

Zitierhinweis

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## Regina M. Loehr: Emotion and Historiography in Polybius<sup>00</sup> "Histories"<sup>92</sup>

In Polybian studies, Frank W. Walbank's name is formidable, and it is likely that he will indefinitely remain the greatest Polybian scholar of the modern period. Walbank began an incredible career as a publishing scholar in 1933 with his *Aratos of Sicyon*, and his final book was a collection of essays titled *Polybius, Rome and the Hellenistic World*, published in 2002. In between, a period spanning almost seventy years, he produced a regular stream of seminal essays on Polybius, but his most significant contribution was the monumental *Historical Commentary on Polybius* in three volumes (1957, 1967, and 1979).

For Walbank, Polybius was a hard-headed Machiavellian pragmatist, a rather unappealing figure without any real moral compass, a man of affairs who was not particularly sophisticated, either as a writer or as a thinker. But since Walbank's final publications, there has been a shift away from this picture of the Achaean historian. Arthur M. Eckstein's *Moral Vision in the Histories of Polybius* (1995) had already adumbrated post-Walbank Polybian revisionism. Eckstein convincingly demonstrated that Polybius strongly adhered to a politically conservative, traditional aristocratic ethos, in which practical success mattered, but much less so than honor, self-mastery, and bravery in existential crises. In the early twenty-first century, other studies have explored focalization in Polybius, chance and the unexpected (going far beyond Walbank's understanding of Polybius' *tychē*), Polybius' conception of reading history as direct experience, or *empeireia*, truth and rhetoric in Polybius, and Polybius' cultural politics. Over the last two-and-a-half decades, therefore, scholars have uncovered Polybius as an historian of much greater complexity, nuance, and historiographical innovation than Walbank allowed.

Regina M. Loehr's new book on emotion in Polybius takes its place in this revisionist vein of Polybian scholarship. She challenges a simple evaluative dichotomy of reason ( *logismos* for Polybius), which is the province of human beings realizing their greatest potential, and the various emotions, which are inferior and must be subordinated to rationality in human affairs. This evaluative polarity is a commonplace in Greek and Roman writers: Sallust expounds upon it in the opening of his *Bellum Catilinae*, and among Greek writers Aristotle showcases it in Book 1 of his *Politics*. This discursive formation lent itself to rebarbative constructs, such as the inferiority of women, ethnic groups, and slaves. Loehr convincingly argues that all is not so straightforward in Polybian historiography, and that for Polybius, emotions have an important positive role to play in human psychology and behavior.

The book consists of an Introduction ("Effective Emotion in Historiography", 8-15), followed by five chapters: 1. "Fundamentals of Emotion: Social Science, History, and Human Behavior", 16-44; 2. "Individual Emotions in Context: Polybius, Aristotle, and the Classical

Historians", 45-103; 3. "Internal State Change: The People's Moral Emotions", 104-51; 4. "Emotions at War: Causal Anger and Justifying War" 152-96; 5. "Learning From History: Audience-Based Emotion and Conclusions", 197-221.

Loehr convincingly demonstrates that emotions are not categorically negative in Polybius' thinking. There is, across the board, something like "moral emotion" in the *Histories*, somewhat analogous to righteous and measured anger in Aristotle's thought (and in popular culture, to the notion of "emotional intelligence"). Moreover, Loehr argues that emotions work in tandem with reasoning in political communities, exercising normative pressure that may well lead to salutary benefits for the commonwealth. In this, she takes issue with Eckstein ( *Moral Vision*, 1995: 131), who saw all emotion in Polybius as disruptive: "Polybius did not view rationality as the normal basis of mass behavior. Instead, uncontrolled emotion was for him the most prevalent - and dangerous - characteristic of the masses and their conduct." In fairness to Eckstein, he does preface this statement with a qualifier: "It is true that [Polybius'] picture is not simplistic; for instance, occasionally in *The Histories* the masses behave rationally, or are persuaded to right action by rational arguments."

Loehr has performed a great service to Polybian scholars by examining such occasions, in the process showing a link, rather than rupture, between emotion and *logismos* in Polybius (104-151). She calls attention to anger ( *orgē* ) in Polybius' history, arguing that it plays a more complex role in causation than scholars have allowed. Focusing on the first two revolutionary movements in Polybius' *anacyclosis* theory in Book 6, she shows that in expressing anger, an "emotion of disapproval", the people initiate a turn for the better in overthrowing the perverted simple constitutional forms of tyranny and oligarchy. These popular reactions are often violent, but they "represent the people's moral disapproval of the transgressors' behaviours according to their communal values, which reinforce their sense of communal identity." (133).

Loehr gives scant attention, about a page-and-a-half (70-72), to the emotion of fear in Polybius. This is regrettable, as it seems to me that it is the crucible for the study of emotion in Polybius. My reasoning for this critique is that, in Polybius' eyes, the emotions, and especially fear, should be grounded in the insecure and brutal realities of the interstate anarchy in which he lived and in which his history was produced. Since Loehr's analysis is almost wholly based on close textual analysis, this sort of blind spot is inevitable in her study. In simplest terms, there was a great deal to arouse the emotions, and a great deal to fear, in Polybius' world.

Consequently, the aristocratic leader for Polybius must master emotions to deal with many threatening forces of an uncertain geopolitical reality presenting dangers on every side. A good illustration of this awareness in Polybius' text is 2.35, the summation of his account of Romano-Gallic wars. It is here that Eckstein's idea of concentric circles of threats to the social order still has much to commend it ( *Moral Vision*, 1995, 118-60). That said, it is possible that Neorealist theory, with Kenneth Waltz as its most renowned spokesman, was already in Eckstein's mind when he came

up with his stark separation of reason and emotion in Polybius' historiography. And I must confess to contributing to this representation of such strong polarity in Polybius' thought in my 2004 study, *Cultural Politics in Polybius Histories*. Loehr now gives us a corrective, demonstrating that the emotions play a more important, and positive, role in Polybius' conceptions than we had allowed.

These positions - Eckstein's brutal ancient Mediterranean interstate anarchy and Loehr's appreciation of the crucial importance of emotion in Polybius as a galvanizing force for societal good, are not mutually exclusive. We should rather see them as complementary, allowing for a realistic, but more nuanced, interpretation of how Polybius saw his world. Steeped in psychological studies and well versed in the literature on emotions in historiography, Loehr has produced a fine study that will complement, with a focus on the Achaean historian, the set of questions raised by the collection of essays edited by D. Cairns and L. Fulkerson, *Emotions between Greece and Rome* (2015). Her study is also an indispensable addition to the revisionist strain in early twenty-first century, post-Walbank Polybian studies.