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TYXA AT THE ORACLE OF ZEUS, DODONA

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ΤΥΧΑ AT THE ORACLE OF ZEUS, DODONA*

1. The Question of ‘Good Luck’ in Oracular Consultations

I start with a phrase of farewell in a passage from *Medea* by Euripides (663–688). Aigeus and Medea are discussing the oracle that Aigeus has received from Delphi concerning his desire for children; he has been instructed not to loose the ‘bulging mouth of the wineskin until he reaches the height of Athens’. In stories reported by the later sources Plutarch (*Theseus* 3 and 6) and Apollodoros (3.15.6), we are told how the breaking of the oracle’s mandate not to have children until he reaches home results in Aigeus begetting Theseus in Troizen. It has been suggested that Euripides invented the oracle, but this seems unlikely, since an earlier epic version seems to have informed Plutarch’s account.¹

As Medea and Aigeus talk, their conversation draws to the audience’s attention the difficulties that emerge from an oracular consultation concerning the nature of the information about the future that an oracle provides and the challenges of trying to use this information for one’s advantage. The need for wisdom is mentioned several times: for example, Aigeus explains that the oracle’s words are (675) ‘too wise to interpret’, and that they require (677) ‘a wise mind’;² and that he is going to visit Pittheus, whom Medea notes (686) ‘is wise and experienced in such matters as interpreting the god’s response’.³

Modern commentary on this passage has focused on examining two key questions. First, the dramaturgical problems of Aigeus’ presence in Corinth; and second, the nature of the oracle he has been given and how this plays out.⁴ In contrast, I want to draw attention to Medea’s final words to Aigeus, when she bids him (688): ἀλλ’ εὐτυχοῖς καὶ τύχοις ὅσων ἐρῶς. This can be translated as ‘Well, good luck attend you, and may you obtain what you desire.’⁵ In what follows I want to explain why I think this phrase is particularly appropriate for Aigeus’ situation.

At first sight, it may appear perverse of Medea to utter this phrase: scholars have generally understood ancient Greek oracles as providing some kind of helpful insight into what was fated to occur, enabling those who used them to take appropriate decisions. As Walter Burkert observes, ‘divination is an attempt to extend the realm of ratio ... into the misty zones from which normal knowledge and experience is absent’.⁶ But the interchange between Medea and Aigeus intimates that the process of employing the insight apparently gained from an oracular response may have been more complicated. Specifically, although this is a literary example, evoking a mythical event, it prompts us to ask how those who actually consulted oracles regarded the role of luck (both good and bad) in the events about which they had asked.

One way to explore this question is to examine evidence for attitudes to luck in historical oracular consultations. In this article, I will do this by analysing formulations employing τύχα in the texts of the (published) questions posed at the oracle of Zeus at Dodona. This analysis leads to the suggestion that the role of luck was not understood to be dispelled through processes of divination; rather, by including τύχα in a variety of different ways in their questions to the oracle, consultants demonstrated their recognition of its active role in their activities.⁷

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¹ Kovacs 1994, ad loc. cf. Burian and Shapiro 2011: 213.

² 675: σοφώτερ’ ἢ κατ’ ἄνδρα συμβαλεῖν ἔπη and 677: μάλιστ’, ἐπεὶ τοι καὶ σοφῆς δεῖται φρονός.

³ 686: σοφός γὰρ ἀνήρ καὶ τρίβων τὰ τοιάδε.

⁴ See for example Mastrorarde 2002 and Mossman 2011, ad loc.

⁵ Kovacs 1994.

⁶ See Burkert 2005: 3.

⁷ In the part of this paper that focuses on the analysis of the Dodona tablets I mainly use the Doric spelling of *tychē* since it predominates in the relevant texts; throughout the rest of this paper, and, where relevant, to discuss specific inscriptions, I will use its more familiar Attic spelling.

While focusing on the term *τύχα* in the question tablets offers a way to identify the presence of luck, it also introduces some complications to this analysis, since *τύχη* had a broad semantic range. Although, over time, *τύχη* came to be anthropomorphized as a goddess, it is often unclear whether ancient sources are using the word to indicate the divinity or one of a range of related meanings, e.g., the result of an event, coincidence, good or bad fortune, or success.⁸ In texts, both literary and epigraphic, the addition of prefixes or adjectives may signal a particular quality of *τύχη*. One example, *ἀγαθὰ τύχη*, was perhaps originally created as a propitiatory title, intended to elicit good luck: in this case, the result became a goddess distinct from the goddess *Τύχη*, although it is hard to separate the two entirely.⁹ Indeed, as a goddess, *Τύχη* came to represent the (good) luck of different cities; and she could also appear in combination with other female figures, both mortal and divine, who had the power to grant prosperity.¹⁰ In this role, the concept of *τύχη* maintains its link with ideas of contingency; but at the same time *τύχη* could also evoke a sense of fate. This ambiguity can be observed in the use of the word to describe the occurrence of an event to a person or city: it communicates not only the particular coincidence of that event, but could also intimate the underlying, formative character of the person or city, which caused that event to occur.¹¹ In visual and literary sources *Τύχη* was associated with other abstract personifications that expressed these ideas: on the one hand, the fragility of luck in the form of *Καῖρός*, the moment of opportunity; and, on the other, the inescapable power of retribution, in the form of *Νέμεσις*.¹²

In sum, the word *τύχη* could indicate a goddess, or an abstract force, personified or not. It could be used to mean, on the one hand, the desire for divine benevolence, and, on the other, notions of allotted fate; but it also conveyed a sense of profound ontological and epistemological uncertainty. This range of possible meanings is, as I will show, also found across the relevant texts of the published corpus of Dodona question tablets. In what follows, I examine all the examples of all forms of *τύχα* available in the texts published by Dakaris, Vokotopoulou and Christidis 2013 (DVC). These are then listed in an appendix, arranged according to the article's sections. I refer to these texts, in the article and appendix, by their DVC catalogue numbers, but without the prefix 'DVC'. Additional relevant texts, not listed by DVC, are taken from (and listed according to) the catalogue of Lhôte 2006; these are also included in the appendix.¹³

2. Invoking Luck and Good Luck

The syntactic pattern of *ἀγαθὰ τύχα* or *τύχα* alongside *θεός* or *θεοί* appears frequently in a number of the tablets. This kind of invocation is familiar, for example, from Athenian civic inscriptions: Tracy argued that the frequent occurrence of the phrase in Attic inscriptions, the appearance of *ἀγαθὴ τύχη* in the two dedications *IG II² 4564* and *4610* (both by wealthy individuals), and her juxtaposition to major gods, sug-

⁸ See Hamdorf 1964: 97–100. The development of *τύχη* from nymph to goddess and the use of the term by different Greek writers to explore ideas of fate and contingency is examined in Eidinow 2011.

⁹ Parker 2003: 180 for propitiatory epithets and 175 for discussion of how different epithets used of the same god appear to have signalled 'different gods'. On *ἀγαθὰ τύχη* see Sfameni Gasparro 1997: 89 for epigraphic evidence. Parker 1996: 231, n. 49 for *ἀγαθὰ τύχη* in Athens: *IG II² 1195*; *IG II² 4564*, and Athens, NM 1343: standing female figure, holding a cornucopia, labelled [ΑΓΑ]ΘΗ [ΤΥ]ΧΗ, on a votive relief (*IG II², 4644*), c. 380–370.

¹⁰ On the *τύχαι* of cities, see esp. Broucke 1994.

¹¹ See, for example, the debate about Demosthenes' *τύχη* in Demosthenes 18.252–275, replying to Aeschines 3, esp. 157 (discussion Eidinow 2011: 144–150).

¹² She is closely associated with *Kairos* in literary sources, e.g., Pl. *Laws* 709b, and found with *Nemesis* on the name-vase of the Heimarmene painter; *LIMC* s.v. *Nemesis*, p. 735. (A clear association has been formed between *Τύχη* and *Nemesis* by the Imperial period [see discussion Hornum 1993: 20, n. 2], but may date to the Hellenistic period or earlier, see for example, *IG IV², 1, 311* from Epidauros, dating to the 5th–4th century BCE.)

¹³ As Lhôte 2014 has noted, DVC has neither the documents known before 1928, including those published by Carapanos, nor those that were discovered after 1959 during excavations by Dakaris. It is important to underline that this article does not set out to offer new readings of any texts, since this is already being done by an international team, led by Pierre Bonnechere, with the eventual aim of making them all available online. It is possible that the details of some of the texts used in this paper will be altered during that project. Nevertheless, I hope that the questions that this paper raises, about the presence and role of *τύχα* in the process of oracular consultation and the formulation of inquiries, will remain relevant.

gests that ‘her worship was securely established’.¹⁴ It seems plausible to take the references to ἀγαθὰ τύχα and to τύχα in the Dodona texts in the same way. Their appearance in these texts might then be explained as simply recalling a common epigraphic habit among the writers, one that was felt to lend their questions the gravity of a civic inscription. However, it is also possible that the invocation of ἀγαθὰ τύχα or τύχα in these texts indicated more than this, and that consultants were referring to either the perceived but invisible presence of these goddesses, or perhaps even their material presence, as evidence relating to other oracular sanctuaries suggests. For example, Simplicios, in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Physics*, reports that Τύχη and Apollo (referred to as Loxias) were both invoked at Delphi: ἐν Δελφοῖς δὲ καὶ προκατήρχεν ἐν ταῖς ἐρωτήσεσιν ὧ Τύχη καὶ Λοξία, τῷδέ τι τι θεμιστεύεις;’ (‘at Delphi the pre-ambles to the inquiry was “O Luck and Apollo, will you answer this request?”’).¹⁵ Granted, Simplicios was writing in the sixth century CE; nevertheless, it is intriguing that what he describes as a common invocation at Delphi should be (as we will see) so similar to certain of the formulae found in the Dodona question texts.

There is no material evidence for a cult of Τύχη at Delphi, although it has, famously, been argued that there was a lot oracle at Delphi, and a dice oracle in the Korykian cave above Delphi, both of which were activities that could be more obviously associated with Τύχη.¹⁶ However, archaeological evidence indicates the material presence of Τύχη at other oracular sanctuaries. For example, at the oracle of Asklepios, in Pergamon, the *Lex Sacra* specifies the procedures that must take place before incubation.¹⁷ The evening before, the final offerings made are to Τύχη, Μνημοσύνη and Θέμις (ll. 9–11 and 26–29): cakes to Τύχη and Μνημοσύνη outside the chamber and a cake to Θέμις within the chamber. Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis has suggested that ‘pilgrims propitiated Tyche in the hope that she would grant them contact with Asklepios – a favour not granted to all incubants’, drawing a parallel with the procedures at Trophonios’ oracle at Lebadeia, where the consultant would stay in a house sacred to Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων and Ἀγοθὴ Τύχη.¹⁸ It is a coherent explanation of the ritual, suggesting that Τύχη was perceived as playing the role of a divine ‘gatekeeper’, mediating access between consultant and oracular god.¹⁹ But it is also possible that this role went beyond mediation, and that, as with the Delphian invocation, these ritual activities indicate that luck, personified in the form of Τύχη, was understood to be a significant force in the process of oracular inquiry itself.

Evidence for a cult of Τύχη is also found at the oracular sanctuary of Apollo at Didyma. For example, the following inscription, dating to the third century CE, records a question posed by one official, Hermias, concerning the inclusion of ‘the’ altar of Τύχη in the altar circle:

Ταμίας Ἑρμίας ἐρωτᾷ: / Ἐπεὶ ὁ τῆς Τύχης βωμὸς / τῆς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ σου συν/κέκλειται ἐν
τῷ λεγομέ//νῳ παραδείσῳ περιτοικο/δομημένων αὐτῷ οἰκιῶν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πολ/λοῖς οὐ
θεωρεῖται, πότε/ρον λῶν καὶ ἄμεινον // τῇ τε θεῷ προσφιλες με/τὰ τῶν λοιπῶν θεῶν καὶ /
τοῦτον τὸν βωμὸν πε/ριβωμίζεσθαι ἢ μή; Ὁ θεὸς ἔχρησεν·

// Πάντας χρῆ τιμᾶν μά/καρας πάντας τε σέβεσ/θαι

Comptroller Hermias asks ‘Since the altar of Τύχη in your sanctuary is enclosed in the so-called *paradeisos*, where houses have been built around it, and on that account many people do not see it, is it better and preferable and pleasing to the goddess that this altar also be placed in the altar circle with the other gods or is it not?’

Response: ‘You must honour all blessed deities and reverence all.’

¹⁴ Tracy 1994: 244.

¹⁵ Simplicios, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics* 2. 4.75 [Arist. p. 196 b 5.10] = 9.333.15 Diels (trans. Fleet 2014).

¹⁶ Amandry 1950: 29–36, 84–85, 232–233.

¹⁷ Wörrle 1969.

¹⁸ Petsalis-Diomidis 2010: 231. Lebadeia: Paus. 9.39.5.

¹⁹ Petsalis-Diomidis also draws a parallel between the drinking of the water of Λήθη and Μνημοσύνη at Lebadeia, and the propitiation of Μνημοσύνη at Pergamon: both seem to refer to the visitor’s desire to be able to recollect what they experienced after the event.

The inscription makes reference to an existing altar of Τύχη (ὁ τῆς Τύχης βωμὸς / ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ σου), which presumably received such dedications.²⁰ And Fontenrose has suggested that this initial altar of Τύχη is referred to, as an altar of Ἀγαθὴ Τύχη, in the Seleukid letter of 288/287 sent to the demos and council of Miletos, and describing offerings made to the gods of the sanctuary of Apollo in Didyma.²¹

With these comparisons in mind, it is worth noting that among the texts from Dodona are a number that include ἀγαθὰ τύχα or τύχα ἀγαθὰ (see App. 1a) alongside the gods; but also texts that invoke only ἀγαθὰ τύχα or τύχα ἀγαθὰ (App. 1b); and there are also texts that appear to address τύχα alone (App. 2), including some that comprise only the word τύχα (e.g. 2936B and Lhôte 33B), which could be either a request for good luck or a laconic invocation. The relationship between ἀγαθὰ τύχα and τύχα in these texts remains puzzling: for example, are the texts that invoke θεὸς τύχα (App. 1c) doing so in order to invoke τύχα as a divinity, or to supplicate god and luck, or are they appealing to god to grant them good luck?

A number of texts (App. 2: 2440, 2936B, and 3276B) suggest that τύχα on her own could be invoked. That she is different from ἀγαθὰ τύχα seems implied by a text such as 2093A (App. 3) in which ἀγαθὰ τύχα occurs alongside θεός at the opening of the question but τύχα in the dative case appears alongside Zeus Naios and Dione, among the list of divinities to whom the consultant's question is addressed; this same trio of gods is also invoked in 80A. In Lhôte 141Ba, the goddess appears alongside a different set of supernatural entities – Herakles, Erechtheus, and Athena Patroa – as the recipient of a libation (this ritual may be the subject of the question, but this is not clear from the text). Taking the example from Didyma discussed above as a parallel, these latter texts could potentially indicate the perceived presence, or even a material presence, of τύχα or ἀγαθὰ τύχα in the sanctuary of Dodona.

It is unclear at what stage in the consultation process these texts were inscribed, or by whom, so it is difficult to draw any conclusions about what they may reveal about the state of mind of the individual consultant. However, it is worth noting that the placing of the invocation in the text could vary: as an example, restoration of ll. 1–2 of Lhôte 92A (App. 1d), means that TY followed by A is to be read τύ(χα) ἄ-/[γαθὰ]. That this phrase occurs not at the beginning of the text, but after the (restored) name and verb of inquiry, suggests a less formulaic and, for that reason, more personal approach to the creation of the question itself. Moreover, there is also evidence that some consultants sought to personalise the opening formula: for example, in text Lhôte 22A (App. 4), the apparently formulaic listing of Θεός. Τύχαν ἀγαθάν is followed by the name of the oracle consultant Ἀντιμάχῳ; the name is then repeated in the following line at the beginning of the main question, ἐπερωτᾷ Ἀντιμάχος. This brings us to texts that do not (or not only) invoke τύχα, but also request it/her.

3. Requests for Luck

The invocation in Lhôte 22A appears, in part, to resemble an appeal to a personal good luck; it may also be a request *for* good luck. Another text, 2510 (this and the other texts in this section are in App. 4), conveys this idea more clearly, including both an invocation for good luck and a request that it be granted to the consultant, alongside health and safety, among other benefits. A bolder request is found in 3453B: a request for the very best luck. Finally, in texts 95A, 2482B, and 2982A, the phrase is formulated in the dative (ἀγαθεῖ τύχει, τύχαι ἀγαθαῖ and ἐπ' ἀγαθαῖ(ι) τύχα[ι]), respectively. In the former two examples, the dative appears to mean either with or for good luck. In 95A, the text is relatively clear: the reference to ἀγαθεῖ τύχει appears apart from and in a different case from Zeus Naios and Dione and those gods who dwell with them, who are invoked at the beginning of the question.²² In 2482B, the text appears to be an inquiry about the paying of a sum of money (τὰν / ὑστάταν φορὰν μνᾶν), and although the words are hard to read, the dative case of τύχαι ἀγαθαῖ suggests that the consultants, Alkidamos and Mastaka, are look-

²⁰ Inquiry of Hermias: Tuchelt 1971: 98, 99, ll. 15–17 (Günther); text and trans. Fontenrose 1988: 202, no. 27.

²¹ Fontenrose 1988: 161. For the text, see Welles 1934: 33, no. 5, and for the latest edition, Bringmann and von Steuben 1995: 334, KNr.: 280[E], ll. 31–32.

²² The long vowels have been shortened: see Buck 1955: 36.

ing for good luck as the reward or recompense for this action.²³ The text of 2982A provides a preposition, which helps to make sense of the text: ἐπὶ ἀγαθῶ(ι) τύχα[τ]. The consultant appears to want to know if the offerings will bring good luck.

These texts suggest that consultants may have asked for good luck on its own, or inquired about it as the result of particular (ritual) activities. This also seems likely to be the case with a number of other texts: these are too fragmentary to offer much sense, but they include τύχα in the accusative (singular) case (1158B, 1223A, 2488A, 2707A, 3390A, 3453B; one text, 799B, includes τύχας, perhaps a plural form, maybe a genitive singular case).

4. The Potential for Luck

It is more difficult to conclude what those questions may have been in which τύχα appears in the nominative case and its location in the text leads us to think it is probably not an invocation (the texts discussed here are in App. 5). 1436A and 2734B both seem to place τύχα close to a name (albeit restored), which suggests that, in each case, the τύχα refers to the luck of a particular person.²⁴

Other texts concern the potential for τύχα arising from a situation described in a conditional phrase: 75 offers the clearest example of this, where the question seems to turn on the possibility of τύχα from a particular activity: DVC suggest the care of an animal of some kind. In 252A, the word, albeit restored, sits close to an interrogative phrase (here largely restored) familiar from other oracular questions, λώϊο[v] καὶ ἄμεινον; it contains a dependent clause, potentially concerned with farming.

However, other such occurrences of τύχα in the nominative occur without such helpful details: a number (e.g. 393B, 1510A, 2002A and 2830B) are simply too fragmentary to enable us to make a likely interpretation, although the gist of the question is clear in the case of 2830B, which seems to concern children. The idea of potentially ‘having’ luck is also possibly the meaning of Lhôte 37, which, as Lhôte discusses, may be a nominal phrase for the expression, ἔφῶν τυχεάνῳ found in Lhôte 35A.²⁵

5. Being Lucky

An alternative reading of 75/M82 (given in DVC) suggests, in place of τύχα, the term τυχα(ῖον), and this brings us to question texts about ‘being lucky’, that is, questions that appear to make τύχα a desirable quality that can be possessed by things, situations, or people; the texts discussed in this section are in App. 6.

Sometimes this idea of ‘being lucky’ is expressed with an impersonal phrase. Thus, if the restoration of the text is correct, 2410 seems to be asking about a co-habiting situation, and whether it will be ‘lucky’ (τυχαῖον) for the consultant. Something similar seems to be the case in 39A, which possibly refers to travel to a city;²⁶ and in 1340A, which concerns farming.²⁷ It also seems to be used in this way in 1088A, 3005A and 3745A, although these are too fragmentary for their subject matter to be clear. In 3192A the usual interrogative formula of oracle questions, λώϊον καὶ ἄμεινον (‘better and more good’) is rewritten to include the idea of luckiness: τυχεαίτερο[v] καὶ λώϊον.

In other questions, ‘being lucky’ qualifies a particular noun: e.g., if Lhôte’s reading is preferred, then in 31A it may refer to a marriage arrangement. It may also be used to qualify a person: the clearest example of this is in 221B, where the term seems to describe the consultant; it is in the feminine form suggesting that this visitor to Dodona was a woman. 3289A may offer another, similar example, although the text is hard to read. Finally, the conceptual field of τύχα is further illustrated by another phrase for being lucky: 4046A uses a metaphor of movement, τύχηι τυχεῖν ‘meeting luck’.

²³ Taking Mastaka as a woman’s name, cf. the male names, Μαστακίς, Μάστακος (*LGPN* II and IIIA); 3381B may also be an example of the dative case.

²⁴ Similar to 1223A, see above, where τύχαν appears to belong to a person, whose name is in the genitive.

²⁵ Lhôte 2006: 101.

²⁶ The Akarnanian polis Θύρρειον; see *IG* IV² 1, 95. 16 (and cf. texts 1523B: [- - -] ΘΥΠΕ and 1729A: ΘΥΠΕΙΟΝ).

²⁷ As the editors of the text suggest and Méndez-Dosuna (2016: 128) agrees, 1340A should be combined with 1339A ἐν Φαρκαδόνι.

6. All about Luck

One of the ways in which consultants structure their enquiries at Dodona is to include a *περί* phrase, usually at the beginning of their question, which identifies the topic of their consultation. It is striking that, as well as asking questions about specific areas of daily life, which acknowledge the role of *τύχα* in the outcome, the consultants at Dodona also ask about *τύχα* itself, using this *περί* structure, e.g., in App. 7, 1810A and 3950A, both ask ‘about luck’.

Only in one example, Lhôte 21, does the question explicitly mention good luck, but it seems highly likely that this is the type of luck that is the subject of most of these inquiries. It is something to be requested from the gods: a number of examples ask to which of the gods or heroes (1370A, 1608B, 3771) they should pray in order to obtain *τύχα*. Those questions that ask *περὶ παντυχίας* (94, 3771 and Lhôte 5) also seem likely to be about gaining good luck – this time in every area of one’s life.

The same idea of a good outcome is also implicit in, for example, 1370A, which seems to be about the luck ‘of money’ (we might say ‘the chance of money’) and those texts that mention other desirable outcomes (3950A and 2374A). Some of these texts closely associate *τύχα* to a person’s name not only as part of the question (1290A and 1370A), but seemingly with a sense of an individual’s personal luck (1187A and 2146B; possibly 2374A).

7. Embracing Luck

Recent scholarship on ancient Greek religion does not often discuss the pervasive presence of concepts of fate, luck and fortune, preferring instead to focus on cult practice. This may be because of a sense that, as Robert Parker has stated in his recent overview of ancient Greek religion, ‘it is difficult to bring the two things together within a single field of argument’.²⁸ These texts from Dodona may offer a case study of a ritual that explicitly included a role for *τύχα*. It may be that *ἀγαθὰ τύχα* and *τύχα* and its cognates were used without attention by the consultants at Dodona, but the analysis here suggests otherwise: they indicate that *τύχα* was part of the conscious, explicit assessment of the outcome of the uncertain future that took place in an oracular consultation. Far from trying to ignore or dispel the idea of luck, these texts reveal how consultants could craft their questions so as to engage with *τύχα*. The multiplicity of ways in which these questions refer to *τύχα* suggests that consultants recognised a variety of roles that *τύχα* could play in shaping future outcomes.²⁹ I have argued elsewhere that the use of *τύχα* in literary sources indicates that there were shared cultural models of this entity, which people might draw on in different ways, according to their context.³⁰ The consultants at Dodona seem to have employed the concept in a similar way in their questions, highlighting different meanings of *τύχα* and allocating her/it different roles.³¹

As noted above, in ancient Greek literary and epigraphic sources it is often difficult to distinguish between luck and good luck (*τύχα* and *ἀγαθὰ τύχα*), and in many of the Dodona question texts, *τύχα* does seem to stand primarily for *good* luck. However, the texts also reveal some differences in the use of these two terms. Those questions concerned with *ἀγαθὰ τύχα* are relatively straightforward: they invoke *ἀγαθὰ τύχα* or request it. In contrast, *τύχα* is cast in a greater variety of roles: she/it is not only invoked and simply requested; the questions also explore her/its potential presence and refer to her/its personalised nature. *τύχα* appears both as an abstract concept and as a divine entity: for some it/she is desired as an outcome

²⁸ Parker (2011: xii). Parker is explaining why he did not include these themes in his discussion of Greek religion: in this context, he aligns ‘fate’ variously with theodicy, divine justice, and human responsibility; he does not mention *τύχη*, ‘chance’ or ‘luck’.

²⁹ As Heimlich (2010: 173) observes, Iles Johnston (2005: 300) does in some places refer to the indeterminacy inherent in oracular consultation, but then, as he puts it, she ‘jumps off the high wire into the safety net ... by claiming that clients of Apollo’s dice oracles were trying to domesticate the unpredictable (we would say “random”) forces that drove both their dice throws and their lives’ (citing Johnston 2005: 15). Heimlich himself goes on to argue that the patrons of dice oracles did not try to tame chance: ‘Rather, if they were attempting to domesticate anything it was themselves, in the sense of becoming at home in the cosmos by orienting themselves in relation to chance.’

³⁰ On shared cultural models of *τύχη*, see Eidinow 2011.

³¹ On the idea of the cultural model applied to *τύχη* esp. in specific ancient authors see Eidinow 2011, esp. 8–11, 66–75, 91–93, 117, 136–141, 153–162.

(‘good luck’); for others, it/she helps to realise the future; for still others it/she is one of the (divine) sources of information about what may come to pass. In addition, τύχα retains her more sinister aspect: a less cheerful form of luck appears in 2074A (App. 8), where the questioner appears to be suffering from bad luck. She (the participle, ἱεμένα, indicates that the consultant is female) asks if she has yet endured enough from τύχα.

8. And So ... Good Luck!

I return to Medea’s final words to Aigeus, when she bids him (688): ἀλλ’ εὐτυχοίης καὶ τύχοις ὅσων ἐρῶς. This can be translated as ‘Well, good luck attend you, and may you obtain what you desire.’³² The first half of the phrase is a formulaic way of saying goodbye: the speaker wishes his interlocutor good fortune, using a verb in the optative mood, which is generally used for a wish. The phrase is found, for example, in Euripides’ *Alkestis*, where Admetos wishes Herakles (1153): ἀλλ’ εὐτυχοίης, νόστιμον δ’ ἔλθοις δρόμον, ‘May you have good fortune and run your homeward course’; and in *Iphigeneia at Aulis*, as Klytaimnestra interrogates Agamemnon about the details of their daughter’s marriage (716): ἀλλ’ εὐτυχοίτην. τίτι δ’ ἐν ἡμέρῳ γαμεῖ; ‘Happiness attend the pair! Which day will he marry her?’

But in these two examples, the irony of the phrase is inescapable. In each case, the first half of the verse, with its innocent request for good luck, is foreshadowed by the audience’s knowledge of the implications of the second half of the verse. This varies in strength: in *Alkestis*, the irony is relatively light. Herakles is rushing away because he must perform his labours. We are aware that he will be successful; nevertheless, the audience’s knowledge darkens Admetos’ reference to Herakles’ ‘journey home’. The second example is more complex and carries a double irony. Klytaimnestra has not yet understood the real nature of the wedding that Agamemnon plans; nor does she grasp the significance of her husband’s response to her question of timing. Agamemnon is indeed about to offer this goddess a sacrifice: not one that precedes a marriage in order to protect the new bride, but the bride herself.³³ This interchange in fact introduces a second reference to τύχη. Klytaimnestra’s earlier wish for good luck is followed by a more ambiguous and sinister mention of τύχη in Agamemnon’s response: ‘I am about to. That is the very thing (ταύτη τύχη) I was engaged in.’³⁴ As commentators have noted, Klytaimnestra could interpret this τύχη as meaning ‘position, condition of affairs’, while Agamemnon could be referring to the sacrifice of Klytaimnestra’s daughter.³⁵ This ambiguity of meaning is then clarified in a later, similar interchange between Agamemnon and Klytaimnestra: Agamemnon says (1136) ‘O Fate revered, O Destiny, and my fortune’; to which Klytaimnestra replies (1137), ‘Yes, and mine and hers too; the three share one bad fortune.’³⁶

These examples suggest that these seemingly habitual phrases about ‘good luck’ may bear closer examination. Similarly, in *Medea*, when Medea wishes Aigeus good luck, the second half of the phrase can be read as conveying further meaning, although not perhaps as blatantly as the examples above. It suggests that Medea considers, explicitly, that there is some uncertainty about what is to come next. Mastronarde has suggested that this concerns Medea’s own future: there is something about the way this phrase is used that prompts Aigeus to ask Medea about her own situation.³⁷ While agreeing that this is one aspect of this interchange, I suggest it is only a part: Medea is also expressing a view about the outcome of Aigeus’ consultation of the oracle, and, both in that context and more generally, about mankind’s inherent and inescapable relationship with luck. As I hope this article has demonstrated, this sentiment was perfectly suited to the consultation of oracles, where τύχα (rather than the inevitability of fate) was recognised as a pervasive presence.

³² Kovacs 1994.

³³ As Parker (2005: 441, n. 94) states, the goddess here is likely to be Artemis because of the requirement to sacrifice to her before marriage, as much as because of the context-specific reference to this divinity. Artemis’ connection to the moon is less clear than that of Diana (as Budin 2016: 60, 159 observes) and it seems more likely that the sequence of ideas concerns the acts that will insure good fortune for the marriage, and especially the bride.

³⁴ 719: μέλλω ’πὶ ταύτη καὶ καθέσταμεν τύχη.

³⁵ England 1891, ad loc.

³⁶ 1136: ὦ πότνια μοῖρα καὶ τύχη δαίμων τ’ ἐμός and 1137: κάμός γε καὶ τῆσδ’, εἰς τριῶν δυσδαιμόνων.

³⁷ Mastronarde 2002, 688n.

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Appendix: Texts of ‘Lucky’ Inquiries from Dodona Unless otherwise indicated, these texts are taken from Dakaris, Vokotopoulou and Christidis 2013. All dates are BCE.		
1. Divinities Invoked (The texts from Lhôte’s catalogue are not listed in DVC.)		
a) Combinations with god/gods θεός ἀγαθὰ τύχα DVC: 8 examples θεός τύχα ἀγαθά DVC: 97 examples. Lhôte: 23, 47, 59A, 87, 106B, 115, 123 θεός τύχοι ἀγαθὰ DVC: 5 examples. Lhôte: 5, 91, 93 θεός τύχαν ἀγαθάν DVC: 38 examples. Lhôte: 58A, 89B, 105A θεὸν τύχαν ἀγαθάν DVC: 1 example. Lhôte: 3 θεός ἀγαθὰ τύχοι DVC: 1 example θεοὶ ἀγαθὰ τύχα DVC: 1 example θεοὶ ἀγαθὰί τύχοι DVC: 1 example θεοὶ τύχα ἀγαθά Lhôte: 68A 107A θεοὶ τύχαν ἀγαθάν Lhôte: 8A and 95A and B See also Lhôte 22A below	b) ἀγαθὰ τύχα ἀγαθὰ τύχα DVC: 12 examples. Lhôte: 101A τύχα ἀγαθά DVC: 34 examples. Lhôte: 89A τύχαν ἀγαθάν DVC: 12 examples. Lhôte: 81B ἀγαθῆι τύχοι (dat.) DVC: 3 examples. Lhôte: 128 ἀγαθὰι τύχοι (pl.) DVC: 3 examples. Lhôte: 11, 113 τύχοι ἀγαθὰι (pl.) DVC: 5 examples; Lhôte: 108B c) Combination of god and τύχα θεός τύχα DVC: 76 examples. Lhôte: 10Ab, 73A, 82, 96A, 100A, 126, 141A, 145A, 157, 163Ba, 167A θεός τύχαν DVC: 12 examples. Lhôte: 118A θεοὶ τύχαν DVC: 1 example	d) Lhôte 92A ; 4 th century [Ὁ δεινὰ] ἐπεροτεῖ, τύ(χα) ἀ- [γαθὰ.] κατὰ θάλασσα- [ν πορε]υμένωι [ῶ Zεὺ Δω]δωναίε [καὶ Διῶ]να [Ναία(?), αἰ] [Κ] πράσσοιμι [βέλτιόν] κα λαιβάν [τῶ]ς θυγα(τέρας) (?)
2. Tyche Alone		
2440 (M851) ; end of 5 th century-beginning of 4 th century τύχα = περὶ γ[ενεᾶ]- ς (ὀ)γ(ο)ε(ῖ)ας = καλ[αικαρπίας] καὶ πολ[υ]χρο[νίας]	2936B ; end of 5 th century-beginning of 4 th century τ(ύ)χ(α) TX Compare Lhôte 33B: Τύχα	3276B ; first half of 4 th century [τύ]χα· πῶ[ς κ]α· Πάρμονος [πα]ρμωνότατος εἴη [τ]έχνην μαθάν;
3. Tyche Addressed Directly		
80A (with Méndez-Dosuna 2016); mid-4 th century [ἐ]πικοινηται Εὐμήδη[δη]ς τῶι Διὶ τῶι Νάωι καὶ τῶι Διόν[ω]ι [κ]αὶ τῶι Τύχοι περὶ τὰς δρυὸς τῶς ἐν τῶι ἥρωι· ἢ ἐξέλω[ν] [τῶ]- [χ]οιμι νοόνδε ἀνθεὶς αὐτῶ;	2093A ; end of 5 th century [θεὸς ἀγ]αθὰ [τ]ύχα· ἐπις[ων]ῆται [ὁ δεινὰ Διὶ Νά]ωι καὶ τῶι Δι[ὼ]ν[ω]ι -- -- [· · · ·]ται τύχοι τίν[ι] κ[α] θεῶ[ν] εὐλόγ[ο]μενος καὶ θύ[ω]ν λῶ[ω]ν π[ρ]άσσοι καὶ [ἀ]μειν[ω]ν	Lhôte 141Ba (on the left) ; c. 390 BCE Θεός. Διὶ Πατράωι ΠΕΡΙ . . ΙΟ Τύχοι λαιβάν Ἡρακλει, Ἐρεχθεῖ Ἀθάναι Πατριάωι

4. Requests for Tyche			
<p>Lhôte 22A Θεός. Τύχαν ἀγαθῶν Ἀντιμάχοι. ἐπερωτᾷ Ἀντίμαχος τὸν Δία. Ναῖον τ(ί)ν(ι) κα Θεῶν ἢ (ή)(ρ)(ώ)ων θύσας βέλτιον πράσσοι καὶ ποτιθέμενος ἀ[γα]θὸν καὶ</p>	<p>95A; end of 4th century [Z]εῦ Νάϊε καὶ Διώνη καὶ σύν[ναοι αἰτώ] [ὄ]μιᾶς ἀγαθῆ τύχει δούνα[ι ἐμοί] [γ]ῶν ἐργαζομένωι καὶ EN[.][- - -]</p>	<p>799B; 4th century [- - -]O[...].]YA [- - -] [- - -] πότερον μετ[αβαλλόμενος] [- - -]E[.] καὶ [σ]όνναοι [- - -] [- - -]APMΩ[.][- - -] [- - -]κ[α]ὶ τύχας [- - -]</p>	
<p>1158B; 4th century θεὸς τύχ[α . - - -] περὶ πτόλοισ[- - - τῶ]- χαν</p> <p>2488A; second half of 5th century αὶ μὲ [ἄ]γ[ο]μῆς [- - -] ἔ ἀφέ(σ)ντες [- - - -] τὰν τύχα[ν - - -]</p>	<p>1223A; first half of 5th century A name here: Euthumos or Prothumos [- - -]ομῶ τύχαν</p> <p>2510 (M877); first half of 3rd century [θεὸς τ]ύχη ἀγαθῆ· Θεόφαντος· Ἀπ[ε]λλοῦ αἰτεῖται[- - -]- φίλον (sic) διδόναι αὐτῶι τύχην ἀ[γα]θῆν καὶ ὕγ(ί)ει[α]ν καὶ σω[τη]ρίαν - - -] [.]ΩΝ [κ]αὶ χρημάτων τῶν ὄντων ὄνησιν κα[ὶ] ἄλλων ἐπε[γ]ρήσιν - - - αὐ]- τοὺς [α]ἰ[τή]ται καὶ ἐργασίας ἀγαθ[ῆ]ς αἰτεῖται Δ[α]μασῶ Φιλεξ[- - -] ΩΝ[. . .] ἀπόντας οὐκ ἀποδεδρακότας E[. .]N αὐτοὺς κα[ὶ] - - -];</p>	<p>2482B; first half of 4th century θεὸς τύχα ἀγαθῆ· ἀποδέδωκε Ἀλκί[δ]αμος καὶ Μαστάκα· τὰν ὑστάταν φορὰν μῶν ἀπ[ὸ] κ[α]ν- δρὸς οὗτος IKETΩ τύχαι ἀγαθῆι;</p> <p>2707A; end of 5th century/beginning of 4th century θεὸς τ[ύ]χα ἀγαθῆ· ὁ δεῖνα] ἐπικον[ι]ῖται - - - τίνι κα θεῶν] καὶ θεῶν [θύων - - -] τύχαν [- - -]</p>	
<p>2982A; end of 4th century θεὸς τύχα [ἀ]γ[ο]θῆ· χρῆσθα[ι] τοῖ(ς) ἱεροῖς ἐπ[ὶ] ἀγαθῶ(ι) τύχα[ι];</p> <p>3453B; mid-4th century [θεὸς τύχα . - - -]όλα[ς] ἐπερωτᾷ τὸν Δία τὸν [Νάϊον καὶ τὰν Διώναν [.]ΩΝΤΩΗ[- - -] [- - -] πότειρα τῶ[ν] πιστρού[ων] τέχνηαν ἐργα[- [ζόμενος - - -] ΤΩ ἀρίστ[αν] τύχαν</p>	<p>3381B; 4th century [- - -] . ΕΣΠΥΤΕΡΕ [- - -] καὶ τύχαι</p>	<p>3390A; end of 5th century ἐ ἠροῖς τύχα[ν - - -] πατρῶος θε[ός- - -] Σίμαι;</p>	

<p>5. The Potential for Luck</p> <p>75 (M82); end of 5th century-beginning of 4th century ποιτηρδ- ν ΓΑΡΟΤΕ- ΟΥ ὄπερ τᾶμον καὶ εἴ ὄστ- ι τύχα</p> <p>I. 6: DVC τυχα(ίον)</p> <p>1436A; first half of 5th century Κλε[. .]έας τύχα [- - -] Πολυξένα [- - -]</p> <p>2734B; end of 5th century-beginning of the fourth century [---]ΑΣΤΥ [---]όδαμος [---]νοσήμ[ατος τύχα</p>	<p>252A; first half of 4th century θεόν· ΕΙΕΣ[.] [- - - γεν]- εἶαι καὶ γυ[ναϊκί - - -]- λώϊο[v] καὶ [ἔμεινον - - - τύ]- χα αἰ γ {γ} αερ [γένων - - -] εἰς ΚΕ[.]Ω[.] [- - -];</p> <p>1510A; end of 5th century [- - -] τύχα [- - - Τ]πράχων</p> <p>2830B; first half of 5th century [- - -]εινις γενεᾶ[v - - -] [- - -] τύχα</p>	<p>393B; end of 4th century [- - -] ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ [- - -][.] τύχα</p> <p>2002A; end of 5th century-beginning of 4th century ἔ ἐπὶ ΕΟ[.]Ν[.] τύχα μῦλλον;</p> <p>Lhôte 35A; c. 450–425 BCE ἔφῶν τυγχάνω</p> <p>Lhôte 37; c. 450–425 BCE θεός· τύχα ἔφῶν;</p>
<p>6. Being Lucky</p> <p>31A; mid-4th century αἰ τυχαία μοι ἂ ἐπι- τροπέα τὰν ἔχου τᾶμον Λυκκίδας Lhôte (no. 28B); γάμων</p>	<p>39A; 4th century Ε[.]·:JOYTOΣ[- - - ιόντι] πῶτ τὸ Θύρ(ρ)ε[τον τυ]- χαίῶν ἐσσι;</p>	<p>221B; mid-4th century εἰ τὰν ἔχῃ τυχαία;</p>
<p>1088A; end of 5th century θεὸς τύχα· ἐπικον[ηται] Φείδης ὁ Κορ- κυραῖος τῶι Διὶ τῶι Νεῖ[ίτοι] καὶ τῆι Διώναι περὶ τὰς διαλυτήσ[ς. . .] ΙΟΤΑΠΙΛΛΕΑΝ ἀντεγράψ[α]το ἢ τυχ[αίον] ΥΝ[. . .] [HYN[.]] καὶ Λώϊον [πρ]όσσοι</p>	<p>1340A; second half of 4th century (combined with 1339; see Méndez-Dosuna 2016: 128) ἐν Φαρκαδόνοι εἰ γαοργέω αἴ ἐσσι μοι τυ χαίῶν;</p>	<p>2410; mid-4th century ἔ Ἀσάνδρ(ω)ι συνναιού[σαι μοι] τυχ[αίον];</p>

<p>3005A; end of 5th century/beginning of 4th century [- - -] τυχαῖον Α[- - -]</p>	<p>3192A; mid-4th century πὲρ τᾶς ἰα[ρ]ατείας ΑΝ[. . .] Κλέωνι εἶ[περ] ΑΜ[. . . 6. . .] ΕΡ[.]ΝΟ[.] Ἄγιος ΣΑ τ- υχαιότερο[ν] καὶ λώϊον τῶν τῶι (Α)πρέμιδι</p>	
<p>3289A; second half of 4th century [- - -] γίν(ο)ιτο [- - -] ἀνδρὸς γένος [- - -] τυχαῖος</p>	<p>3745A; end of 5th century/beginning of 4th century ΠΑΚΟΙΑΣ αἰ τυχαῖον - - -]</p>	<p>4046A; second half of 4th century ἀγαθῆι τύχη[η]· ὁ δεινὰ ἐπικονοῦται τῶι Διὶ τῶι Ναῖοι καὶ [τῆι Διώνηι - - -] ὧν ἔνεκεν [- - -] τύχηι τυχεῖ[ν - - -]</p>
<p>7. All About Luck</p>		
<p>94 (M92); first third of 4th century Ἄλβειος περὶ παντυχίας</p>	<p>1187A; second half of 4th century [περὶ τᾶς τύχης τοῦ Κραῖβα</p>	<p>1290A; second half of 4th century Λεωνίδας] πε(ε)ρὶ τύχ[α]ς]</p>
<p>1370A; beginning of 4th century Σίμωνι περὶ τύχης τῶ[ν χρημ]- άτων τίνι κα θεῶν [ἢ ἠρώων] εὐχόμενος Η[. . . 5. . .];</p>	<p>1608B; first half of 4th century περὶ τύχης [- - -] τίνι κα θεῶν εὐχόμενος - - -]</p>	<p>1810A; mid-5th century [- - -]ΙΟ πὲρ τύχ[α]ς]</p>
<p>2146B; middle of the 5th century Μνασίλλο τύχης (τυ)</p>	<p>2374A; first half of 5th century [- - -]σστου : τύχης [- - -] περὶ γενεᾶς : Κλεμιάχ- [ου - - -]ΝΑ :</p>	<p>3771 (M1243); beginning of 4th century περὶ παντ[υ]χίας τίνι κα [θεῶν εὐχόμενος ἐχοι ἀγαθ]- ἂν τύχαν;</p>
<p>3950A; 4th century–3rd century [περ]ὶ τύχης [.] [- - -] [- - -] σωτηρίας [- - -] [- - -] [.]Ν[- - -]</p>	<p>Lhôte 5; c. 350–280 Θεός]. Τύχει ἀγαθῆι [ἐπερωτῆι] ἡα πόλις – ἡα τῶν Ταραν[τίνων] τὸν Δία τὸν Ναῖον καὶ τ[ῶν Διώνων] περὶ παντυχίας καὶ περὶ χωρίων? τὰ χηρῶι(?) καὶ περὶ τῶν [- - -]</p>	<p>Lhôte 21; c. 400–350 BCE [Ζεὺ Ναῖε καὶ Διώνα Να]ῖα, Θέμι καὶ Ἄπολλ[ον], [Ἀρχεφῶν περὶ σωτηρίας καὶ τύχης ἀ]γαθῆς].</p>
<p>8. Enough Luck</p>		
<p>2074A (M739); end of 5th century ἔ ἀπὸ τύχης ἱεμένα ἄλις;</p>		