 and 13.4. In the latter case, the Spartans "did not put out to sea, nor had they then done what they had intended (*οὔτε ἃ διενοήθησαν...ἔτυχον ποιήσαντες*) to blockade the entrances". Rood (1998) rightly points out that the negatives stress the Spartans' mistake, but, I think, presses too hard the distinction between "timing" and "chance" (33). To recognise an element of chance here would not imply a lack of purpose on the part of the Spartans, but a lack of design on the part of the Athenians. As it happened, the Spartans' initial purpose was not put into effect and this occurred at a very opportune moment for the Athenians: they grasped the opportunity of entering the harbour unmolested and attacking the Spartans. This was not planned by the Athenians and, therefore, for them it was both fortunate and accidental.

This case is classified by Schneider as an example in which synchronicity is more prominent than fortuitousness.[23] Even if one interprets vii.2.4 in this way, I shall argue that it is hard to distinguish between synchronicity or coincidence and accident.[24] The meeting of two distinct lines of action often means that two events happen at the same point in time (temporal aspect) and that this takes place by chance (accidental aspect). The element of chance inherent in this situation can be seen in two areas, that is, in terms of relevant purposes and explanations. First, the agents may have some purpose in mind but this purpose does not bring about the actual outcome. The classic example to illustrate this is the one used by Aristotle in his analysis of causes in *Physics* 2.4-6. He takes *automaton*[25] to include anything which happens for no purpose and *tyche* to denote those things that might have been (but as a matter of fact were not) done expressly for benefit (2.6. 197^{a}36-7). Thus if you happen to meet someone who owes you money in the market place, and recover the debt, the outcome is lucky (2.5. 196^{b}34-197^{a}5, 197^{a}16), since you did not go there for that purpose although you might have done. 'To collect a debt' is a perfectly intelligible reason for going to the market, although as it happens it was not on this occasion operative. Second, coincidences may appear accidental either because they have no explanations or because they may have many and indefinite ones, which do not really explain the synchronicity involved. In the above example, the question 'Why did one have to catch his debtor in the market place *on that very morning*?' can either have no explanation (that is, it was a coincidence) or many, indefinite and not really relevant explanations (that is, because he wanted to see someone, to go to litigate, or to go to the theatre).[26]

In his chapter on Pylos Cornford argues that "ἔτυχον denotes the *coincidence* [his italics] of two events with the implication that the coincidence was undesigned or accidental. Often this implication is not *felt* [his italics] at all".[27] However, he is uncertain how much accident to allow in

---

[23] Schneider (1974) 96 and n. 185.

[24] Etymologically 'coincidence' (cum + in+ cado) combines synchronicity and accident, while 'chance', 'accident', 'incident' and 'coincidence' are all cognates.

[25] Thucydides uses this term of phenomena that take place spontaneously and are not caused by human agents (ii.77.4; vi.36.2; vi.91.7).

[26] On this see R. Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame*, (London, 1980) 3-25.

[27] Cornford (1907) 85, n. 2.

etychon. On the one hand, he claims that the implication of the accidental is often imperceptible; on the other, he sees a faint suggestion of accident in *etychon* (iv.5.1; iv.9.1; iv.13.4), which is enough to sustain "the tone of accident" in *κατὰ τύχην* (iv.3.1) and in *ὁρμὴ ἐνέπεσε* (iv.4.1).[28] My objection is that only a reasoned discussion of the context can help us decide whether the temporal and the accidental aspect coexist or not. Often it is the case that different perspectives give prominence to different aspects. At any rate, I have suggested that it is hard to draw a clear-cut line between synchronicity and accident. This is the reason why we tend to regard events that happen at the same time as accidental, which, as Aristotle's analysis shows, need not mean purposeless or irrational.

To a modern mentality it is not perhaps self-explanatory why Thucydides should refer to a series of natural phenomena – earthquakes, eclipses, famines and the plague (i.23.3) – which were external to and coincidental with the unprecedented disaster and loss of human lives brought by the Peloponnesian War (i.23.2). This partly reflects the historian's sensitivity to coincidence and the intrusion of unexpected circumstances in human action, especially in cases of natural phenomena occurring at the same time as the important events he wants to focus upon. Moreover, coincidence and the unexpected are not the only important elements here. The conjunction of all sorts of *παθήματα* brings home to us the sheer importance and size of the Peloponnesian War. A conception of a dark time of tragedy and disaster in which the natural world joined in is also at play. "Thucydides' vision of history is of greatness measured by war, and greatness of war measured by destruction, or *πάθος*".[29] The study of the *tyche* language in Thucydides forms part of a similar aspect, characteristic of all historical eventuality; namely, the juxtaposition and interaction of numerous factors of a different character. Not only human agents but also natural phenomena, not only plans and interests

---

[28] ibid. p.88 and n. 2. Cornford does not discuss these cases in detail but takes more or less for granted that the *etychon* and participle construction strengthens his assumption that the occupation of Pylos was "*the most casual thing in the world* [his italics]" and, further, that Thucydides "really saw an *agency* [his italics], called 'Fortune', at work in these events" (97). I find Rood's criticism on these points justified: [(1998) 26-31].

[29] A. M. Parry, *The Language of Achilles and other papers*, (Oxford, 1989) 289. On this see also H. D. F. Kitto, *Poiesis*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1966) 270-9 and H. Strasburger, *Homer und die Geschichtsschreibung*, (Heidelberg, 1972) 33-4.

but also unexpected imponderable circumstances come into play, oppose or interrelate and create the historical reality.

In cases where a crucial about-turn occurs, *etyche* with a participle may introduce the unexpected event on which the reversal depends. At ii.91 the historian describes how an Athenian ship exploits a circumstance near the shore of Naupactus and contributes to snatching the victory from the Peloponnesians. The latter had the upper hand (ii.90.4 – 91.1), but the situation changes suddenly when the Athenian ship manages to sink a Leucadian one: "After a while the Peloponnesians came up, chanting the paean for their victory as they sailed on; a Leucadian ship far ahead of the rest was still chasing a single remaining Athenian one. But there happened to be a merchantman lying at anchor in the roadsteads (*ἔτυχε δὲ ὁλκὰς ὁρμοῦσα μετέωρος*), which the Athenian ship found time to sail round, and struck the Leucadian ship in chase amidships and sank her. An exploit so sudden and unexpected produced a panic among the Peloponnesians (*τοῖς μὲν οὖν Πελοποννησίοις γενομένου τούτου ἀπροσδοκήτου τε καὶ παρὰ λόγον φόβος ἐμπίπτει*)" (ii.91.2-4). This unexpected incident leads to a decisive blow against the Peloponnesians, who, overwhelmed by their panic and disorder, are easily defeated by the Athenians.

Perhaps the grimmest turning-point in the *History* introduced by the *tygchanein* and participle construction is the eclipse of the moon in 413 (vii.50.4), which prevented the Athenians from sailing away and made them stay in Sicily to meet their final doom. For us the eclipse *per se* as an astronomical phenomenon is not a matter of chance. But, although fifth-century astronomers clearly possessed some knowledge about celestial phenomena, in all likelihood lunar eclipses could not be accurately foretold.[30] Therefore, fifth-century Athenian laymen may have experienced the lunar eclipse of 413 as a portentous occurrence (cf. vii.79.3). The chance involved in the event was apparently that the eclipse took place at *πασσέληνος* (full moon) and, hence, was clearly visible. The coincidence is important and fatal. The eclipse happened suddenly while the Athenians were in such a predicament that secret orders had been given for withdrawal. But under the

---

[30] See Gomme's comment on ii.28.

new circumstances religious Nicias and most of the Athenians refused even to deliberate further until the "thrice nine days" prescribed by the seers had passed. Unlike Nicias, in 431 Pericles is said to have explained to the alarmed Athenians the phenomenon of solar eclipse that occurred then (Cic.*Rep.* 1.16.25; cf. Plut.*Per*.35.2). A similar lesson of sophistic enlightenment at 413 would have fallen on deaf ears: in the ever-worsening conditions for the Athenians in Sicily reason is totally superseded by fear and ingrained superstition. The reaction of the Athenians to the lunar eclipse at vii. 50.4 shows the limitations of human knowledge and reason in the face of dire or incalculable circumstances.

iii) *tyche* and important themes in the *History*

Thucydides lays repeated emphasis on the human tendency to want to trust *τύχη*.[31] Making good use of one's present *εὐτυχία* and the risks attending one's not doing so is a recurrent motif in the speeches and the narrative.[32] Like *ἐλπίς*, *τύχη* is a positive power for deception; this goes with a demonic, superhuman conception of human nature. It is indicative that *ἀνθρωπεία φύσις* has usually bad or at least ambivalent connotations in Thucydides.[33] The sinister idea that it is impossible to prevent human nature from doing what it has set its mind upon (iii.45.7) has to do with the powerful deception inspired by hope, desire and good fortune, and points towards self-destruction. Similar views on human fallibility due to fatal deception by "winged" hopes and transient success, overweening arrogance and greediness or mad desires -- whether the gods join in or not-- can be found in contemporary and earlier literature, especially Pindar, Herodotus and the tragedians.[34] In this light, these ideas apparently form part of Greek popular morality and the tragic view of life. Therefore, I am not convinced by Cornford's argument that similar

---

[31] See, for example, iii.97.2; iv.18.3; cf. vi.23.

[32] E.g. iv.17.4, 21.2; iii.39.4, 45.5-7.

[33] See ii.35.2; iii.45.7, 64.4, 82.2, 84.2; vii.14.2, 14.4, 48.4; v.105.2. Further, I agree with Stahl's rendering of *τὸ ἀνθρώπινον* at i.22.4 as including unpredictable chance and changeable circumstances (*τύχη, αἱ μεταβολαὶ τῶν ξυντυχιῶν*); see Stahl (1966) 33 and 102.

[34] For example, see Pind. *Ol.*12, 5ff.; *Pyth.*3, 20 and compare Thuc. vi.13.1: *μηδ', ὅπερ ἂν αὐτοὶ πάθοιεν, δυσέρωτας εἶναι τῶν ἀπόντων*; Aesch. *Ag.* 385ff. and 394; *Persae* 93ff.; Soph. *Antig.* 616ff.; Eur. fr.271 N (*Auge*); Hdt. viii.77.

views in Thucydides should be pigeonholed as a particularly Aeschylean influence.[35]

In the *History* *τύχη*, either as success or as bad fortune, often affects people's mood and confidence levels (iv.55.3; v.75.3). Accordingly, engaging in 'fortune talk' is a rhetorical device for building up confidence and usually occurs in exhortatory speeches before crucial battles. This has to do with the psychological comfort people derive from believing that fortune and success attend them in their undertakings. The formula *τύχῃ ἀγαθῇ τῇ Ἀθηναίων* "with the good fortune of the Athenians" occurs twice in fifth-century inscriptions (iv.118.11; Meiggs and Lewis, 52, 40-5). Emphasis on favourable fortune is common in contexts of wishing for the best possible outcome in an undertaking or of foregrounding the possibility that things will go well. *Agathei tychei* as a formula of good omen may be seen as a means to ward off danger and unfavourable outcomes, elements linked with any new and risky enterprise. This could be an alliance between states, or wartime building projects, or the Sicilian expedition,[36] or in a tragedy the intrigue of the characters before or after recognition.[37]

Several occurrences of the acclamation *agathei tychei* in Aristophanes are proof enough of its colloquial nature.[38] This formula simply expresses a wish, but on another level it may have a psychological aspect: it suggests that at least some Athenians thought that they were favoured by good fortune and that this would continue to be so (cf. iv.17.4-5, 18.3-5 and 65.4). The tragic reversal of this wishful thinking becomes manifest in book 7, just before the last battle in the harbour of Syracuse. The words Gylippos uses to encourage the Syracusans and express his belief that they could defeat the Athenians are striking indeed: "The fortune of our greatest enemies having thus handed itself over to us (*τύχην ἀνδρῶν ἑαυτὴν παραδεδωκυῖαν πολεμιωτάτων*) and their disorder being what I have described, let us join battle in anger" (vii.68.1). Nicias also

---

[35] See chapters VIII and IX in *Thucydides Mythistoricus* (London, 1907).

[36] See above in Chapter One. The accounts of Pheidias' statues of Athena (440-39 BC; see Meiggs-Lewis 54, A1) begin with the invocation: *Θεοί Ἀθενᾶ Τύχε*. The building-accounts of the Propylaia (434-3 BC; Meiggs-Lewis 60) also start with: *[Θεοί Ἀ]θηναία [Τύχε]*. The acclamation *τύχει ἀγαθεῖ* occurs also in decrees relating to the Sicilian expedition (415 BC; Meiggs-Lewis 78a, 78b).

[37] For example, see Aesch. *Cho*. 138-9, 738-8; Eur. *Hel*. 688-9 and *IT* 841-2.

employs a sort of subdued 'fortune talk' in the attempt to offer hope to the Athenians: "Remember the surprises of war (*τῶν ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις παραλόγων*), and with the hope that fortune will stand by us (*τὸ τῆς τύχης κἂν μεθ' ἡμῶν ἐλπίσαντες στῆναι*), prepare to fight again in a manner worthy of the number which you see yourselves to be" (vii.61.3).

After the defeat of the Athenians and just before they start their retreat, Nicias engages again in 'god talk' and 'fortune talk': "I have, therefore, still strong hope for the future and our misfortunes do not terrify me as much as they might. Indeed, we may hope that they will be lightened: our enemies have had good fortune enough (*ἱκανὰ γὰρ τοῖς τε πολεμίοις ηὐτύχηται*); and if any of the gods was offended at our expedition, we have already been amply punished" (vii.77.3). This goes with a line of thought that *τύχη* ought not to remain always the same. Similarly, in tragedy we often find references to the natural law of change and "the instability of all things human".[39]

The way Thucydides himself talks about the defeat of the Athenians in the final naval battle drives home the tragic wisdom of the reversal of fortune. At vii.75.7 he comments: "For this was by far the greatest reverse that ever befell a Hellenic army. They had come to enslave others, and were departing in fear of being enslaved themselves". As Theseus says to Creon in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*: "Know that by being captor you are captured and you, the hunter, have become the prey of *tyche*" (1025-7).

These cases turn on the reversal of roles and fortune. Further, perceived roles and states of affairs can be reflected in the way people talk about fortune. At vii.77.3 religious Nicias tries to encourage the battered Athenians by mixing 'fortune talk' and 'god talk'. These are often employed by the weak and the desperate.[40] The hopeless predicament of the Athenians towards the end of book 7 is similar to the Melians' predicament in book 5. The whole Melian dialogue sharply contrasts the cynicism of the Athenian power with the hopeless idealism of the Melians. In this light, they connect

---

[38] See *Peace* 360 and compare the phrase *helesthai tychei agathei* in an Athenian inscription of 415 BC (Meiggs-Lewis 78); *Birds* 436, 675; *Wasps* 869.

[39] Heath (1987) 158 with note. See also Eur. *IT* 721f., *Hel.* 1446ff., 1099 and H. Strohm, "Trug und Täuschung in der euripideischen Dramatik", in E.-R. Schwinge (ed.), *Euripides*, Wege der Forschung LXXXIX, (Darmstadt, 1968) 345-372, at 360.

[40] In cases of extreme danger, people call on gods, not on *tyche*. See, for example, iii.59.2 and vii.69.2.

tyche with the divine: "You may be sure that we are as well aware as you of the difficulty of fighting against your power and fortune (*πρὸς δύναμίν τε τὴν ὑμετέραν καὶ τὴν τύχην*), unless the terms are equal. But we trust that the gods may grant us fortune as good as yours (*πιστεύομεν τῇ μὲν τύχῃ ἐκ τοῦ θείου μὴ ἐλασσώσεσθαι*), since we are just men fighting against unjust, and that what we lack in power will be made up by the alliance of the Lacedaemonians, who are bound, if not by anything else, by kinship and shame to come to our aid. Our confidence, therefore, after all is not so utterly irrational" (v.104).

The Athenians in their reply eschew the issue of justice, and stressing that neither their pretensions nor their conduct goes against the gods express their belief in the natural law of power: the most powerful rules (v.105.1-3). In the end, the Melians refuse to submit, declaring once more their trust in fortune coming from gods: "Our resolution, Athenians, is the same as it was at the first. We will not in a moment deprive of freedom a city that has been inhabited these seven hundred years; but we put our trust in the fortune by which the gods have preserved it until now (*τῇ τε μέχρι τοῦδε σωζούσῃ τύχῃ ἐκ τοῦ θείου αὐτὴν...πιστεύοντες*), and in the help of men, that is, the Lacedaemonians; and so we will try to save ourselves" (v.112.2).

The final annihilation of the Melians proved them to be wrong in their trust in divine fortune. Yet those who are at this point powerful annihilators, the Athenians, are themselves destroyed in Sicily, partly deceived by the excessive confidence in their power and good fortune. In retrospect, it is a tragic irony that they attribute deception by fortune and hope to the Melians in the conclusion of the Melian dialogue: "Well, you alone, as it seems to us, judging from these resolutions, regard what is future as more certain than what is before your eyes, and what is out of sight, in your eagerness, as already coming to pass; and as you have staked most on, and trusted most in, the Lacedaemonians, your fortune, and your hopes, so will you be most completely destroyed (*καὶ Λακεδαιμονίοις καὶ τύχῃ καὶ ἐλπίσι πλεῖστον δὴ παραβεβλημένοι καὶ πιστεύσαντες πλεῖστον καὶ σφαλήσεσθαι*)" (v.113).

The Athenians, intoxicated with their unprecedented success at Pylos and overconfident about their fortune and power (iv.65.4), get enmeshed in a similar deception; for them the result of the Sicilian expedition was massive

catastrophe. At v.111 the Athenians argue that submission to Athens involves no dishonour for the Melians. When people lead themselves to disaster the disgrace accompanying lack of judgement (*μετὰ ἀνοίας*) is bigger than when the failure comes as the result of misfortune (*τύχῃ*). In real life misjudgement and misfortune as causes of a disaster may merge, although the Athenians here keep them apart for the sake of the argument. For example, the Athenian catastrophe in Sicily was caused mainly by their misjudgement, errors and overconfidence, partly by the ability of their opponents and partly by unfavourable outward circumstances, such as the sudden arrival of Gylippos just in time to 'turn the tide' against the Athenians once and for all.

The distinction between intelligence (*γνώμη, διάνοια, ξύνεσις*) as an inner characteristic and fortune (*tyche*) as an incalculable external entity is often made in the *History*. In his speech just before the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, Pericles refers twice to *tyche* in connection with human planning or wisdom. At i.140.1 he finds a similarity between the course of events and human plans; they can both develop in an arbitrary way. The whole paragraph needs to be quoted: "There is one principle (*γνώμης*), Athenians, which I hold to through everything, and that is the principle of no concession to the Peloponnesians. I know that the spirit which inspires men while they are being persuaded to make war, is not always retained in action; that as circumstances change, resolutions change (*πρὸς δὲ τὰς ξυμφορὰς καὶ τὰς γνώμας τρεπομένους*). Yet I see that now as before the same, almost literally the same, counsel is demanded of me; and I put it to those of you, who are allowing yourselves to be persuaded, to support the national resolves even in the case of failure (*ἢν ἄρα τι καὶ σφαλλώμεθα*), or to forfeit all credit for their wisdom (*ξυνέσεως*) in the event of success (*κατορθοῦντας*). For sometimes the course of things (*τὰς ξυμφορὰς τῶν πραγμάτων*) is as arbitrary (*ἀμαθῶς*; unwise or unforeseeable) as the plans of man (*τὰς διανοίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*); indeed this is why we usually hold fortune responsible for whatever does not happen as we expected (*δι' ὅπερ καὶ τὴν τύχην, ὅσα ἂν παρὰ λόγον ξυμβῇ, εἰώθαμεν αἰτιάσθαι*)".

ἀμαθῶς may have either an active sense, that is, 'in an unwise way' or a passive one, that is, 'in an unforeseeable way'. Gomme sees irony in the active sense and paraphrases: " 'we may suffer disaster (*ἢν ἄρα τι καὶ*

σφαλλώμεθα), for (though a man make a wise decision) the turn of events may prove as unwise as the plans of men', 'fortune may support the wrong side'". However, I cannot see how this last statement can be supported by the text. The *gar*-clause explains the possibility of failure by bringing out a similarity between what is regularly distinguished: the course of events (something uncontrollable) and human plans (which attempt to control events). They both can develop in an unintelligible or unforeseeable way and so people can lose control over them. This is what is normally assumed about outward circumstances elsewhere in the *History*,[41] but to claim the same about human plans is uncommon. Yet Pericles by saying that resolutions may change together with circumstances strikes a note of potential similarity between the two, which the main thrust of his argument in this context disapproves: he urges the Athenians to stick to the principle of allowing no concession to the Peloponnesians. He also seems to disapprove exclusively ascribing to fortune whatever does not happen as expected. The reference to human plans just before δι' ὅπερ may imply that for him human intelligence is another, if not the main, cause. At the end of his speech Pericles urges the Athenians to live up to the reputation of their fathers, who succeeded in beating back the Medes "more by mental quality (γνώμῃ) than by fortune (τύχῃ), more by daring (τόλμῃ) than by strength (δυνάμει)" (i.144.4).

τύχη pertains to war in the sense that the latter's outcome is unpredictable, and in a state of war numerous incalculable conditions affect human life. The Athenian envoys at the congress in Sparta argue that arbitration is preferable to war, whose course and outcome lie in the dark: "Consider the vast influence of accident in war (τοῦ δὲ πολέμου τὸν παράλογον)[42], before you are engaged in it. As it continues, it generally becomes an affair of chances (φιλεῖ ἐς τύχας τὰ πολλὰ περιίστασθαι), chances from which neither of us is exempt, and whose event we must risk in the dark" (i.78.1-2). Similarly Archidamus, who is described as a wise and moderate

---

[41] In tragedy also events can be ἀμαθῆ (Eur. *Tro.* 1205) or in *Heracles* 347 even Zeus is called ἀμαθής by desperate Amphitryon. Both gods and τύχαι may partake of the indifference of the mere course of events.

[42] Compare ii.61.3, 85.2; iii.16.2; vii.28.3, 55, 61.3 and viii.24.5.

man (i.79.2), presents the idea that "the freaks of chance are not determinable by calculation"[43] as part of the Spartan education.

Thucydides also in his account of the Corcyrean revolution stresses the rule of varying circumstances and necessities in the state of war (iii.82.2). The course of war is governed by changing circumstances and can never be restricted to the conditions that each of the combatants would like to see permanently fixed. At iv.18 the Spartan representatives warn the Athenians of the precariousness of their success at Pylos: "Nevertheless, we have not been brought to this by any decay in our power, or through having our heads turned by aggrandisement; no, our resources are what they have always been, and our error has been an error of judgement, to which all are equally liable. Accordingly the prosperity which your city now enjoys, and the accession that it has lately received, must not make you fancy that fortune will always be with you (*ὥστε οὐκ εἰκὸς...τὸ τῆς τύχης οἴεσθαι αἰεὶ μεθ' ὑμῶν ἔσεσθαι*). Indeed sensible men are prudent enough to treat their gains as precarious, just as they would also keep a clear head in adversity, and think that war, so far from staying within the limit to which a combatant may wish to limit it, will run the course that its chances prescribe (*ὡς ἄν αἱ τύχαι αὐτῶν ἡγήσωνται*); and thus, not being puffed up by confidence in military success, they are less likely to come to grief, and most ready to make peace, if they can, while their fortune lasts. This, Athenians, you have a good opportunity to do now with us, and thus to escape the possible disasters which may follow upon your refusal, and the consequent imputation of having owed to accident (*τύχῃ*) even your present advantages, when you might have left behind you a reputation for power (*ἰσχύος*) and wisdom (*ξυνέσεως*) which nothing could endanger" (iv.18.2-5).

Admittedly, the fact that the Spartans impersonate the voice of caution and pacification here has to do with their weak position after their defeat at Pylos.[44] Yet, the historian himself admits at viii. 24.4 that to his knowledge

---

[43] *τὰς προσπιπτούσας τύχας οὐ λόγῳ διαιρετάς* (i.84.4).

[44] Similarly, in 422, after the defeats of the Athenians at Delium and Amphipolis, Thucydides describes the general desire for peace (v.14) and tells us that for Nicias the continuation of the war would be tantamount to exposure to danger and changeable fortune: "Nicias, while not suffering (*ἀπαθής*) and honoured, wanted to secure his good fortune (*διασώσασθαι τὴν εὐτυχίαν*), to obtain a present release from trouble for himself and the citizens, and hand down to posterity a name as an ever-successful statesman, and thought the way to do this was to

the Spartans and the Chians were the only people "who knew how to be wise in prosperity and ruled their city the more securely the greater it grew", a characteristic the Athenians lack, and that contributed to their ruin. The outcome of the Sicilian expedition shows that the Spartan representatives in the above passage were right. The bad policies of Pericles' successors and the infatuation of the Athenians with their good fortune and ruling power led them to their Waterloo (ii.65.11). As early as 422 Thucydides makes it clear that the course of the war was developing differently from the expectations of both the Athenians and the Spartans (v.14).

Contrary to general expectation the war was not terminated after the Athenian disaster at Sicily. Athens did not remain idle. The historian stresses the paradox when he describes the Athenian success at Chios at 412; the Chians, despite their reputation for being wise in prosperity, were mistaken to believe that the Athenians had no power left: "Nor was this [i.e. the Chian] revolt, in which they might seem to have erred on the side of rashness, ventured upon until they had numerous and gallant allies to share the danger with them, and until they perceived the Athenians after the Sicilian disaster themselves no longer denying the thoroughly desperate state of their affairs. And if they were thrown out by one of the surprises which upset human calculations (*εἰ δέ τι ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρωπείοις τοῦ βίου παραλόγοις ἐσφάλησαν*), they found out their mistake in common with many others who believed, like them, in the speedy collapse of the Athenian power" (viii. 24.5).

Although Thucydides does not refer explicitly to *tyche* here, his comment on the Chian error of judgement sits well with the main meaning of *tyche* in the *History*: that of unexpected circumstances that introduce reversals and upset human plans, expectations or normal order. This is especially true in wartime and in cases of overconfident individuals and states showing excessive reliance on their good fortune and power. The element of the unexpected introducing new circumstances is also expressed by the *etyche* and participle construction. The temporal aspect in this, synchronicity, cannot really be distinguished from coincidence and contingency. Things may happen that run "on separate but parallel tracks, and occasionally flashed by

---

keep out of danger and commit himself as little as possible to fortune (*ἐλάχιστα τύχῃ αὐτὸν*

one another with blazes of confusing light, like trains passing one another in the night".[45] Seen from different perspectives simultaneous events may seem more or less accidental. Thucydides presents human purpose and intelligence side-by-side with incalculable contingency and precarious good fortune, which are inherent in all things human. In his more human-centred and naturalistic outlook, *τύχη*, *παράλογος*, and *ἀνάγκη* seem to have replaced divine interventions, a common element elsewhere in Greek literature.[46] However, the intrusion of unexpected circumstances does not cancel human intelligence. Rather, both these factors are taken into account as connected with human nature and life.

παραδίδωσι), and that peace could make this keeping out of danger possible..." (v.16.1).

[45] To borrow the image and the words of Robertson Davies, *The Cornish Trilogy*, (Penguin Books, 1992) 264.

[46] As Ernst Heitsch points out, " Geschichte ist – nach Thukydides – unberechenbar nicht deshalb, weil sie von Göttern bestimmt wird, die möglicherweise neidisch sind und auf jeden Fall ihre eigenen Ziele verfolgen, sondern weil die Fülle der Faktoren, die im geschichtlichen Prozeß aufeinander wirken, von denen, die selbst in diesem Prozeß stehen, nicht mehr zu übersehen ist und daher für ihr eigenes Handeln auch nicht angemessen berücksichtigt werden kann" [*Geschichte und Situationen bei Thukydides*, (Stuttgart und Leipzig, 1996) 98].

CHAPTER FOUR

DIVINE INTERVENTION, HUMAN UNCERTAINTY AND THE UNEXPECTED IN EURIPIDES

Ion, *Iphigeneia in Tauris* and *Helen* are the subject of discussion in this chapter. These plays, composed probably between 418 and 412, have been characterised by modern scholarship as Tyche-plays.[1] My objection to this term is twofold: first, it is not very helpful, in the sense that it may convey the misguided impression that the action in these plays is directed by some vague supernatural power called Tyche. This may be true of Hellenistic romances, (and it is very occasionally found in Menander) but not of Classical literature, despite the fact that sometimes *tyche* is indeed spoken of as a personified supernatural force. Second, it does not really tell us anything about the complex nature of *tyche*-language, which is not restricted to Euripides' later plays or to his so-called 'tragicomedies'.[2] *τύχη* or *τύχαι* in the sense of good or bad fortune or unexpected circumstances is part of the human condition and of suffering, the most broad and general theme of any Greek tragedy. It is also found in connection with the word *περιπέτεια*, the sudden reversal of circumstances on which the plot of many tragedies depends. Although Aristotle does not refer to *τύχη* in his discussion of the best tragic plots

---

[1] W. Zürcher, *Die Darstellung des Menschen im Drama des Euripides*, (Basel 1947) 149ff. and 180f. gives this tag to Euripides' later plays as opposed to the earlier *ὀργή* -plays; in the first category the characters are driven here and there through the play of *tyche*, but in the end reunite after a great deal of effort for happiness. See also W. Kerscher, *Handlungsmotive Euripideischer Dramengestalten*, (Munich, 1969) 134-9 and 271. I find his observation that *tyche* plays a role also in the earlier plays correct (137). On *tyche* in Euripides see also A. Lesky, *Greek Tragic Poetry*, transl. by M. Dillon, (New Haven, 1983) 324ff.; A. Spira, *Untersuchungen zum Deus ex machina bei Sophocles und Euripides*, (Kallmünz, 1960) 132ff.; R. Leimbach, *Euripides Ion. Eine Interpretation*, (diss. Frankfurt, 1971) 113-117 and 128-130.

[2] See my discussion of *τύχη* in Chapter Five. In Euripides fortune talk spans all his plays, early and late. In fact, the only play that has not a single occurrence of *tyche* is the *Bacchae*, which was produced posthumously. R. P. Winnington-Ingram, *Euripides and Dionysus*, (Bristol, 1997)[2] notes that "Dionysus directs the action of this play towards his own triumph", and therefore *tyche* "is not to be found in the *Bacchae*, where nothing is left to 'chance' " (3 and n. 3). McDonald (1978) refers to Winnington-Ingram's remark and adds: "We have seen *τύχη* plays where *τύχη* was an important force and *εὐτυχής* terms predominated (e.g. *Ion*). The *Bacchae* is a *δαίμων* play where a *δαίμων* is important and *εὐδαίμων* terms predominate" (252f and n. 2).

combining *ἀναγνώρισις* (recognition) and *περιπέτεια* (reversal of fortune), these two elements are both verbally[3] and thematically linked with *τύχη*.

Questions of divine agency, free will and uncertain fortune lie at the heart of the tragic vision of the world and of many Euripidean plays. In the *anagnorisis* and *mechanema* plays Euripides emphasises the power of the incalculable, the unpredictable, to affect human plans, either by frustrating them or by effecting a sudden change from extreme danger to unhoped-for happiness. The prominent place of the exposed hero motif in his *oeuvre* reveals his keen interest in plots containing adventure, intrigue and recognition as well as sudden changes from the fear of death to unexpected salvation. In all these areas we may see links between the actually divine and the unplannable or the seemingly accidental.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse Euripides' ambiguous treatment of *τύχη* in *IT*, *Helen* and *Ion,* and to show how he creates surprising and exciting plays by employing patterns of chance and unpredictable fluctuations.[4] Further, by examining the occurrences of *τύχη* in these plays, I shall argue that fortune talk is connected, on the one hand, with the divine and, on the other, with limited human perspectives and uncertainty. Solmsen was the first to note the motive of intrigue (*μηχάνημα*) in Euripides' *Electra*, *IT*, *Helen*, *Ion* and *Orestes*, in connection with the themes of *σωτηρία*, *εὐτυχία* and *τύχη*.[5] However, Solmsen goes too far when he argues that especially *Ion*, *IT* and *Helen* represent a period in Euripides' production in which "the dramatic event is no longer directed by human will, but by the power of *τύχη* which acts above people and events and unexpectedly thwarts their plans".[6] This overstatement was noticed and criticised by Gerda Busch, who concludes her short study by saying that: "Tyche has no function in the plot of the Euripidean tragedies. But the question of *τύχη* often stands out indeed, the question, that is, of its relationship to gods and humans. In Euripides' dramas one meets with a *τύχη*

---

[3] See Eur. *Andr.* 982 and Hdt.viii.20.

[4] For some aspects of chance in Euripidean narrative strategy see B. Goward, *Telling Tragedy: Narrative Technique in Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides*, (London, 1999), esp. 123ff., 134ff., 141 and 146f.

[5] F. Solmsen, "Zur Gestaltung des Intriguenmotivs in den Tragödien des Sophokles und Euripides", *Philologus* 87 (1932) 1-17, especially 3-6 and 8-9.

that constrains and breaks free (from control), an arbitrary *τύχη*. From this one has to conclude in any case that the poet dealt with the problem, but not that he believed in the controlling power of chances (coincidences, accidents)".[7] My study is in agreement with Busch's view. Further, I shall argue that Euripides engages in the 'fortune versus human intelligence or divine predetermination' debate in his polyphonal tragedies, both challenging and affirming divine power, both foregrounding mutable, arbitrary *tyche* and qualifying it through human planning and supreme divine knowledge. In this way he seems to keep pace with contemporary intellectual discussions and also to create a bleak image of uncertain, ignorant and suffering humanity, set against the occasional saving and reassuring 'divine light' at the end of the tunnel. From this point of view, Sophocles is similar, but Euripides' diction and plots seem to stress the changeability and arbitrariness of *τύχη* in a more forceful way, or to juxtapose the limitations of human planning, the unexpected and the unplannable, divine will and 'what must be' in bolder lines.

My discussion has many affinities with Cedric Whitman's view about the "three motive forces" in *IT*, *Helen* and *Ion*. He writes: "…the effort of human characters, in the form of a plan of intrigue (techne, mechane), strives onward step by step, sometimes aided and sometimes thwarted by chance (tyche), while influences from divinity (daimon), whether as commands, oracles, deceptions, or epiphanies, play over both the rational and irrational elements of human experience with motley brilliance".[8] In fact, attitudes to *τύχη* form part of earlier literary tradition, of popular beliefs, and of fifth-century ideas on human achievement and progress versus transitoriness and uncertainty. Whitman has pointed out that the "antinomy between *τέχνη* and *τύχη* … plan versus the unplannable" is prominent in Euripides' *IT*, *Helen* and *Ion*, and, further, is an important part of late fifth century thought. Whitman's comment sounds plausible: "In an era when old religious values, or at least

---

[6] My translation. See F. Solmsen, "Euripides' Ion im Vergleich mit anderen Tragödien", *Hermes* 69 (1934) 390-419, at 400.

[7] "Tyche übt also in der Handlung Euripideischer Tragödien kein Amt aus. Wohl aber tritt die Frage der *τύχη* oft hervor, das Verhältnis zu Göttern und Menschen. Es begegnet in den Dramen des Euripides die gebundene und die sich loslösende, willkürliche *τύχη*, woraus jedenfalls zu schließen ist, daß der Dichter sich mit dem Probleme beschäftigte, nicht aber, daß er an eine beherrschende Macht der Zufälle glaubte". Busch (1937) 55.

religious credence, were under shrewdly questioning scrutiny by the thinkers of the enlightenment, it is not surprising that the feeling should arise that the shape of experience was determined by a combination of human contrivance and uncontrollable chance".[9] This antinomy is worthy of further analysis.

The *τέχνη - τύχη* opposition is a commonplace in fifth-century literature. The frequency with which this opposition is discussed in the Hippocratic Corpus as well as similar oppositions in Thucydides and Herodotus suggest that the 'art or knowledge versus luck or chance' issue was the subject of intellectual discussions. Elizabeth Craik points out in her commentary on *Places in Man* that chapter 46 of this work "on the subject of luck or chance in medicine, is written in an authoritative, even dogmatic, manner, with emphatic use of first person verbs and some polemic against opposing views".[10] The author of this work downplays the role of luck and stresses the central importance of knowledge in medicine and the development of its techniques. Medicine has very little need of luck (*ἐλάχιστα τύχης δεῖσθαι*, 46.1). Stress on the art of medicine or reasoning and elimination of luck occurs in other works of the Hippocratic Corpus,[11] but here we find a remarkable description of the nature of *τύχη*. "For luck is absolute in power and is ungovernable, and it is not its way to come in response to one's wish" (Craik's translation), *ἡ γὰρ τύχη αὐτοκρατὴς καὶ οὐκ ἄρχεται, οὐδ' ἐπ' εὐχῇ ἐστιν αὐτὴν ἐλθεῖν* (46.1).

The adjective *αὐτοκρατής* (= ruling by itself, absolute, independent) is used of *tyche* only here in extant literature,[12] but a similar idea is expressed in Thucydides 4.64. Hermocrates, in the context of his plea to the Sicilians that they should all unite against the danger represented by Athens, says: " I am not so inclined to ruin myself for the sake of hurting my enemies, or so blinded by animosity as to think of myself as equally master of my own plans as of fortune which I cannot command" (*μηδὲ μωρίᾳ φιλονικῶν ἡγεῖσθαι τῆς οἰκείας*

---

[8] C. W. Whitman, *Euripides and the Full Circle of Myth*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1974) 109.
[9] Whitman (1974) 6.
[10] E. M. Craik, *Hippocrates: Places in Man*, (Oxford, 1998) 216. This treatise is believed by many to be archaic in style and content, and dated by Craik in the first half of the fifth century BC (see 25-9, esp. 28-9).
[11] *The Art* 4ff. and *Ancient Medicine* 1, 5, 6, 12.
[12] It refers to *νοῦς* in Anaxagoras 12 and to *φρήν* in Euripides' *Andromache* 482.

γνώμης ὁμοίως αὐτοκράτωρ εἶναι καὶ ἧς οὐκ ἄρχω τύχης) (4.64.1). What Hermocrates claims here about himself and *tyche* corresponds to what is said about this concept in *Places in Man* 46.1, where it functions as a subject (αὐτοκρατής, οὐκ ἄρχεται). In Thucydides τύχης is the object of ἄρχω (ἧς = τύχης οὐκ ἄρχω) and an objective genitive from αὐτοκράτωρ. Moreover, Hermocrates implies that he is master of his own plans (γνώμη) and, likewise, the author of *Places in Man* goes on to establish the difference of knowledge from *tyche*. "But knowledge is governable and brings success when the one with knowledge wishes to use it", ἡ δ' ἐπιστήμη ἄρχεταί τε καὶ εὐτυχής ἐστιν, ὁπόταν βούληται ὁ ἐπιστάμενος χρῆσθαι (46.1). We see here that knowledge and luck are not totally dissimilar things in the sense that knowledge when used properly by those who possess it is εὐτυχής, that is, it has good luck, success. This point is further developed in 46.3. Here the author opposes those who claim that the possessor of good knowledge does not have good luck and exclude luck from medicine or any other activity, ὅστις δὲ τὴν τύχην ἐξ ἰητρικῆς ἢ ἐξ ἄλλου τινὸς ἐξελάσει, φάμενος οὐ τοὺς καλῶς τι πρῆγμα ἐπισταμένους χρῆσθαι τύχῃ, τὸ ὑπεναντίον δοκεῖ μοι γινώσκειν. A threefold equation is at work in what follows: to have good luck (χρῆσθαι τύχῃ) equals to have success (ἐπιτυγχάνειν) and this can be achieved only by people who have knowledge (ἐπιστάμενοι). A similar interaction between skill and good luck survives in a fragment of Agathon: "art (skill) is fond of luck and luck of art (skill)", τέχνη τύχην ἔστερξε καὶ τύχη τέχνην (fr.6 Nauck). This is apparently a word-play reconciling, as it were, the two concepts and presenting them as complementary.

But the above reconciliation between skill and luck, and the equation of good luck, success and knowledge in *Places in Man* do not constitute the only view on the issue. Different attitudes occur in two other works of the Hippocratic Corpus, namely *Affections* 45 and *Diseases*1.7; the first refers to the discovery of drugs not by reasoning but by chance, and the second presents the view that events happen not through medical σοφίη (skill) or ἀμαθίη (ignorance) but through chance. All these conflicting views formed part of fifth-century intellectual and professional debate. The evidence we have from fifth-century historians and tragedians shows that they also contributed in different ways to this debate. In Euripides (more often and more forcefully

than in Sophocles) *τύχη* represents "the aspect of unexpectedness in a complex pattern of events, including divine forces"[13] as well as human planning and action. So it neither is totally subsumed by the divine nor abolishes human intelligence. The basic sensibility behind the experience of the power of *τύχη* has been succinctly summarised by Cropp in his comment on *IT* 475-8: "In other words, what happens to us is so variable and unpredictable that we can never know what to expect next, nor why what happens happens – not because there are no gods' designs and no pattern, but because the designs and the pattern are obscure and complicated";[14] and because, I would like to add, human reactions and passions are also unpredictable and mutable.

Euripides could assume in the fifth-century Athenian audience a shared belief in the power of both the divine and *tyche*. Presumably, his contemporaries would have perceived *tyche* both as subsumed by the gods and divine intentions[15] and as a more or less independent power of chance. Having said this, it is important to make clear what we mean by 'chance'. When Euripidean characters speak of *Tyche* with no obvious connection to the divine, they often aim at the rhetorical effect of stressing their dramatic plight, as they seem to personify their actual experience. To put this vividly, they seem to think: 'How accidentally and unexpectedly this good or bad thing has befallen me. It looks as if not mine or a god's purposes rule, but uncertainty and purposeless chance'. This intensified reference to the characters' experience or pathos is the most important effect of personifying *Tyche,* which makes any one-word faithful translation of the concept 'sadly inadequate'. 'Pure' chance is better suited to philosophical constructions, and it is the product of later, originally Aristotelian, distinctions. In the plurality of human experience expressed in tragedy, by contrast, overarching divine plans, orders

---

[13] To use M. J. Cropp's formulation in his *Euripides: Iphigenia in Tauris*, (Warminster, 2000) 37.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Belief in the gods' participation in every important action and outcome seems to have been part of both popular and philosophical thought. This is well expressed by S. Broadie: "Ancient Greek philosophy arose in a culture whose world had always teemed with divinities. 'Everything is full of gods' said Thales …". S. Broadie, "Rational Theology", in A. A. Long (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, (Cambridge, 1999) 205-24, at 205.

or oracles coexist with (or in the case of *Ion* are partly interrupted by) human plans and apparently accidental occurrences.

A relation between this emphasis on a *Tyche* dissociated from gods and the climate of scepticism about the divine in Athens after the plague of 430 B.C. is likely[16] but not verifiable. The evidence for fifth-century uses of *tyche* shows a variety of attitudes and beliefs from which this or that view could be selected according to the context and the purposes of the person involved. In the second *Tetralogy* of Antiphon, for example, although the possibility of accidental death caused by *tyche* is recognised, the plaintiff argues that the accused is nevertheless to blame, and claims further that an accident may be the instrument of divine punishment,[17] while in another speech the defendant puts the whole blame for an accidental death on *tyche*.[18]

Euripidean characters sometimes see *tyche* and the gods as alternatives or wonder which of the two is more powerful.[19] This may suggest contemporary debate on the extent to which gods or chance control human affairs. In fifth-century literature *tyche* is almost never placed above the gods,[20] but the sort of language used of gods or an unspecified *daimon* is applied to *tyche* as well.[21] What is more, the image of the wheel of fortune and the mutability of human fate are connected. Probably the *θεός* on whose wheel Menelaus' destiny is always revolving and changing its nature is *Tyche*: *ἀλλ' οὑμὸς ἀεὶ πότμος ἐν πυκνῷ θεοῦ | τροχῷ κυκλεῖται καὶ μεταλλάσσει φύσιν.*[22] Ion's

---

[16] On this see M. Ewans, "Patterns of tragedy in Sophocles and Shakespeare", in M. Silk (ed.) *Tragedy and the Tragic*, (Oxford, 1996) 440-41 and 445-46; also W. D. Furley *Andokides and the Herms*, *BICS* Supplement 65 (1996) 71ff.

[17] 1.2 and 3. 7-8.

[18] *On the chorus boy*, 15: *οὐ δῆτα ἔγωγε, πλήν γε τῆς τύχης, ἥπερ οἶμαι καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς ἀνθρώπων αἰτία ἐστὶν ἀποθανεῖν.* Gagarin (1997): 231 contrasts this passage with the second Tetralogy (3.3.8) and suggests that "attitudes towards *τύχη* had changed if a decade or two separates this case from the Tetralogies"; this would be fast-paced *Geistesgeschichte* indeed!

[19] See Bond (1963) 48 and Austin (1968) 86; cf. *Trag. fr. adesp.* 169 N; Eur. *Cyc.* 606, *Hec.* 488-93; Eur. *fr. incert.* 901 N, contrast *Trag. fr. adesp.* 482 N.

[20] On this ground, R. Kannicht and B. Snell conclude that *adesp. fr.* 506 does not belong to a pre-fourth-century play; this seems too absolute, given the fragmentary nature of our evidence and the sort of remarks about *tyche* in fifth-century plays collected in the previous note.

[21] U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Der Glaube der Hellenen* I, (Berlin, 1931) 364, n.1: "Es leuchtet ein, daß in manchen Fällen *τύχη* für *δαίμων* stehen könnte. Aristophanes Vögel 544 sagt schon *κατὰ δαίμονα καὶ κατὰ συντυχίαν ἀγαθήν.* Diagoras 2 hatte sogar gesagt *κατὰ δαίμονα καὶ τύχαν*, was wirklich alles andere als gottesfürchtig war. Euripides Fr. 901 denkt scharf und sagt *εἴτε τύχη εἴτε δαίμων τὰ βρότεια κραίνει*, Gottheit oder Zufall". See also *TrGF* ad. 92. Cf. M. P. Nilsson, *A History of Greek Religion*, (Oxford, 1925) 284-5.

[22] See Soph. fr. 871 Radt; cf. *TrGF* ad. 700, 29.

invocation to *μεταβαλοῦσα Τύχη* at 1512ff. is generated by similar considerations and constitutes a fleeting personification of the apparently random, changeable and not divinely controlled course of events.[23]

Another related pair in fifth-century literature is *τύχη* and *καιρός* (due or appropriate measure, opportune or critical moment, right time). In Homer the adjective *καίριος* is always used to denote that somebody has been wounded in the right, most fatal place; similarly, *τυχεῖν* often takes the meaning 'to hit the mark'.[24] In posthomeric literature, *καιρός* in the sense 'advantage, profit' comes close to *τύχη* in the sense 'success, favourable circumstances'.[25] However, in the Hippocratic Corpus and in Thucydides *tyche* and *kairos* are often distinguished, in the sense that medical practitioners and tacticians in war aim at eliminating the uncertain factor of *tyche* and at finding the due measure, or grasping the right moment (*kairos*), to act through reasoning.[26] Here *kairos* comes close to *techne* and *λογισμός* or *πρόνοια*. Yet *kairos* can be the subject of verbs like *παρατυγχάνειν* or *παραπίπτειν*,[27] which may suggest that the unplannable and uncontrollable can never be totally abolished from human life and action.

In Plato's *Laws* 4, 709a-b the Athenian says that the lawgiver is liable to chance, and indeed that all things human are subject to unpredictable circumstances (*τύχας δ' εἶναι σχεδὸν ἅπαντα τὰ ἀνθρώπινα πράγματα*). Yet the Athenian is quick to add that everything is not chance but god, and that god has two auxiliaries by which all human affairs are managed, chance and fit occasion (*Ὡς θεὸς μὲν πάντα, καὶ μετὰ θεοῦ τύχη καὶ καιρὸς τἀνθρώπινα*

---

[23] This is a more assertive comment on the dynamic character of *tyche* than Eur. fr. 262 Nauck, where a similar idea is expressed but *τὰς τύχας* has a static sense.

[24] Cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 1292, 1343f.

[25] In Euripides' *Andromache* 483-5 the Chorus sings: "The execution of affairs in house and in city must belong to a single man if men wish to find their true advantage (*ὁπόταν εὑρεῖν θέλωσι καιρόν*)" [transl. D. Kovacs, *Euripides II*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1995)]. The context praises single marriage and kingship (465-82), and condemns Hermione's persecution of Andromache and her son (486-93). A scholion glosses *θέλωσι καιρόν* at 485 by *ὅτε ἐπιτυχίας καὶ εὐκαιρίας λαβέσθαι θέλουσιν*. Compare also the scholion on line 131 (E. Schwarz, *Scholia in Euripidem*, Vol. II, Berlin, 1891). A similar idea in a negative sense occurs in Euripides' *Helen* 477-8 where *τύχη* is used of the turn of affairs and *καιρός* of disadvantageous, bad timing. In Euripidean drama characters tend to comment on the appropriateness or non-appropriateness of (unexpected) arrivals at a critical moment in terms of *καιρός* (*El.* 598; *Her.* 701, cf. 532; *Hel.* 1081-2, cf. 783).

[26] On *kairos* in general see M. Trédé, *Kairos: l'àpropos et l'occasion*, (Paris, 1992); on the Hippocratics and Thucydides see especially 139-244.

διακυβερνῶσι σύμπαντα). Together with these goes skill (*τέχνη*). "If skill is helpless against bad luck, good luck is useless without skill".[28] In this Platonic context, god controls all that is, while chance and fit occasion co-operate with god in the control of human affairs. In Euripides we get a more ambiguous and complex picture. If we put aside the associations of *tyche* with the divine, the possibility of *tyche* as distinct from the gods is also aired. But in *Ion, Helen* and *IT* the tension between divine teleology and the unexpected is never resolved. The numerous references to *tyche* presented in this chapter and also in those on Herodotus and Thucydides strongly suggest that this concept is not only part of the poetic or historic theology, but is also a living preoccupation connected with human uncertainty and fear of unexpected reversals that can turn one's life upside down. Would Euripides have given *tyche* such a prominent verbal and often dramatic role, if this concept had not already been well established in the experience and the thoughts of his contemporaries?

It is important that we study Greek attitudes to fortune, luck and chance in their context and try to be sensitive to similarities and differences between different genres. This is a difficult task, not only because it involves the study of a culture in the remote past, but also because popular beliefs are notoriously difficult to recover, let alone the fact that our knowledge is bound to be restricted to the texts that have come down to us. Another problem for us is whether we should write *tyche* with a capital letter or not, although for fifth-century Greeks this distinction did not exist. Sometimes *tyche* is spoken of as an active agent and is coupled with active verbs or metaphorical language; these may suggest that *tyche* could have been felt as a suprahuman power. However, the goddess Tyche appears on stage only in the fourth century, in Menander's *Aspis*. In fifth-century tragedy *tyche* never appears as a fully-fledged divinity; a genealogy, a mythology or a description of the deity's characteristics and sphere of influence is lacking. Sometimes *tyche* occurs as a personification, and occasionally, it is invoked.[29] In cases of personification or

---

[27] See, for example, Thuc. iv. 23.2, 103.4.

[28] To use E. B. England's formulation in *The Laws of Plato*, Vol. I, (Manchester, 1921) 19.

[29] Aesch. *Ag*.664; Soph. *OT* 1080; Soph. *Ichneu*. 79; Eur. *Hec*.786; *Ion* 1512-15; *IA* 864 and Soph.fr.871 Radt. In the last case, perhaps the *theos* on whose wheel Menelaus' destiny is always revolving and changing its nature is Tyche. See also below in the *Ion* section.

apostrophe of *tyche* it seems reasonable to capitalise *τύχη*. *We* are forced to choose; *they* were not.[30]

There are several passages in Euripides that imply that *tyche* should be perceived as *agens* rather than as *factum*. And from here, seeing a personified *Tyche* is not far away. In *Hecuba*, when Agamemnon expresses his compassion towards Hecuba ("Ah, what woman was born to such ill-fortune", 785), she replies: "There is none unless you mean Lady (Mis)fortune (*τὴν Τύχην*) herself". Hecuba's words suggest that she sees *Tyche* as a female figure which is the embodiment of misfortune.[31] It seems that here a personification is created out of an abstract idea. On the other hand, W. Pötscher's distinction between personification (in the true sense) and the tendency to personify fields of operation, "das Person-Bereichdenken"[32] could apply here equally well. At *Hec.* 786 *ἡ τύχη* seems to belong to 'Person-Bereichdenken'. This means that it may be translated both as 'Lady (Mis)fortune', that is, a person or 'my misfortune', that is, my personal state of affairs. Yet, I think that the context here favours seeing *tyche* as experienced as a person. In contrast, in *IT* 501 it seems that *tyche* is better understood as the operative factor. Orestes says that he might rightly be called 'Unfortunate' (500) and Iphigeneia replies that he should ascribe this to his fortune, *τῇ τύχῃ*. In Greek popular belief the line between a divinity and a personification was always a fine one: Ares, god of war, can represent war itself and, likewise, Aphrodite, goddess of love, love or sex itself. Accordingly, the line between *tyche* as *factum* and Tyche as *agens* is a fine one.

In fifth-century tragedy and history we find a plurality of voices about and attitudes to *tyche*, some of which occur already in earlier literature and

---

Compare A. C. Pearson, *The Fragmentary Plays of Sophocles*, Vol. III, (Cambridge, 1917) fr. 871, p. 70-1.

[30] See also above in Chapter One.

[31] And this certainly befits "the particularly black view of this play" as A. N. Michelini, *Euripides and the tragic tradition*, (Madison, 1987) 133, n.10 notes.

[32] This means that certain phenomena are perceived as a person and a thing simultaneously. Within this unity, the deity represents the personal aspect whereas the phenomenon appears as the deity's particular province. "This is a category of pagan religion. It has to do with a mode of experience in which things or processes are experienced as a 'person' and as a 'thing' at the same time. In this not logically solvable global act of consciousness the one or the other component may be more strongly emphasised each time, but both are always experienced together": *Der Kleine Pauly* 4 (1972), s.v. 'Personifikation', 661-663.

seem to form part of popular wisdom, while others apparently reflect contemporary cultural tendencies or are peculiar to individual authors. *Tyche* is such a Protean and elusive concept, with such wide-ranging applicability, that one can hardly pin it down with one comprehensive statement. For example, fortune may come from a divine source, or may be couched in terms of a vague higher force, with or without divine connection. Fortune as unexpected circumstances may be seen as favouring or thwarting human plans. It may be spoken of as having a special relationship with an individual: ignorant Oedipus proclaims himself to be the son of 'good Fortune', while desperate Hecuba sees herself as the embodiment of 'Misfortune'. Mutable fortune may as well be the impersonal power behind the fragility and transitoriness of all things human. It would be a mistake to extract some lines on *tyche* from a tragedy and present them as encapsulating the main or the author's attitude towards this abstraction. Any general statement on the role of *tyche* is bound to be valid only if it is qualified and limited by considering both the factors of human action and divine will.

This may sound like a truism, but my aim is to avoid doing what Brian Vickers calls 'concordance criticism'. Specifically, he warns against the practice of taking any reference to *ate* in Greek Tragedy as being as valuable as any other. His remarks have a general validity and are worth quoting in full: "But works of drama are not analphabetical lexica. It must surely be a basic principle of literary criticism that any utterance in drama is to be evaluated according to the character who makes it, according to our opinion of that character (both of which impressions have been carefully built up by the playwright), according to its place in the dramatic action, according to the kind of stress which it receives, central or peripheral – to adopt a crude model of the kind of decision which we are always making, whether instinctively or consciously, in the reading process".[33]

This set of considerations applies also to the examination of *tyche*. Previous scholars have concluded that Euripides gives a greater or a lesser role to *tyche*, or that chance circumstances influence to a greater or lesser extent the dramatic action. My examination resists making one general pronouncement

on this issue and focuses on the complexities of figurative or metaphorical language involving *tyche* in specific contexts, taking into account previous and following dramatic action. My study concentrates on crucial and emotionally charged contexts and not on references to this concept that have simply the neutral meaning of 'event, what has happened'. It is important that characters refer to *tyche* when they are trying to sort out or explain what has happened to them. Although there is certainly a rhetorical side, I think there is more in this than 'mere reflexes' or 'snap explanations'.[34] The characters often refer to bad or mutable fortune when they comment on their past or present experiences and sufferings or to good fortune when they express their hope or wish for the future. Further, fortune talk occurs in contexts of uncertainty and risk, when the characters sense that a lot is at stake and emphasise the limitations of human knowledge and the sheer unpredictability of human life.

In the course of the plays, limited knowledge, insecurity and unpredictable fortune colour the diction, emotions and thoughts of the characters. This constitutes the human perspective. The divine perspective is different. The *deus ex machina* never couches his or her explanation of what has happened to the characters or of what the future holds for them in terms of *tyche*, but always in terms of some divine will, *πεπρωμένον* (what is destined, ordained to happen) or *μοῖρα* (what is allotted to somebody, destiny). Therefore, at the heart of the dynamics of fortune versus destiny talk lies the gap between mortal and divine perspectives. According to G. E. R. Lloyd, "Philosophy and science can only begin when a set of questions is substituted for a set of vaguely assumed certainties".[35] In the end of this chapter the opposite effect will emerge. Far from giving certain answers to the questions that characters or dramatic action pose, Euripides puts forward an ambiguous and inconclusive treatment of *tyche* and the divine.

My aim in this chapter is threefold: to examine how characters use *tyche* in these plays, and to show how unexpected events actually signpost strategic dramatic moments so that, the divine aside, we can speak about the

---

[33] B. Vickers, *Towards Greek Tragedy*, (London and New York, 1979) 134.
[34] Ibid. 134-6.
[35] G. E. R. Lloyd, *Magic, Reason and Experience*, (Cambridge, 1979) 266.

influence of the unexpected and randomness on human or even on divine purposes (in the case of *Ion*). Finally, I shall argue that the recognition scenes in *IT*, *Helen* and *Ion* make prominent use of the ambiguity and the overlapping of human action, divine will, miracle and the accidental.

i) The contexts of *tyche* in *IT, Helen* and *Ion*

For methodological reasons it is helpful to classify the occurrences of *tyche* in similar dramatic contexts.[36] This scheme may afford an answer to the question in which contexts Euripides tends to refer to *tyche*, and furthermore it could point to the verbal and dramatic significance he usually applies to this concept. After discussing the categories, I shall go on to examine *Ion*, *IT* and *Helen*. I shall argue that the most important references to *tyche* are functionally placed so that they coincide with the swing between knowledge and ignorance, certainty and uncertainty, reality and appearance; in other words, with Euripides' playing with the audience's expectations by creating and maintaining till the end of the plays an atmosphere of surprise and suspense.

One important category is that in which *tyche* and gods appear in the same context and are interrelated. In *Helen* both the servant at 711ff. and the Chorus at 1137ff., who reflect upon the many-sidedness and inscrutability of gods, round off their thoughts with a reference to *tyche*. At 711ff. the ambiguous and incomprehensible nature of the gods is explained through the empirical knowledge that human existence is exposed to the continuous *μεταβολὴ ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν* and the other way round.[37] So the unpredictability of the divine operation is set beside the insecurity and precariousness of fortune. At 1147ff. the workings of gods, *τὰ θεῶν*, are described as leaping here and there with ambiguous and unexpected reversals of fortune, *ἀμφιλόγοις ... ἀνελπίστοις τύχαις*. As Kannicht says, this could mean that *τὰ θεῶν* appear to men as *τύχαι* because they cannot grasp the meaning of divine workings.[38] Importantly, at *Troades* 1204-6 it is *αἱ τύχαι* that leap here

---

[36] This classification in dramatic contexts concentrates on *IT, Helen* and *Ion* and is different from the more general groupings organising the occurrences of *tyche* in degrees of personification in Chapter One.

[37] See also the discussion below in the *Helen* section.

[38] R. Kannicht, *Euripides: Helena*, Band II, (Heidelberg, 1969) 297.

and there like a mad man, *ἔμπληκτος ὡς ἄνθρωπος*. Furthermore, the fact that *τὰ θεῶν* and *τύχαι* are spoken of with the same language implies that both are considered as irrational, unstable and unpredictable powers operating in the world. In fact, the image of the workings of gods as leaping here and there is reminiscent of fortune (*τύχη*) in *OT* 263, which springs on the head of the person affected.[39] Yet there is a difference; in *OT* we have to do with a purposeful leap, not inconsistent jumping about.

The fact that *τὰ θεῶν* and *τύχη* are presented as having similar characteristics interrelates them more closely. Helen's paradoxical fortune, which is controlled by gods, proves (1144-50) and corroborates the inexplicability of the workings of gods. In *IT* 476ff. Iphigeneia speaks of the ignorance of mortals in regard to divine dispensations and adds that uncertain fortune (*ἡ τύχη*) leads them astray (*παρήγαγε*) into the difficulty of knowing.[40] Iphigeneia's reflection upon the inscrutable working of divine powers and fortune has a serious and gnomic character.[41] In fact, what she says is ironically true; she cannot see that what she says here directly applies to her own case. The dream, a manifestation of *τὰ τῶν θεῶν*, which was sent to her as a warning and was falsely interpreted by her, is an example proving that *τὰ τῶν θεῶν ἐς ἀφανὲς ἔρπει*. Due to the false interpretation of the dream (348-50) she is now about to sacrifice the two strangers, and it is impossible for her to know that this scene is going to close with the identification of her brother. Furthermore, Iphigeneia at 867 says that some daimon is the source of her misfortune, *δαίμονος τύχᾳ τινός*. Finally, Orestes at 909 draws a parallel between *tyche* and *τὸ θεῖον*: both of these powers help those who help themselves. It seems that each time *τύχη* and *τὸ θεῖον* occur side by side we are meant to take the reference to *tyche* seriously. In this case, what is said is not undermined by the characters' ignorance or misconception, since it shares the presumably[42] truer and deeper divine perception. What Orestes here says is

---

[39] Compare also Soph. *Ant.* 1345 and Aesch. *Pers.* 515.
[40] Cf. *Alc.* 785-6. See also below in the *IT* section.
[41] Compare *Heracleidai* 863-6 below.
[42] This is the operative word here as there are qualifications of this idea. At *Ion* 67-8 Hermes says that Apollo guides *τὴν τύχην* to this point. Nonetheless, the action itself shows that events can escape the notice and control of Apollo. The ambiguous interrelationship between *tyche* and the divine is characteristic of this play. See 1456-7 and compare 1374-5, 1501-15.

true and has a bearing on the earlier and the later dramatic events; fortune working in the framework of divine providence seems to have helped the siblings to recognise each other, while towards the end Athena and Poseidon help them to escape.

The association of *tyche* with the unexpected and with sudden reversals forms another category. The Messenger in *Heracleidai* 863ff. concludes his account of the miraculous rejuvenation of Iolaus and the capture of the once fortunate Eurystheus with a gnomic reflection on the ephemerality of human fortune: "By this present stroke of fortune (*τῇ δὲ νῦν τύχῃ*) he (Iolaus) clearly declares a lesson to all men to learn: that none should envy the man who seems fortunate until they see he has died; for human fortunes are ephemeral (*ὡς ἐφήμεροι τύχαι*)" (863-6).[43]

In the last scene of *Heracleidai* (928 ff.) Eurystheus is brought under guard to Alcmene and the servant talks of the unexpected change in the fortune of the formerly ferocious king: "an unexpected sight and for him not a less unexpected stroke of fortune", *ἄελπτον ὄψιν τῷδέ τ' οὐχ ἧσσον τύχην* (930). And he continues: "For he never supposed that he would fall into your (i.e. Alcmene's) hands when he set off from Mycenae with his throng of toiling soldiers, with more pride than was right, to sack Athena's city. But fate (*δαίμων*) has cast its vote against him and changed his fortune, *τύχην*" (931-5). This passage is an example showing that unexpected reversals are linked with *tyche*, which in this case appears as controlled by a *daimon*, not exactly "a god" but some vaguer, more inscrutable and intrusive force. Imagery from the public, political sphere of voting is employed here. At *IT* 895-7 Iphigeneia wonders which of the alternatives of "a god or a mortal or what unexpected event" (*τί τῶν ἀδοκήτων*)[44] will help Orestes and her out of their misfortune. Here there is no reference to *tyche* but it seems to lurk behind the indeterminate alternative of 'what unexpected event'. This is the last in a series of questions implying Iphigeneia's uncertainty in regard to what the future holds in store for them. At 875 she wonders: "What event (fortune) – *tycha* – will befall me?" Feelings of insecurity and ignorance colour the

---

[43] On *ἐφήμερος* see in Chapter One.

[44] We cannot be sure about the text here. Lines 895-7 are printed within *cruces* by Diggle.

meaning of questions both at 875 and 895-7. Feeling similar uncertainty, Ion at *Ion* 1512ff. explicitly talks of the power of changeable *Tyche* as having effected unexpected changes in his and his mother's life.[45]

The references to *tyche* in contexts related to salvation,[46] to deliverance, or to a plan of escape and rescue, form another category.[47] In *Helen* 412 Menelaus, as he describes his torments in the heavy seas on his journey back home, sees his salvation as due to unexpected luck, *ἀνελπίστῳ ... τύχῃ*. This passage is reminiscent of *Agamemnon* 664ff., where the Herald narrates how saving Fortune, *Τύχη... σωτήρ*, saved Agamemnon's ship. In *Helen*, after the recognition scene, Menelaus and the real Helen meet again after a separation of many years; it is actually because of this happy reunion that Menelaus can see the fortunes of his soldiers, of Helen and himself as joined all in one. This joining of all fortunes in one venture, *εἰς ἓν ἐλθόντες τύχης* (742), means that they are united in their attempt at saving themselves from Theoclymenus. There is a similar expression at *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 1065. Iphigeneia, trying to persuade the Chorus not to reveal the secret plan of escape, says that the three friends, Orestes, Pylades and herself, are faced with *μία τύχη*; that is "all three of us face the same result: rescue or death for us all". If the Chorus keep silent, then the three friends will escape and Iphigeneia promises that she will save also the women of the Chorus, making them share their happiness at home in Hellas, *σωθεῖσα δ', ὡς ἂν καὶ σὺ κοινωνῇς τύχης* (1067). At 902-4 Pylades urges Orestes to stop "the mutual embraces and the expressions of self-pity" [48] and start making plans to escape.

---

[45] Compare *Heracleidai* 863-6, *Hipp.* 1105-19, *Tro.* 101-4, 1201-6, *Hel.* 1140-3 and *Alexandros* fr. 62.

[46] This does not mean that the principals' salvation is left to chance. At *IT* 976-80 Apollo seems to have determined Orestes' eventual deliverance.

[47] For example see *IT* 89, 907, 1065 and *Helen* 278, 412, 742, †1374†, 1409 and 1424. Compare also *Τύχα σώτειρα* Pi. *O.* 12.2, *Τύχη σωτήρ* A.*Ag.* 664, S.*OT.* 81; *σωτήρ* is also an epithet of Zeus, e.g. Pi. *O.*5.17 (see above in Chapter One); see also *σωτηρίας τυχεῖν* A.*Pers.* 508, *Cho.* 203 and X.*Cyr.*4.1.2.

[48] See M. Platnauer, *Euripides: Iphigenia in Tauris* (Oxford, 1938) 136. Lines 907-8 are expelled by Dindorf "as the interpolation of some scribe whose inclination towards moralising was stronger than his powers of expression". Diggle also deletes 907-8 but Cropp keeps the lines. Although the repetition of *λαβόντας* at 908 and *λαβόντες* at 906 may be unwelcome, Platnauer points out that lines 907-8 "seem to offer a forward reference to *τύχη* in 909" and so they point to Orestes' reply that follows. Cropp accepts Platnauer's argument and keeps the lines.

Tyche occurs often in *Helen* in the context of a wish or a prayer. At 264 Helen wishes her beauty had been expunged and she had started again with a plainer appearance; the Greeks then could have forgotten the misfortunes, *τὰς τύχας μὲν τὰς κακὰς*, which now torment her, and been mindful of better ones. At 642, after the recognition scene, Menelaus says that, after taking her from his home, a god is driving them on to a different state better than the current. Helen replies that it was a fortunate misfortune that brought them together and wishes she may live to enjoy her good luck. Although Menelaus thinks that a god is responsible for the reversal of their luck, Helen sees their reunion as due to the paradoxical circumstances, *τὸ κακόν δ' ἀγαθόν σὲ κἀμὲ <u>συνήγαγε</u>* (644).[49] The misfortune, which here is also a good thing, refers to Menelaus' excruciating wanderings in the heavy seas after the fall of Troy until he arrived at Egypt. In general *τὸ κακόν* may be connected with the unfavourable circumstances that afflicted the couple, from their god-motivated parting and the war in Troy (and Helen's ill repute as the cause of the war) to the dangers the real Helen faces in Egypt after Proteus' death. There is a similar expression at *Ion* 661-3, again after the recognition scene. Xuthus names his supposed son Ion because it fits the happy circumstance, *τῇ τύχῃ πρέπον*, by which they met when Xuthus came out of the oracle, *ὀθούνεκ' ἀδύτων ἐξιόντι μοι θεοῦ | ἴχνος <u>συνῆψας</u> πρῶτος*. At *Helen* 641ff. the context is relevant to *tyche*, since Menelaus says that the god is leading Helen to a different lot, *πρὸς ἄλλαν συμφορὰν*.[50] The similarity between the above passages in *Helen* and *Ion* suggests that Euripides tends to refer to *tyche* in order to emphasise the happy conjunction of circumstances through which a reunion, unexpected by the human agents and not planned by them, takes place.[51]

Helen in *Hel.* 1093-1106, following Theonoe's advice that they should first pray to gods for their salvation, and especially to Aphrodite and Hera, invokes both goddesses and prays to them to put an end to their sufferings.

---

[49] See also below in the *Helen* section.

[50] See Zuntz's conjecture at 643: *τύχαν τᾶσδε* instead of *συμφορὰν τᾶσδε*. For a similar context see *Ion* 67-8: *Λοξίας δὲ τὴν τύχην ἐς τοῦτ' ἐλαύνει...*

[51] After the recognition, wishing good luck for the rest of the characters' ventures is common. See *Hel.* 698-9 and *Ion* 1456-7.

Similarly, Menelaus prays not to the goddesses but to Zeus. This prayer combines god talk and fortune talk:

> "O Zeus, you are called father and wise god,
> look down upon us and grant us a change from our troubles,
> join with us as we drag our misfortunes up a rocky slope,
> give us your strong support. It needs but a touch of your fingertip
> and we shall arrive at the good fortune (*τῆς τύχης*) we wish for.
> The calamities we suffered before have been enough.
> You gods, I have called you many slighting and abusive names.
> Surely I should not always be unlucky. I should be safe and prosperous (at last).
> If you give me this one favour, you will make me happy for the rest of my life" (1441-50).[52]

In this prayer *tyche*, meaning 'good luck' and 'success', is seen as directly connected with Zeus' willingness to help. Moreover, the rationale of the prayer is based on the idea that bad luck should be followed by good luck. As if there is a kind of theodicy regulating the turns of fortune, Menelaus assumes that, although he has called gods many abusive names in his misfortune, they should now restore him to success and prosperity because he has suffered enough already. It is stupid or boring to allow the same victims always to suffer. This thought is very Euripidean and is often addressed to gods. In *Phoenissae* Jocasta concludes her long prologue with a prayer to Zeus: "O Zeus dwelling in heaven's veiling light, save us, grant reconciling to my sons. If you are wise (*σοφός*) you ought not to leave the same man always to be unfortunate" (84-7). In *Heracles*, as Megara and the children go into the palace to prepare for their death, Amphitryon lashes out against Zeus because he does not know how to save the people he loves. He is either an ignorant (*ἀμαθής*) or an unjust (*δίκαιος οὐκ*) god (347). On the other hand, when one is unhappy it is a consolation to think that fortune changes and therefore things can look up again for the unfortunate. This idea is found also in Thucydides. Just before the Athenians start to retreat, Nicias in his attempt to give them

---

[52] Translation by J. Morwood, *Euripides: Medea, Hippolytos, Electra, Helen*, (Oxford, 1997), with some alterations. See also below in the *Helen* section.

some hope mentions that *tyche* ought not always to remain the same (vii.77.3).[53]

Another category is the reference to *tyche* when characters attempt to justify their course of action. At *Helen* 1636, when the servant calls into question whether Helen belongs to Theoclymenus, the latter objects that he may not have received her from her father like Menelaus, but it was "the way things turned out" or "fortune" that gave him Helen, *ἀλλ' ἔδωκεν ἡ τύχη μοι*. His reference to *tyche* is transient and mistaken, because it is his interpretation of the events that makes him believe that Helen belongs to himself. However, the servant replies that what is right (or fate), *τὸ χρεών*, has taken her away. Similarly, Orestes at *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 489 justifies his way of thinking by referring to *tyche*. He argues that it is necessary for a man to accept what comes to happen to him, *τὴν τύχην δ' ἐᾶν χρεών*; Iphigeneia should not weep for Orestes and Pylades since it is certain that they are going to die. So their *tyche* in this particular context is the fact that they are going to be sacrificed to Artemis according to an ancient local custom. Orestes thinks "him a fool who accepts the doubtful comfort of another's pity, when that pity cannot save him from a certain doom".[54] It is not *σοφόν* to lament, but *μωρία*: a very Euripidean way of looking at it. The general opinion Orestes expresses at 489 justifies his conduct at this particular moment. He thinks that it is proper to submit to what he recognises to be his irreversible fortune. Ultimately, Athena determines a happy future for them.

My purpose in distinguishing these categories was to delineate more clearly the links of *tyche* with other concepts and themes. It emerges that quite often *tyche* is associated with the divine. In some contexts this association reveals that *tyche* functions as the *modus operandi* of divinity (*Hel.* 1137f.), whereas other contexts differentiate *tyche* and the divine qualitatively (*Hec.* 488ff., *Cyc.* 606-7, fr.154.4-5 Austin).[55] Either interchangeability or

---

[53] See above in Chapter Three.
[54] Platnauer (1938) 102.
[55] On these see in Chapter One.

overlapping of the gods and *tyche* (explicit or implicit)[56] or their dissociation represent different ways of looking at things, and each of them may well be employed by Euripides to serve his dramatic purposes in particular contexts.

But, although Euripides provides us with examples of *tyche* perceived as random chance (*Hec.* 488f.) or as personified Fortune (*Hec.* 786) or as an active agent (*Ion* 1512-4), he never goes as far as deifying *tyche*, or calling it θεός. Yet, he comes close to this at *Cyc.* 607, where it appears as a possibility predicated by an implied condition. Before the venture of blinding Polyphemus, Odysseus invokes Hephaestus (599) and Hypnus (601), praying to them not to let himself and his companions die at the hands of Cyclops, "a man who heeds not gods or men" (605). What ἤ implies at the beginning of the next line is a condition: "If you do let me and my men die at the hands of this man"; and Odysseus continues "we will have to regard chance (*τὴν τύχην*) as god (*δαίμονα*) and the gods as weaker than chance". *tyche* is referred to as *daimon* not in an affirmative but in a conditional context, describing what will be the inevitable rationalisation if the implied condition is fulfilled. Euripides expresses here the idea that a life which fails to make moral sense is a life at the mercy of *τύχη*.

On the other hand, the collocation *θεὸς τύχη* occurs at Soph. *Ichneutai* 79, where Silenus prays for success. As I argued in chapter one, *tyche* here translates as 'Success' and it is not a fully-fledged divinity but a fleeting personification which suits the linguistic situation in this context.[57] T. Gantz concludes his chapter on 'Olympos, the Underworld and Minor Divinities' by saying that "There are no myths whatever about her (i.e. *Tyche*), and clearly she did not capture the Greek mind of the Archaic period, however sensitive that mind may have been to the changing winds of fortune".[58] But even without mythology or as a personification, *tyche* in fifth-century tragedy and historiography strongly suggests that fortune talk really captured the Greek mind of the classical period.

---

[56] Implicit is the operative word here because *tyche* as sudden, unexpected good fortune is one of the powers characterised as *ἀφανῆ* (Thuc. iii. 45), and therefore we may well infer its influence on human psychology even if it is not explicitly mentioned.

[57] For Tyche as a minor deity in Hesiod and Pindar see in Chapter One.

[58] T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, (Baltimore, 1993) 151.

It is important that at several points of the dramatic action characters are presented as thinking in terms of *tyche* (with the various meanings this concept may take), while the action itself either ironically undercuts or significantly strengthens their *tyche*-related reflections. Especially in the so-called tragicomedies Euripides challenges the audience's expectations as the plot takes new unexpected lines of develpoment. The way in which he manipulates the interplay between divine intervention (providence and finality), human action and eventuality seems to point to a certain relation of dramatic effect and intellectual or theological content, in other words to a certain conception of the world.

ii) *IPHIGENEIA IN TAURIS*

The ways in which the characters talk about *tyche* in this play reveal their insecurity, uncertainty and ignorance in relation to what the future holds for them. Although they are aware that divine plans are obscure in outcome, still it looks as if this realisation is not enough to describe in full their frailty in the face of the unpredictability of the future. Talking about *tyche*, or fortune talk, is another way of expressing human fragility before the unexpected. On the other hand, the more positive aspect of *tyche* as good fortune is also in evidence. From the following examination of *IT* it will emerge that *tyche* is important not because it directs the action and is even more powerful than mortals and gods, but because it is linked with the limitations of human perspective before the unexpectedness and obscurity of future events.

In *IT*, although the main characters' hopes, thoughts and actions are guided by divine will, still much room is left for the unexpected and the accidental through the suspenseful and effect-orientated handling of the plot. This is partly due to the fact that there are two contradictory predictions in the prologue. Iphigeneia has dreamed that she will sacrifice the last pillar of her house, that is Orestes (44-58), while Apollo has announced to Orestes that he will escape the Furies by stealing the statue of Artemis and bringing it to Athens (85-92). Thus the prologue sets up two alternative possibilities: Orestes will be killed, or he will be saved. Moreover, Euripides makes events conspire so that he remains anonymous. And when two young men are

brought before Iphigeneia the former possibility looks more and more imminent, especially since only Pylades is named. But this name does not mean anything to Iphigeneia, whereas Orestes is never identified by name before the recognition. As a result, Iphigeneia runs the risk of sacrificing her very brother to Artemis. Suspense in the audience is soaring high, as the recognition is constantly at hand and constantly elusive. It looks as if Euripides invites us to recognise his virtuoso handling of the plot. In fact, the recognition is effected by the ingenious trick of the letter and, in particular, is triggered by Iphigeneia's taking into account the incalculable factors connected with a sea journey (759). She decides to read the letter aloud as a means to make sure that information will reach its destination even if the actual letter is lost (764-5).

It is important that the characters tend to refer to *tyche* in order to express their uncertainty and ignorance with reference to divine will. On the one hand, Orestes uses uncertain language to describe Apollo's command and, on the other, reveals piecemeal his relationship with Apollo and the Furies, a technique which may create feelings of uncertainty or even perplexity in the audience. But let us examine these two ideas separately. We hear from Orestes (77-92) that he would escape the Furies, not by being tried in Athens as in Aeschylus, but by transporting the statue of Artemis to Athens. Was Orestes' respite from toils to result simply from the return of the statue (92), not from the trial? The reply to this question is postponed till after the recognition (939ff). Orestes tells us that he was tried at Athens and was acquitted. However, the Furies, like Aeschylus' jurors, were split and some of them continued their oppression, thereby causing Orestes to take yet another trip to Delphi and to continue wandering.

He, in his first long speech (77-103), reveals his insecurity and fear as he sets foot on the hostile land of Tauris (94) with Pylades, and, on the other hand, his uncertainty about Apollo's orders. Orestes was told to fulfil the dangerous mission of taking the statue of Artemis from Tauris back to Attica. How Orestes is to get hold of the statue is indifferent to Apollo, as can be inferred from 89: *ἢ τέχναισιν ἢ τύχῃ τινί*, "either by contrivances or by some stroke of luck". The effect of uncertainty produced by this disjunctive

conjunction[59] is further enhanced by Orestes' remark that Apollo did not say what would happen afterwards (92). He is left to his own means and devices, and to some stroke of good luck, a very uncertain and precarious thing in itself. Significantly, there does not seem to exist any deep sense of commitment on the part of Apollo. We do not hear anything similar to the *πιστὰ ἐύορκώματα* of Aeschylus' *Choephori* (901), and Orestes does not appear to derive courage and confidence from the god's command,[60] although he says at 93 that he is obedient to Apollo's words. Furthermore, the series of Orestes' questions to Pylades (96-100) show that he has no plan at all, while their first impression of the temple of Artemis is hardly connected with good luck; what they see there is the blood from the sacrifices of foreigners. This irony will be resolved after the recognition scene, where it is proved that after all it was good luck that Orestes was commanded to come to Tauris. On the other hand, the later scheme of Iphigeneia, her *σοφίσματα* (1031) or her *τέχναι* (1032), could be foreshadowed at 89. Similarly, Orestes' and Iphigeneia's hazardous ventures (*κίνδυνος*, 90 and *κινδύνευμα*, 1001, respectively) are connected implicitly from the beginning of the play and explicitly after the recognition scene.

Iphigeneia also talks about *tyche* to express her preoccupation with humanity's ignorance and helplessness with reference to divine operation. When Orestes and Pylades are brought before her, she starts asking them sympathetic questions about their origins. And from the irony of expressing her sympathy for the sister who is going to be deprived of the brothers, she goes on to make some general remarks on divine plans and fortune: "Two fine young brothers she'll have lost and be without. Who can know who is going to have fortunes such as these? All of the gods' designs are obscure in outcome, and no one can know anything with certainty, for fortune (*ἡ τύχη*) leads us astray (*παρήγαγε*) into the difficulty of understanding" (474-479). *ἡ τύχη* here seems to denote an obscure and indefinite power; mentioned in the same context as *αἱ τύχαι* (fortunes, 475) and *τὰ τῶν θεῶν* (476), it seems

---

[59] The frequent fifth-century tension between skill or intelligence and luck or chance in this context serves to reflect Orestes' insecurity and uncertainty. On this tension see above.
[60] Contrast Aeschylus' *Choephori* 1029-30.

related to them. But, on the other hand, it is linked with a transitive verb (*παρήγαγε*) and, therefore, may imply an agency vaguely connected with but, potentially, distinct from divine agency.

This dark picture of human ignorance and hopelessness can naturally lead to the idea that mortals have no other option than to surrender to fortune. In fact, this is Orestes' first reaction to Iphigeneia's compassionate willingness to learn the foreigners' origins and identity. Since he and Pylades are to be sacrificed and there is no escape from death (490-1), Iphigeneia's pity on them is foolish and vain (482-5). The same holds true of a man who grieves when facing certain death (486-9). Orestes briefly concludes these general reflections by saying at 489 "One should let fortune have its way", *τὴν τύχην δ' ἐᾶν χρεών*. In the same vein, at 500, when Orestes introduces himself by the name *Δυστυχής* (Unfortunate), evading revealing his real name by using a description of his state of affairs, Iphigeneia replies that she did not ask about his misfortune; Orestes should ascribe this to fortune, *τοῦτο μὲν δὸς τῇ τύχῃ* (501). Cropp aptly notes that: "Iphigenia dismisses the concealment (*Δυστυχής*) with a pun (*δὸς...τύχῃ*)". Further, Euripides' technique of constructing the stichomythia is visible here: as the subject of the conversation moves to Orestes' place of origin (505), Iphigeneia does not ask again about his name, whose concealment is an important prerequisite of the prolonged recognition scene.

Towards the end of the long stichomythia, when Iphigeneia hears that Orestes is alive, she disparages the validity of her dream: "Deceptive dreams, farewell! You were nothing, then" (569). Orestes then applies the same idea to his case, cryptically talking about deceptive gods and seers: "Nor indeed are the gods, though reputed to be wise,[61] any more infallible than flighty dreams. There is much turmoil in divine and human affairs (*πολὺς ταραγμὸς ἔν τε τοῖς θείοις ἔνι | κἀν τοῖς βροτείοις*); † but he grieves over one thing only,† when not through being foolish, but persuaded by seers' pronouncements, he is ruined as he is ruined in the eyes of those who know" (570-5). The text is uncertain here; lines 572-5 have been suspected by Diggle and others, while Cropp deletes them. The latter argues that there is no clear connection between 570-1

and 572-5; Orestes follows Apollo's orders not some seers', and the fact that the god is elsewhere called a 'seer' is not relevant here. Cropp concludes that: "the lines may have originated in a marginal parallel".[62] His arguments are plausible but I am not convinced that these lines should be deleted. If Cropp describes Orestes' words in 570-1 as cryptic why could one not say the same about lines 572-5? These look like a reference both cryptic and ironic to Orestes' case. If they imply that Orestes thinks at this moment that he is going to die, Iphigeneia's unexpected proposal (578ff.) reverses the situation and undercuts Orestes' despair. Is it not dramatically appropriate that Orestes should be given some lines dwelling on his despair (albeit cryptically) just before the unexpected reversal is introduced? Moreover, the idea that there is a lot of confusion (*ταραγμός*) in human and divine affairs (572-3) seems to recast Solon's words to Croesus. The Herodotean Solon says that *τὸ θεῖον* confuses our lives (i.32.1); Orestes says that human life suffers confusion itself.[63]

The connection between references to *tyche* and feelings of insecurity and uncertainty continues even after the reunion. After the initial jubilation (827-49) the siblings sink back into the grim memories of Iphigeneia's sacrifice (852-66). At 864-7 she sings: "Unfatherly, unfatherly treatment was my fate. But different things are emerging from what went before, through some godsent stroke of fortune (*δαίμονος τύχᾳ τινός*)"[64] (Cropp's translation). The last two verses could refer either to her past misfortunes after the events at Aulis or to the latest events: the unexpected reunion with her brother which happened just in the nick of time to reverse the danger of her sending him to death. At least this is what Orestes understands, who comments: "Suppose, poor woman, you had slain your brother!" (868). Iphigeneia, engrossed by this near escape (869-71), goes on to dwell on her uncertainty about how they can find deliverance from their troubles through a series of questions (874-98). At 875 she wonders: "What will happen to me?" (*τίς τύχα μοι συγκυρήσει;*). Here *tycha* represents the unpredictable and unexpected factor in future events and

---

[61] Notice again the motif of *σοφία*: the gods *ought* to make intelligible sense!
[62] Cropp (2000) 213.
[63] Cf. Eur. *Electra* 368 and *Heracleidai* 959.
[64] But note that Herwerden conjectures *τέχνᾳ* at 867.

this seems to be picked up again in 896, although the text is uncertain. Iphigeneia, ending her song, wonders about the different possibilities: "†What….god or mortal or what unexpected event (*ἤ τί τῶν ἀδοκήτων*)† will make us a path from this impasse and show these two lone descendants of Atreus deliverance from their troubles?" (895-9).

So far we have seen that *tyche* mostly means fortune and represents the unexpected factor in future events, while at the same time it reflects the insecurity and uncertainty of the characters. However, Pylades' intervention at 902ff. marks a turning point in the dramatic action, as he urges the siblings to stop sorrowing and think how to escape from Tauris. Hence, his reference to *tyche* has the positive meaning of good fortune: "This is the way of the wise, not to let go of good fortune (*μὴ 'κβάντας τύχης*) but to seize the moment and to get further joys" (907-8). Orestes' reply at 909-11 also includes *tyche* with a favourable nuance. Here *tyche* is linked with the verb *μέλει* that is often used of divine agency:[65] "I think good fortune (*ἡ τύχη*) is taking care of this (i.e. of our rescue) along with us". We recognise here a pattern in which the agency of *tyche*[66] is inextricably associated with human willingness to act, which is further intermingled with divinity's willingness to help (910-11). Similarly, in a fragment of Sophocles we find the idea that it is foolish of mortals to be afraid of death, since "that is up to luck".[67] Platnauer in his commentary talks about "the sentiment 'Heaven helps those who help themselves'" and quotes two parallel tragic fragments,[68] in which both god and *tyche* are spoken of in similar terms: god or fortune help only those who act themselves. It emerges then that *ἡ τύχη* (propitious fortune) at 909 is perceived as an active power, distinct but not independent from both human and divine action.

Anne Burnett has argued that *Iphigeneia in Tauris* "takes the role of accident in human life more seriously than any other Euripidean tragedy

---

[65] See for example *Ion* 35-6; Sophocles' *OT* 377and *Phil.* 196, 1036; compare also *Hel.* 45-6.
[66] Here it is propitious and approaches the sense of 'good fortune, luck'.
[67] Sophocles fr. 951 Radt: *ὅστις δὲ θνητῶν θάνατον ὀρρωδεῖ λίαν, / μῶρος πέφυκε· τῇ τύχῃ μέλει τάδε. / ὅταν δ' ὁ καιρὸς τοῦ θανεῖν ἐλθὼν τύχῃ / οὐδ' ἂν πρὸς αὐλὰς Ζηνὸς ἐκφύγοι μολών.*
[68] Euripides fr. 432 N: *αὐτός τι νῦν δρῶν, εἶτα δαίμονας κάλει· / τῷ γὰρ πονοῦντι καὶ θεὸς συλλαμβάνει.* Cf. Soph. fr. 927 Radt: *οὐ τοῖς ἀθύμοις ἡ τύχη ξυλλαμβάνει* and fr. 407 Radt. Compare also the proverb *σὺν Ἀθηνᾷ καὶ χέρα κινεῖν* and *audentis Fortuna iuvat* (Virgil, *Aen.* 10, 284; cf. Ter. *Phorm.* 203).

does".[69] Although I agree with her conclusion that diction and plot suggest that "the autonomous power of *tyche* is merely an appearance, while the power of heaven is reality",[70] some of her observations go beyond what can be found in the text. There is no "chorus's vision of a tyche-governed universe"[71] in the first stasimon and, similarly, it is not clear that Iphigeneia shares this vision at 475ff. and 501. In the first context fortunes (*τὰς τύχας*), divine matters (*τὰ τῶν θεῶν*) and fortune (*ἡ τύχη*) are set side by side, while the second context constitutes a passing comment on *tyche* which also contains a word-play.

The skilful progression of the recognition scene, which is built on suspense and surprise, creates the impression of a very life-like, naturalistic reunion, especially through the ingenious device of the letter. Iphigeneia's spontaneous and, hence, apparently fortuitous idea to send a letter to her relatives at Argos (578ff.) occurs to her just after she hears that Orestes is alive (568). The characters, arriving at their recognition and at their escape-plan through "the free interplay" of their thoughts, emotions and actions,[72] seem to be susceptible to spontaneous or unexpected factors. Unlike *Ion*, where the reunion of Creusa and Ion is prepared by the miraculous, implicitly god-motivated rescue of Ion and furthermore is set into motion by the prophetess, the recognition scene in *IT* consists of the long interplay between Orestes, Iphigeneia and Pylades. Its retardation and swervings come to reveal some of their moral characteristics. Apollo's influence - if any - on the recognition scene is never explicitly mentioned, while we can assume that an apparently chance event colours it. Orestes' name was not mentioned at all and therefore was not heard by the herdsmen, who have heard and reported the name - unknown to Iphigeneia - of Pylades. What kind of recognition would we have, if Iphigeneia had happened to hear from them the name of her brother? On the other hand, Iphigeneia's dream is meant to be understood as prophetic, as

---

[69] See A. P. Burnett, *Catastrophe Survived. Euripides' plays of mixed reversal*, (Oxford, 1971) 67 and n.19. However, she appears critical of the fact that plays not really connected with chance are called "*Tyche* plays, a most unfortunate appellation".

[70] Burnett (1971) 68.

[71] ibid. p. 67.

[72] ibid. p. 49.

usual with dreams in tragedy.[73] Yet Euripides does not dwell on the divine origin of the dream but on the human reaction. Iphigeneia misinterprets it and is made to believe that her brother is dead. Now she is determined to sacrifice the two strangers without mercy (348), although she disapproves of this cruel custom (380). Paradoxically enough, it is through this decision to sacrifice the two foreigners that the unexpected and unimaginable outcome of getting reunited with her brother is effected.

The basic feeling of human uncertainty in the face of contingency is strikingly reflected in the letter-scene. Iphigeneia wants to make sure that the carrier of the letter will complete his mission (as it is likely that he might not: 730ff.) and so she requests an oath from Pylades. Moreover, once oaths are exchanged (742-52), Pylades requests "a contingency-clause"[74] allowing for the possibility of a shipwreck and the loss of the letter. Iphigeneia is aware that one should expect the unexpected because "many things hit upon many things", *πολλὰ γὰρ πολλῶν κυρεῖ*, 759 (cf. 865). Therefore, she immediately offers to read the letter aloud. This discloses her identity; once she is convinced of Orestes' identity the recognition is complete.

The messenger's speech towards the end of the play contains a memorable instance of the dynamic presence of the uncontrollable that temporarily thwarts the plan of the characters to escape. As the ship crossed the mouth of the harbour and was about to sail out into the open, a great wave threw the ship towards the shore again (1392-7). However hard the oarsmen strained they could not overcome the turbulent sea. This is an unexpected and thrilling complication that momentarily threatens the salvation mission Apollo has ordered Orestes to undertake (89, 979) as well as Iphigeneia's plan to escape from the land of Tauris. The Messenger does not describe the incident of the sudden adverse winds and of the great wave as anything other than a natural phenomenon. There is no divine intervention in the first place, although the Messenger in his interpretation of the incident later on sees

---

[73] Xenophon (*Eq. Mag.*, 9.7-9) lists dreams along with sacrifices, omens and voices as means by which the gods give signs (*προσημαίνουσι*) to men. See K. Valakas, "*Όνειρο και τραγωδία. Το πρόβλημα των προρρήσεων στην Ιφιγένεια εν Ταύροις του Ευριπίδη*", *Ariadne* 6 (1993) 109-39 [in Modern Greek with a summary in English (266-7)].

[74] To use M. J. Cropp's formulation in Cropp (2000) 220.

Poseidon behind it. Euripides does not go as far as Thucydides, who uses the expression *κατὰ τύχην* (by chance) in describing weather conditions (iii.49.4; iv.3.1). There is a fundamental difference here: Thucydides is describing what actually happened, but Euripides is *inventing* the wave incident.

In *IT* the apparent vagaries of the adverse winds provide the plot with a fresh spin, which may reflect the sudden reversals in human life and the impotence of human will. Even at the moment when one is most justified in believing that one's plans and hopes are about to be fulfilled, an accidental happening can turn everything upside down. Despite Iphigeneia's prayer to Artemis (1398-1402), a different goddess, that is, Athena, intervenes and has persuaded Poseidon to calm the sea (1444-5). It is important that Euripides need not have invented this obstacle at all. Apparently, he wants this for its effects: the surprising complication which brings things to a crisis. Thoas is just about to launch his pursuit and capture the Greek ship (1422ff.). This is the moment when a divine intervention seems most needed. Indeed, the goddess Athena appears and reveals to Thoas Orestes' divine mission. From this point of view, *Helen* towards the end is simpler, although the obstacle of the sacrificial bull refusing to get onboard may be comparable (1555-66). Still, this is not developed to the same degree as the wave incident, which seems to reflect the limitations of the human perspective. The Messenger's interpretation – that Poseidon who watches over Troy (a very Homeric idea) opposes the Greeks, and hence that he is going to give Orestes and deceitful Iphigeneia to Thoas (1414-9) – is disproved by Athena's authoritative explanation. Poseidon is making the sea calm for her sake (*χάριν ἐμήν*) so that Orestes' ship can take him to Attica (1444ff.).

Through the surprising complication of the wave incident, the dramatic action reaches a crisis in which the danger that the siblings' plan will fail, and that all the Greeks will fall into the hands of Thoas, is very imminent. Only a divine power can save them, and Athena's intervention in the nick of time highlights how near their escape was. Athena's epiphany puts an end to the ironies of the plot, and at the same time her control over the future seems to throw human ignorance and fragility into relief. Although in the course of the play the characters' uncertainty and ignorance is reflected in the way they talk

about some vague power of fortune (*τύχη*), Athena's divine voice is the only one that speaks with real certainty and power of knowledge. It is indicative that the goddess never talks about double-edged, uncertain *τύχη*. Instead, she markedly refers to what was destined to happen (*πεπρωμένον*, 1438) and to what must be, which is above both mortals and gods. As she says characteristically at 1486, applauding Thoas' compliance with the divine orders: "I commend you. What must be controls you and the gods" (*τὸ γὰρ χρεὼν σοῦ τε καὶ θεῶν κρατεῖ*).

Cropp points out that *τὸ πεπρωμένον* "is often invoked by Euripides' play-closing gods" and cites several passages.[75] It is interesting to add that Heracles, who is the semi-divine appearance at the end of Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, refers both to his fortunes (*τὰς ἐμὰς...τύχας*, 1418) and to what has to be suffered (*ὀφείλεται παθεῖν*, 1421) or what must happen, coupled with reverence to the gods and Zeus (*χρεών*, 1439 and 1441-4; cf. 1466-8). It is tempting to see in this his double status as both human and divine. The only *τυχ*-stem word Athena uses in *IT* is *εὐτυχία*, good fortune. Addressing all those departing for Greece she concludes at 1490-1: "Go on your way in your good fortune (*ἐπ' εὐτυχίᾳ*), happy in attaining your salvation (*τῆς σωζομένης / μοίρας εὐδαίμονες ὄντες*)". The characters attain happiness in the end with divine help. The most important aspect of the 'fortune' versus 'what must be' tension is the stress thrown on the difference between limited human perspectives and powerful divine knowledge. Although the characters often talk about uncertain, vague fortune (*τύχη*) in the course of the play, Athena's divine voice seems to present their happiness (*εὐτυχία*) and salvation as permanent and inviolable (1486-91). In Aeschylus only the good side of fortune, prosperity, or happiness, is for mortals like a god or more than a god; *τὸ δ' εὐτυχεῖν, / τόδ' ἐν βροτοῖς θεός τε καὶ θεοῦ πλέον* (*Cho.* 59-60). If prosperity is felt to be godlike or a gift of god (Aesch. *Sept.* 625), then "there is perhaps the further implication that only divine *εὐτυχία* can be permanent".[76] This corresponds to Athena's concluding words in the *IT*, which contrast divine *εὐτυχία* with the numerous occurrences of uncertain human *τύχη* in the play.

---

[75] Cropp (2000) 261 on line 1438.
[76] A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus: Choephori*, (Oxford, 1986) 60-1.

iii) *HELEN*

Helen bears several similarities with *IT*. The ironic antinomy between appearance and reality pervades both plays. At the beginning of *Helen* Menelaus is said to be missing, and from this Helen falsely concludes that he is dead. In a similar way Iphigeneia misinterprets her dream as meaning that Orestes is dead. On the other hand, the presence of Helen in Troy is a deceptive appearance, since Hera sent only an image of her there, and the real Helen was transported to Egypt. Likewise, Iphigeneia's death at Aulis is a deceptive appearance as well: a deer was sacrificed in her place, and she was transported to Tauris. *Helen* and *IT* involve the meeting and recognition of long-separated family members: husband and wife, and siblings, respectively. Helen devises a fictitious burial for Menelaus so that they hoodwink Theoclymenus and escape. Similarly, Iphigeneia deceives Thoas with her plan of sham purifications.

In *Helen*, as in *IT*, three branches of causation can be discerned. Divine motives, human motives and what the characters perceive as fortune or the factor of the unexpected (*tyche*), which may or may not be connected with the divine. The divine causation is represented by Hera, Zeus, Aphrodite, Hermes and Theonoe, while Menelaus and Helen are the human agents whose efforts are necessary for their plan to succeed. Helen is aware that her misfortune started from the part played by Aphrodite and Hera in her life, and at the same time she talks about her bad fortunes (*tychai* or *tyche*). The motto of her speech at the beginning of the first episode could be summarised as follows: "It's bad luck on me that my beauty has caused me such a sad life" (*Hel.* 264, 304-5). Apart from misfortune, human uncertainty and ignorance before the unknown future can also be expressed in terms of *tyche* (vague, uncertain fortune). Helen, in utter despair thinking that her husband, mother and brothers are all dead (277-86), wonders at 293: "Why go on living then? What kind of fortune is left behind for me? (*τίν' ὑπολείπομαι τύχην;*)". It seems that after Teucer's unexpected arrival, who breaks the news of a family disaster to Helen, she forgets all about Hermes' words that ultimately she will live in Sparta with her husband. Helen possesses this knowledge of a happy

outcome from a divine source. Yet this proves to be of no avail in the course of the play where new, unexpected circumstances constantly change the way characters think and feel. Both the divine and fortune are spoken of in relation with this instability and uncertainty in all things human, and *Helen* contains memorable expressions of this set of ideas (711-9, 1137-50).

It is significant that *tyche* is not only spoken of but also depicted in close relation to divinity and other personified powers of fate. An amphoriskos in Berlin, dated in the 430's B.C., presents the persuasion of Helen. At the centre of the scene there are Helen, Aphrodite, Peitho, Paris and Himeros. Four female personifications are also represented as standing close to the scene. Nemesis and Heimarmene are identified by inscriptions, while the sole surviving 'Y' in another label was restored by Wilamowitz as Tyche. A last female figure, probably a personification as well, cannot be identified with any degree of likelihood.[77] The meaning of the above personifications and their relation to the main scene have been variously interpreted by different scholars. Wilamowitz took Tyche to mean *ἀγαθὴ τύχη* (good fortune), denoting that Paris will be successful in winning Helen's love and abducting her.[78] For Palagia the symbolism of Nemesis' coupling with Tyche on the amphoriskos is "obvious: Paris' great good fortune attracts divine retribution".[79] For Shapiro Heimarmene "represents the past, what has been ordained by gods and fate, while Nemesis points to the future, to the dire consequences of Helen's (and Paris') act".[80] In this light, Tyche (if Wilamowitz's restoration is correct) acquires a more double-edged and ambiguous quality, in the sense that this moment's good fortune and success will change into misfortune and suffering in the future. Although the

---

[77] See *LIMC* s.v. *Heimarmene* and *Tyche*. Also Hamdorf (1964) 32 and 100. H. A. Shapiro, "The origins of Allegory in Greek Art", *Boreas* 9 (1986) 4-23, at 9-14. Shapiro (1993) 192-5 and 227-8. On the acorn lekythos known only from a nineteenth-century description by Körte [see in G. Körte, "Eichelförmige Lekythos mit Goldschmuck", *AZ* (1879; published in 1880) 93-96] see also Shapiro (1993) 106 and n. 224: the lekythos in question once belonged to "an Athens private collection but has never surfaced in the literature…It has a composition of a seated woman, surrounded by three other women…The seated woman is Harmonia, the other three Peitho, Hygieia, and Tyche".

[78] Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1929) 485.

[79] O. Palagia, "No Demokratia" in *The Archaeology of Athens and Attica under the Democracy*, W. D. E. Coulson, O. Palagia, T. L. Shear Jr., H. A. Shapiro and F. J. Frost (eds.), (Oxford, 1994) 113-122, at 119.

[80] Shapiro (1993) 194.

personifications of fate (Heimarmene) and fortune (Tyche) as such do not occur in Euripides' *Helen*, still irreversible fate and uncertain fortune there constitute different ways of looking at what happens. 'What must be' is provided as an explanation of the general pattern of events by the Dioscuri in the end, whereas unpredictable fortune matches the uncertainty and ignorance of the characters in the course of the play.

Helen in the eponymous play speaks the prologue. She sets the action in Egypt and narrates the familiar story of the judgement of Paris, which Aphrodite won by promising Helen to Paris (1-30). But how did this bring Helen to Egypt? Euripides here introduces a novel spin to the goddesses' dispute. Originally, Helen was Aphrodite's lure to Paris (27-28); yet here it was not Helen that Paris led to Troy but her image (*εἴδωλον*), Hera's ploy for gaining revenge.[81] She produces it out of heaven, *εἴδωλον ἔμπνουν οὐρανοῦ ξυνθεῖσ' ἄπο* (33), and gives it to Paris, because the goddess was cross that he did not make her prevail over her rivals, Athena and Aphrodite (31).[82]

But does this jealous squabble and spite have a larger purpose? Euripides does not tell us. What we hear instead is that Zeus has his own plan to alleviate the earth of overpopulation and to advertise Achilles by causing a war, and that Hera's scheme conveniently coincides with his own (36-7). According to Helen, Zeus cares for her. After Hera sent her image to Troy, Hermes came and took Helen to Egypt "for Zeus did not overlook me" (45-6).[83] Still we do not hear anything that explains this hint further, while Hermes' prediction that Helen will return to Sparta with her husband is not explicitly attached to a larger project of Zeus. Consequently, from Helen's prologue one gets the impression that the Olympians cause the action, but each seems to act from selfish or even spiteful motives without any coherent purpose. Helen gives a very disorderly picture of divine order. What Orestes

---

[81] In Euripides' *Electra* 1280-3 Castor explains that Zeus sent an image of Helen to Troy to cause strife and death among mortals. Also earlier in Stesichorus it is probably Zeus who creates the double of Helen in order to protect his daughter from the disgrace of adultery and its consequences; see Kannicht (1969) 26ff. E. Hall notes that "this mythical exculpation of Helen had originally been invented by the lyric poet Stesichorus, and had been rationalized by Herodotus in his account of Egyptian antiquities (2.118-20)"; see her introduction to Morwood (1997) xxiii.

[82] Later in the play we find that the real Helen's return to Sparta is a further scheme to discredit Aphrodite (880-3).

says at *IT* 572-3 is a typical human reaction to this: *πολὺς ταραγμὸς ἔν τε τοῖς θεοῖς ἔνι | κἀν τοῖς βροτείοις*. So far we have had an idea of what kind of turmoil exists on the divine plane. As the plot thickens the characters' hopelessness and bewildered uncertainty in the face of unexpected happenings is reflected in their frequent prayers to gods and in their reliance on Theonoe (the one who knows the divine will) to help them escape. Ignorance and insecurity characterise the human perspective in the play, which is set against the pattern of events revealed by the Dioscuri in the end: everything that happened was necessary or destined to happen.

If it is indeed right that there is no coherent divine purpose in the prologue, then how are Hermes' words at 56-8 to be understood? The god's vague promise seems to set up expectations and hope both in Helen and in the audience. However, these optimistic feelings are shortly undercut with the unexpected entrance of Teucer. Helen hears from him that her mother, brothers and husband have all died. This unexpected concourse of misfortunes adds to the troubles Helen has had in her life so far.

Euripides makes his Helen particularly sensitive to the fact that she herself was to suffer from the fact that the gods set her double as prize for the Trojan war (42-3, 109). Since Hera is the creator of her *εἴδωλον*, Helen rightly regards her at several points as responsible for her misfortunes (241-51, 261, 669-82). However, at 52 Helen says that many Greek soldiers were killed in Troy because of her, *δι' ἐμέ*. At that moment it seems to her that it is not Zeus' will or Hera's plan or Helen's *εἴδωλον* that are responsible for the destruction of so many lives. Conversely, the paradoxical fact that she is guilty and not guilty at the same time lies at the heart of her tragic position; "she is *ἀναίτιος* and *παναίτιος* so far as her existence has become a prerequisite for Zeus' will and Hera's stratagem".[84] Furthermore, the bad news Teucer brings to Helen enhances even more her sense of guilt; she feels responsible for the supposed death of Menelaus as well as for the death of her mother and of her brothers (196-202).

---

[83] For a similar prologue reassurance of divine care see *Ion* 67-8.
[84] Kannicht (1969) 32 on line 52.

At 267-8 the gnome that Helen utters can be interpreted in two ways, since *tyche* can be taken as having either a positive meaning or a negative one. In the first case, lines 267-8 are to be translated as follows: "When a man setting his hopes on one result (*τύχη*) is distressed by the gods, it is hard, but must be borne". The conflict which is expressed here – placing one's hopes in one good thing but being destroyed by gods - is reminiscent of the *ἀμφιλογία* (1141) in Helen's *tychai*; despite her divine origins and her exceptional beauty (304-5), she was to suffer a concourse of misfortunes. Therefore, *τύχη* at 267 may refer to Helen's *κάλλος*: she expresses a general opinion that serves as a bridge between her previous and following thoughts. Earlier she wishes that her beauty might have been expunged away and be replaced by a plain face; then the Greeks could have forgotten her ill luck and remembered what is not ill. At 267-8, in order to proceed from this thought on to the recitation of her sufferings, she uses the gnome. However, the antithesis which relates the gnome to the following lines (*ὅστις μὲν..... ἡμεῖς δὲ*) seems to imply that Helen begins speaking about herself at 269ff. (*ἡμεῖς δὲ*). This antithesis leads us to the second interpretation of the gnome: "when a man with regard to only one misfortune is afflicted by the gods....". Now the question we have to ask, if we want to choose one of these two interpretations, is whether the content of the gnome has a bearing on Helen herself or not. It is obvious that the direct reference to herself starts with *ἡμεῖς δὲ*. Yet an indirect reference to herself cannot be excluded, especially if the gnome is to be regarded as a kind of bridge between her earlier renunciation of her beauty and the following enumeration of her misfortunes. Therefore, both interpretations appear as possible.

Helen is at pains in this speech to convey the idea that she is the victim of many catastrophes. One of them is her beauty. She says: 'I have *more than one συμφορά* -- my *κάλλος* being one of them. Other people have only one *τύχη* to worry about'. It seems that here Euripides, connecting *κάλλος* with *τύχη* (260-9, 304-5), wants to point to the ambiguity of these two factors: they can make one happy, but they can also destroy one. Helen's beauty exposed her to a number of imponderable factors and uncontrollable dangers. In other words, her loveliness made her susceptible to several reversals of luck. As the old

woman says to Menelaus at 477f., "things have taken a turn in the palace", *ἔστι γάρ τις ἐν δόμοις τύχη*. The wooing of Helen by Theoclymenus results in his order that all the Greeks arriving at Egypt should be killed. After the recognition, Menelaus and Helen will have to make a plan to escape from Theoclymenus. Importantly, in the background of all these is Helen's *κάλλος* and *τύχη* (both her bad and good fortune); and it appears that the latter is under the control of divine powers.

It seems that the frequent references to *tyche* in Helen's long speech (255-305) serve the wider purpose of throwing into relief the image of unfortunate but virtuous Helen which Euripides promotes in this play. In contrast to Helen's excessive despair after hearing the news from Teucer, the Chorus keeps on reminding her that she should not put too much faith in the stranger's words (306-7, 309, 311). The Chorus suggests that Helen should consult Theonoe about her husband. Once she has got a clear answer from Theonoe, according to the fortunes revealed to her (*πρὸς τὰς τύχας*, 320-1),[85] she should be happy or mourn. Apart from foreshadowing the later scene with Theonoe, this piece of advice functions as a signal that a reversal is about to happen. There is a similar passage pointing to the forthcoming reversal and recognition in *IT* 721-2. Here Pylades emphatically says that even great unhappiness can show great reversals when it comes to that (when it happens).

The next twist of fortune is represented by the arrival of Menelaus who has survived the shipwreck by some unexpected event, *ἀνελπίστῳ τύχῃ* (412). Although there is a great deal of unexpectedness and randomness in this *tyche*, it is also connected with the divine. This is obvious when Menelaus says that the gods did not grant him his return to his country, *κἀς πάτραν χρήζων μολεῖν, / οὐκ ἀξιοῦμαι τοῦδε πρὸς θεῶν τυχεῖν* (403). The phrasing *πρὸς θεῶν τυχεῖν* is important because it shows that the meaning of *τυχεῖν / τύχη* depends a lot on what they are associated with each time. At 403 the idea of divine granting is prominent, whereas at 412 the unexpectedness of the event and vagueness about its source prevail.

---

[85] F. Dunn, *Tragedy's End: Closure and Innovation in Euripidean Drama*, (Oxford / New York, 1996) 147 takes this line as meaning "since chance can bring both joy and grief". This is not an accurate translation.

At 417 shipwrecked Menelaus refers to his plight as *τύχας* and connects it with the theme of the reversal of fortune (417-9, 423-4).[86] Euripides seems to keep always in sight the links of *tyche* with the divine, the unexpected, and the reversal of states of affairs. Good luck may have been with Menelaus when he survived the shipwreck, but he arrives at the palace at the least opportune moment, as the Old Woman says, *ἔστι γάρ τις ἐν δόμοις | τύχη, τύραννος ἥ ταράσσεται δόμος.| καιρὸν γὰρ οὐδέν' ἦλθες* (477-9). Yet, it turns out that Menelaus arrives just in time to save his wife from Theoclymenus' advances. It is indicative of the complications Euripides has introduced in the plot that their recognition is not so easy as may be expected for the reunion of husband and wife. In fact, the recognition is thwarted and it is the sudden entrance of a messenger that solves the impasse. He brings the news of the disappearance of Helen's double, which has been a major obstacle, rendering impossible the couple's recognition.

In the *Odyssey* we see that the pattern of *anagnorismos* is already not a simple matter for Homer, but attracts his special care (suggesting that it is already a familiar motif). Admittedly, the moment of recognition between two long-separated characters constitutes a high dramatic point. This is obvious in *Odyssey* 23, where the scene of the reunion of Odysseus with his wife takes place. "The meticulous preparation of the reunion is most apparent in the several instances in which the couple are brought together but Penelope's recognition of Odysseus is postponed or prevented (xviii, xix, xxi)",[87] while in 23 she still delays. The *anagnorismos* in Euripides is formed by postponement, unexpected twists and changes, and moreover may be given a miraculous, semi-divine character (*Hel.* 560: *ὦ θεοί· θεὸς γὰρ καὶ τὸ γιγνώσκειν φίλους*). Good luck and fortune (*τύχη*) seem to be involved in every recognition, and so we are justified in talking about the *τύχη* of *anagnorismos*.[88] Kannicht speaks of "die in der *τύχη* des Anagnorismos manifeste göttliche Macht". Or rather, in the good fortune (*tyche*) of the reunion there is *pronoia*, that is, both human and divine purpose.

---

[86] See also 1081-2, which emphasise the reversal.

[87] See J. Russo, M. Fernandez-Galiano, A. Heubeck, *Homer's Odyssey*, Vol. III (Oxford, 1992) 313.

[88] Kannicht (1969) 190.

Euripides leaves enough room for chance in the recognition scene in *IT*. Yet in *Helen* the stunning reversal which the disappearance of Helen's phantom introduces has only the semblance of a chance event. Euripides shows us a conventional tragic scene of recognition – which unexpectedly fails – and so has to be doubled (like everything in *Helen*). In the first place, the recognition between Helen and Menelaus is hampered by his understandable inability to distinguish between, or to reconcile, the Helen he left in the cave and the Helen who stands in front of him. The miraculous, extraordinary disappearance of the *εἴδωλον* has as an immediate consequence the disappearance of Menelaus' doubt and disbelief, and therefore the ultimate recognition between the couple. Helen, having heard from Theonoe that Menelaus is alive but still wandering in the heavy seas, comes in sight of a man with savage looks; utterly dismayed, she wants to flee to the tomb like a racing filly or a bacchanal. Correspondingly, Menelaus is struck dumb by what he sees in front of him. But each one's troubled reaction stems from different causes; Menelaus is bewildered because he recognises and yet cannot accept the woman in front of him as his wife, Helen. There cannot be two identical Helens, one beside him and the other in the cave, and he cannot have two identical wives. On the other hand, Helen, being obsessed with Theoclymenus' wooing and judging from Menelaus' poor clothes, thinks that he is ordered by Theoclymenus to catch her and give her over to the tyrant. Although she knows that Menelaus is shipwrecked somewhere in Egypt,[89] she does not express any kind of hope when she sees this obviously shipwrecked man.

So the *anagnorisis* begins with a divergence: what could be an opportunity for Helen to express her concern about her shipwrecked husband, and therefore establish a similarity between him and the apparently shipwrecked man in front of her, is left unexploited by the poet. Conversely, the false recognition between Creusa and Ion ironically points to the similarities between the fortune of Creusa and Ion.

---

[89] If we accept lines 530-40 as authentic.

However, as Karin Alt points out, Helen's reaction is psychologically right;[90] she dreads Theoclymenus' wooing and so automatically connects the appearance of the stranger with his purposes. This divergence, the fact that at the beginning of the *anagnorisis* the two parties get further apart, persists, and the recognition fails, despite the several points where a rapprochement seems likely to be achieved. At 559 and 563 Menelaus sees the great similarity between the woman in front of him and the other Helen. Helen calls on gods at 560 and justifies her invocation by saying that also recognising your beloved ones is divine. Accordingly, she recognises the man in front of her as her husband (564, 566). Yet Menelaus cannot become reconciled to the idea of the Trojan Helen not being his wife. Now that the recognition fails, Helen reveals to Menelaus that she never went to Troy, but Hera contrived an image of her and gave it to Paris so that he could not have her. But her revelation misfires, and the divergence with which the recognition scene began appears again.[91] The convergence is finally achieved in a miraculous and surprising way: a servant arrives and reports to Menelaus that the Helen he left in the cave has been lifted up and away out of sight into the air. To the surprise of the characters, the false Helen has spoken confirming what the real Helen revealed to Menelaus earlier; he can now see the truth of her words. In fact, the actual recognition consists of the convergence of the truth of the real Helen and Menelaus' conscience, which is no longer baffled by her phantom, *ξυμβεβᾶσί μοι λόγοι / οἱ τῆσδ' ἀληθεῖς* (622-3). At 644-5 Helen refers again to their reunion by using a similar verb: *τὸ κακὸν δ' ἀγαθὸν σέ τε κἀμὲ συνάγαγεν*....

The whole context here is important. According to Diggle's text, Helen at 639-40 recalls a happy moment from her wedding with Menelaus: her brothers riding on white horses in the torchlight procession proclaimed her happy (*ὤλβισαν*). Menelaus at 641ff. contrasts this merry scene of the past with an unhappy event that paradoxically leads to a happy one. "This (i.e. the nuptial *μακαρισμός*) is a thing of the past (*τὸ πρόσθεν*), but a god (*θεὸς*) took you

---

[90] See K. Alt, "Zur Anagnorisis in der *Helena*", *Hermes* 90 (1962) 6-24, at 18.

[91] It is significant that at this climactic point (596) Helen forgets what she revealed to us in the prologue; she has has heard from Hermes' lips that she will eventually live with her husband in Sparta.

away from my house, yet now is leading you towards a different lot (*συμφορὰν*), better even than this" (641-3). Helen's reply is not less paradoxical: "Something evil that is good (*τὸ κακὸν δ' ἀγαθὸν*) has brought us together again my husband. It took it a long time (*χρόνιον*) – but still (now we are together). May I have profit of my good fortune (*ὀναίμαν τύχας*)" (644-5). Menelaus sees divinity as the responsible agent for the changes in Helen's life, whereas she talks of an abstract, vague factor, "something evil that is good", which has brought her back to her husband.[92]

Menelaus picks up again on divinity with a less vague reference to "the goddess", who cannot be other than Hera. He says at 653: *ἠισθόμην τὰ τῆς θεοῦ*, "I now understand the part played by Hera (the Phantom)".[93] I find unconvincing Willink's thesis that in this line *τὰ τῆς* is a corruption of *τύχης*. He translates: " 'I recognise the goddess Chance' or more exactly 'I recognise Chance (as) *θεός* ' " and argues that Menelaus will completely understand Hera's *μηχαναί* only later at 674-83. At this point a reference "to Hera's conduct is surely premature" since Menelaus "has not yet come to terms with the aforesaid information".[94] Willink's argument, that the way in which Helen and Menelaus start talking about Hera at 674-5ff. should exclude any previous reference to the goddess in the Duo, is rather debatable. A general mention of the part played by Hera at 653 does not oppose Menelaus' more specific question at 675 about Hera's motives; this is what Menelaus still needs to know. Besides, at 683 he can refer back to the information communicated by Helen at 586 and by the Old Servant at 608-11. Helen told him that Hera substituted an image for the real Helen, and the Old Servant explained that this ploy by Hera caused so many Greeks and Trojans to perish. Therefore, it is not clear why at 653 "Menelaus has not yet come to terms with the aforesaid information" and Willink's proposal does not seem to hold up under close scrutiny. On the other hand, his decision to give lines 654-55 to Menelaus

---

[92] C. W. Willink, "The Reunion Duo in Euripides' *Helen*", *CQ* 39 (1989) 45-69, at 57-8 says that *τὸ κακὸν δ' ἀγαθὸν* is "simply, but paradoxically conceived as the non-personal agency without whose operation they would not have been brought together as man and wife".

[93] See Dale (1967) 111.

[94] Willink (1989) 60.

affects the emendation he suggests.[95] He sees those lines as Menelaus' response to an "unexpected reversal to good fortune" and for this reason as similar to Ion's words at *Ion* 1512-14. Willink argues that "Menelaus has succeeded in recovering Helen not, as he had thought, by his prolonged labours at Troy, but in a wholly unexpected and apparently *irrational* manner, time and place. Irrational events are naturally attributed, especially by enlightened persons in Euripidean drama, to the agency of *τύχη*".[96] I agree with these comments, but they cannot really justify Willink's suspicion that there is a corruption in line 653.

In Euripides *tyche*, although it is spoken of with language similar to that used of a *daimon* (*Cyc.* 606ff and *IA*. 1136), is nowhere called a goddess, *θεός*. This is a fact that casts more doubt on Willink's suggestion. The disappearance of the phantom is a strikingly unexpected and irrational happening which changes the direction of the recognition scene; the *peripeteia* of the play depends a lot on this supernatural turn of events. Menelaus thought that fighting against and gaining a victory over the Trojans should mean the regaining of his wife. He could never expect that the reunion with his wife would entail the miraculous disappearance of the phantom Helen. Yet, though the latter may be seen as a "wonder-inspiring accident",[97] we should not forget that Hera's purpose lies always in the background of the play.

It is interesting to ask whether there is any connection between the disappearance of Helen's ghost, this awesome, wonder-inspiring event (*θαυμάστ'*, 601) and what Aristotle argues about those awesome chance events (*θαυμαστὸν... ἀπὸ τύχης*) which seem to have happened by design.[98] One of the few concessions Aristotle makes for chance events is in the case when the awesome (*τὸ θαυμαστόν*) is achieved not simply through a show of chance (*ἀπὸ τύχης*) or spontaneously (*ἀπὸ τοῦ αὐτομάτου*), but through chance events which seem to have happened by design (*ἐπίτηδες*) and not randomly (*οὐκ εἰκῆ*). Aristotle exemplifies his argument by referring to the killing of the murderer

---

[95] He does not discuss why he divides the lines in this way.
[96] Willink (1989) 60-1.
[97] See D. Frede, "Necessity, Chance and 'What Happens for the Most Part' ", in A. Rorty (ed.) *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, (Princeton, 1992) 197-219, at 205 and n. 27.
[98] Aristotle, *Poetics* 1452a, 5.

of Mitys by his statue: "as when Mitys' statue at Argos killed the murderer of Mitys by falling on him as he looked at it (or when he was visiting the festival)".[99] While the fall of the statue is an event of a kind which is according to normal rules of events, the self-revelation by the *εἴδωλον* is absolutely not: it requires *τὸ θεῖον* not just for its *timing*, but for *the kind of event that it is*. The phantom disappears at the moment when Menelaus encounters again the true Helen and instinctively recognises but on reflection rejects her. The truth would have remained undiscovered and unknown if Euripides had not included this miraculous scene, while on the other hand the *anagnorisis* would be impossible. But apart from its dramatic convenience as a *μηχάνημα*, Helen's ghost has a more significant role to play, as it reveals at 612-3. It remained among mortals in Troy as long as it had to, safeguarding the purposes of destiny, "*τὸ μόρσιμον σώσασα*". But now that Menelaus meets again the true Helen, its apportioned time on earth has expired, and therefore it goes to heaven. This is a more ordered, less random explanation than attributing the disappearance of Helen's double to chance.

The fact that the *εἴδωλον* was created by Hera makes us expect that it will also be destroyed by her; however, the servant who relates the unearthly event does not explicitly refer to Hera's intervention. Yet the double has a destiny to fulfil, and this implicitly connects it more closely with divine motivation. Menelaus at 653, after rejoicing at the reunion, perceives the work of Hera behind this wonder-inspiring event. Helen at 560 gives to the highly emotional moment of the recognition a divine character. In a way what Aristotle says about the killing of Mitys' murderer by Mitys' statue seems to apply better to Ion's miraculous rescue in *Ion*. This is an event of a kind which *looks natural* but also reveals a divine *πρόνοια*: not like the *εἴδωλον* in *Helen*. In *Ion* the whole structure of the banquet scene makes the act of a bird drinking the poison, its death and Ion's salvation a wonder-inspiring accident, which seems to have happened by design and not randomly. Since the scene is set at Delphi and Ion is Apollo's servant, there is a strong feeling that Apollo is somehow operative in the background.

---

[99] Translation by S. Halliwell, *Aristotle: Poetics*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1995).

The reunion of Helen and Menelaus is surely good luck, *τύχη* (645, 698, 738). Nevertheless, Euripides does not lose sight of the other aspect of *tyche*, namely its randomness and fickleness. The miraculous reunion of the couple leads the Old Servant to reflect upon the inscrutability of divine workings (710-4) and the instability of human fortune (715-9): "O daughter, how many-sided is god, how difficult he is to interpret! Somehow he directs all things for the best this way and that and changes all their dispositions (*εὖ δέ πως πάντα στρέφει | ἐκεῖσε κἀκεῖσ' ἀναφέρων·*). One man suffers while another one does not suffer but later comes horribly to grief, finding no security in fortune at any time. For you and your husband had your share of troubles, you as the victim of report and he in his zest of fighting. But all his struggles then availed him nothing, while now he has made no effort and yet has won the greatest happiness" (710-9).

These lines encapsulate an important feeling of the play. Inscrutable divine operation and human ignorance or uncertainty are placed side by side, as good or bad things happen irrespective of human toil or merit. A similar set of ideas is memorably expressed by the Chorus at 1137-1150. Diggle deletes lines 712-9 presumably because they sound like a trite embellishment of some later interpolator. However, Dale and Kannicht keep them; the latter underlines the traditional mentality of these lines and also the typical construction of the whole argumentation.[100] The Old Servant is not an unsuitable character to express these ideas, especially since Euripides likes to challenge the picture of slaves as lacking freedom of intellect or the capacity of unconstrained decision-making.[101] It seems to me that these lines fit well in their context and the general meaning of the play and, therefore, should be considered genuine. A similar image of god overturning all things, preceded by the image of casting dice, occurs in Euripides' *Supplices* 329-31. Aithra concludes her plea to her son Theseus to retrieve the bodies of the Seven against Thebes and give them to their mothers for burial by saying: "... and I am confident, as I see the people of Kadmos prospering, that yet their future

---

[100] See also H. F. Johansen, *General Reflection in Tragic Rhesis*, (Copenhagen, 1959) 92 and 98-9.

[101] See *Ion* 854-6; *Hel.* 1629-34 (a slave who acts in opposition to his master); *Hel.* 726-33, deleted by Diggle but kept by Dale and Kannicht.

dice casts will be different (*ἔτ' αὐτὸν ἄλλα βλήματ' ἐν κύβοις βαλεῖν*). For god in turn upsets all things (*ὁ γὰρ θεὸς πάντ' ἀναστρέφει πάλιν*)".

It is important that in *Helen* *ὁ θεός* (711) and *ἡ τύχη* (715) appear in the same context with reference to the variability and inscrutability of the gods as well as the fickleness of fortune. F. Dunn relates this passage to his argument that "the absence of a divine plan and the pervasive role of chance together produce a radical uncertainty about the nature of human action".[102] I think this is only partly true. If we put too much emphasis on the absence of a divine plan, we are likely to miss the crucial point, which resides in an ambiguous and inconclusive juxtaposition of god talk and fortune talk. This is not peculiar to Euripides, but he gives it renewed emphasis and momentum. For example, in Aeschylus' *Supplices* 86-95 the Danaids sing of the inscrutability of Zeus' desire and mind. In the antistrophe, Zeus' will has the supreme power of bringing into fulfilment everything he decides; this superior power and will is likened to light, which shines forth even in the darkness of events (fortune, *τύχα*) obscure to the limited human perspective. I translate West's text:[103] "May Zeus' desire (*Διὸς...ἵμερος*), if it is Zeus' in all truth, set things well for us. It has been hard to trace; the devices of his mind stretch in tangled and dark ways, too incomprehensible to be perceived (*κατιδεῖν ἄφραστοι*). Secure it falls and not on its back, whatsoever is decreed to be fulfilled by the nod of Zeus. Surely it shines in every way, even in gloom attended by events obscure to mortal men (*κἀν σκότῳ μελαίνᾳ / ξὺν τύχᾳ μερόπεσσι λαοῖς*)" (86-95).

The similarity with Euripidean contexts of combined references to the divine and *τύχη* is evident. Yet with regard to this juxtaposition Euripidean characters rather stress the disorderliness and arbitrariness of the divine than divine effectiveness and power like the Aeschylean ones. Jacqueline de Romilly, comparing Aeschylus' *Supplices* 93-5 (=88-90 in West's edition, as he follows Westphal's transposition of 88-90 and 93-5) and Euripides' *IT* 476-8, observes that the image is identical but the thoughts are diametrically opposite. "La mystère du divin nous laisse donc de plus en plus confrontés

---

[102] Dunn (1996) 148.
[103] M. L. West, *Aeschylus Tragoediae*, (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1998).[2]

aux simples désordres du hasard".[104] However, I would like to modify this statement. In Euripides we are confronted *both* with the traditional inscrutability of divine will *and* with a new emphasis on uncertain, mutable human fortune. This makes the younger tragedian more inclusive and inconclusive, but not diametrically different from Aeschylus. It seems that Euripides, by making his characters couch uncertain fortune (*τύχη*) in more active terms, highlights the sheer feeling of the unplannable and the unexpected in what happens to them, but also their ignorance of an eventually larger divine plan. The apparent chance events are not independent from either human or divine agents. It is often the case that some opaque divine purpose underlies and infuses human will and action, a purpose unknown to the characters in the course of the play but often revealed to them by a *deus ex machina*.

It may be a truism to say that Euripides makes use of prior literary traditions, contemporary ideas and his own poetic creativity. The dramatist blends expressions of religious feeling, criticism, or rationalism according to his purposes. His characters are well aware that chance is not compatible with divine providence. Talthybius in Euripides' *Hecuba*, coming to announce to Hecuba the killing of her daughter, sympathises with her while wondering:

> "Zeus, what shall I say? That you watch (*ὁρᾶν*) over men?
> Or that you have won a false reputation of doing so,
> [false, supposing that the race of gods exists],
> while chance in fact governs all mortal affairs?
> (*τύχην δὲ πάντα τἀν βροτοῖς ἐπισκοπεῖν;*)
> Is this not the queen of Phrygia rich in gold,
> the wife of Priam the highly blessed?
> And now her whole city has been devastated by the spear,
> and she herself, a slave, old and luckless, lies upon the ground,
> defiling her luckless head in the dust.
> Alas, alas, I am an old man, but still I pray I may die
> before I fall into some kind of miserable fortune."
> (*πρὶν αἰσχρᾷ περιπεσεῖν τύχῃ τινί*) (488-9).

---

[104] J. de Romilly, *La Modernité d' Euripide*, (Paris, 1986) 29.

Talthybius' expression of doubt whether Zeus or chance controls human affairs is a genuine reaction to Hecuba's pitiful turn of affairs. On the other hand, the idea of lack of divine order and proper care for mortals can occur in an ironical, ambivalent context. In the same tragedy, when Polymestor arrives at the Greek camp, ignorant that his murder of Polydorus has been discovered and that Hecuba's intrigue against him is about to unfold, the audience knows that his expression of sympathy is fake and likewise his attempt to blame it all on gods:

> "Priam, dearest of men, and dearest of women, Hecuba,
> I weep as I see your city and also your daughter lately slain.
> Alas, nothing can be relied upon, not good repute
> nor yet the thought that a man in luck
> will never have bad fortune.
> The gods stir things together in confusion back and forth,
> adding disorder so that in our ignorance
> we might worship them".
> (*φύρουσι δ' αὐτὰ θεοὶ πάλιν τε καὶ πρόσω*
> *ταραγμὸν ἐντιθέντες, ὡς ἀγνωσίᾳ*
> *σέβωμεν αὐτούς...*) (952-60).

Neither gods nor chance nor any other supernatural power is responsible for the murder of Hecuba's son. Polymestor is the murderer and pays for that. Similarly in the previous passage, Talthybius engages in sympathetic generalisations about Zeus and chance, but the raw reality is that the Greeks have caused the disasters in Hecuba's life: the fall of Troy and Polyxena's killing. The conclusion from the juxtaposition of the above passages should be that Euripides makes use of a set of ideas about the lack of divine providence, the rule of chance or intentional disorder and confusion coming from gods, but he does not commit himself to any of these ideas. The frequency of these ideas in his work can tell us something about the way in which he makes his characters think and feel. *Helen* contains several prayers to gods, and in one case *tyche* appears in this context as well.[105] It is this ever-present desire of the characters for divine response and for *tyche*, the wish for

good luck and avoidance of bad luck,[106] especially before a risky enterprise, that implies their deep-rooted insecurity and uncertainty in the face of the unknown future.

The Old Servant's general reflections in *Helen* 710ff. could also be seen as adumbrating the next unexpected obstacle in the plot, namely the sudden arrival of Theonoe at a moment when Menelaus and Helen have lost all hope and have started having thoughts about committing suicide (839f.; cf. 857ff.). Theonoe tells them that their lives are in the hands of gods who are actually engaged in a squabble about the future of Helen (878-9). Hera and Aphrodite are at cross purposes: the first wants to help the couple return home so that Helen's union with Paris (the gift of Aphrodite) will be seen to be null and void, whereas the latter wants the opposite (880-6). There is a sharp contrast between the characters' ignorance (877, 1090-2) and Theonoe who, as her name shows (13-5), knows about things divine, in the present and in the future. Nevertheless, it is surprising and bizarre to hear that the outcome of the divine dispute rests with Theonoe (887-91) and her inner sense of justice (1002-4). This is indeed an arresting presentation of the Olympian gods, in the sense that the prophetess Theonoe, who is connected with the divine but not a goddess herself, is to decide an issue disputed by the gods.

Although Theonoe decides to favour Helen and Menelaus in their attempt to escape, she makes it clear that she will not interfere; her help will go only as far as not telling Theoclymenus that the newly arrived Greek is Menelaus (1021-2). The prophetess also urges the couple to pray to Aphrodite and Hera for the fruition of their plan (1024-7). Helen does so at 1093-1106, a double prayer that is preceded by her realisation of the precariousness of their enterprise. "We are embarking upon a great struggle, and I see two ways the scale could tip (*βλέπω δύο ῥοπάς*). Either I must die if I am found out in my plotting – or save my Menelaus and go to my fatherland" (1090-2). Menelaus also prays to Zeus at 1441-50 and dwells on the idea that *τύχη* ought not remain always the same: after a run of misfortunes good fortune should follow: "It needs but a touch of your fingertip and we shall arrive at the good

---

[105] See above.

[106] Euripides seems to be well aware of this double-edged concept.

fortune we wish for. The calamities we have suffered before have been enough…Surely I do not have to be in misery all time. I ought to succeed (at last)" (1444-9). For Menelaus this seems to represent some kind of order that gods should not disparage. Nicias at Thucydides vii.77.3, not praying but encouraging his troops, has recourse to the same idea: "I have, therefore, still strong hope for the future and our misfortunes do not terrify me as much as they might. Indeed, we may hope that they will be lightened: our enemies have had good fortune enough". Nicias turns out to be deceived in his hope, whereas Menelaus' request is granted. Yet both passages are similar in the sense that the need to engage in god talk and fortune talk in critical circumstances reveals the human ignorance and insecurity in the face of a precarious future.

The same set of ideas occurs in Euripides' fragment 1073 N, where the speaker seems to be uncertain whether *ὁ δαίμων* (probably perceived here as the power of controlling the destiny of an individual, hence one's lot or fortune; see *LSJ* s.v. *δαίμων* **2**) should be called *θεός* :

οὐ χρή ποτ' ὀρθαῖς ἐν τύχαις βεβηκότα
ἔξειν τὸν αὐτὸν δαίμον' εἰς ἀεὶ δοκεῖν·
ὁ γὰρ θεός πως, εἰ θεόν σφε χρὴ καλεῖν,
κάμνει ξυνὼν τὰ πολλὰ τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἀεί.
θνητῶν δὲ θνητὸς ὄλβος· οἱ δ' ὑπέρφρονες 5
καὶ τῷ παρόντι τοὐπιὸν πιστούμενοι
ἔλεγχον ἔλαβον τῆς τύχης ἐν τῷ παθεῖν.

"One should not imagine when one is in good fortune, that one will enjoy the same *daimon* for ever; for god, if one should call it (= *daimon*, lot) a god, is somehow in most of the cases tired of being with the same people always. The prosperity of mortals is mortal. Those who have high thoughts and trust in the future on the basis of the present, get a proof of (the mutability of) fortune by their suffering". Unfortunately, this is only a fragment and any attempt to analyse it is hampered by the lack of context. We can only say that referring to *tychai, tyche, daimon* or a god constitute alternative ways of talking about the mutability and precariousness of human fortune, and also that, from a human

perspective, the relationship between the above factors is elusive and uncertain.[107]

Statements about the sheer changeability of fortune (often remaining undefined and not attributed to a divine source) increase in the second half of the fifth century BC and seem to reflect a bleaker, more uncertain and disorderly idea of the world than Hesiod's or Pindar's often god-originated good fortune or success (*tyche*) suggests. E. Kurtz comments that the image of line 4 in the above passage, the god getting tired of being with the same people all the time, arises from the experience of social, everyday mixing in fifth-century Athens. Kurtz argues that people in real life like to change their company and that this experience is transferred here to describe a god's behaviour and account for the change of fortune.[108] This seems to be a novel way of explaining the mutability of fortune, and equally novel and ironical is the disillusioned image of a *daimon* in Euripides' *Supplices* 552, who leads a luxurious life (*τρυφᾷ*), benefiting from the lavish sacrifices mortals offer him, hoping for good luck in return.[109] This happens irrespective of who is fortunate or unfortunate at any given time, the only raw truth about human life being that it is a sheer struggle (549-55). These passages allow the gods to exist, but deprive them of anything divine in their motivation.

In the first Stasimon of *Helen*, the Chorus picks up on similar considerations, also suggesting that the contradictory and unexpected turns of *tyche* constitute the *modus operandi* of divinity (1137-42):

> "What is god, or not god, or what is in between?
> Which of mortals can say after searching?
> He who can see the divine leaping this way and that
> and back again in contradictory, unexpected shifts of fortune,
> (*ἀμφιλόγοις | πηδῶντ' ἀνελπίστοις τύχαις*)
> he it is who has got furthest towards an answer".

---

[107] In Euripides fr. 330 N the change of human fortunes (from happiness to misfortune) is compared to the yearly alteration of seasons. Note also how often in Euripides the reversal of fortune is compared to the change of winds: *Her.* 216, *El.* 1147f. (lyr.), *Tro.* 101 (lyr.) and *Ion* 1503-6 (lyr.).

[108] E. Kurtz, *Die bildliche Ausdrucksweise in den Tragödien des Euripides*, (Amsterdam, 1985) 514-5. On the other hand, this picture of the gods may not be more than taking turns to fulfil their desires and whims (i.e. "It's our turn now!").

(Morwood's translation)

This is a memorable expression of human ignorance and uncertainty where divine operation is concerned. From a human perspective, divine matters seem to leap here and there in contradictory, unexpected shifts of fortune, and this is the furthest one can go in explaining divine workings in human life. Even Helen, who is the daughter of Zeus, was proclaimed "a traitor, faithless, lawless and godless"(1144-8). The strophe ends by emphasising once more human uncertainty and ignorance concerning divine matters (1148-50).[110] This links with both what precedes and what follows in the Stasimon. The Greeks fought a catastrophic (1122-36) and, in fact, vain war, not over true Helen but over a *κενὴ δόκησις* (36), an empty belief, that is, Helen's image, created by Hera (1136) and meant to deceive. This mad war (1151) could have been settled through discussion (1159-60). To return to the preceding strophe, the image of 'erratic jumping about' in *Troades* 1203-6 is not associated with the divine but with fortunes (*αἱ τύχαι*), to illustrate the idea that for men happiness is only temporary and precarious. "That man is a fool who imagines he is firmly prosperous (*εὖ πράσσειν δοκῶν βέβαια*) and is glad. For in their very nature fortunes (*τοῖς τρόποις γὰρ αἱ τύχαι*), like a mad (*ἔμπληκτος*) man, jump now in one direction, now in another (*ἄλλοτ' ἄλλοσε πηδῶσι*), † and the same man is never fortunate forever †" (1203-6). The plural *αἱ τύχαι* is perhaps intended here to imply the multiplicity and variability of human fortune. This is also what the plural dative *τύχαις* at *Helen* 1142 seems to suggest. Both passages form part of the tragic commonplace of the mutability and precariousness of human fortune.

In the context of the escape plan there are several ironical and ambiguous references to *tyche*. By 1390ff. Theoclymenus has already been talked into helping Helen make the fictitious funeral offerings to the sea, but he asks her to stay with him on land (1393-4). In her reply Helen cunningly addresses Theoclymenus as her new husband (1399). She urges him to let her give the 'burial' rites herself and diplomatically wishes: "May the gods grant all that I wish and grant it to the stranger here too for all his help in this ritual"

---

[109] Kurtz (1985) 512-4.
[110] The text is uncertain. Diggle puts lines 1149-50 in *cruces*.

(1405-6). It is because of Theoclymenus' kindness to Menelaus and herself that the tyrant will receive her as wife in his house (1407-9). She aptly connects Theoclymenus' wish to marry her with her wish to make the supposed funeral offerings, that is, to escape with Menelaus. If the tyrant lets her pay honour to her 'dead' former husband and consequently shows kindness to herself and Menelaus, then all this is leading to a kind of good fortune, *ἔρχεται γὰρ δή τιν' ἐς τύχην τάδε* (1409). Here *τύχη* seems to be ambiguous; for Theoclymenus, good fortune is his marriage with Helen, while for her it is her departure with Menelaus.[111] We meet the same ambiguity at 1424 where Helen says: "All I need is good luck", *τῆς τύχης με δεῖ μόνον*. She means her plan, while Theoclymenus understands his marriage to her. In these two passages *τύχη* appears in relation to Helen's plan of salvation, and its ironical ambiguity protects the secrecy of the plan. Furthermore, Helen's words at 1424 reflect also the development of the dramatic action. At 813 she says to Menelaus that they have to make a plan (*δεῖ δὲ μηχανῆς τινος*) in order to escape from Theoclymenus. Now that she has already secured Theonoe's help and beguiled Theoclymenus into providing them with what is necessary for the success of their plan, she says that she only needs good fortune. Finally, we should bear in mind that, although *tyche* occurs frequently in the context of the escape plan, it is important what Theonoe, who knows divine matters, says. It rests upon Helen and Menelaus to find a way to escape (*Hel.* 1022), but they have to pray first to Aphrodite and Hera, since after all their salvation seems to depend on the good will of the goddesses (*Hel.* 1024-7).

In the closing scene Helen's divine brothers intervene to prevent Theoclymenus from killing his sister, who concealed from him the true identity of Menelaus and so contributed to the success of Helen's escape plan. The Dioscuri explain their intervention and the way events have turned out in terms of what was destined to happen or of divine will (1646, 1660-1, 1670, 1677). In contrast, as we have seen, in the course of the play the limited perspective and uncertainty of human agents is partly reflected in their frequent references to precarious fortune. The last one in this long list is Theoclymenus. At 1636, trying to refute the Servant's argument that

---

[111] See Dale (1967) on line 1409.

Menelaus is Helen's rightful husband and Theonoe was right to support them, Theoclymenus says that good fortune (*ἡ τύχη*) gave Helen to him. "And what is right took her away from you (*τὸ δὲ χρεὼν ἀφείλετο*)" the Servant replies, foreshadowing the pattern of 'what must be' in the Dioscuri's intervention. It looks as if one can argue against *tyche* at this point in the play, where a closure has to be reached. The final arguments are couched in terms of the powerfulness of destiny and the divine. It was not destined for Theoclymenus to marry Helen (*οὐ γὰρ πεπρωμένοισι...γάμοις*, 1646). It was necessary (*ἐχρῆν*) for Helen to stay in Theoclymenus' house so long as the Trojan war was going on and she was lending her name to the gods. But this is no longer necessary (1650-3). The Dioscuri could have saved their sister long ago, since Zeus made them gods; but they are weaker than fate and the gods' will (1658-60). It is Zeus' will that Helen will be honoured as a goddess after her death (1666-9), and it is destined (*μόρσιμον*) by the gods (*θεῶν πάρα*) that Menelaus will live on the island of the blessed (1676-7). These neat, closing arrangements, deriving their validity from a divine, *post eventum* outlook; they do not really cancel the characters' earlier references to uncertain fortune, but they highlight the limited 'as-it-happens' perspective of the human agents, who are confronted with the (at the time) unexpected and sudden turns of events.

The concluding lines of the Chorus (if authentic) repeat the connection between the divine and the unexpected, elaborated earlier by characters in the play (711ff., 1137ff.): "The divine will manifests itself in many forms, and the gods bring many things to pass against our expectation (*ἀέλπτως*). What we thought would happen remains unfulfilled, while the god has found a way to accomplish the unexpected (*τῶν ἀδοκήτων*). That is how this affair has turned out." (1688-92).

Diggle deletes these lines and also the identical endings of *Bacchae* and *Medea*; in the latter the first line is different. He keeps the same formulaic ending in *Alcestis* and *Andromache*. In the first play the final lines (1159-63) are attested in a papyrus and the thematic links with the context seem to be stronger. Admetus at 1123-5 invokes gods and expresses his amazement and joy at the unexpected miracle (*θαῦμα ἀνέλπιστον*) of his wife's return from the dead (cf. 1130, 1134). In *Helen* the formulaic coda has only a general thematic

connection with the play, the unexpected workings of the divine. In the codas of *Andromache*, *Bacchae* and *Medea* the links with the plays are very general or, in the last case, really tenuous. One wonders with Barrett how it can be that Euripides "should content himself in almost one play in three with a repetition of the same undistinguished platitude". Barrett argues that this 'tail-piece' is probably a later embellishment by actors. He radically suggests that if the ending of *Helen, Andromache, Bacchae* and *Medea* is found spurious, then also the more authentic looking coda of *Alcestis* should be suspected.[112] F. Dunn summarises the opposite arguments on this issue and argues that the endings should be kept as they "best exemplify Euripides' approach to closure". Dunn concludes that: "The closing anapests should be read less for significant content that as a gesture or ritual of closure".[113] I do not find this view very convincing. On the other hand, Barrett may be too radical. It is sensible to assume that the ending of *Alcestis* is probably authentic. This is also might be the case with the final lines of *Helen* and *Andromache*, whereas the end of *Bacchae* and *Medea* is to be suspected. Yet, having said this, the repetition of identical or similar endings remains problematic. Neither the general thematic links with the plays nor the function of closure can adequately explain this phenomenon. Are we really to believe that Euripides was short of different ways of expressing the idea of the unexpected operation of the divine, or that he or his audience was so fond of these lines that he felt he should repeat them? In orally transmitted poetry the repetition of formulaic groups of lines seems natural. But in the case of written down and produced plays the repetition of a group of lines seems to be an alien practice. In this light, it is plausible that this tail-piece, which has the look of a popular moral tag, could have been interpolated by actors around the third century BC.[114] Handley rightly argues that the frequent use of the formulaic prayer to *Νίκη* by Menander suggests that this New Comedy poet invented it.[115] It therefore

---

[112] W. S. Barrett, *Euripides: Hippolytos*, (Oxford, 1978)^2 on lines 1462-6.

[113] Dunn (1996) 24-5.

[114] Barrett (1978)^2 417 writes that "this particular commonplace was popular: it appears on a scrap of papyrus of the 3rd cent. B.C., *P. Hib.* 25, probably as a schoolboy's exercise", and quotes several sources where this commonplace is cited or parodied.

[115] E. W. Handley, *Menander: The Dyskolos*, (London, 1965) 304f. This might be an argument against the authenticity of the prayer for victory at the end of Euripides' *IT*,

seems probable that in the course of the fourth century BC a certain liking for sententious tags was developed. Actors may have started repeating at the end of other Euripidean plays the formulaic end Euripides himself perhaps had first composed for his *Alcestis* in 438 BC.

In Greek literature the limitations and precariousness of the human condition can be reflected in several alternative ways: through divine powerfulness, through the ineluctability of what is destined to happen or through unexpected and uncertain *τύχη*. All these seem to have formed part of fifth-century intellectual debates. Euripides has taken ideas that were already in the air and has made them his own through adaptation, elaboration and emphasis. He emphasises the role of the unexpected and the unplannable in human life but stops well short of saying that *τύχη* as opposed to divine will or human intelligence is the most important factor in human life. Rather, fifth-century tensions are adapted and elaborated to contribute to the creation of exciting, suspenseful and intellectually and emotionally charged plays.

iv) *ION*

In *Ion* Euripides dramatises an extraordinary and complex set of relationships between god and mortals. Apollo is the father of Ion, born to Creusa after the god has raped her. Later, Xuthus, Creusa's husband – presented as a kind of gullible dupe – is to regard Ion as his own son,[116] but not by Creusa, and so is doubly mistaken about his relationship to him. He is not the only one being deceived. Creusa, ignorant of Apollo's providential plan, believes that her exposed child is dead. Similarly Ion, already an adolescent as the play starts, performing religious duties at Apollo's shrine in Delphi, is ignorant of his true identity and of what the god has in store for him; for a time he believes that Xuthus really is his father; then he discovers that this is not true, but that Creusa is his mother. Deception, ignorance, and a myopic, limited perspective condition the characters' views and emotions throughout the play, until at the very end Athena reveals Apollo's far-reaching (though, as we shall see, not

---

Phoenissae and *Orestes*. These tail-pieces are also considered by Barrett to be spurious. See Barrett (1978)[2] 417-8.

[116] Significantly, as Athena says towards the end of the play (1601-2), this deception will last.

omniscient) perspective. As in *IT* and *Helen*, the way in which characters talk about τύχη in *Ion* reflects their ignorance and uncertainty, or, in other words, the limitations of the human perspective.

Apollo's plan – that Ion will be given to Xuthus, go to Athens, meet his mother there and, finally, become the progenitor of the Ionian race – is a plausible one, but it does not quite work out. It is derailed apparently by chance, as human nature with its unforeseeable responses gives the course of events a movement of its own. For Euripides in this play, then, even divine plans can be affected by τύχη, which has important implications for our perception of the power and range of chance in the world of his plays. The first part of Apollo's plan (71-2), that Creusa and Ion will reunite in Athens, fails to come true. The recognition between mother and son takes place actually in Delphi, after she has tried to kill him and he her. The effect of the alteration of the divine plan is to create in the audience a variety of feelings, "assurance, confusion, dismay and finally reassurance – and this progression parallels that of Creusa".[117] The normal tragic pattern of foiled human intentions has similar effects. *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, a play with many changes of mind, presents the difficulty caused by Agamemon's wife coming to Aulis. As it happens, Menelaus intercepts Agamemon's second letter, intended to cancel the effects of the first one, which called Iphigeneia to Aulis on the pretext of a marriage to Achilles (98ff.). This ploy was conceived to persuade Clytaemnestra, but it conceals the real intention of sacrificing Iphigeneia, according to Calchas the necessary condition of the expedition to Troy (89ff.). The second letter never reaches Clytaemnestra and, to Agamemnon's dismay (441ff.),[118] she arrives at Aulis to marry her daughter to Achilles.

In *Ion* prologue and epilogue give a single, divine scope; between those points, the action seems humanly motivated.[119] It is natural therefore that what

---

[117] R. Hamilton, "Prologue, prophecy and plot in four plays of Euripides", *AJP* 99 (1978) 277-302, at 279. It is interesting to note that where Ion's fluctuation of feelings is concerned his disbelief and lack of reassurance are skilfully prolonged in such a way that they necessitate the intervention of Athena's divine authority in order that they can be removed and the play can end.

[118] *τὰ δ' ἄλλ' ἰούσης τῆς τύχης ἔσται καλῶς. / οἴμοι, τί φῶ δύστηνος; ἄρξωμαι πόθεν;* (*IA* 441-2).

[119] What is the purpose of this demarcation? We encounter a similar technique in *Hippolytus*, where Aphrodite's words at 42 are misleading, though in that play they come true in the end. Misdirection is also a characteristic of the divine prologue in *Bacchae* (50-2). The possibility

is described from Hermes' and Athena's privileged perspective as part of Apollo's plan will be seen from the characters' limited perspective as random, inscrutable and even morally ambiguous. It is Hermes who first refers to *tyche* (67), saying that Apollo is directing *tyche*, which seems to mean that from the present perspectives of Ion, Creusa and Xuthus the outcome Apollo has in mind is not foreseeable. Hermes' divine perspective here presents Apollo as shaping the events of the mortals' lives. It seems appropriate that Hermes should speak the prologue in a play rich in unexpected, seemingly chance, events and tricks of fortune. Taking into account his functions as transporter of divine children to safe environments and as god of luck,[120] we could see the powers of unexpected fortune and of divine providence that operate in the play as incorporated in him.[121]

Yet in *Ion* Euripides also seems determined to present divine weaknesses and lack of omniscience; Hermes, in all-too-mortal fashion, hides in the laurel grove in order to learn fully how Ion's fortunes are to be accomplished. This might be a hint that, although there is a fixed divine plan giving a direction to events, the way things actually come to happen is uncertain and pregnant with alternative possibilities. Moreover, events do not turn out precisely as Hermes predicts. Apollo, apparently inattentive to human feelings, does not see the need to anticipate the human reactions to his plan. Creusa's violent response to Apollo's giving a son to Xuthus but not to her sets in motion the intrigue against Ion, which eventually leads to the true

---

of a pitched battle mentioned there does not in fact eventuate, "though it is envisaged at 780ff. It is perhaps mentioned to titillate the audience with the possibility of an unusual development...": G. S. Kirk, *The Bacchae of Euripides*, (Cambridge, 1979) 30. In these Euripidean prologues gods give predictions that are misleading without exactly being false, "perhaps in order to preserve an element of surprise": R. Seaford, *Euripides: Bacchae*, (Warminster, 1996) 153. Yet the case of *Ion* is different from the other two. Athena in the end (1563-68) refers explicitly to the modification of the divine plan, and we therefore have sufficient reason to believe that in *Ion* Euripides aims at something more than an element of surprise.

[120] Thus *ἕρμαιον* is an unexpected piece of luck coming from Hermes, a gift from Hermes; cf. the proverbial *κοινὸς Ἑρμῆς* meaning "shares in your luck!". Consider also Hermes *Τύχων*; see Usener (1895) 218 and 220. For *Τύχων* as a proper name see above in Chapter One.

[121] The next step from Euripides' use of Hermes to deliver the prologue in a drama full of reversals and recognitions, both real and ironic, is Menander's use of the goddess *Tyche* in *Aspis*, where she appears after the prologue. Her divine status here corresponds to the importance to Menander's audience of the relationship between *Tyche* and the human world. See T. B. L. Webster, *Studies in Menander*, (Manchester, 1960) 198-201 and above in Chapter One.

recognition of mother and son. Furthermore, Athena's concluding intervention confirms that the father is Apollo, though he intended his paternity to remain secret until after Ion's arrival at Athens. This modification of the divine plan[122] is exceptional for extant Greek tragedy, and it seems reasonable to suppose that this novel twist had a special purpose. Perhaps, by presenting emotional responses which create confused and chaotic situations and partly upset Apollo's scheme, Euripides is depicting the power of the unexpected and accidental to alter even divine plans.[123] It follows therefore that the agency of *tyche* can operate on gods in the same way as on human beings. Normally gods are subject only to the agency of things that have a clear and palpable connection with natural conditions; Zeus in *Iliad* 14, for example, is overcome by *Hypnos*,[124] and Aphrodite in *H. Aphr.* 45 is subject to *himeros*.

Unlike *Ion* 67, where Hermes says that Apollo directs *τὴν τύχην*, at 359 and 368 *tyche* has nothing to do with divine providence. In both places *tyche* has the meaning of 'what has happened' *qua* 'a misfortune'. It is also connected with the characters' limited knowledge in this scene of the aborted recognition between mother and son. Ion can see only a similarity between Creusa's and his own suffering, *προσῳδὸς ἡ τύχη τῷμῷ πάθει* (359). Accordingly, Creusa, unaware that the young man in front of her is her son, stresses her suffering, *ἀλγύνεται δέ γ' ἡ παθοῦσα τῇ τύχῃ* (368). It becomes obvious that the way in which they employ *tyche* in their thoughts reveals their ignorance of what is at stake at this particular moment. Only the audience can feel the irony and the suspense of the narrowly-averted recognition. As we move on from here to the false recognition between Xuthus and Ion the

---

[122] P. E. Easterling, "Gods on stage in Greek Tragedy", in J. Dalfen, G. Petersmann and F. F. Schwarz (eds.), *Religio Graeco-Romana: Festschrift für W. Pötscher*, Grazer Beiträge, Suppl. 5 (Graz, 1993) 77-86, comments at 85: "Perhaps Athena's hasty arrival (on the mechane?) is the next best thing to revelation at Athens". A. Lesky, *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*, (Göttingen, 1956) 188, commenting on *Ion* 1563ff., says: "Also auch die Götter müssen mit der Tyche rechnen. Es ist deutlich, wie die alte Vorstellung von einem Schicksal, das über persönlichen Götterwillen steht, in diesen andersgearteten Bereich hineinwirkt".

[123] See A. Lesky, *Greek Tragedy*, transl. by H. A. Frankfort, (London, 1978) 186-187. The original text reads: "Apollon ist wie die Menschen selbst bei aller Fürsorge einer Macht ausgesetzt, die sein Konzept arg gefährdet".

[124] Here deity and abstract concept or natural phenomenon (i.e. *ὕπνος*) seem to coexist and interact.

suspense created is partly relaxed, since a part of Apollo's plan is actually fulfilled. Hermes predicted in the prologue that when Xuthus enters the oracular shrine (*εἰσελθόντι...Ξούθῳ*)[125] Apollo will give him his own son (*τὸν αὑτοῦ παῖδα*) and assert that Ion is Xuthus's son (*πεφυκέναι / κείνου σφε*) (69-71).

But still this prediction does not preclude unexpectedness and fortuitousness at the moment of its fulfilment. It is telling for the way characters perceive *tyche* that Xuthus at 661 finds the name Ion, that is, 'he who comes', suitable to the fortunate turn of events (*τῇ τύχῃ*). There is something unexpectedly fortunate in the fact that Ion first met Xuthus when the latter was coming out of the oracle. Though divine will lies in the background the focus here is rather on the unexpected meeting. There is also uncertainty and bewilderment as to how and why this came to happen. Ion wonders at 539: "How did this turn of events come about? (*ἡ τύχη / πόθεν ποθ' ἥκει;*)". The Chorus endorses his amazement: "We both marvel at the same thing". Xuthus' meeting with Ion is presented as both an unexpected happening and as being expected to happen because of the oracle. The audience heard Hermes in the prologue referring to the name Ion in connection with Apollo's providential plan and, furthermore, claiming that he is the first of the gods to name Ion by this name. What Xuthus sees as a fortunate turn of events (661) is part of the divine plan, of which he is ignorant. Similarly, what Ion at 668 sees as good luck ("my good fortune is lacking in one way"), the prospect of finding his mother as well, is informed by his ignorance.[126] For, on the one hand, he has still to wait for the good news of *who* is his *real* father and, on the other, his imminent encounter with his *real* mother will be darkened by her attempt at killing him. Ion at 668 cannot know that what he perceives as his good luck at that moment is temporary and false.

An example of the different expressions the characters use to describe what they experience is the way Ion and Xuthus speak of their meeting in the

---

[125] Note that when surprised Ion asks Xuthus what Loxias told him (534) Xuthus replies that the person who met with him as he came out (*ἐξιόντι*) of the oracle would be his son. This may suggest the different points of view in the two contexts. At 69 the emphasis is on consultation and going *into* the oracle, whereas at 535 the stress is on meeting with Ion, 'he who comes', and, hence, going *out* of the oracle.

[126] Notice that Ion's reservations and fears about his supposed stepmother (607-12) foreshadow Creusa's actual hostile behaviour towards him later in the play.

false-recognition scene. Verses 539 and 661 present their encounter after the oracle given to Xuthus as a *tyche*, a turn of events or a turn of chance. At 554 Xuthus claims that fate has discovered the truth, while at 569-70 it is a god who has rightly accomplished his finding of Ion: *θεὸς / ὀρθῶς ἔκρανε*. The first response to a sudden, seemingly unexpected event may be to ascribe it to the power of chance, to destiny, or to a god -- according to the point of view of the character in each case. Xuthus refers to the divine in order to show Ion that their meeting has divine approval, perhaps because he is about to ask Ion to leave Apollo's shrine and come with him to Athens. Their encounter is presented as a curious combination of divine predestination and chance. The poet appears to make full use of the ambiguity of the oracle and the seeming fortuitousness of their meeting in order to introduce Creusa's intrigue together with its unpredictable consequences. Besides, the responses of the characters to the false recognition the oracle has thrust upon them are different and reveal their personal characteristics. Xuthus' brash acceptance of his apparent good fortune matches the simplicity of his character and contrasts with Ion's scepticism and Creusa's sensitiveness.

It is important that these references to *tyche* are accompanied by striking stage action. At the beginning of the second episode (510ff.) the entries of Ion and Xuthus almost coincide; as the first enters from the parodos, the second is about to come out of the *skene*.[127] Wilamowitz has observed the coincidental character ("die Zufälligkeit") of this scene;[128] their almost simultaneous entrances may suggest the accidental nature as well as the surprising and wondrous character of their first meeting. The audience, of course, knows that Apollo intends to give Ion, his own son, to Xuthus. Yet the scene in question shows how a divine purpose can appear fortuitous and coincidental at the moment of its realisation. The first-met theme occurs frequently in oracular responses.[129] Euripides here seems to exploit a familiar

---

[127] On the other hand, such a staging is outlined by the oracle (531-6). Furthermore, the childless Xuthus inevitably consults Delphi as, for example, Laius and Aegeus do.

[128] U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Euripides: Ion*, (Berlin, 1926) 110.

[129] See for example Hdt. 6.34; also the oracle given to Kadmos in Ov. *Met.* 3.10ff. and to Cephalos, on which see J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle*, (Berkeley, 1978) 386.

oracular pattern and to develop it in the direction of mere or, paradoxically, premeditated chance.

The tension between the apparently fortuitous and the actually providential is characteristic of the play, with all the references to *τύχη* under the influence of this polarity. After the false-recognition scene, what separates Xuthus from Creusa is that he has found a son. Creusa understands the oracle as implying that she is never going to have a child. What most rankles in her heart is that she no longer shares a common fortune with Xuthus as far as childlessness is concerned.[130] These ironic references may hint at the idea that purposeful divine action is perceived by mortals as random, ill-fated experience:[131] naturally enough, since human knowledge and perception are trying to come to terms with the unfathomable divine and the fickle behaviour of gods.

Fortune talk appears at yet another turning point of the action and seems to keep pace with upsetting feelings of uncertainty in the audience. The Chorus at 676f. express their sympathy with Creusa, who according to the strange oracle (690-1) is deprived of offspring. By contrast, Xuthus, the outsider, is blessed with a child. The Chorus condemn him for not aligning himself with the fortunes of the house, *οὐκ ἴσωσεν τύχας* (669-704).[132] In fact, it is in this antistrophe that the possibility of the Chorus revealing Xuthus' secret to Creusa arises. This exceptional involvement of the Chorus in the action triggers Creusa's plotting against Ion, which in turn derails all the expected action and creates in the audience thrilling suspense and dismay.

There is no reference to *tyche* in the servant's account of Creusa's murderous plan and its frustration. He says that Apollo exposed the murderer because he did not want to be polluted (1117). Yet the servant does not know the full story. At the actual moment of Ion's rescue there is no explicit

---

[130] Ion foresees at 608ff. that this might be the case. This is also one reason why Xuthus decides to keep secret from Creusa that Ion was given to him as his son (657-8). The Chorus (704, 1101) and the Old Man (818) refer to this in connection with Xuthus' ingratitude. Finally, Creusa in her monody touchingly emphasises her anguish and pain caused by both human and divine violence (876-80).

[131] Compare 359 and 368.

[132] This point is picked up by the Old Man later (818-9) and by the Chorus again at 1101. Although *τύχας* at 704 seems to be neutral ('fortunes'), *τύχης* at 818 is negatively coloured ('ill-fortune') and at 1101 *τεκέων τύχαν* is the good fortune of children.

intervention by Apollo, but the god seems to exploit Ion's own piety and virtue (1182ff.).[133] The actual scene of Ion's rescue may be seen as miraculous; in fact, prevention of a poisoning *in extremis* by just fortune is a widespread mythical motif[134] often used by Euripides.[135] It is impossible to discern what in the rescue of Ion is miraculous, what is accidental,[136] and what is Ion's just deserts. In effect, Euripides here seems to exploit the ambiguities caused by the overlapping of the divine miracle and the fortuitous.

Still, the poisoning is only the first danger averted at the eleventh hour. The audience's anxiety is only momentarily relieved by Ion's rescue. Suddenly, the tables are turned and the feelings of horror re-emerge as Ion now is about to kill his mother. The sudden entrance of the Pythia puts an end to Creusa's and Ion's misdirected reprisals and reveals his true identity. Fortune talk reappears after the recognition scene not only in the form of exultation for the reunion of mother and son (1456-7), but also of acknowledging humanity's uncertainty and hopelessness in the grip of fortune's sudden reversals (1502f.).

Even though the divine scheme does not develop exactly as planned, the divine is given a prominent role, especially in the interruption of Creusa's attempt at poisoning Ion and in the entrances of the Pythia and Athena. Due to this double perspective of the unexpected and the accidental on the one hand and divine providence on the other,[137] the characters sometimes stress *tyche* and at other times give priority to divine agency. Of course, Athena in the end, like Hermes at the beginning, treats what has already happened as coming to fulfilment through Apollo's providential plan (1563-5 and 1595-1600). But we should neither overemphasise the *deus ex machina* nor underemphasise the

---

[133] Ion's connection to Apollo is emphasised by the servant at 1141-1166, 1209, 1218 and 1224. It is notable that though we know it and Creusa knows it, still Euripides tells us.

[134] See Huys (1995) 55.

[135] Earlier, in his *Aegeus* and *Kresphontes*, a lucky escape from poisoning is also followed by recognition.

[136] On this see Owen's comment on 1514 [A. S. Owen, *Euripides: Ion*, (Oxford, 1939) 174]. It was the rationalist critics - especially at the end of the last century - who could not accept the role of both the divine and supernatural chance in the play. See Owen (1939) xxxii-xxxvi and Michelini (1987) 11-19.

[137] Euripides seems to suggest that things are differently appreciated from different points of view. As Ion says at 585-6: "It is clear that things have a different appearance when seen close up and when seen at a distance".

apparently accidental events in the course of the play.[138] We should not take the half for the whole. If we are to weigh the god's grand scheme against Creusa's traumatic experience, we should also weigh the same divine plan against the earlier, seemingly accidental events. In Thucydides we can distinguish between the author's use of *tyche* and its use by speakers, but this is impossible in tragedy, a narratorless genre where the author's 'I' does not appear. Since we cannot identify where Euripides uses the word *tyche* in his own voice, we have to approach the plays in a holistic way.

This points to the technique of distinguishing between the 'as-it-happens' perspective and the 'in-retrospect' perspective. Euripides links the first with ignorant human agents, who often formulate what happens to them as *τύχη*, and the latter with Athena's larger perspective. The goddess in the end explains past events through Apollo's beneficial purpose or foretells a glorious future that is destined to come to fulfillment, but no word about *τύχη* is uttered from her divine lips.

In the highly emotional scene of recognition between Creusa and Ion, both characters refer to *tyche*. Actually, in all the *anagnorisis* and *mechanema* plays the recognition is consistently expressed in terms of *tyche*.[139] The familiar *tyche* - *techne* antithesis[140] seems to have been transformed by Euripides into a complementary relation: here, *tyche* is the good luck of

---

[138] W. Ludwig, "Aulularia-Probleme", *Philologus* 105 (1961) 44-71, writes at 54: "die Gottheit durch ihr Wirken dem Geschehen eine bestimmte Richtung gibt, gewisse Möglichkeiten öffnet. Das menschliche Handeln kann ihnen entsprechen, kann sie aber auch, da es den göttlichen Plan nicht erkennt und falschen Zielen zutreibt, durchkreuzen. Bei der Gottheit steht es, ob sie durch erneute Eingriffe das Geschehen wieder in die richtige Richtung lenkt. Solche Eingriffe wirken überraschend, oft wie ein Zufall; es sind die Momente, in denen es sich entscheidet, ob das Geschehen in dieser oder jener Richtung weitergeht, wobei gleichgültig ist, welcher Mittel der Gott sich dabei bedient". This is a fair description of the interaction of divine purpose, human will and *tyche* in *Ion*, but it is important to stress that only *post eventum* are the critical crossroads of the action connected with the divine. In the actual narrating (i.e. Ion's rescue) or staging (i.e. the Pythia intervening and preventing Ion from killing Creusa) of these critical moments the impression is created that things happen suddenly and by chance.

[139] Euripides, apparently following Sophocles' use of the optative expressing wish (e.g. *El.* 1226), makes his characters use *tyche* when they wish that their good luck of *anagnorisis* should last. See *Ion* 1456, *IT* 841, *Hel.* 698 and compare Aesch. *Cho.* 212-3. In this light, Cropp's proposal [M. Cropp, "Notes on Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris*", *ICS* 22 (1997) 25-41, at 34-5] to substitute *τύχα* for *ψυχά* at Eur. *IT* 838 fits well with the emphasis on *tyche* after the recognition as well as the theme of the characters' "dependence on unpredictable strokes of fortune (*τύχαι*)".

[140] See above and Agathon frr. 6 and 8 N; Eur. *Alc.* 786 and *IT* 89.

anagnorisis and *techne* the intrigue, which requires practical resourcefulness and cleverness, and aims at securing this good luck. Significantly, the elation inspired by the good luck of *anagnorisis* is followed by a successful *mechanema* (in *Iphigeneia in Tauris* and *Helen*) or is preceded by a foiled *mechanema* (in *Ion*). In this moment of exultation, the crimes Creusa and Ion almost committed in their former blindness appear to them even more horrible. In this light they tend to emphasise the turn of events, and to attribute the interruption of their attempts upon one another to sheer chance (1502, 1514).[141] Placing the intrigue before the recognition enables Euripides to show in a memorable way that *tyche* is not only what the characters experience as good fortune at the moment of recognition but also chance, which the characters see as effecting extreme reversals in their lives.

So at 1512ff. Ion goes so far as to address a powerful and apparently independent Chance whom he deems responsible for having brought him to the critical point of being killed and killing his mother, then for having saved him from both. This is a naturalistic and rhetorical description of the situation mother and son are in at this moment: naturalistic because Ion talks of *Tyche* as a purposeless, non-teleological agent that is not directed by some divine will; rhetorical because the personification of *Tyche* throws into relief what the characters have suffered so far. At 1374-5 Ion seems to hold Apollo and an unspecified *δαίμων* responsible for the good and the bad things in his life respectively. What for a god is *χρηστόν* is experienced by mortals as *βαρύ*, as *τὰ τοῦ δαίμονος* (explained by the following *γὰρ*-clause), denoting both baby Ion's and Creusa's hard lot. Furthermore, at 1388 he expresses his belief in what is destined to happen (*τὰ πεπρωμένα*). Thus *Tyche*, this indefinite power that contains the element of sudden reversal,[142] here seems to indicate what Ion experiences at this particular moment. When presenting his characters'

---

[141] A. P. Burnett, *Euripides: Ion*, (Englewood Cliffs, 1970) 152 points out that "only in the recognition scene do the characters seem to forget the working connection between divinity and 'chance' ".

[142] Compare Soph. *Ant.*1158-9: *τύχη γὰρ ὀρθοῖ καὶ τύχη καταρρέπει / τὸν εὐτυχοῦντα τόν τε δυστυχοῦντ' ἀεί.* See Ellendt's comment on this [F. Ellendt, *Lexicon Sophocleum*, (Hildesheim, 1965) 748]: "Haec sententia proxime abest a *deae Fortunae* mentione". H. Diller, *Kleine Schriften zur antiken Literatur*, (Munich, 1971) 385 talks of "das blinde Ungefähr" which brings ill-luck to Iphigeneia in *Iphigeneia at Aulis* 1402ff., but raises Ion and Creusa to the heights of good fortune and happiness at 1512ff.

hindsight Euripides seems to emphasise the changeability of fortune and of human life in general. Compare the Sophoclean Electra's reflection on the curious way in which opposite experiences -- utter ruin and the greatest joy, yet also love and hatred -- have been mingled for her in the day's events (1357ff.). Euripides seems to go one step further when he makes Ion ascribe the extreme change of his life to *μεταβαλοῦσα Τύχη*.

Ion's invocation of *Tyche* is a rather transient expression of his belief in the power of Chance. Rather than a "weak personification" I would call this an *Augenblickspersonifikation*[143] (momentary, fleeting personification). *Tyche* is meant to be taken as a supernatural, indefinite power. This can be shown by the parallel uses of *tyche* and *daimon*;[144] their common elements become apparent in descriptions of the misfortunes of the past and abrupt changes of fortune.[145] Ion's apostrophe to *Tyche* can be seen as a response to the widest range of possibility and to the abruptness of change from one extreme to the other. Calling *Tyche* what Athena will in the end ascribe to Apollo's plan is not just a substitution of another rational force, but the rejection of rational explanation in favour of asserting the irrational, the paradoxical.[146]

Is *tyche* to be taken here as a *factum* (event/state) or as an *agens* (agent)? I think this is left deliberately unclear (hence the debate whether *tyche* should be capitalised). Euripides, intent on creating an exciting and suspenseful play, counts heavily on the imprecisely defined interaction of divine agency, free will and chance. At 1512-5 the change of subject from

---

[143] Borrowing Usener's *Augenblicksgötter*: (1895) 279-301. T. B. L. Webster, "Personification as a mode of Greek thought", *JWCI* 17 (1954) 10-21, at 13ff. distinguishes between "deification", "strong personification", "weak personification" and "technical terms". However, determining the degree of vividness of a given personification in a particular context remains uncertain and to a great extent subjective. See also above in Chapter One.

[144] See Eur. *Her.* 884 and fr. 1073 N; *Trag. fr.adesp.* 353 N and Eur. *Inc. fab. fr.* 974 N. Gods deal with important matters and condescend to leave to other *daimones* or *tyche* smaller, less significant issues. Compare R. Schlesier, "Daimon und Daimones bei Euripides", *Saeculum* 34 (1983) 267-279, at 277.

[145] See *Ion* 359, 1374-9, 1456-7 and 1501ff. Note how the reference to personal responsibility at 1497 shifts to the indefinite *tychai* (1501) and *pneumata* (1506). This seems to suggest that there is something superhuman in the constant change of human fortune and so to prefigure the personification of *Tyche* at 1514. See H. Erbse, *Untersuchungen zur Funktion der Götter im homerischen Epos*, (Berlin / New York, 1986) 10ff., who argues that the personal aspect of an abstract concept often becomes palpable only in specific contexts, where, for example, the events described suggest that something is being perceived as superhuman.

'*Tyche*' to 'we' makes it ambiguous who is after all the real agent (but it appears that the point of the change of subject is indeed the imprecisely defined interaction). *Tyche* is the subject of the active participle *μεταβαλοῦσα*, the agent of an action, 'changing the life of thousands of men from misfortune to happiness'. A demonic power could be held responsible for changes of fortune or for any unexpected, unwelcome event.[147] It is in fact an important feature of Greek thought that what is felt to be numinous can readily be personified or deified;[148] Euripides is prominent among the tragedians for this form of expression, which is often combined with an apostrophe.[149] Presenting *Tyche* as an agent seems to suit his interest in creating doubt and uncertainty about the outcome of an event; certainly Ion here expresses surprise and his enduring uncertainty about his paternity (1516ff.). What Ion says a little before going on to ask Apollo about his paternity[150] is telling: "Is the god's oracle true or false? It troubles my mind (*ταράσσει*), mother, with good reason" (1537-8). This question reflects a sentiment not uncommon in Greek thought. Enquiring minds, trying to make sense of divine will and agency, are often confronted with perplexity and bafflement. In the end Athena's very intervention is needed so that Ion is persuaded. Yet, paradoxically, the goddess' exposition of Apollo's grand plan (1566-1568) reveals his very lack of absolute control over every aspect of the characters' life. But perhaps this is not inconceivable when we have to do with anthropomorphic, all-too-human gods. Characteristically, there is always the option of explaining divinity by human standards or practices. An example is how Creusa explains to Ion Apollo's purpose: "For a man might well give away as friend to friend his own son for him to become master of the house"

---

[146] As H.-P. Stahl, "On extra-dramatic communication of characters in Euripides", *YCS* 25 (1977) 159-176, aptly puts it at 161: " 'Plumb-line' and 'chance' in a single statement: clearly, the concrete experience of life can only be expressed by a paradox".

[147] See Eur. fr.1073 N; Soph. *El.* 1269, where a reunion beyond thought and hope (1262-3) is seen by Orestes as a result of divine impulsion (1264) and by Electra as the action of a *daimonion*.

[148] Hes. *Works and Days* 763, Aesch. *Cho.* 60.

[149] See *Or.* 213, 398ff.; *Hel.*560; *Hr.*556ff.; *Pho.* 506, 782; *Bac.* 370, 414. This is the point of the joke against Euripides in *Frogs* 893ff., where he is presented as praying to his 'private' gods, who possess no great influence in comparison to the Olympian authorities.

[150] Is it an indication of his bafflement that he forgets what he himself told to Creusa at 369f., namely that "there is no one who will speak for you in this matter…it isn't right to question the oracle contrary to the god's will"?

(1535-6). We find a parallel secular explanation of divine matters at *IT* 1012-16. Here Orestes argues to Iphigeneia that Artemis must approve of their escape since her brother's oracle demanded it.

Burnett's characterisation of Ion's apostrophe to Fortune as "a momentary expression of error and faithlessness" seems off the mark.[151] Ion is unaware of Apollo's plan, and no explicit divine intervention has yet taken place. Ion is not mistaken about the power of chance as Jocasta is in *Oedipus Tyrannus* when she says (977ff.) that *τὰ τῆς τύχης κρατεῖ* and there is no reliable foreknowledge. Jocasta's speech has an immediate disastrous consequence, whereas Ion's apparent belief in *metabalousa Tyche* is in a way vindicated by the modification of Apollo's plan. Trying to make sense of what has happened to him, Ion turns to rationalising and views what Creusa told him about his divine paternity with a critical eye (1523-7, 1532-3). He is so bewildered by his sudden change of fortune that he cannot help asking whether Apollo tells the truth or not (1537-8). Criticism of divine justice has been a recurrent theme earlier, in the first episode; in their effort to reach understanding Euripidean characters frequently venture to impugn the wisdom of the gods themselves.[152]

It would be wrong on this basis to jump to the conclusion that to Euripides gods have lost their power and it is *Tyche* that rules. The tension between divine agency and *tyche* is meant to remain unresolved in order to highlight human limitations and divine power but also to assert the power of the unexpected, forces that are beyond human and sometimes divine control and comprehension. Given the recurrent criticism of divine justice in Euripides, rejecting an understanding of the complex phenomena of life entirely in terms of a limited anthropomorphic deity seems to have been among his purposes. Euripides seems to take advantage of the traditional interaction between *tyche* and the divine. Though personifying *Tyche* may be seen as conferring on her the capability of independent and autonomous

---

[151] Burnett (1970) 52.

[152] See *Her.* 339-347, 1087ff.; *Hipp.* 117-120; *Bac.* 1348; *Pho.* 86; *Tro.* 65-68, 469-471, 884, 1280-1; note esp. *Bellerophon* fr. 292 N; *Melan.* fr. 506 N; Bond (1963) 48 and 136-137. See also H. Yunis, *A New Creed: Fundamental Religious Beliefs in the Athenian Polis and Euripidean Drama*, Hypomnemata 91, (Göttingen, 1988) Part Two.

action, the effect is rather more subtle and ambiguous. We may not have here any explicit association between *tyche* and a divinity (as at *Hipp*. 371-2 or *Her*. 1393), but *tyche* is often associated with divine agency. The ambiguous and elusive trade-off between agency (divine or human) and contingency receives prominent expression in *Ion*, *Iphigeneia in Tauris* and *Helen*, where a divine frame establishes a goal and direction for the human action. As the plot of *Ion* unfolds, however, this goal and direction are at times foils to confused and undirected human action, but are also affected by it, even if by the end of the tragedy the god's general aim is attained. Apollo's plan is fundamental, but its realisation is conditioned and its outcome significantly modified by human responses and *tyche*, which in the end are what the play is all about.

The idea of *metabole*, often connected with *tyche*, is emphasised by Euripides both verbally[153] and dramatically. His liking for clear, sharp contrasts between episodes,[154] often initiating unpredictable new lines of action, is very much at home with the idea of *metabole*, of unexpected reversal. Accordingly, his recognition of the role of *tyche* is reflected in his taste for exciting, unpredictable plots and virtuoso effects. Consider the sudden turns at the beginnings of episodes in *Ion*. They break up the action into many situations that come to nothing:[155] Xuthus believes he has found a son, but Ion is not his son; Creusa's plan to kill Ion fails; Ion's revenge against Creusa is stopped short. Everything so far has been pointless. Only the last

---

[153] See *Ion* 969-70, 1501-18; *IT* 1117ff.; *Her*.480, 508ff., 1291-3; *Hel*. 711ff., 1136ff.; *Hipp*. 1102-10; *Hec*. 488ff. All these references to *metabole* and *tyche* are comments on completed action and are placed before important turning points of the plot. "A similar technique occurs in *IT* 721-2 and 864ff. In 721-2 Pylades states the principle; enter Iphigenia (725) and the beginning of the upswing": J. Gibert, *Change of Mind in Greek Tragedy*, Hypomnemata 108, (Göttingen, 1995) 196-7 and n. 84. See also Immerwahr (1966) 150, n. 3 and Krause (1976) 224-285; cf. Soph. fr. 222 Radt (*Eurypylos*), *Ant*. 1156-60 and Simonides, *PMG* 521. Aristophanes, *Frogs* 1217-9 = Eur. fr. 661 (*Stheneboea*) may suggest that the tragic commonplace of the mutability of fortune was particularly associated with Euripides; on *Stheneboea* see C. Collard, M. J. Cropp and K. H. Lee, *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays I*, (Warminster, 1995).

[154] While in Sophocles we have contrasts between scenes of the same episode, and a main reversal, *peripeteia*.

[155] See R. Aélion, "La technique dramatique d' Euripide et sa conception de la destinée humaine", in F. Jouan (ed.) *Visages du destin dans les mythologies*, (Paris, 1983) 69-85, at 75ff.

300 lines, beginning with the startling appearance of the Pythia,[156] present a successful event,[157] the true recognition. In the experience of the play itself, human ignorance, misinterpretation and violent passions predominate, and in the end, despite Athena's explanation[158] of human deception and foiled action as results of Apollo's providential plan, even it has been affected by an uncontrolled and unforeseen element of chance.

The clash of the limited human perception with the unforeseeable and the divine, "the abolition of the rules of this world by the heavenly 'Player'",[159] is the fundamental principle of such different dramas as *Ion* and Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*. In the latter this clash leads to a tragic end, but in *Ion* to a by-and-large happy end. It is rewarding briefly to compare the two plays from this point of view.

There are striking resemblances as well as differences between these only extant foundling plays. The similarities derive mainly from the fact that both involve the exposed hero tale-pattern.[160] Both Oedipus and Ion are foundlings and, though in different ways, both plays deal with the theme of unknown personal identity. Exposed hero means exposed fortune. The concept of *tyche* seems to pervade both these plays, especially if we take into account the importance of its verbal occurrences. But where dramatic structure is concerned, the two dramatists differ. Sophocles has not dramatised the most extraordinary coincidences of Oedipus' life, which are narrated by Oedipus himself (771-833), by the Corinthian messenger (1020ff., 1025, 1036, 1039), and by the servant of Laius (1178-1181), nor has he stressed their coincidental nature. Moreover, he draws no special attention to the most startling coincidences of all, the double roles of the witness to Laius' murder who was also the one sent to expose Oedipus, and the Corinthian

---

[156] Although the suddenness of her intervention makes us think of it as something accidental, this is not at all the case. As expected, the Pythia's involvement in Ion's case has always been a result of Apollo's influence on and command to her (47-8, 1343-7 and 1357-62).

[157] M. Lloyd, "Divine and human action in Euripides' *Ion*", *A&A* 32 (1986) 33-45, argues that the end the mortals achieve is far more satisfactory than what Apollo has planned for them (44).

[158] ibid. 45 and n. 65.

[159] W. H. Friedrich, *Euripides und Diphilos*, (Munich, 1953) 21.

[160] Huys (1995) 65 and *passim*; also L. Edmunds, *Oedipus: The Ancient Legend and its Later Analogues*, (Baltimore, 1985). On the role of *tyche* in *OT* see the analysis of P. Pucci, *Oedipus and the Fabrication of the Father*, (Baltimore, 1992).

messenger who was also the one who received him. It looks as if these coincidences are there only to demonstrate the poet's control of his plot and the god's or fate's control of the world. Besides, the audience was familiar with the myth and had a privileged perspective. As a result, several important references to *tyche* (especially at 949, 977 and 1080) are ironically undermined by the fact that the audience knows more than the characters, and by the immediately following events. One gets the impression that the dramatic events are working their way inexorably towards the revelation of a divine pattern already established by the gods in advance. Unlike the excitingly unpredictable plot of *Ion*, that of *OT* is more tightly controlled. Correspondingly, Sophocles allows chance only a very limited role in his play, where it is difficult to separate the power of fate from the elaborate mechanism of the plot.[161]

By contrast, the story of *Ion* seems to be largely of Euripides' invention. Hermes' prologue provides the audience valuable information the characters lack, but it is only a bare outline, so that at bottom the audience remains in the dark about what is going to transpire. Moreover, the sequence of dramatic events turns out to have an unexpected and seemingly coincidental character. This is enhanced by the fact that Apollo's intervention always remains implicit, and the characters as well as the audience have to wait till the very end in order to learn from Athena the full details of his beneficent purpose.

It is significant that, in their respective speeches in response to the revelation of the divine plan, Ion addresses *Tyche* as responsible for the vicissitudes in a man's life (1512ff.), whereas Oedipus sees Apollo as the accomplisher of his cruel sufferings (1329-1330). At 1080-1 overoptimistic Oedipus asserts that he is the child of good Fortune, but he turns out to be more fully dependent on *τύχη* as unpredictable fortune than he thinks – unlike Ion's acknowledgement of the unpredictable operation of *Tyche*. Of course the two characters are not equally cognizant of the agency of Apollo. Although Ion till the very end of the play is wholly unaware of the god's providential plan, Oedipus is condemned to a different kind of ignorance: he knows the

---

[161] I am indebted to Michael Lloyd for this observation.

oracle, but is completely in the dark about when and under what circumstances it is going to be fulfilled.

At the end of *Ion* Athena, from her Olympian perspective, places all the turns of event earlier viewed as fortuitous within the framework of Apollo's plan. Yet Euripides, by repeatedly presenting as chance what the *deus ex machina* will ultimately confirm to be a divine plan, tends to juxtapose chance and divine agency and mark them out in bolder lines. These two powers can seem to be two sides of the same coin. The idea that what at a particular moment seems to be due to chance at another moment turns out to be part of a divine plan is very much at home with the characteristic double perspective of the play (585-6).[162] There is room for what at the time appear random happenings in the complex and inscrutable world-order, which in a sense extends beyond the power of the anthropomorphic gods. If this last idea is right, Euripides presents it in a very indirect and ambiguous way. Although Apollo, the god of prophecy, might be expected to predict the future accurately, his failure to do so is not explicitly criticised in the play. By dramatising a modification of a divine plan necessitated by human action the poet seems to subvert the Homeric pattern in which it is the gods who frustrate human plans and intentions. This hardly constitutes a commitment to the overmastering power of chance as opposed to successful divine agency. Rather, the Homeric idea that even the gods may be subject to fate seems to be restated: even the gods may be subject to mutable and unpredictable *tyche*. It emerges eventually that gods still direct the action, but they do so within constraints and are no longer uninterruptedly effective. In the world of *Ion* in particular, the divine plan finding its way to fulfillment must not only negotiate but adapt to unforeseen human responses. Even the actions of the gods can be affected by *tyche*. This is a striking extension of *tyche*'s power

---

[162] The play's double character can be seen in the interaction between light irony and serious tragedy. According to K. J. Matthiessen, "Der *Ion* -- eine Komödie des Euripides?", *Sacris Erudiri* 31 (1989-90) 271-291, the play is partly ironical, in the presentation of the relationship between Xuthus and Ion, partly serious, in the presentation of the relationships between Creusa and Apollo and between Creusa and Ion, and partly also wavering between seriousness and irony, where the relationship of Ion with his divine father is concerned. See also K. Zacharia, "The Marriage of Tragedy and Comedy in Euripides' *Ion*", in S. Jäkel and A. Timonen (eds.), *Laughter Down the Centuries* II, Annales Universitatis Turkuensis 213, Turku (1995) 45-63

and range, and suggests that what is mortal and contingent both complements and subverts the divine.[163]

and K. Zacharia, *A Thematic Commenatry on Euripides' Ion*, (Diss. University College London, 1997).

[163] My discussion of the relation between divine agency and *tyche* is not by any means meant to underestimate the human factor in the play. For the interaction between divine and human action see Lloyd 1986.

CHAPTER FIVE
CAUSATION AND THEOLOGY IN EURIPIDES' *HERACLES*

The jarring reversals of action and emotion in Euripides' *Heracles* provide a challenging ground for the examination of causation and poetic theology. The question of causation or simply 'why things happen' is closely connected with divine will or impersonal suprahuman powers and abstractions. On the other hand, poetic theology suggests the poetic, dramatic use of ideas about gods and the nature of the divine or ideas about fate, necessity or fortune (of popular, mythological or of philosophical origin). The relation between causation and poetic theology can be either one of association or one of dissociation. Tragic events are often, but not always, theologically explained and, furthermore, there may or may not be a straightforward and clear causal link between human crime and divine punishment.

No consistent vision of theological explanation seems to emerge from Euripides' *Heracles*, at least not in the sense of the fairly consistent Aeschylean references to Zeus' justice. Euripidean characters talk more often about indeterminate and impersonal fortune (*τύχη, τύχαι*). This goes hand in hand with a human perspective, that is, the characters' ignorance and fragility with regard to an uncertain future or to inexplicable and unjust god-sent affliction. It is indicative that characters tend to see a god or fate or fortune behind grave situations and impasses, sudden catastrophes or unexpected reversals. Variability, ambiguity and inconclusiveness appear to be more characteristic of Euripides, combined with the recurrent theme of human impotence and ignorance in the grip of malignant, indifferent, or self-centred gods and sudden reversals of fortune, which are not always explained as coming from gods.

In *Heracles* a number of causative factors are employed according to the context and the mood the tragedian wants to convey each time. In what follows, I shall pay particular attention to the role of *tyche* in the way characters see and evaluate events and changes in their lives. *Tyche* (circumstances, fortune, stroke of fortune) is an indefinite, impersonal

abstraction. It may be either a static or a dynamic term. It can either describe a certain momentary incident, or a lasting state that results from an incident or, dynamically, the power that is at work in an incident. In this last case a degree of personification is in evidence.

Surely the most potent personified abstraction in *Heracles* is Lyssa, the embodiment of madness and the agent that on Hera's orders sends Heracles mad. Lyssa, the abstraction closely linked with the god-sent madness afflicting Heracles, is the only one in the play that is enacted and presented on stage as a full-fledged divine power.[1] However, this is not the case with *tyche*. It is not until Menander's *Aspis* that Tyche appears impersonated on stage as a goddess. In *Heracles τύχη* indeed acquires a whiff of personification when characters couch it in dynamic or vivid terms (480ff., 509f., 1357, 1393), but mostly it functions as a marker of the limited human perspective and impotence in the face of sudden and unforeseen reversals.

Having said this, there is evidence suggesting that *τύχη* was perceived as a power (*δύναμις*) along with *νέμεσις*, *μοῖρα* and *ἀνάγκη*. A scholion of Servius (on Virgil's *Aeneid* 7, 337) mentioning that the Erinys in Euripides says "se non esse unius potestatis, sed se fortunam, se nemesin, se fatum, se esse necessitatem" might retain the general content of what once was an identifiable Euripidean line. Wilamowitz has connected this scholion with an assumed madness-sending Erinys in Euripides' *Alcmeon*,[2] without specifying which of the two Alcmeon plays he meant.[3] Wilamowitz gives a Greek

---

[1] Similarly, in Euripides' *Alcestis Θάνατος*, the impersonation of death and the agent that takes Alcestis to the underworld, appears on stage as a full-fledged divinity.

[2] U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Euripides: Herakles*, Vol. I, (Berlin, 1895) 123-4 and note 22. Servius' scholion presents the Erinys in Euripides as talking of her many forms of power, but nothing is mentioned of a madness-sending Erinys. However, Wilamowitz assumes that this scholion may have to do with the famous madness scene of Euripides' *Alcmeon* imitated by Ennius. Tatian also refers to mad Alcmeon (*Orat. Ad Graec.* 24), but not to a madness-sending Erinys.

[3] Euripides' *Alcmeon in Psophis* was produced in 438 and his *Alcmeon in Corinth* followed thirty years or so later (produced posthumously together with *Iphigeneia in Aulis* and *Bacchae* according to the scholion on Arist. *Frogs* 67). As only a few fragments from Euripides' *Alcmeon* have come down to us we are not in a position to say anything with certainty about the two plays. There are references to Alcmeon' madness in Apollodorus 3, 7, 5 and 7. Hyginus fab. 73 talks of the persecution of Alcmeon by the Erinyes after the matricide: "… Alcmaeon memor patris praecepti Eriphylem matrem suam interfecit. Quem postea furiae exagitarunt". See T. B. L. Webster, *The Tragedies of Euripides*, (London, 1967) 40.

translation of the above scholion: *οὐ γὰρ πέφυκα δυνάμεως κρατεῖν μιᾶς· / ἀλλ' εἰμὶ νέμεσις καὶ τύχη καὶ μοῖρ' ἐγὼ,/ ἐγὼ δ' ἀνάγκη.* Here *τύχη* (fortune) occurs as a power forming one aspect of the Erinys' several other powers (retribution, fate, necessity). In Euripides' *Heracles* *τύχη* (like 'what must be', fate or necessity) is occasionally couched by characters in terms of a suprahuman power, but it is never seen as a goddess.[4] Heracles in a crucial passage towards the end connects *τύχη* with Hera: "We are struck down by a single *τύχη* of Hera", he cries (1393).

On the other hand, the static aspect of *tyche* needs also to be taken into account. There are several interesting remarks about the life experience of reversals and *tyche* in Hans Drexler's article on *Heracles*.[5] For Drexler random incidents like a bolt from the blue can be experienced only as *tyche*, as blind chance. As he characteristically adds, "any other opinion is secondary, additional, a product of reflection or interpretation".[6] Surely, on the first level, this has to do with the fact that *tyche* can mean 'what has happened', an event or the outcome of an event. This is a markedly neutral sense that lacks the evaluative quality of a religious interpretation, that is, when one assumes that what has happened comes from the gods. On a second level, *tyche* can also denote the element of unexpected reversal in an event. But even this sense lacks the evaluative force of a religious interpretation. Any event that happens randomly can be described as *tyche*, and the experience of *tyche* constitutes the primary, immediate reaction to unexpected happenings.

According to Drexler this is exemplified in *Heracles*: Lycus' usurpation and the unexpected threat this represents for Heracles' family; the latter's equally unexpected return in the nick of time to save them; and, finally, the most unexpected and arbitrary incident of all, Heracles' affliction with madness and killing of his wife and sons. All these inversions of the plot

---

[4] Dio Chrysostom (1-2 century AD) talks of the many names of the goddess *Tyche*: *ὠνόμασται δὲ ἡ τύχη καὶ πολλοῖς τισιν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ὀνόμασι· τὸ μὲν ἴσον αὐτῆς νέμεσις, τὸ δὲ ἄδηλον ἐλπίς, τὸ δὲ ἀναγκαῖον μοῖρα, τὸ δὲ δίκαιον θέμις, πολυώνυμός τις ὡς ἀληθῶς θεὸς καὶ πολύτροπος* (64, 8).

[5] H. Drexler, "Zum Herakles des Euripides", *Nachrichten von der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 9 (Göttingen, 1943) 311-43. On *tyche* see especially 328ff.

are occasionally expressed in terms of *tyche*, while after the final and most brutal reversal Heracles suggests his innocence by putting the blame of kin-killing on the combined external agency of Hera and *tyche*.[7] Drexler concludes that whereas theodicy is only an aspect linking events with gods, *tyche* as the unmediated event *per se* is the central problem of the play.[8] This point is valid, although it perhaps overrates the centrality of *tyche* and underrates the amount and the emotional weight of the discussion of *τὰ θεῖα, οἱ θεοί*. My discussion stresses the importance of acknowledging the existence of several alternative ways of explaining events in different contexts, as well as the shifting perspectives of the characters, rather than of giving one factor priority over the others. I shall argue that *τύχη*, fortune, whether coming from gods or presented as an entity of its own, is one way the characters use to suggest their impotence and fragility before the unknown, the unexpected, the unforeseeable, the unfathomable, and the changeable in all things human. It will be argued that Euripides, more predominantly than the other two tragedians, lays special emphasis on god-sent calamity that can fall upon apparently innocent people. Moreover, being unexpected, irrational and not causally linked, it may be felt as a gratuitous accident, a stroke of bad luck with no moral implication.

Sometimes divinity is seen as the originator of the tragic event. In other places theological explanations or simply descriptions seem to give way to vaguer, more abstract notions, such as fate or fortune. What kind of causes are emphasised in different contexts and why? This is an important question and worthy to be posed not only about Euripides but also about his intellectual environment. Robert Parker in *Miasma* writes: "Religious diagnoses become rarer in the post-Herodotean period (although several of the most interesting come in fact from Thucydides). The sense of a precise and direct link between crime and punishment, which allowed Herodotus to discuss carefully which of several offences a misfortune was caused by, was probably giving way in the

---

[6] Drexler (1943) 329:"Jede andere Auffassung ist sekundär, nachträglich, reflektiert, interpretatorisch".
[7] On these points see my discussion below.
[8] Drexler (1943) 341-3.

fourth century, even among the religious, to vaguer and less potent notions".[9] This movement, as Parker puts it, from 'a precise and direct link' between cause and effect (of which crime and punishment is a subcategory) to 'vaguer and less potent notions' is already happening in Euripides in the fifth century BC and indeed in Herodotus himself. Abstractions like fortune, fate or necessity occur as explanations of events in tragedy and history, whether they are linked with the divine or not. Alternative causes appear in different contexts: here religious ones, there more secular or naturalistic ones, and this need not be seen as inconsistency. In Euripides there is severe divine punishment with no crime preceding (*Heracles*)[10] or at least no fault commensurate with the callous divine vindictiveness (*Hippolytus, Bacchae*).

In Herodotus viii, 13, before the battle of Salamis, the tempest that destroyed a Persian squadron[11] is explained as a divine act meant to reduce the superiority of the Persian fleet: "And everything was being done by a god (ἐποιέετο ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ) so that the Persian fleet would be levelled with the Greek one and would not be much greater". Apparently ὁ θεός here is generic, standing for no specific god but for the divine. There is a reference to the same tempest at Artemisium in viii. 66, but here Herodotus says nothing of the equalising action of divinity: "In my judgement the Persian forces both by land and sea were just as strong at the time of their entry into Attica as they had been at Sepias and Thermopylae; for as an offset to the losses suffered in the storm, at Thermopylae and at Artemisium, I reckon the reinforcements which had subsequently joined them... The further Xerxes advanced into Greece, the more peoples followed him". Jouanna has argued for an inconsistency between the above two Herodotean passages. He asks whether, when writing viii.66, Herodotus forgot all about the equalising action of

---

[9] Parker (1983) 277.
[10] Iris calls it δίκη (842): but for what?
[11] This squadron of 200 ships sailed outside Sciathos with orders to turn southward round Euboea and into the Euripos. It was meant to take the Greeks in the rear and block their retreat (viii, 7).

divinity.[12] But there is not necessarily an inconsistency. The relationship between religious and naturalistic causes in Herodotus is one of coexistence rather than of opposition. Shifting points of view or perhaps different audiences may have dictated here a religious, there a naturalistic explanation of the same event.[13] This fluctuation between association with, and dissociation from, the divine can be observed in Euripides'*Heracles* as well. Towards the end of the play the emphasis shifts from possible, alternative causes, to the human predicament which Heracles has to cope with by shutting off all theological explanations. I shall argue that at the end of his last long speech the over-determination of his affliction through reference to both *τύχη* and Hera (1393) produces not something doubly determined but something that is difficult to determine and understand in human terms.

The form of *Heracles* assists in expressing the content. The action may be seen as consisting of four movements. At the start the hero is out of sight and presumed dead, still in Hades performing his last labour for Eurystheus. Euripides has perhaps[14] invented a new person, Lycus, a usurper of the Theban throne, who is persecuting Heracles' family and threatening

---

[12] See Jouanna (1981) 5: "Manifestement la diversité et la complexité des faits chez l'historien brisent l'action continue et cohérente de la divinité, telle qu' elle pouvait apparaître dans la vision tragique d' Eschyle".

[13] Rosalind Thomas' conclusion is appropriate here: "Perhaps we should also consider that in this period [i.e. in the latter part of the fifth century] competing, sometimes conflicting, ways of seeing the world and of claiming knowledge coexisted, and it is interesting to see how far such models have to share – sometimes uncomfortably – in Herodotus' all-embracing enquiries" [Thomas (2000) 285]. On the other hand, it may be the case that in viii.13 the Athenian point of view prevails, whereas in viii.66 the Persian one. It is indicative that for the Athenians at vii.189 Boreas "had helped them before (i.e. at the storm destroying part of the Persian fleet at Athos)" and was also "responsible for what occurred on this occasion too (i.e. the storm destroying part of the Persian fleet at Sepias)". Boreas is the deification of a natural phenomenon but also akin to Athens by marriage [cf. the new Simonides fr. 4, in D. Boedeker and D. Sider (eds.) *The New Simonides*, *Arethusa* 29 (1996) 156 and I. Rutherford's commentary at 171-2]. On the Persian side, it is the Magi who brought the storm at Sepias to an end by sacrificial offerings and by further offerings to Thetis and the sea-nymphs (vii.199). Yet, significantly, Herodotus gives us an alternative natural explanation: "or, of course, it may be that the wind just dropped naturally' (vii.191.2). This simultaneously divine and naturalistic aspect is captured in the American proverbial saying "I'll be there tomorrow, God willing and the creek don't rise". Compare also the expression 'Barring anything unforeseen', which semantically is the same as the previous one, though the lack of combined divine and naturalistic aspects makes it less vivid.

[14] Has Euripides really invented Lycus? That he appears also in *Antiope* suggests that Lycus comes from myth. Probably 31f. suggests that Euripides has doubled an existing Lycus to create a second one.

them with death. However, Heracles arrives unexpectedly in the nick of time and kills Lycus. Then a startling reversal occurs. On Hera's orders Lyssa and Iris drive Heracles mad, and he kills his children and wife. Finally, another character is unexpectedly introduced. Theseus comes after the kin-killing and helps Heracles to face the possibility of living with the knowledge of what he has done; in other words, of rejecting suicide and living to overcome dishonour.

The poet follows here a drastically different sequence from the conventional one, where Heracles' madness precedes the labours, which are then performed as a penance for the killing of his children. In the Euripidean play there is no question of this kind of atonement. Paradoxically, the labours here still represent the peak of Heracles' glorious achievements, though only to be overshadowed by the onslaught of madness and the killing of his wife and children.[15] The lack of causal unity in the development of the action has led to negative criticism, such as Swinburne judging the play a "grotesque abortion", and Murray calling it "broken-backed". But if we dispense with concepts of Aristotelian structure, it appears that the blatant and disconnected shifts of the plot manifest better one important thematic strand of the play, namely the violent wrenches of fortune which in fact expose the capricious and irrational nature of divine agency.

The following examination of the *tyche*-language in *Heracles* will show that fortune talk is linked with human frailty and uncertainty in the face of the unforeseeable inversions of fortune. In some contexts *τύχη* assumes a dynamic character, but this does not mean that it replaces Hera.[16] In *Heracles* *τύχη*-language or fortune talk is closely linked with human ignorance and with situations of danger and insecurity, where the human agents feel that the changes in their lives are due to some impersonal, external power of fortune and have nothing to do with the way they have acted.[17]

---

[15] In fact, the labours are minor trials in comparison to the agony of what Heracles has to go through following his madness and the extinction of his family.

[16] *Contra* W. Arrowsmith, *The Conversion of Herakles: An Essay in Euripidean Tragic Structure*, (diss. Princeton, 1954) and his "Introduction to Heracles", in D. Grene and R. A. Lattimore, *Euripides III*, (Chicago, 1969)^2 266-281, at 273 and 277.

[17] This also applies to other Euripidean plays. See my chapter on *IT, Helen* and *Ion*.

The opening of the play presents us with danger and foreboding. Amphitryon, Megara, and the sons of Heracles are seated as suppliants at the altar of Zeus the Saviour (*σωτῆρι*), seeking protection from the murderous intentions of Lycus. Heracles is away in Hades, on his last labour to capture and bring to light Cerberus (23-5). So his family are in utter despair, insecure (51-4) and lacking in allies. Amphitryon concludes his prologue speech with a *gnome* that stresses the importance of true and able friends when one is *in extremis*: "And of our friends, some I see to be not reliable (*οὐ σαφεῖς*) friends, while those who truly (*ὀρθῶς*) are so are powerless to help. This is what human ill-luck means (*τοιοῦτον ἀνθρώποισιν ἡ δυσπραξία*). May the person who wishes me even moderately well not meet with this ill-luck, the most unerring test of friendship (*φίλων ἔλεγχον ἀψευδέστατον*)" (55-9).[18]

This is the first of a series of sententious reflections on friendship, the instability of fortune, time and necessity, which give a "reflective and elevated" tone in the first part of the play, up to the arrival of Heracles.[19] Fortune talk often forms part of this reflective, poetic language.[20] After Amphitryon's gnomic conclusion Megara accompanies her thoughts on the inversion in their lives (from wealth and power to powerlessness, destitution and despair) with a *gnome* on the inscrutability of the divine: "Old man, you who once destroyed the Taphians' city in glorious command of Theban arms, how unclear are the ways of the divine to men (*ὡς οὐδὲν ἀνθρώποισι τῶν θείων σαφές*). I was not excluded from prosperity on my father's side (*οὔτ' ἐς πατέρ' ἀπηλάθην τύχης*). He was celebrated for his wealth then, he had a tyranny – that thing for the lust of which long spears leap against its prosperous owners – and he had children. He gave me to your son, thus settling upon Heracles a

---

[18] All translations from *Heracles* in this chapter follow Barlow's translation, with some changes.

[19] S. A. Barlow, *Euripides: Heracles*, (Warminster, 1996) 6 talks about the reflective and elevated language in the first five hundred trimeters of the play, following Michelini (1987) 236. Barlow refers to "*gnomai* or general maxims on friendship, failure, time and necessity", giving the relevant lines in a footnote. However, I find no evidence in the text for maxims on 'failure', and so the word 'failure' should be replaced by 'the instability of fortune', which is a *leit-motiv* in the play; Barlow acknowledges this in her 'Index', page 194.

[20] See, for example, 60-72, 101-6, 131-4, 309-11, 480-2, 503-13, 765-71 and 1389-96.

distinguished marriage. But now these things are dead and vanished (*καὶ νῦν ἐκεῖνα μὲν θανόντ' ἀνέπτατο*)" (60-9).

The reflections of both Amphitryon and Megara contain the adjective *σαφής, σαφές* negatived, meaning 'not reliable', in the first case, and 'not clear', in the second.[21] Yet the subsequent action reveals that Amphitryon and Megara have different attitudes towards their predicament. The first cherishes a hope that things can change, while the latter is convinced that there is no point in refusing to submit to what is bound to happen. Accordingly, Amphitryon tends to emphasise the possibility of a change for the better (91), whereas Megara keeps on stressing that death is for them inevitable (70-2). When she asks him what hope or means of safety he has (80-1), he replies that there is hope in procrastination, (89, 93) and later that Heracles may still come (95-7). Amphitryon takes pleasure in life and cherishes hopes (*καὶ τῷδε [φάει] χαίρω καὶ φιλῶ τὰς ἐλπίδας*, 91). Megara, although she also likes these things, puts the stress on what is inevitably expected to happen, that is, Lycus putting them to death: "So do I (= I also take pleasure in life and cherish hopes). But one must not expect what is not to be expected, old man", *κἀγώ· δοκεῖν δὲ τἀδόκητ' οὐ χρή, γέρον* (92). However, the startling reversals of the plot prove both Megara and Amphitryon to be partly wrong: the arrival of Heracles exemplifies that one should indeed expect the unexpected,[22] and that something unexpected can be even worse. The rescue of the family is immediately followed by a change for the worse (884-5). Heracles saves his wife and children only to massacre them as a result of the divine affliction of madness on him.

Amphitryon sticks to his hopes and the possibility of change until he gives in and comes to see death as inevitable (502). Before this, his motto is 'hope for a change'; conversely, 'the inevitability of death' is typical of Megara. These two contrasting attitudes are often reflected in the gnomic language the characters employ. Amphitryon at 101-6 uses wind imagery to

---

[21] It is notable that in all contexts this adjective has a negative word and is linked with the limitations of human knowledge (55, 62, 670, 1108).

[22] As the Chorus sings at 771, Heracles "has come as a hope beyond all reckonings", *δοκημάτων ἐκτὸς ἦλθεν ἐλπίς.*

express the idea of change in human life: "Human misfortunes (*αἱ συμφοραί*) too grow weary (*κάμνουσι*),[23] just as the blasts of the winds do not always have their full force. Those who are happy become unhappy in the end. Everything separates from its neighbour and takes a different place.[24] The bravest man is one who has always put his trust in hope; to despair is the mark of a coward" (101-6). A little below Amphitryon, referring to Lycus, says that death should be the fate of the latter if Zeus were justly disposed towards Heracles' family (210-2). In this context where the issue of justice is linked with Zeus' will, the wind of god (*θεοῦ...πνεῦμα*) is seen as likely to bring about a change for the worse in the tyrant's life: "But do not act violently or you will experience violence yourself when the wind of god towards you happens to change (*ὅταν θεοῦ σοι πνεῦμα μεταβαλὸν τύχῃ*)" (215-6).

Amphitryon in the above two passages stresses the possibility of a positive *μεταβολή*, whereas Megara often employs *χρή*-language to express the ineluctability of death (281-7, 296-300, 309-11) or talks of a negative *μεταβολή* (480-2). Her conclusion at 309-11 focuses on the idea that no man can change the fortunes gods send him or what must happen: "The man who tries to struggle his way through the fortunes sent him by gods (*τὰς τῶν θεῶν... τύχας*), has courage, but the courage of a fool. For no man will ever make that which is fated to be of no effect" (*ὃ χρὴ γὰρ οὐδεὶς μὴ χρεὼν θήσει ποτέ*) (309-11). Yet an attitude opposite to this underlies Heracles' decision to avoid suicide after the massacre of his children and wife. He thinks that real courage in his case means living (1347ff.), despite the extinction of his family by a single stroke of fortune from Hera, *Ἥρας μιᾷ...τύχῃ* (1393).

---

[23] G. W. Bond, *Euripides: Heracles*, (Oxford, 1981) comments *ad. loc.* that "*κάμνουσι* looks a colourful word" and that "it is used virtually literally of God growing tired at fr. 1073, a similar topos: *ὁ γὰρ θεός πως, εἰ θεόν σφε χρὴ καλεῖν, / κάμνει ξυνὼν τὰ πόλλα τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἀεί* ".

[24] Bond (1981) notes on line 104 that the language here echoes the terminology of philosophers "who engaged in cosmic speculation" and that "the principles and language of natural and cosmic change are commonly applied to human fortunes and morals".

Fortune (*τύχη*) is not always connected with gods. Sometimes it is felt as an indefinite, independent, active and hence causative force. It is interesting to examine the contexts in which this happens.[25]

At the beginning of the second episode the prevailing mood is one of complete despair. The moment of death has come for Amphitryon, Megara and her children. The focus of her lamentation is the doomed hopes for her children and the tragic change of their fortune. She reminisces about their earlier fortune and the promises Heracles made to them to establish a future full of hope (460-84). This loving bourgeois-father Heracles, who is presented assigning his possessions to his children,[26] is an innovation of Euripides in aid of a more naturalistic representation of the dramatic situation (as resembling that of an ordinary family), which aims at the heart of the dearest and most intimate parental concerns.[27] The tragedian apparently intends to create more pathos and an intense emotional response in the audience. In this context, Megara is presented selecting brides for her sons. The intensification of pathos here is related to a turn of fortune: "But all that has gone. Instead, your fortune has changed (*μεταβαλοῦσα δ' ἡ τύχη*) and has given you spirits of Death (*Κῆρας*) as your brides and me the unhappy one tears as the ritual water to carry" (480-2). *ἡ τύχη* here is the subject of an active verb (*ἀντέδωκε*) and therefore it may be perceived as an active agent. Nevertheless, the line of distinction between *tyche* merely as the *situation* of mutable fortune and *tyche* as a more active *power* that can give things to people is very fine. The context here is highly poetical; Wilamowitz speaks of the rhetorical substitution of poetic personifications for more concrete figures,[28] but it does not seem self-evident that *he tyche* should here be felt as a vague poetic personification rather than an active power.

A little below, Amphitryon also deplores the dramatic change in his life (508-10), just before Heracles arrives unexpectedly to save them. It is

---

[25] See 480, 509, 1357; 1393 is a special case: syntactically *tychei* denotes an impersonal agent and it is the genitive *Heras* that expresses the person who acts.
[26] Contrast Soph. *Trach.* 161-3, where we find what merely amounts to 'Heracles made his will'.
[27] Cf. esp. 633-6: "It's universal!".
[28] See Wilamowitz (1895) II, 118.

high irony that exactly when Amphitryon abandons all his previous hopes and starts to think like Megara that death seems inevitable for them (*θανεῖν γάρ, ὡς ἔοικ', ἀναγκαίως ἔχει*, 502), the unexpected breaks through. His address to the old men of the Chorus lends a markedly dramatic force to his thoughts: "My old friends, life is brief: get through it as pleasantly as you can and let night succeed day without pain. Time does not know how to preserve our hopes, but vanishes, taken up with its own concerns (*ὡς ἐλπίδας μὲν ὁ χρόνος οὐκ ἐπίσταται | σώζειν, τὸ δ' αὑτοῦ σπουδάσας διέπτατο*). Look at me! I was once looked up to by men and achieved notable things, and yet fortune has made me vanish in one day like a feather into the air (*καί μ' ἀφείλεθ' ἡ τύχη | ὥσπερ πτερὸν πρὸς αἰθέρ' ἡμέρᾳ μιᾷ*). I know of no-one for whom great wealth and reputation are secure (*ὁ δ' ὄλβος ὁ μέγας ἥ τε δόξ' οὐκ οἶδ' ὅτῳ | βέβαιός ἐστι*). Goodbye, my companions. You have seen the last of a man who is your friend" (503-13). At 506-7 *ὁ χρόνος* (time) is invested with human characteristics: he does *not know* how to preserve human hopes and *minds* his own business. This fleeting, gnomic personification of time[29] is followed by a similar momentary personification of fortune. The feeling and frame of mind underpinning these gnomic personifications is Amphitryon's bitter disappointment at Zeus' unresponsive, ignorant or unjust behaviour (498-9; cf. 339-47). In moments of absolute danger and despair humans tend to think that an inattentive, unresponsive divinity is quite similar to impersonal, indefinite, unfeeling fortune. As Amphitryon "has renounced belief in divine reciprocation" it seems that there is only vague, indifferent *τύχη*. As Harvey Yunis aptly remarks: "The reasoning is straightforward and, given the premises, unassailable".[30]

---

[29] See J. de Romilly, *Time in Greek Tragedy*, (Cornell, 1968). In her Euripides chapter she observes that Euripides " takes up what Sophocles said of the short time sufficient for great change. But he insists that 'one single day' is quite enough: 'one single day' has deprived Hecuba of all her prosperity (*Hecuba*, 285). 'One single day' has ruined the glorious fate of Amphitryon (*Heracles*, 510); indeed the poet adds an image: chance has brushed it off, as a feather in the air. … with Euripides, time is the realm of *tuchē*, or 'chance' " (118-9).

[30] Yunis (1988) 144-5 and n.12. In this note Yunis points out that at 509-10 "where Amphitruo has renounced belief in the reciprocation of Zeus, the meaning of *τύχη* must be akin to its meaning in Eur. fr. 154 Austin: *ὦ θνητὰ παραφρονήματ' ἀνθρώπων, μάτην | οἳ φασιν εἶναι τὴν τύχην ἀλλ' οὐ θεούς· | ὡς οὐδὲν ἴστε κεἰ λέγειν δοκεῖτέ τι. | εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἡ τύχη 'στιν οὐδὲν δεῖ θεῶν, | εἰ δ' οἱ θεοὶ σθένουσιν οὐδὲν ἡ τύχη*". Yunis also finds Eur. *Hec.* 488-91, *Cyc.* 606-7

At 508-10 it is *he tyche*, again the subject of a transitive verb (*καί μ' ἀφείλεθ' ἡ τύχη*),[31] that has made Amphitryon vanish in one day like a feather into the air. A dynamic sense in *he tyche* can be detected here as well. The transitory nature of happiness and the instability of fortune are themes that permeate the play and *tyche* is used to describe every important reversal of the action. Immediately after Ampitryon's bleak reflections on *tyche* (508-10), at this moment of total despair, when death is seen as more imminent than ever, Heracles suddenly appears (514) and brings an immediate reversal of fortune for his family. He announces his intention of killing Lycus (566-8) and eliminating all those who have been disloyal (568ff.). Thus Euripides provides for the characters and the audience a memorable example of the mutability of fortune.

This unexpected change for the better brings back to the forefront divine associations and attitudes of theodicy. When Megara sees Heracles approaching she urges her sons to take hold of him and not let him go, "for he is as good at saving you as Zeus himself", *ἐπεὶ Διὸς / σωτῆρος ὑμῖν οὐδέν ἐσθ' ὅδ' ὕστερος* (521-2). The earlier doubt of the Chorus whether Heracles is son of Zeus (353-4) transforms now to the jubilant conviction that this is in fact so: *Διὸς ὁ παῖς*, they exult at 696 (cf. 798-804). Just before Lycus meets his death at the hands of Heracles they sing: "Disaster is reversed (*μεταβολὰ κακῶν*)! Our lord, formerly great, has turned back from Hades. Io! This is justice and a divine change of destiny! (*ἰὼ· | δίκα καὶ θεῶν παλίρρους πότμος*)" (735-9).

The Chorus' belief in the justice of gods becomes even more prominent after the killing of Lycus, "the godless man, *δυσσεβὴς ἀνήρ*" (760). At 763-73 they sing: "Dancing, dancing and feasting are now our concern in the sacred city of Thebes. The change from tears and the changes in fortune (*μεταλλαγαὶ γὰρ δακρύων, / μεταλλαγαὶ συντυχίας*) have produced … songs. The new king is dead and the former king rules again now that he has left the

---

and fr. 901 N comparable. He does not say precisely how *τύχη* would be translated in the above contexts, although he notes that its meaning is flexible and not universal. I think that its meaning could include a long series of adjectives: 'impersonal, indefinite, suprahuman, indifferent, unfeeling, purposeless, gratuitous, uncontrollable fortune'.

harbour of Death. He has come as a hope beyond all reckonings (*δοκημάτων ἐκτὸς ἦλθεν ἐλπίς*). The gods, the gods take care to listen to the unjust and the good (*θεοὶ θεοὶ / τῶν ἀδίκων μέλουσι καὶ / τῶν ὁσίων ἐπάειν*)" (763-73). As Harvey Yunis points out: "In terms of the progress of the drama, the theodicy of the chorus is an implicit revision of Amphitruo's belief about the gods. For the divine reaction sought by Amphitruo, the absence of which led him to abandon his belief in reciprocity with the gods, has finally come about. …The rift between men and gods is apparently healed".[32] In this part of the play there is no reference to *τύχη*; but as 'the rift' tragically reopens with the affliction of madness on Heracles and his kin-killing, questions about divine justice and nature reappear, and along with them the issue of *τύχη*.

The double *ἔα* at 815 denotes an extreme instance of an unexpected appearance. Indeed, Iris and Lyssa appear on the roof of the palace and announce their task: to drive Heracles out of his mind, so that he kills his children. This is by order of Hera, who has had an implacable hatred for Zeus' bastard son ever since his birth, and who can pursue him, now that the labours are over. As Iris reveals, while Heracles had not yet completed his labours, "that which must happen (fate) kept him safe and his father Zeus would not let me and Hera hurt him", *τὸ χρή νιν ἐξέσωζεν, οὐδ' εἴα πατὴρ / Ζεύς νιν κακῶς δρᾶν οὔτ' ἔμ' οὔθ' Ἥραν ποτέ.* Zeus protected him while the labours were being performed, but now he is vulnerable again to Hera's enmity. This does not explain the 'why' of Hera's attack. It only refers to the 'when' and shows that Zeus' protection of his son is not after all based on any permanent principle of parental care or of justice, as the Chorus would have it in the previous (third) stasimon. Now that Heracles has completed his trials, Zeus' interest in him is apparently completed and over. Or (even more cynically) Zeus protected Heracles as long as he had a need for his services – then dropped him. Now Hera can have her go. One wonders whether Olympian power-politics are determined by anything other than the puerile principle of

---

[31] Cf. Eur. *Hec.* 285: *τὸν πάντα δ' ὄλβον ἦμαρ ἕν μ' ἀφείλετο* and fr. 420, 2 N.
[32] Yunis (1988) 148-9.

"It's my turn now!". This is a kind of logic, but not from the point of view of human and divine justice. One would have expected a totally different outcome: now that Heracles' trials are over, he would seem justified in returning home and living happily with his family. This peculiar Olympian order seems to embody the idea that each of the conflicting divine wills and whims must have its go at some point.

Since we are examining issues of causation and theology, it is important to ask what Heracles has done to deserve the tragically disproportionate punishment he gets from Hera. At first sight, Heracles' very existence, being the son of Zeus and Alkmene, makes him an enemy to Hera. The goddess' jealousy and envy is the known mythological reason. Iris briefly mentions Hera's anger at 840 (*Ἥρας...χόλος*), and Heracles clearly says that he was hated from birth by Hera (1262-3). However, Zeus' paternity is only alleged (*φασιν*) at 826. The question of Heracles' paternity is sometimes treated as a biological matter, but at others as a moral one. Whoever of the two, Zeus or Amphitryon, behaves like a father, deserves to be called Heracles' father (1264-5).[33]

The final clause (838ff.) towards the end of Iris' speech refers to the purpose of Heracles' punishment. He will be driven mad and kill his sons in order that he may learn how great is Hera's wrath (*χόλος*) and Iris' own against him. "Otherwise the gods are nowhere and mortal doings shall be too great, if Heracles does not pay the penalty", *ἢ θεοὶ μὲν οὐδαμοῦ, / τὰ θνητὰ δ' ἔσται μεγάλα, μὴ δόντος δίκην* (841-2), Iris concludes. She does talk of *δίκη* but only in order to emphasise the absence of any attempt to show that this action is really just. It is a striking paradox that the very personification of madness, Lyssa, thinks sensibly and is reluctant to perform her task as ordered by Hera, because Heracles is a man of merit and piety (849-53). Not for nothing does Iris say to Lyssa at 857 "Zeus' consort did not send you here to be sensible

---

[33] Amphitryon begins the play by calling himself Zeus' bedfellow (*Διὸς σύλλεκτρον*), while at 170-1 he opens the Agon with Lycus by saying that Zeus himself will act in defending his son's paternity. Yet, it is characteristic of the play's sudden and tragically ironical reversals that at 339ff. Amphitryon in his despair rejects Zeus' shared paternity because the god is not behaving as a father should.

(*σωφρονεῖν*)". Lyssa can find no purpose and justice in driving Heracles mad, but out of necessity gives in to the will of Hera and her messenger (859). Similarly, Heracles towards the end cannot see any justice or any moral pattern in Hera's levelling a blow against himself and his family. Hence, he does not talk of the traditional *χόλος* of Hera but of a single stroke of *τύχη* from her: "We are all destroyed, struck in misery by a single stroke of fortune from Hera", *πάντες ἐξολώλαμεν / Ἥρας μιᾷ πληγέντες ἄθλιοι τύχῃ* (1392-3). Surely, the contrast between the third and the fourth episode is startling. Euripides creates the juxtaposition of Zeus' implicit salvation of Heracles' family through his unexpected return, with the unexpected counter-blow from his wife Hera. If this suggests an uncanny symmetry, still Hera's attack has a grim suddenness that cannot be morally explained.

On the other hand, Iris' equation of Heracles escaping punishment with gods losing their importance and men growing too great, might be taken to imply that Heracles, having successfully performed all the tasks, and especially having returned from the Underworld, has transgressed the borderline that keeps mortals apart from gods. But there is no support in the text for such an interpretation. In Iris' eyes Heracles is a mortal, even though he is called at times son of Zeus and he helped the gods against the Giants (176ff). The play presents no *moral* transgression or fault on Heracles' part that would justify his punishment. Although there are places in the text where the possibility of misbehaviour or fault in Heracles may be implied,[34] the ironical effect of those warning remarks is that they provide no good grounds either for blaming Heracles or for explaining his suffering. And if Lycus' hybristic behaviour against Heracles' family seems to justify his punishment (732-3), there is nothing in what Heracles says or does that could explain and justify Hera's attack against him.[35] The First, Second and Third Stasima, respectively, praise Heracles' successful deeds of valour, praise his outstanding *arete*, and provide a glorious affirmation of his victory over

---

[34] See Amphitryon's suggestion at 599ff. that Heracles should address and honour Hestia, and Theseus warning Heracles that he should not talk blasphemously (1244).
[35] Wilamowitz (1895) I, 128-9 talks of a flaw in Heracles: his very heroic greatness contains the seeds of his destruction. See also Yunis (1988) 151 and n. 21.

Lycus. Nothing suggests overweening arrogance on Heracles' part or any kind of *hybris*, which might make Hera's wrath appear more reasonable.

Towards the end of the play what has happened, the disaster that has hit the hero, comes painfully into focus —both for the audience and for him after the restoration of his sane mind. This involves a shift of emphasis from possible causes (1024, 1135, 1186, 1253, 1261-4, 1308-12) to the actual event of kin-killing (1114-5, 1128-9) as well as the experience of drastic reversals *per se* (1357, 1392-3). At 1022-4 the Chorus sing that Heracles killed his children in the raging madness which was his lot (*τέκνα τρίγονα ... λυσσάδι συγκατειργάσω μοίρᾳ*).[36] At first sight, the *σύν*-prefix in the verb seems to imply Heracles' co-responsibility. But, as Wilamowitz has observed, the meaning "you have killed your children in co-operation with your *λυσσὰς μοῖρα*" does not make sense. Wilamowitz seems to be right to argue that *συγκατεργάζεσθαι* here means 'to kill all together' and that *λυσσάδι μοίρᾳ* denotes little more than *διὰ μανίας*. The idea of co-responsibility is clear in line 1135. Lines 1305-12, though, stress Heracles' innocence and Hera's blameworthiness.

The gradual transition from alternative causes to the stress on the actual event of kin-killing starts at 1114ff. Amphitryon, gradually breaking the horrible news to Heracles, suggests the enormity of suffering generated by Heracles' killing of his children and wife: "Sufferings at which even a god would groan, if he knew of them" (1115). It is important what Heracles replies: "This is a greatly boastful statement (*κόμπος*), but you haven't revealed yet what has actually happened (*τὴν τύχην*)". Heracles is anxious to hear *τὴν τύχην* sooner rather than later. Although a little further on attention is drawn for a while to the responsibility of Hera (1127), and Heracles wants to know what kind of hostility from this source causes them suffering (1128), Amphitryon shifts the emphasis back to what has actually happened: "Leave the goddess and attend to your own misfortunes (*τὰ σὰ περιστέλλου κακά*)" (1129).

---

[36] The expression *λυσσάδι μοίρᾳ* harks back to Sophocles' *λυσσώδη νόσον* at *Ajax* 452, where Ajax says that Athena has inflicted on him "raging-mad sickness".

Yet at 1135 Amphitryon, answering the question: 'Who killed these children?', lists the human agent (Heracles), the weapon he used (*τόξα*) and 'whatever god is responsible' (*θεῶν ὅς*) as chargeable (*αἴτιος*) with the killing. Euripides uses here the traditional 'over-determination' of a crime,[37] but the way he ends this play involves a revaluation and re-appreciation of all these three factors. The re-examination of Hera's involvement (1263-312) and of divine agency in general (1340-6) helps Heracles decide to avoid suicide (1347-57) and to keep his murderous but illustrious weapons (1376-85). Moreover, Heracles' final explanation of his suffering cancels the very notion of self-responsibility as well as of determination (1392-3).

Fortune talk towards the end of the play is part of this re-examination process as well as of Theseus' consolatory intervention (1314-5, 1320-1, 1396). The actual process of Heracles coming to terms with his suffering results in Hera being backgrounded and *τύχη* being foregrounded (1340-93). In the context of his consolation of Heracles (1314ff.), Theseus says that neither mortals nor immortals are undefiled by troubles and sufferings (*ταῖς τύχαις ἀκήρατος*, 1314).[38] Gods, despite their offensive behaviour towards one another, still live on Olympus, taking their *τύχαι* easy. Theseus argues that the examples of divine misbehaviour and the gods' making light of their misfortunes should teach Heracles not to be excessively disconcerted at his own misfortunes (1320-1).

In response, Heracles says that these examples of Theseus are irrelevant to his ills (1340). In Heracles' own strict, philosophical understanding of divinity gods do not misbehave, since a god is a sort of being that is self-sufficient and lacks nothing (1341-6).[39] The theological line of explanation is offered to Heracles as a reason to live but he intentionally rejects it. Instead, his language "tentatively in 1341-1344, clearly in 1345-

---

[37] See Bond (1981) on line 1135.

[38] The condition *ἀοιδῶν εἴπερ οὐ ψευδεῖς λόγοι* (1315) seems to imply the controversial character of this argument, i.e. that one can argue the opposite, where gods are concerned. The more idealistic belief that gods are actually undefiled by, or pure of, suffering, was also possible. An apparently similar version of this idea is expressed by Heracles at 1345-6, who dismisses the stories of the poets as their own unhappy constructions.

[39] Compare Xenophanes, B 11, A 32; Antiphon B10 and Eur. fr.210 *Antiope*.

1346, shows that he is concerned with what would properly be called a philosophical understanding of divinity".[40] In his last long speech Heracles comes to terms with his suffering and decides to forgo suicide not through Theseus' consolatory theologising, but by adopting a human perspective together with a distinctive idea of what god properly is. The "relevant significance" of his proclamation of the self-sufficiency of the gods is "that Heracles is, and can only be, proclaiming such conviction as far from self-sufficient man: it is a man's pious idealism, not a god's inside knowledge, that informs these words".[41]

Explaining the basis on which he is going to live (1347ff.) Heracles speaks of the principle of standing up to *κακά* and *συμφοραί* and secularises Theseus' *τύχαι* by shifting the emphasis from the divine to avoiding cowardice. It is purely on grounds of avoiding cowardice that he decides to forgo death. Theseus mixes *τύχη* and the divine,[42] and presents misfortune as something that can be understood commensurately from a divine and human point of view. Heracles does not accept the premise of this; operating from his own human sense he deals with his predicament by leaving the gods out of account and assimilating *τύχη* to *συμφορά*, thus focusing on the end of the semantic spectrum of the word *τύχη* represented by Latin *fors* rather than *fortuna*. The effect of this secularising, humanising effect is felt in what follows. Heracles concludes his decision to go on living by saying (1357): "But now, as it seems, I have to be a slave to fortune (*τῇ τύχῃ δουλευτέον*)". This is an aspect of the wider principle of standing up to *συμφορά*; and *ἡ τύχη* here refers to the change of events described in 1352-6. Heracles could never imagine coming to a point where he would cry. But now what has happened to him makes this an unexpected reality that must be put up with.

---

[40] Yunis (1988) 159. I agree with him that "In 1341-1346 Heracles is not denying the existence or activity of the traditional gods Zeus and Hera; he is certainly not denying their capacity for mischief. He is denying that they meet the criteria for inclusion in his somewhat restricted, distinctive class of gods. Heracles does not say in this passage anything further about how he views the status of the traditional gods; that will come a few lines later with specific reference to Hera" (162-3).

[41] Michael S. Silk, "Heracles and Greek tragedy", *Greece and Rome*, 32 (1985) 1-22, at 16.

[42] He is talking about the gods not as agents but as fellow victims of *tyche*.

At 1358 *εἶεν* starts a new section of Heracles' speech, which is concluded by a memorable phrase: *πάντες ἐξολώλαμεν / Ἥρας μιᾷ πληγέντες ἄθλιοι τύχῃ*, "We are all destroyed, struck in misery by a single stroke of fortune from Hera" (1392-3). *μιᾷ τύχῃ* can be either a dative of agent denoting an inanimate power or a dative of means. To this impersonal construction *Ἥρας* is appended either as a possessive / pertinentive (including the notion of association with) genitive or as a genitive of source (ablatival, answering the question 'from where'). Wilamowitz paraphrases lines 1392-3 as follows with no further explanation: *ἄθλιοι γεγενήμεθα, ἐπειδὴ πάντες ὑφ' Ἥρας ἐπλήγημεν.*[43] He substitutes the prepositional genitive of agent (*ὑφ' Ἥρας*) for the dative of agent or means in *tychei*. But in this way, the presence of *tyche* is not fully registered. The immediate cause is meant to be *tyche* and working somewhere behind is Hera.

In line 20 Hera's agency is expressed in a clearer way: Amphitryon says that Heracles "either at the instigation of Hera, subdued by her goads (*εἴθ' Ἥρας ὕπο / κέντροις δαμασθείς*),[44] or in accordance with fate (*εἴτε τοῦ χρεὼν μέτα*)" promised to Eurystheus to "free the earth of violence". Here there is a disjunction between Hera as an active person and fate as a suprahuman abstraction. But in 1393 the two agents – the goddess being the personal one and fortune the impersonal one – merge in one memorable causative complex. So far the agency of Hera (20-1, 831-2, 840, 855, 1127, 1189, 1253, 1263-8, 1303-10, 1311-12) and the agency of *tyche* (480, 509) have been kept apart. Yet bringing the two streams together raises more questions than answers. It makes both Hera and *tyche* vaguer. This is not over-determination, but rather lack of determination.

A similar coexistence of an abstraction and Hera's wrath goes as far back as Homer. In *Iliad* 18 Achilles, talking to Thetis about his fate of death, presents Heracles' case as similar to his own: "Even the mighty Herakles could not escape death, and he was the dearest of men to lord Zeus, son of

---

[43] Wilamowitz (1895) II, on line 1393.

[44] Following Bond (1981) on line 20f., I take *Ἥρας ὕπο* together, explained by *κέντροις δαμασθείς*. As Bond notes, "Hera is an active person, hence *ὑπό*".

Kronos: but fate conquered him, and the cruel enmity of Hera (*ἀλλά ἑ μοῖρα δάμασσε καὶ ἀργαλέος χόλος Ἥρης*). So if the same fate is there for me, I too shall lie low when I die" (117-121).[45] Euripides at *Heracles* 1393 uses the abstraction of *τύχη*, which from a human perspective represents as great a puzzle as *μοῖρα*, but with the added colour of suddenness and randomness. Perhaps also an overtone of the Homeric use of *τυγχάνειν* in the sense of 'hit a target' might be felt in *Ἥρας μιᾷ ... τύχῃ*.[46] The similarity of the reference to *tyche* in these lines with that in an epitaph carved on a grave stele is striking:

λυπρὸν ἐφ' Ἡδίστῃ Μοῖραι τότε νῆμα ἀπ' ἀτράκτων
κλῶσαν, ὅτε ὠδῖνος νύμφη ἀπηντίασεν·
σχετλίη· οὐ γὰρ ἔμελλε τὸ νήπιον ἀγκαλιεῖσθαι
μαστῷ τε ἀρδεύσειν χεῖλος ἑοῖο βρέφους·
ἓν γὰρ ἐσεῖδε φάος, καὶ ἀπήγαγεν εἰς ἕνα τύμβον
τοὺς δισσοὺς ἀκρίτως τοῖσδε μολοῦσα Τύχη (142 Peek).

"A painful thread for Hediste did the Fates weave from their spindles when, as a young wife, she came to the throes of childbirth. Ah wretched one! For it was not fated that she should cradle the infant in her arms, nor moisten the lips of her new-born child at her breast. One light looks upon both and Fortune has brought both to a single tomb, making no distinction when she came upon them".[47]

At 1393 Euripides employs the word *tyche* to refer to an act with a personal agent, i.e. Hera, whereas he has used it repeatedly in the play to denote the indeterminacy of events (480, 509, 1314, 1321, 1357). As Harvey Yunis points out: "Heracles repeats his conviction that Hera, who certainly exists, has acted and destroyed him and, what he proclaimed before, that he is a pure victim. But he stops short of allowing Hera's behavior…to be glorified as a demonstration of superiority, let alone the justice, of the divine (as Hera and Iris would have it). Hera's behavior is, so to speak, no more rational, no

---

[45] Translation by M. Hammond, *Homer: The Iliad*, (Penguin Classics / London, 1987).
[46] Compare also *πληγὴ Διός* and *θεοῦ πληγή* in Sophocles' *Ajax* 137 and 278-9, respectively. These expressions denoting the stroke of a god are more concrete than *Ἥρας μιᾷ ... τύχῃ*.
[47] Stele of Hediste, ca. 200BC (Painted stele, Volos, Archeological Museum). Translation by J. J. Pollitt, "An Obsession with Fortune", in S. B. Matheson (ed.), *An Obsession with*

less prone to moral obscenity, hence no more dignified, than *τύχη*".[48] It is characteristic of the paradoxical atmosphere of the play that the will of the goddess is combined with the indeterminacy and randomness of events *per se*.

Kovacs is right in pointing out here the return to the mythological cause of Heracles' downfall, that is Hera.[49] But the importance of the reference to Hera lies elsewhere, I think. As Heracles opposes *Ἥρας μιᾷ τύχῃ* to *πάντες*,[50] he puts himself on the same level as his children. He therefore sounds, on the one hand, as though he is reproaching the goddess for the 'one size fits all' nature of their affliction, and, on the other, as though he wants to stress his own innocence. So, despite his earlier rejection of Theseus' theologising, Heracles comes back to Hera at the end of his speech --but very vaguely only, as a means to direct a reproach against something external, against an agency that is personal only at one remove, as it were. Heracles does not deny the existence of gods, even those who are excluded from his idealised idea of divinity. For Heracles' human perspective Hera's levelling, unjust blow is simply unintelligible and inexplicable. That is why for him *tyche*, something external, random and impersonal is foregrounded whereas Hera is backgrounded.[51] In a universe presented as both capricious and apparently indifferent to questions of morality, Theseus' offer of friendship and honour, and its acceptance by Heracles, acquire particular sharpness. As

---

Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art, Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin, (Princeton, 1994) 13-17, at 17 and fig. 3.

[48] Yunis (1988) 168 with notes.

[49] D. Kovacs, *Euripides III* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998) 445, n. 41.

[50] In Euripides' *IT* 1065-6 "*one* fortune" is juxtaposed to "the *three* dearest comrades", Iphigeneia, Orestes and Pylades: *ὁρᾶτε δ' ὡς τρεῖς μία τύχη τοὺς φιλτάτους, / ἢ γῆς πατρῴας νόστος ἢ θανεῖν, ἔχει.* Compare also *Hel.* 742.

[51] The same random and inexplicable aspect of a divine operation may be implied also by the expression *τύχα / Κύπριδος* (*Hippolytus* 371-2). In both Heracles' and Hippolytus' case there is no clear, justifiable and undisputed link between crime and punishment or cause and effect apart from the capricious wrath of a rogue deity. And if Hippolytus' exclusive worship of Artemis and virginity, and disregard for Aphrodite and sex is his flaw, the enormity of his punishment is presented as absolutely out of proportion with this. It is appropriate to quote here Winnington-Ingram: "The explanations which the goddesses give are thin and over-simple. They suit the context of power-politics upon Olympus better than they suit the complexities of human life" [R. P. Winnington-Ingram, "Hippolytus: A Study of Causation", in J. C. Kamerbeek (et al.) *Euripide*, Entretiens sur l' antiquité classique VI (Geneva, 1960) 170-191, at 188]. But even in what one might think of as clearer cases of human fault, Sophocles' *Ajax*, for example, Athena's presentation and operation there is far from being indisputably justifiable or part of an impartial or all-embracing theodicy.

the play closes the stress falls on Theseus' genuine friendship – in contrast with the unreliable *φιλία* of the gods – and Heracles' dependence on it (1402-4, 1424-6).

A brief look at the differences between Sophocles' *Ajax* and Euripides' *Heracles* is revealing. Here I am limiting myself to a short discussion of how the two tragedians treat *τύχη* (fortune) and change in human life.[52] Both plays emphasise the change of fortune, but in different ways. In the Sophoclean tragedy *tyche* denotes an event or a state of affairs (102, 283, 323, 485, 803, 980, 1028, 1058), but never an active agent. It is connected to necessity (485-6, 803) and lot (1058) rather than random fortune. Time is mainly spoken of as responsible for change in human affairs.[53]

Euripides, on the other hand, twice presents *tyche* as an independent and indefinite force, responsible for change for the worse (480f., 508f.), while at *Heracles* 766 the expression *μεταλλαγαὶ συντυχίας* denotes change for the better. The idea that man must face change and the alteration of his expectations is found in both *Heracles* and *Ajax*. Though for Heracles this is feasible, for Ajax it is impossible. His so-called 'deception speech' (646-692) shows him trying to imagine what it would be like to accept change as a natural part of one's life. Ironically, it is the character which most stubbornly resists the law of change which gives such an eloquent appreciation of it. That he fails to face up to the eternal rhythmical order described in his speech is his tragedy. The reason Calchas gives for Ajax's fall at 756ff. agrees with this order: mortals have to know their limitations and not transgress them. Men should not violate the Delphic maxim of *μηδὲν ἄγαν*. In other words they should live according to *σωφροσύνη*. This moderation of mind and action includes the recognition of man's puny cognisance (1418-20) and the omnipotence of gods, and, hence, a readiness to acknowledge their help – which Ajax scornfully rejects (767-775) and, as a result, wins for himself the

---

[52] For more detailed comparisons see J. de Romilly, "Le refus du suicide dans l'Héraclès d' Euripide", *ΑΡΧΑΙΟΓΝΩΣΙΑ* 1 (1980) 1-10; S. A. Barlow, "Sophocles' Ajax and Euripides' Heracles", *Ramus* 10 (1981) 112-28 and S. Yoshitake, "Disgrace, Grief, and Other Ills: Heracles' Rejection of Suicide", *JHS* 114 (1994) 135-53.

[53] Day: 131-2; night: 208-9; long and immensurable time: 646-53; great time: 714-8.

undying wrath of Athena (776-7). The goddess herself states this moral point in the prologue scene (126-33).

Athena's anger against Ajax is justified and portrayed as part of a rhythmical order. In contrast, Hera's wrath in *Heracles* is presented as unjust and totally callous. The presentation of *tyche* as a causal agent in the Euripidean play is compatible with this picture. Unlike in *Ajax*, the change, instability and, hence, uncertainty of life is never in this play accepted as part of the natural condition. But it is often deplored as part of the violent dislocations inflicted by gods or *tyche* (60-72, 215-6; cf. 101-6, 480-4, 506-13, 669-70, 1303-1312, 1393). The only clear point in this case is that the operation of gods is amoral and gratuitous, and therefore approaches events that happen by random fortune. This is a consideration that helps Heracles towards the end to come to terms with his affliction and go on living.

It seems clear that Ajax's heroism and excellence is flawed. His determination and eagerness to kill the Atreidai is checked by Athena, in the sense that she interferes with his powers of perception by sending him 'mistaken notions' (51-2). Thus the goddess misleads him into believing that he attacks and kills his enemies, whereas in fact he attacks and kills herds of animals. Athena's intervention prevents Ajax from killing the Argive chieftains and averts a major manslaughter. Nevertheless, this is the worst kind of punishment for Ajax. For his *ethos* cannot put up with the ignominy of not being able to take revenge upon those who slighted his excellence and being laughed at (271-80). His excellence makes him overconfident, unwise and rigid. On a theological level this means that he thinks that he can win glory for himself without gods (768-775). On a non-theological or empirical level this means that he disregards the natural law of change (129-30, 670-6).[54]

---

[54] Apart from gods and seers nobody knows how things may turn out; everything is subject to alteration, and hence human beings should be ready to adjust to a new state of affairs and reappraise their previous ideas and beliefs. No clear line of distinction can be drawn between the theological and the non-theological level. Explanations and causes of the dramatic events derive from both, and this interaction boils down to the principle of *σωφροσύνη*, a quality that Ajax evidently lacks. Although he is human he refuses to think as a man should (760-1) and has more than human pride. This is enough to call down upon him the cruel anger of Athena (133-4, 776-7) who, in Ajax's words, threw him down, casting upon him madness (*λυσσώδη νόσον* = 'raging-mad sickness', 452). According to Athena, gods love those who are sensible

By contrast, Heracles is innocent of faults. He is struck down by order of Hera just as he is saving his family from death, about to be inflicted on them by the usurper, Lycus. Moreover, disturbing as it is that Ajax kills helpless animals under the impression that he is killing Agamemnon and Menelaus, it is not nearly as horrible as the act of the entirely blameless Heracles, who is actually putting to death his own sons under the impression that he is killing his enemy's children. And this is all the more horrific since Euripides has artfully created a picture of Heracles as an accessible and caring father, husband and son, whereas Sophocles presents Ajax as almost unreachable, though in his inflexibility dependent on and in need of others. Furthermore, the fact that Ajax's excellence is flawed makes Athena's intervention look justified, and the moral points she and other characters make, valid.

Even so, in the presentation of Athena the emphasis is not on the vindication of divine justice, but rather on Athena's favouritism for Odysseus and her insistence on the gap of power and knowledge between men and gods.[55] The role of Athena rather complicates than clarifies the issues of causation and theology in this play.[56]

In Euripides' *Heracles* it is important that Heracles by shutting off all divine causation manages to bear up under his affliction. Hera's jealousy and determination to harm him are taken more or less for granted. It is rather the experience of a series of sudden, unexpected and uncontrolled reversals[57] as

---

and detest those who are evil (133-4). Surely, Ajax is not presented as being sensible (*σώφρων*), but it is not clear that we are meant to think of him as evil (*κακός*). His lack of wisdom and sensibility is bound up with his valour and excellence. Though he intended to kill the Argive chieftains, one of them, namely Odysseus, recognises belatedly that Ajax was indeed the best among the Argives, except Achilles (1339-41). Thus, Odysseus after Ajax's suicide seems to admit that the armour of Achilles should have been awarded to Ajax, and not to himself. Late in the day and retrospectively, it is acknowledged that Ajax was justified in feeling offended, although he should not have nourished his anger against the Argive chieftains to the point of wanting to kill them.

[55] Compare Soph. *Aj*ax 118-20 and Eur. *Heracles* 841-2.

[56] At the beginning, the image of the powerful goddess, who has complete control over Ajax and whose purpose is to display the omnipotence of gods (118-20), may appear in human eyes as a manipulating, mocking (89-90, 114-5) and harsh divinity. This seems to prompt Odysseus to express his pity for Ajax at 121-4 and conclude with a more general statement about the human condition: "all of us who live are nothing but ghosts, or a vain shadow" (125-6).

[57] The play constantly represents reversals of the normal or expected order: Lycus the usurper threatens Heracles' family with death. Heracles comes and saves his family from Lycus.

well as of coming to terms with the disaster that give the play its very structure and meaning. In effect, connecting Hera's malignant action with *tyche* by no means provides an explanation of it. On the contrary, it darkens the already obscure divine agency by linking it with this impersonal and unfathomable power. It emerges therefore that Euripides' causation and theology (in general) and his employment of *tyche* (in particular) are deliberately inclusive and inconclusive.

A whole range of ideas about the relationship of humans, the divine and powers of fate or random fortune as causal agents (present already in earlier poets and prose writers) was available to Euripides. This sheer diversity of voices in his plays – here expressing faith in gods, there criticism of them, or sometimes presenting *tyche* as coming from gods but at other times as an independent and unknown entity[58] – is part of his inconclusive presentation of the divine[59] and of powers beyond human control. The knowledge mortals can have about divinity and other powers beyond human control is limited and precarious. The question of *why* things happen is meant to remain unanswered and the different possibilities arising from this question are deliberately left unresolved. All these uncertainties are powerfully exploited in Euripides' *Heracles*.

Lyssa inflicts madness on Heracles and he kills his children and wife. Theseus arrives and helps Heracles decide to go on living.

[58] Although the fluctuation of fortunes brings men many surprises, those at risk do not direct their prayers or complaints to *tyche* but to gods. Nevertheless, see Eur. *Ion* 1512ff.

[59] On this see S. Halliwell, "Human limits and the religion of Greek Tragedy", *Literature and Theology*, 4 (July 1990) 169-180.

CONCLUSIONS

Remaining sensitive to the linguistic context is of paramount importance for the examination of such a Protean word as *τύχη*. This is my methodological tool throughout this thesis. That this could be a promising approach was already hinted at by Burkert's and Parker's observations.[1] Both these have been proved correct by my discussion of *τύχη*: this abstraction starts indeed from poetry, figures briefly on two late fifth-century vases[2] and finally finds its way into the realm of cult as Agathe Tyche. This is a product of language as well, "a translation from word into form of the fixed appeal for good luck that was made at the start of decrees of the assembly and in many other contexts", as Parker points out.

The main purpose of this thesis was to show how *tyche* (in a static or dynamic sense) gains importance in the fifth century through its employment in a variety of literary contexts and through its involvement in contemporary intellectual debates. In archaic lyric poetry *tyche* as good fortune, luck, is connected with the divine and, on the other hand, with the precariousness or mutability of all things human. In Pindar *tyche* appears as good or divine fortune and also as double-edged, uncertain fortune, linked with gnomic language about the limitations of human existence. The tragedians and the historiographers draw on this rich tradition, although the latter never see Tyche as a personification. In fact, Herodotus refers only once to personified Moirai. A juxtaposition of short-term and long-term causation can be traced both in tragedy and history. Detailed and short-term accounts of events are linked with a limited, as-it-happens perspective, whereas long-scale patterns of events are associated with the divine and with an in-retrospect perspective. This distinction between broad patterns of events and the small details which occur in their working out is traceable even in Homer. In Euripides the juxtaposition between the divine perspective of the *deus ex machina* and the limited perspective of the characters in the course of the play creates a similar effect.

---

[1] See above, 2-3.

[2] Although the one case is only probable, and the other is based on a description of a now lost vase. See above in the section on Euripides' *Helen*.

It emerges that far from attributing all events in human life to a divine purpose or some sort of predetermination, pagan Greeks were also very well aware that things can just happen for no obvious reason or purpose. That is why they thought of *τύχη* as one of the unseen powers, or as an undefined cause. Moreover, *τύχη* language, *μοῖρα* language and god talk constitute alternative ways of expressing human uncertainty, ignorance and frailty in the face of the unforeseen future, danger or critical circumstances. The choice of word is important, as it expresses an attitude to events as well as an intellectual explanation of them. Calling events *τύχη* points to their lack of any purpose or shape, and may also suggest the randomness of human life or the transience of all things mortal. Calling events 'god-sent' or 'fated' points to their acceptance as inevitable and as universal markers of the limits of the human condition.

Thucydides is different in the sense that he himself never connects *τύχη* with the divine. In his *History* *τύχη* is part of the rhetoric of success and failure as well as of the precariousness of human fortune and the limitations of intelligence and planning. The tension between *τύχη* and *γνώμη* comes sharply into focus. This antinomy, together with the *τύχη-τέχνη* or *τύχη-πρόνοια* oppositions, formed part of sophistic thought, while its occurrence in various texts (the Hippocratics, oratory, Democritus, tragedy and historiography) points to its involvement in fifth-century intellectual debates. Ample evidence for this is to be found in Euripides as well. In his use of both fortune talk and god talk as well as in his adaptation of earlier ideas about them, he turns out to be the most inclusive and inconclusive tragedian. It is no accident therefore that New Comedy drew heavily on this rich source of such varied, challenging and at times conflicting ideas.[3]

---

[3] See Vogt-Spira (1992); also on Tyche and recognition scenes see his recent article: G. Vogt-Spira, "Euripides und Menander", *Drama* 10 (2001) 197-222.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aélion, R. (1983) "La technique dramatique d' Euripide et sa conception de la destinée humaine", in F. Jouan (ed.) *Visages du destin dans les mythologies*, Paris: 69-85.

Allègre, F. (1889) *Étude sur la déesse grecque Tyché, sa signification religieuse et morale, son culte et ses représentations figurées*, Paris.

Alt, K. (1962) "Zur Anagnorisis in der *Helena*", *Hermes* 90: 6-24.

Andrewes, A. (1938) "Eunomia", *CQ* 32: 89-102.

Arrowsmith, W. (1954) *The Conversion of Herakles: An Essay in Euripidean Tragic Structure*, diss. Princeton.

Arrowsmith, W. (1969)^2 "Introduction to Heracles", in D. Grene and R. A. Lattimore, *Euripides III*, Chicago: 266-281.

Austin, C. (1968) *Nova Fragmenta Euripidea in Papyris Reperta*, Berlin.

Barlow, S. A. (1996) *Euripides: Heracles*, Warminster.

Barnes, J. (1982)^2 *The Presocratic Philosophers*, London.

Barrett, W. S. (1973) "Pindar's twelfth *Olympian* and the fall of the Deinomenidai", *JHS* 93: 23-35.

Barrett, W. S. (1978)^2 *Euripides: Hippolytos*, Oxford.

Bauer, C. (1995) *Reliefs und Epigramme griechischer Privatgrabmäler*, Köln.

Beazley, J. D. (1956) *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters*, Oxford.

Becker, O. (1940) "Pindars Olympische Ode vom Glück", *Antike* 16: 38-50.

Berry, E. G. (1940) *The History and Development of the concept of ΘΕΙΑ ΜΟΙΡΑ and ΘΕΙΑ ΤΥΧΗ down to and including Plato*, Chicago.

Billington, S. (1996) "Fors Fortuna in Ancient Rome", in S. Billington and M. Green (eds.) *The Concept of the Goddess*, London: 129-140.

Bischoff, H. (1932) *Der Warner bei Herodot*, diss. Marburg.

Boedeker, D. and Sider, D. (eds.) (1996) *The New Simonides*, *Arethusa* 29.

Bollansée, J. (ed.) (1999) F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* IV A, Fasc. 3, Leiden / Boston / Köln.

Bond, G. W. (1963) *Euripides: Hypsipyle*, Oxford.

Bond, G. W. (1981) *Euripides: Heracles*, Oxford.

Bouché-Leclerq, A. (1891) "Tyché ou la Fortune", in *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 23: 273-307.

Broadie, S. (1999) "Rational Theology", in A. A. Long (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Early Greek Philosophy*, Cambridge: 205-224.

Brunt, P. A. (1967) Review of H.-P. Stahl, *Thukydides. Die Stellung des Menschen im geschichtlichen Prozess*, Zetemata 40, (Munich, 1966) in *Classical Review* 17: 278-80 [reprinted in P. A. Brunt, *Studies in Greek History and Thought* (Oxford, 1993) 394-8].

Bundy, E. L. (1986) *Studia Pindarica*, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

Buriks, A. A. (1948) *ΠΕΡΙ ΤΥΧΗΣ. De ontwikkeling van het begrip tyche tot aan de Romeinse tijd, hoofdzakelijk in de philosophie*, Leiden.

Burkert, W. (1985) *Greek Religion*, tr. J. Raffan, Oxford.

Burnett, A. P. (1970) *Euripides: Ion*, Englewood Cliffs.

Burnett, A. P. (1971) *Catastrophe Survived. Euripides' plays of mixed reversal*, Oxford.

Busch, G. (1937) *Untersuchungen zum Wesen der τύχη in den Tragödien des Euripides*, Heidelberg.

Buxton, R. G. A. (1982) *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy. A Study of Peitho*, Cambridge.

Campbell, D. A. (1988) *Greek Lyric* II, Cambridge, Mass.

Campbell, D. A. (1991) *Greek Lyric* III, Cambridge, Mass.

Campbell, D. A. (1993) *Greek Lyric* V, Cambridge, Mass.

Chiasson, C. C. (1986) "The Herodotean Solon", *GRBS* 27: 249-262.

Classen, J. and Steup, J. (1897) *Thukydides*, Berlin.

Classen, J. and Steup, J. (1966) *Thukydides*, (fifth edition reproduced) Berlin / Zurich / Dublin.

Collard, C. (1991) *Euripides: Hecuba*, Warminster.

Collard, C., Cropp, M. J. and Lee, K. H. (1995) *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays I*, Warminster.

Conacher, D. J. (1956) "Religious and ethical attitudes in Euripides' *Supplices*", *TAPA* 87: 8-26.

Conacher, D. J. (1988) *Euripides: Alcestis*, Warminster.

Cornford, F. M. (1907) *Thucydides Mythistoricus*, London.

Craik, E. M. (1998) *Hippocrates: Places in Man*, Oxford.

Crawley, R. (1910) *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, London / Everyman's Library.

Cropp, M. J. (1997) "Notes on Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris*", *ICS* 22: 25-41.

Cropp, M. J. (1988) *Euripides: Electra*, Warminster.

Cropp, M. J. (2000) *Euripides: Iphigenia in Tauris*, Warminster.

Dale, A. M. (1967) *Euripides: Helen*, Oxford.

Davies, M. (1991) *Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, Vol. I, Oxford.

Davies, R. (1990) *The Manticore* (orig. publ. in 1972): *The Deptford Trilogy*, Penguin Books.

Davies, R. (1992) *The Cornish Trilogy*, Penguin Books.

Dietrich, B. C. (1965) *Death, Fate and the Gods*, London.

Diller, H. (1971) *Kleine Schriften zur antiken Literatur*, Munich.

Dodds, E. R. (1960)^2 *Euripides: Bacchae*, Oxford.

Dorn, T. (1960) *Die Tyche von Antiochia*, Berlin.

Dover, K. J. (1980) *Plato: Symposium*, Cambridge.

Dover, K. J. (1974) *Greek Popular Morality in the time of Plato and Aristotle*, Berkeley.

Drexler, H. (1943) "Zum Herakles des Euripides", *Nachrichten von der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 9 (Göttingen): 311-343.

Dunn, F. (1996) *Tragedy's End: Closure and Innovation in Euripidean Drama*, Oxford and New York.

Easterling, P. E. (1993) "Gods on stage in Greek Tragedy" in J. Dalfen, G. Petersmann and F. F. Schwarz (eds.), *Religio Graeco-Romana: Festschrift für W. Pötscher*, Grazer Beiträge, Suppl. 5 (Graz): 77-86.

Ebeling, H. (1885) *Lexicon Homericum*, Leipzig.

Edmunds, L. (1975) *Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides*, Cambridge, Mass.

Edmunds, L. (1985) *Oedipus: The Ancient Legend and its Later Analogues*, Baltimore.

Ehnmark, E. (1999) "The Gods and Fate", in I. J. F. de Jong (ed.) *Homer: Critical Assessments*, Vol. II, London and New York: 359-368 [originally part of E. Ehnmark, *The Idea of God in Homer* (Uppsala, 1935)].

Ellendt, F. (1965) *Lexicon Sophocleum*, Hildesheim.

England, E. B. (1921) *The Laws of Plato*, Vol. I, Manchester.

Erbse, H. (1986) *Untersuchungen zur Funktion der Götter im homerischen Epos*, Berlin and New York.

Evans, M. (1995) *Aischylos: The Oresteia*, London.

Ewans, M. (1996) "Patterns of tragedy in Sophocles and Shakespeare", in M. Silk (ed.) *Tragedy and the Tragic*, Oxford: 438-457.

Fontenrose, J. (1978) *The Delphic Oracle*, Berkeley.

Fraenkel, E. (1978) *Aeschylus: Agamemnon*, Vol. II, Oxford (reprinted with corrections).

Fränkel, H. (1946) "Man's 'ephemeros' nature according to Pindar and others", *TAPA* 77:131-145.

Fränkel, H. (1968)[3] *Wege und Formen frühgriechischen Denkens*, Munich.

Frede, D. (1992) "Necessity, Chance and 'What Happens for the Most Part'", in A. Rorty (ed.) *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, Princeton: 197-219.

Friedrich, W. H. (1953) *Euripides und Diphilos*, Munich.

Frisk, H. (1970) *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Vol.II, Heidelberg.

Fritz, K. von (1967) *Die griechische Geschichtsschreibung*, Berlin.

Furley, W. D. (1996) *Andokides and the Herms*, *BICS Suppl.* 65.

Gagarin, M. (1997) *Antiphon: The Speeches*, Cambridge.

Gagarin, M. and MacDowell, D. M. (1998) *Antiphon and Andocides*, Austin.

Gantz, T. (1993) *Early Greek Myth*, Baltimore.

Garvie, A. F. (1986) *Aeschylus: Choephori*, Oxford.

Gerber, D. E. (1999) *Greek Elegiac Poetry*, Cambridge, Mass.

Gerber, D. E. (1999) *Greek Iambic Poetry*, Cambridge, Mass.

Gibert, J. (1995) *Change of Mind in Greek Tragedy*, Hypomnemata 108, Göttingen.

Gomme, A.W. (1981) *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, Vol. III, Oxford.

Gomperz, Th. (1866) *Philodem über Frömmigkeit*, Herculanische Studien, zweites Heft, Leipzig.

Gould, J. (1989) *Herodotus*, London.

Goward, B. (1999) *Telling Tragedy: Narrative Technique in Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides*, London.

Greene, W. C. (1938) Review of G. Busch, *Untersuchungen zum Wesen der τύχη in den Tragödien des Euripides* (Heidelberg, 1937) in *AJP* 59: 364-367.

Greene, W. C. (1944) *MOIRA: Fate, Good, and Evil in Greek Thought*, Cambridge, Mass.

Griffin, J. (1980) *Homer on Life and Death*, Oxford.

Griffith, M. (1999) *Sophocles: Antigone*, Cambridge.

Halliwell, S. (1995) *Aristotle: Poetics*, Cambridge, Mass.

Halliwell, S. (July 1990) "Human limits and the religion of Greek Tragedy", *Literature and Theology* 4: 169-180.

Hamdorf, F. W. (1964) *Griechische Kultpersonifikationen der vorhellenistischen Zeit*, Meinz.

Hamilton, R. (1978) "Prologue, prophecy and plot in four plays of Euripides", *AJP* 99: 277-302.

Hammer, D. C. (1998) "The cultural construction of chance in the *Iliad*", *Arethusa* 31: 125-143.

Hammond, M. (1987) *Homer: The Iliad*, London.

Handley, E. W. (1965) *Menander: The Dyskolos*, London.

Hankinson, R. J. (1999) *Cause and Explanation in Greek Thought*, Oxford.

Hansen, P. A. (1983) *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca* Vol. I, Berlin and New York.

Hansen, P. A. (1989) *Carmina Epigraphica Graeca* Vol. II, Berlin.

Harrison, T. (2000) *Divinity and History*, Oxford.

Heath, M. (1987) *The Poetics of Greek Tragedy*, London.

Heinimann, F. (1945) *Nomos und Physis*, Basel.

Heinze, R. (1993) *Virgil's Epic Technique*, transl. by H. and D. Harvey and F. Robertson, Bristol.

Heitsch, E. (1996) *Geschichte und Situationen bei Thukydides*, Stuttgart und Leipzig.

Hellmann, F. (1934) *Herodots Kroisos-Logos*, Berlin.

Hense, O. (1912) *Ioannis Stobaei Anthologii* Vol.III, Berlin.

Herter, H. (1975) "Tyche", in *Kleine Schriften*, Munich, 76-90.

Hiller von Gaertringen, F. (1911) "Die Phylarchosinschrift von Tegea", *Mitteilungen des deutschen Instituts in Athen* 36: 349-360.

Humphreys, S. C. (1986) "Dynamics of the Greek breakthrough: the dialogue between philosophy and religion", in S. N. Eisenstadt (ed.) *The Origins and Diversity of Axial Age Civilisations*, New York: 92-110.

Hunter, R. L. (1985) *The New Comedy of Greece and Rome*, Cambridge.

Hutchinson, G. O. (1985) *Aeschylus: Seven against Thebes*, Oxford.

Huys, M. (1995) *The tale of the hero who was exposed at birth in Euripidean tragedy: a study of motifs*, Leuven.

Immerwahr, H. R. (1954) "Historical action in Herodotus", *TAPA* 85: 16-45.

Immerwahr, H. R. (1956) "Aspects of historical causation in Herodotus", *TAPA* 87: 41-80.

Immerwahr, H. R. (1966) *Form and Thought in Herodotus*, Cleveland.

Jacoby, F. (1959) *Diagoras ὁ Ἄθεος. Abhandlungen der deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Klasse für Sprachen, Literatur und Kunst* 3, Berlin.

Jaeger, W. (1945) *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* I, transl. by G. Highet, Oxford.

Janko, R. (1982) *Homer, Hesiod and the Hymns*, Cambridge.

Jebb, R. C. (1898) *Sophocles: The Play and Fragments, Part IV, The Philoctetes*, Cambridge.

Johansen, H. F. (1959) *General Reflection in Tragic Rhesis*, Copenhagen.

Joos, P. (1955) *ΤΥΧΗ, ΦΥΣΙΣ, ΤΕΧΝΗ. Studien zur Thematik frühgriechischer Lebensbetrachtung*, Zurich.

Jouanna, J. (1981) "Les causes de la défaite des Barbares chez Eschyle, Hérodote et Hippocrate", *Ktéma* 6: 3-15.

Kahn, C. H. (1979) *The art and thought of Heraclitus*, Cambridge.

Kannicht, R. (1969) *Euripides: Helen*, Band II, Heidelberg.

Kassel, R. (1958) *Untersuchungen zur griechischen und römischen Konsolations-Literatur*, Zetemata 18, Munich.

Kerscher, W. (1969) *Handlungsmotive Euripideischer Dramengestalten*, Munich.

Kershaw, S. P. (1987) *Personification in the Hellenistic World: Tyche, Kairos, Nemesis*, Ph.D. Bristol.

Kirk, G. S. (1979) *The Bacchae of Euripides*, Cambridge.

Kirkwood, G. M. (1975) "*Nemean* 7 and the theme of vicissitude in Pindar", in *Poetry and Poetics from Ancient Greece to the Renaissance*, Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 38, Ithaca: 56-90.

Kitto, H. D. F. (1966) *Poiesis*, Berkeley and Los Angeles.

Körte, G. (1879; published in 1880) "Eichelförmige Lekythos mit Goldschmuck", *AZ*: 93-96.

Kovacs, D. (1995) *Euripides II*, Cambridge, Mass.

Kovacs, D. (1998) *Euripides III*, Cambridge, Mass.

Krause, J. (1976) *Ἄλλοτε ἄλλος. Untersuchungen zum Motiv des Schicksals-wechsels in der griechischen Dichtung bis Euripides*, Munich.

Kurtz, E. (1985) *Die bildliche Ausdrucksweise in den Tragödien des Euripides*, Amsterdam.

Lehrs, H. (1856) *Populäre Aufsätze aus dem Alterthum*, Leipzig.

Leimbach, R. (1971) *Euripides Ion. Eine Interpretation*, diss. Frankfurt.

Lesky, A. (1956) *Die tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*, Göttingen.

Lesky, A. (1978) *Greek Tragedy*, transl. by H. A. Frankfort, London.

Lesky, A. (1983) *Greek Tragic Poetry*, transl. by M. Dillon, New Haven.

Lloyd, G. E. R. (1979) *Magic, Reason and Experience*, Cambridge.

Lloyd, M. (1986) "Divine and human action in Euripides' *Ion*", *A&A* 32: 33-45.

Lloyd-Jones, H. (1996) *Sophocles: Fragments*, Cambridge, Mass.

Ludwig, W. (1961) "Aulularia-Probleme", *Philologus* 105: 44-71.

Macleod, C. (1983) *Collected Essays*, Oxford.

Marincola, J. (1996) *Herodotus: The Histories*, Penguin Books.

Matthiessen, K. J. (1989-90) "Der *Ion* -- eine Komödie des Euripides?", *Sacris Erudiri* 31: 271-291.

McDonald, M. (1978) *Terms for Happiness in Euripides*, Hypomnemata 54, Göttingen.

Meiggs, R. and Lewis, D. (1988)[3] *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions*, Oxford.

Meuss, H. (1889) "Die Vorstellungen von Gottheit und Schicksal bei den attischen Rednern", *Jahrbücher für klassische Philologie* 139: 445-476.

Meuss, H. (1899) "Tyche bei den attischen Tragikern", *Programm Königliches Gymnasium zu Hirschberg*, 3-17.

Michelini, A. N. (1987) *Euripides and the tragic tradition*, Madison.

Mikalson, J. (1991) *Honor Thy Gods*, Chapel Hill.

Morwood, J. (1997) *Euripides: Medea, Hippolytos, Electra, Helen*, Oxford.

Mossman, J. (1995) *Wild Justice: A study of Euripides' Hecuba*, Oxford.

Müri, W. (1968) "Beitrag zum Verständnis des Thukydides" in H. Herter (ed.) *Thukydides*, Wege der Forschung xcviii, Darmstadt: 135-70 = *Museum Helveticum* 4 (1947) 251-75.

Nesselrath, H.-G. (1992) *Ungeschehenes Geschehen,* Stuttgart.

Nestle, W. (1938) "Hippocratica", *Hermes* 73:1-38.

Nilsson, M. P. (1925) *A History of Greek Religion*, Oxford.

Nilsson, M. P. (1949) *A History of Greek Religion*, tr. F. J. Fielden, Oxford.

Nilsson, M. P. (1955) *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* I, Munich.

Nilsson, M. P. (1961)^2 *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* II, Munich.

Nisetich, F. J. (1977) "The leaves of triumph and mortality: Transformation of a traditional image in Pindar's *Olympian* 12", *TAPA* 107: 235-264.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2001)^2 *The fragility of goodness. Luck and ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*, Cambridge.

Obbink, D. (1996) *Philodemus On Piety*, Oxford.

Osborne, M. J. and Byrne, S. G. (eds.) (1994) *A Lexicon of Greek Proper Names*, Vol. II, Oxford.

Osborne, R. (1996) *Greece in the Making 1200-479 BC*, London and New York.

Ostwald, M. (1988) *ΑΝΑΓΚΗ in Thucydides*, Atlanta.

Owen, A. S. (1939) *Euripides: Ion*, Oxford.

Page, D. L. (1981) *Further Greek Epigrams*, Cambridge.

Palagia, O. (1994) "No Demokratia" in *The Archaeology of Athens and Attica under the Democracy*, W. D. E. Coulson, O. Palagia, T. L. Shear Jr., H. A. Shapiro and F. J. Frost (eds.), Oxford: 113-122.

Parker, R. (1983) *Miasma*, Oxford.

Parker, R. (1996) *Athenian Religion: A History*, Oxford.

Parry, A. M. (1989) *The Language of Achilles and other papers*, Oxford.

Pearson, A. C. (1917) *The Fragmentary Plays of Sophocles*, Vol. III, Cambridge.

Peek, W. (1955) *Griechische Vers-Inschriften*, Vol.I, Berlin.

Peek, W. (1960) *Griechische Grabgedichte*, Berlin.

Pelling, C. (1991) "Thucydides' Archidamus and Herodotus' Artabanus", in *Georgica: Studies in Honour of G. L. Cawkwell*, M. A. Flower and M. Toher (eds.) *BICS* Supplement 58: 120-42.

Pelling, C. (1996) "The urine and the vine: Astyages' dreams at Herodotus 1.107-8", *CQ* 46: 68-77.

Pelling, C. (April 2000) "Herodotus and Croesus", unpublished talk given at the National Humanities Center, North Carolina.

Platnauer, M. (1938) *Euripides: Iphigenia in Tauris*, Oxford.

Pohlenz, M. (1937) *Herodot, der erste Geschichtsschreiber des Abendlandes*, Leipzig and Berlin.

Pokorny, J. (1959) *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Bern.

Pollitt, J. J. (1994) "An Obsession with Fortune" in S. B. Matheson (ed.), *An Obsession with Fortune: Tyche in Greek and Roman Art, Yale University Art Gallery Bulletin*, Princeton: 13-17.

Pötscher, W. (1958) "Götter und Gottheit bei Herodot", *WS* 71: 5-29.

Pounder, R. L. (1975) *The Origin and Meaning of ΘΕΟΙ in Greek Inscription Headings*, Ph.D. diss. Brown University.

Pucci, P. (1992) *Oedipus and the Fabrication of the Father*, Baltimore.

Race, W. H. (1997) *Pindar* I, Cambridge, Mass.

Race, W. H. (1997) *Pindar* II, Cambridge, Mass.

Rawlinson, G. (1997) *Herodotus. The Histories*, with an introduction by R. Thomas, London / Everyman's Library.

Regenbogen, O. (1930) "Die Geschichte von Solon und Krösus", *Gymnasium* 41:1-20, reprinted in W. Marg, (ed.), *Herodot*, Wege der Forschung 26 (Darmstadt, 1965): 383-388.

Reinhardt, K. (1949) *Aischylos als Regisseur und Theologe*, Bern.

Richardson, N. J. (1974) *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Oxford.

Rivier, A. (1975)^2 *Essai sur le tragique d' Euripide*, Lausanne.

Romilly, J. de (1968) *Time in Greek Tragedy*, Cornell.

Romilly, J. de (1980) "Le refus du suicide dans l'Héraclès d' Euripide", *ΑΡΧΑΙΟΓΝΩΣΙΑ* 1: 1-10.

Romilly, J. de (1986) *La Modernité d' Euripide*, Paris.

Rood, T. (1998) *Thucydides: Narrative and Explanation*, Oxford.

Rosado Fernandes, R. M. (1961-3) "A propósito de um verso do hino a *Τύχη* (v.5, Frag. Adesp. 101 Page) ", *Boletim de Filologia* XX-XXI: 207-11.

Russell, D. A. and Wilson, N. G. (1981) *Menander Rhetor*, Oxford.

Russo, J., Fernandez-Galiano, M., Heubeck, A. (1992) *Homer's Odyssey*, Vol. III, Oxford.

Ryffel, H. (1949) *ΜΕΤΑΒΟΛΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΩΝ. Der Wandel der Staatsverfassungen*, Bern.

Sandbach, F. H. (1973) *Menander: A Commentary*, Oxford.

Schlesier, R. (1983) "Daimon und Daimones bei Euripides", *Saeculum* 34: 267-279.

Schmid, W. – Stählin, O. (1934) *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, I.2, Munich.

Schneider, C. (1974) *Information und Absicht bei Thukydides. Untersuchung zur Motivation des Handelns*, Hypomnemata 41, Göttingen.

Schneweiss, G. (1975) "Kroisos und Solon. Die Frage nach dem Glück" in A. Patzer (ed.) *Apophoreta* für U. Hölscher, Bonn: 161-187.

Schreckenberg, H. (1964) *Ananke. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Wortsgebrauchs*, Munich.

Schwarz, E. (1891) *Scholia in Euripidem*, Vol. II, Berlin.

Scullion, S. "'Saviours of the father's hearth': Olympian and Chthonian in the *Oresteia*", forthcoming in Robin Hägg, (ed.), *Greek Sacrificial Ritual, Olympian and Chthonian. Proceedings of the Sixth International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult* (Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Institutet I Athen, Paul Åströms Förlag, Stockholm).

Seaford, R. (1996) *Euripides: Bacchae*, Warminster.

Shapiro, H. A. (1986) "The origins of Allegory in Greek Art", *Boreas* 9: 4-23.

Shapiro, H. A. (1993) *Personifications in Greek Art*, Zurich.

Shapiro, S. O. (1996) "Herodotus and Solon", *CA* 15: 348-364.

Sharples, R. W. (1991) *Cicero: On Fate and Boethius: The Consolation of Philosophy IV.5-7,V* , Warminster.

Silk, M. S. (1985) "Heracles and Greek tragedy", *Greece and Rome*, 32: 1-22.

Solmsen, F. (1932) "Zur Gestaltung des Intriguenmotivs in den Tragödien des Sophokles und Euripides", *Philologus* 87: 1-17.

Solmsen, F. (1934) "Euripides' Ion im Vergleich mit anderen Tragödien", *Hermes* 69: 390-419.

Sommerstein, A. H. (1985) *Aristophanes: Peace*, Warminster.

Sorabji, R. (1980) *Necessity, Cause and Blame*, London.

Spira, A. (1960) *Untersuchungen zum Deus ex machina bei Sophocles und Euripides*, Kallmünz.

Spira, A. (1984) " 'Stabilität' und 'Instabilität' in der Ethik der Griechen", *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 36: 115-130.

Spratt, A. W. (1905) *Thucydides: Book III*, Cambridge.

Stafford, E. (2000) *Worshipping Virtues: Personification and the Divine in Ancient Greece*, London and Swansea.

Stahl, H.-P. (1966) *Thukydides: Die Stellung des Menschen im geschichtlichen Prozess*, Zetemata 40, Munich.

Stahl, H.-P. (1975) "Learning through suffering? Croesus' conversations in the history of Herodotus", *YCS* 24: 1-36.

Stahl, H.-P. (1977) "On extra-dramatic communication of characters in Euripides", *YCS* 25: 159-176.

Stein, H. (1881-96) *Herodotos*, Berlin.

Stevens, P. T. (1971) *Euripides: Andromache*, Oxford.

Strasburger, H. (1972) *Homer und die Geschichtsschreibung*, Heidelberg.

Strohm, H. (1944) *TYCHE. Zur Schicksalsauffassung bei Pindar und den frühgriechischen Dichtern*, Stuttgart.

Strohm, H. (1968) "Trug und Täuschung in der euripideischen Dramatik", in E.-R. Schwinge (ed.), *Euripides*, Wege der Forschung LXXXIX, Darmstadt: 345-372.

Swain, S. (1989) "Plutarch: Chance, Providence, and History", *AJP* 110: 272-302.

Taylor, C. C. W. (1999) *The Atomists: Leucippus and Democritus*, Toronto.

Thomas, R. (2000) *Herodotus in Context. Ethnography, Science and the Art of Persuasion*, Cambridge.

Thummer, E. (1957) *Die Religiosität Pindars*, Innsbruck.

Tod, M. N. (1946) *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions* II, Oxford.

Tracy, S. V. (1994) "*IG* II^2 1195 and Agathe Tyche in Attica", *Hesperia* 63: 241-4.

Trédé, M. (1992) *Kairos: l'àpropos et l'occasion*, Paris.

Trevor-Roper, H. R. (1980) *History and Imagination*, Oxford.

Ubsdell, S. (1982) *Herodotus on human nature*, Oxford D.Phil.

Usener, H. (1895) *Götternamen*, Bonn.

Valakas, K. (1993) "*Όνειρο και τραγωδία. Το πρόβλημα των προρρήσεων στην Ιφιγένεια εν Ταύροις του Ευριπίδη*", *Ariadne* 6: 109-39 [in Modern Greek with a summary in English (266-7)].

Valk, M. van der (1979) *Eustathii Commentarii ad Homeri Iliadem Pertinentes* Vol. III, Leiden.

Verdenius, W. J. (1987) *Commentaries on Pindar* I, Leiden.

Vickers, B. (1979) *Towards Greek Tragedy*, London and New York.

Vogt-Spira, G. (1992) *Dramaturgie des Zufalls. Tyche und Handeln in der Komödie Menanders*, Zetemata 88, Munich.

Vogt-Spira, G. (2001) "Euripides und Menander", *Drama* 10: 197-222.

Wachsmuth, C. (1884) *Ioannis Stobaei Anthologii*, Berlin.

Webster, T. B. L. (1954) "Personification as a mode of Greek thought", *JWCI* 17: 10-21.

Webster, T. B. L. (1960) *Studies in Menander*, Manchester.

Webster, T. B. L. (1967) *The Tragedies of Euripides*, London.

Wees, H. J. van (1999) "Introduction: Homer and Early Greece", in I. J. F. de Jong (ed.), *Homer: Critical Assessments*, Vol. II, London and New York: 1-32.

Wehrli, F. (1931) *ΛΑΘΕ ΒΙΩΣΑΣ. Studien zur ältesten Ethik bei den Griechen*, Leipzig and Berlin.

Wehrli, F. (1968) *Demetrios von Phaleron*, Basel.

Wendel, C. (1914) *Scholia in Theocritum vetera*, Leipzig.

West, M. L. (1966) *Hesiod: Theogony*, Oxford.

West, M. L. (1989) *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, Oxford.

West, M. L. (1998)^2 *Aeschylus Tragoediae*, Stuttgart and Leipzig.

Whitman, C. W. (1974) *Euripides and the Full Circle of Myth*, Cambridge, Mass.

Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, U. von (1895) *Euripides: Herakles*, Vols. I and II, Berlin.

Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, U. von (1922) *Pindaros*, Berlin.

Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, U. von (1926) *Euripides: Ion*, Berlin.

Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, U. von (1929) "Lesefrüchte", *Hermes* 64: 458-490.

Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, U. von (1931) *Der Glaube der Hellenen* I, Berlin.

Willink, C. W. (1989) "The Reunion Duo in Euripides' *Helen*", *CQ* 39: 45-69.

Winnington-Ingram, R. P. (1960) "Hippolytus: A Study of Causation", in J. C. Kamerbeek (et al.) *Euripide*, Entretiens sur l' antiquité classique VI, Geneva: 170-191.

Winnington-Ingram, R. P. (1997)[2] *Euripides and Dionysus*, Bristol.

Yoshitake, S. (1994) "Disgrace, Grief, and Other Ills: Heracles' Rejection of Suicide", *JHS* 114: 135-153.

Yunis, H. (1988) *A New Creed: Fundamental Religious Beliefs in the Athenian Polis and Euripidean Drama*, Hypomnemata 91, Göttingen.

Yunis, H. (2001) *Demosthenes: On the Crown*, Cambridge.

Zacharia, K. (1995) "The Marriage of Tragedy and Comedy in Euripides' *Ion*", in S. Jäkel and A. Timonen (eds.), *Laughter Down the Centuries* II, Annales Universitatis Turkuensis 213, Turku: 45-63.

Zacharia, K. (1997) *A Thematic Commenatry on Euripides' Ion*, Diss. University College London.

Zagagi, N. (1994) *The Comedy of Menander*, London.

Zimmerman, A. (1966) *Tyche bei Platon*, unpub. diss., Bonn.

Zürcher, W. (1947) *Die Darstellung des Menschen im Drama des Euripides*, Basel.