

Συνητός as Aristocratic Self-Description

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ΣΥΝΗΤΟΣ is a verbal adjective formed from the verb συνήμι; its plain referential meaning is ‘intelligent’, ‘wise’, or ‘sagacious’. Yet the adjective and related noun σύνεσις, I shall argue, have a wider and more complex significance in aristocratic ideology. This view complements Gregory Nagy’s explanation of συνητός as a key-word in praise-poetry, parallel to σοφός.¹ If the aristocracy is the exclusive referent of praise poetry,² which can be understood only by those who share a common education, aristocrats will call themselves *synetoi*, as the only ‘intelligent ones’. This becomes, in effect, another way of designating aristocrats as a group.

In *Olympian* 2, composed for Theron of Acragas, and *Pythian* 5, for Arcesilaus IV of Cyrene, Pindar addresses his audience as *synetoi*.³ The question arises who these *synetoi* are and why Pindar addresses them in this way. As Bruno Gentili has shown, the relationship between the poet and his patron, the circumstances of the performance, and the audience are all components of epinician poetry.⁴ The success of Pindar’s praise-poetry requires not only technical mastery but also responsiveness to the expectations of his patron-audience,⁵ with whom the poet shares a linguistic and ethical code. Those who do not share this

¹ Cf. G. Nagy, *The Best of the Achaeans* (Baltimore 1979) 239f; for a different interpretation of this word, see B. Gentili, *Bacchilide. Studi* (Urbino 1958) 27.

² Cf. Nagy (*supra* n.1) 22: “The conceit of praise poetry is that it praises the noble only, not the base.”

³ Nagy (*supra* n.1) also cites Bacchyl. 3.85: φρονεόντι συνετὰ γάρω.

⁴ B. Gentili, *Poesia e pubblico nella Grecia antica* (Rome 1984) 153–202 (= *Poetry and its Public in Ancient Greece*, tr. A. T. Cole [Baltimore 1988] 115–54).

⁵ On the aristocratic character of Pindar’s poetry see R. W. Burton, *Pindar’s Pythian Odes* (Oxford 1962) 134; cf. W. DONLAN, *The Aristocratic Ideal in Ancient Greece* (Lawrence 1980 [hereafter ‘Donlan’]) 95–111.

code are excluded from poetic understanding and enjoyment. Birth, education, and culture combine to make up a community of ethical values and of the language that serves as the vehicle of these values. The word *synetos* characterizes the καλοὶ κάγαθοί who claim intellectual eminence. Pindar's usage presupposes a correspondence between being aristocratic and being intelligent.⁶

The 'aristocracy' in Pindar of course covers a heterogeneous group: it is an aristocracy not only of birth but also of wealth⁷ and of a common moral and political culture. Pindar in fact worked within tyrannies where wealth easily supplanted birth as a criterion for inclusion in the aristocracy, which was not simply a caste but also a social and cultural melting pot of the rich, oligarchs, and hereditary aristocrats. Accordingly, I shall extend Nagy's view to show how *synesis* serves as a criterion for aristocratic self-definition outside praise-poetry.⁸ My evidence is derived from relevant passages recorded in the TLG data-base. We begin with the archaic and classical poets and conclude with Thucydides. I shall focus upon those instances of *synesis* and *synetos* in which a clear nexus can be established between verbal usage and ideological, cultural, and social outlook.⁹

⁶ Pindar (*Ol.* 2.83–88) says: "Under my arms, in the quiver, I have many arrows that speak clearly only to those who can understand (συνετοῖσιν), but they demand interpreters to the vulgar herd (τὸ πᾶν, 85)." The scholiast explains these verses by quoting Aristarchus: ὥστε τοῖς μὲν σοφοῖς σοφὰ διαλέγεσθαι καὶ μὴ ἔκθεσμα, τοῖς δὲ ἰδιώταις μὴ κατάδηλα γίνεσθαι. The *synetoi* and the *sophoi* are all those who differentiate themselves from the mob of ἰδιῶται through their knowledge and are able to understand Pindar's verses.

⁷ The difference between being rich and being aristocratic is not pronounced during the archaic period: see T. J. Figueira, "The Ten *Archontes* of 579/8 at Athens," *Hesperia* 53 (1984) 447–73 at 456.

⁸ Cf. Donlan, "Social Vocabulary and its Relationship to Political Propaganda in Fifth-Century Athens," *QUCC* 27 (1978) 99 n.5.

⁹ For other occurrences cf. B. Snell, *Die Ausdrücke für den Begriff des Wissen in der vorplatonischen Philosophie* (Berlin 1924) 40–59, the most comprehensive work on σύνεσις and related words. Snell believes that *synesis* is an exclusively moral quality: moderation opposed to extreme boldness, which becomes an intellectual skill only with the sophists and Euripides. For *synesis* as "coscienza morale" see A. Cancrini, *SYNEIDESIS. Il tema semantico della «con-scientia» nella Grecia antica* (Rome 1970) 20–23, 61–64.

I. *Synesis* in Archaic and Classical Poetry

The social connotation of *synetos* is easily recognizable in Alcaeus, where there is a clear correspondence between the politician and the aristocrat. At the outset of fr.326 L.-P., in the context of civic *stasis* metaphorically expressed by the image of a ship beset by a storm, we find the verb ἄσυννέτημι: "I do not understand."¹⁰ Alcaeus is ἄσυννετός because he cannot comprehend the forces of political action represented by the restless movement of the winds (=factions).¹¹ By at least the time of Heraclitus (*All.* 5.1–9), the poem was interpreted as a reference to Myrsilus and the uprising in Mytilene that ended in tyranny; the poet and his companions (3, ἄμμες) are set adrift amid political changes that have caused Alcaeus to lose his political understanding. Division among the aristocrats has destroyed their intellectual, ethical and political coalition. Alcaeus has therefore become *asynetos*; *synesis* no longer serves to delimit a single, traditional ethical outlook.¹²

Theognis also provides examples of *synetos* and related terms as key-words of the symbolic self-representation of the aris-

¹⁰ For the verb συνίημι cf. Snell (*supra* n.9) 40–52.

¹¹ For commentaries on the fragment see E. Degani and V. Burzacchini, *Antologia dei lirici greci* (Florence 1977) 217–22; Gentili (*supra* n.4) 263; L. Edmunds, *Cleon, Knights and Aristophanes' Politics* (Washington 1987) 9–15; A. Aloni, "La tempesta di Alceo: Nota tecnica al fr.208a V I," *Museum Tusulanum* 57 (1987) 24–33.

¹² Indeed, this intellectual-political ability has already become a prerequisite for political action, if Pittacus is answering Alcaeus when he says that it is a peculiarity of the *synetoi* to forecast misfortunes before they happen (Diog. Laert. 1.78): ἔλεγε συνετῶν μὲν ἀνδρῶν, πρὶν γενέσθαι τὰ δυσχερῆ, προνοῆσαι ὅπως μὴ γένηται, ἀνδρείων δέ, γενόμενα εὖ θέσθαι. The *synetoi* become those who, more far-seeing than Alcaeus, acted to end civil discord by backing Pittacus as *aisymnetes* (Strab. 13.2.3): Πιττακὸς δ' εἰς μὲν τὴν τῶν δυναστειῶν κατάλυσιν ἐχρήσατο τῇ μοναρχίᾳ καὶ αὐτός, καταλύσας δὲ ἀπέδωκε τὴν αὐτονομίαν τῇ πόλει. For the meaning of *aisymnetes* cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1285a30ff, *Eth.Nic.* 1167a28ff; Dion. Hal. *Ant.Rom.* 5.73.3; Plut. *Sol.* 14.7. Cf. A. Andrewes, *The Greek Tyrants* (London 1974) 96; R. E. Romer, "The Aisymneteia: a Problem in Aristotle's Historical Method," *AJP* 103 (1982) 25–46. On Alcaeus' particular situation cf. Donlan 63, who defines his attitude as "a combination of the older heroic ideal of glory and honor and the newer notions of partisan politics, pride of blood, class consciousness—all blended with a sense of nostalgic loss, bewilderment at social changes, retreat into transient pleasures." The verb ἄσυννέτημι is thus a symbolic and emphatic expression of this bewilderment.

ocracy. Among his rules for the young is this (563ff): "You must take part in the banquet, sit close to a good man, skilled in all knowledge (σοφίην), to understand (τοῦ συνιεῖν) when he says something wise (τι σοφόν)." Attendance at the aristocrats' symposium is not a simple occasion for amusement but an opportunity for education. If we consider σοφίη as an aristocratic and exclusive mastery of a certain 'knowledge' and τι σοφόν as the message of a shared ethical code,¹³ τοῦ συνιεῖν is the decodification of the message, which requires the right knowledge.¹⁴ The symposium offers the means of acquiring this knowledge.¹⁵ In these lines of Theognis, then, the verb συνιεῖν provides the semantic context in which to place σύνεσις and related words. *Synesis* is an exclusive intelligence that is characteristic of aristocrats and a product of a specific education.¹⁶ Alcaeus, who "does not understand," is comparable to Theognis. Both poets inhabit a world in which *stasis* prevails, but the first "does not understand," while the other "understands many things" (419, πολλά με καὶ συνιέντα παρέρχεται), though he cannot express himself openly (315–18).¹⁷

¹³ On σοφία and σοφοί cf. G. Nagy, "A Poet's Vision of his City," in T. J. Figueira and G. Nagy, edd., *Theognis of Megara: Poetry and the Polis* (Baltimore 1985) 22ff; see also Donlan 77–95.

¹⁴ συνιεῖν finds an equivalent in Latin *intellegere*. Cicero offers a good example of the 'educational' connotation of this verb in *Brut.* 183, where he distinguishes *vulgi iudicium* from *intelligentium iudicium*. Some speakers are lauded by the many (*multitudine*) and others are approved of by only those who understand (*intelligentium*). Cicero thus believes in two kinds of judgment: one that does not rely on technical knowledge, and another based on the rules and the *principia* of oratory, thus an 'educated' and an 'uneducated' way of viewing the oration. Cf. *Brut.* 320: *quantum non quivis unus ex populo, sed existimator doctus et intelligens posset cognoscere*.

¹⁵ The *synetoi* are therefore those who learn and understand more easily: cf. Evenus of Paros (fr.1.5f Gentili/Prato), "One could quickly persuade, by speaking well, the *synetoi* who are easily taught" (τοὺς ξυνετοὺς δ' ἂν τις πείσειε τάχιστα λέγων εὖ, οἵπερ καὶ ράστης εἰσὶ διδασκαλίας); and Dionysius Chalcus (fr.4 Gentili/Prato), ἀγγελίας ἀγαθῆς δεῦρ' ἴτε πευσόμενοι καὶ κυλίκων ἔριδας διαλύσατε καὶ κατάθεσθε τὴν ξύνεσιν παρ' ἐμοὶ καὶ τάδε μανθάνετε.

¹⁶ Other significant examples: 1163f, ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ γλῶσσα καὶ οὐατα καὶ νόος ἀνδρῶν ἐν μέσσωι στηθέων ἐν συνετοῖς φύεται; 903f, ὅστις ἀνάλωσιν τηρεῖ κατὰ χρήματα θηρῶν, κυδίστην ἀρετὴν τοῖς συνιείσιν ἔχει; cf. 1237, 1240, 1284.

¹⁷ For analysis of these verses see L. Edmunds, "Theognis 815–18 and the Banquet of Attagnus," *CP* 82 (1987) 325ff.

A significant reflex of the archaic aristocratic meaning is preserved in Aristophanes' portrait of Aeschylus in *Frogs*. The chorus (1481–99) celebrates Aeschylus as a man who has ξύνεσιν ἠκριβωμένην. *Synesis* here is not a plain intellectual quality but reflects rather his particular aristocratic outlook as contrasted with that of Euripides. Among his accusations against Euripides,¹⁸ Aeschylus mentions that he diverted the youth from physical activity while arousing in them an excessive interest in the art of speaking and political debate (1069ff). This complaint recalls the chorus' words at 729ff that the city despises those among the citizens who are εὐγενεῖς, σώφρονας, δικάιους, καλοὺς τε κάγαθούς καὶ τραφέντας ἐν παλαιστραῖς.¹⁹ For Aeschylus, Euripides' bad influence has an ideological connotation, since physical activity is considered an important part of the education of the καλοὶ κάγαθοί.²⁰

Dionysus confirms this characterization. Hesitant about which poet to bring back on earth, he recognizes that Euripides diverts him (ἡδομαι) but he considers Aeschylus σοφόν (1413; cf. 1434, ὁ μὲν σοφῶς γὰρ εἶπεν, ὁ δ' ἕτερος σαφῶς). Dionysus thus sums up the value of Aeschylus' poetry in a catchword of the aristocratic scheme of virtues.²¹ Aeschylus in fact will be the one who, chosen by Dionysus, will persuade the polis to change her hatred against τοῖς χρηστοῖς²² and her (unwilling) reliance on τοῖς πονηροῖς (cf. 1454ff). Furthermore, as the chorus points out, he returns home διὰ τὸ συνετὸς εἶναι (1490) for the welfare of his fellow-citizens (ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ μὲν τοῖς πολίταις, 1487) and of his *genos* and friends (ξυγγένεσι τε καὶ φίλοισι, 1489). Aeschylus' return is important not only for the welfare of the polis but also for *genos* and *philoï*, according to a

¹⁸ For Euripides as champion of the democratic view see Donlan 150–53; but cf. W. B. Stanford, ed., *Aristophanes, The Frogs*² (London 1963) at 952f.

¹⁹ Cf. Donlan 146, who observes that this particular chorus offers a detailed list of all the aristocratic virtues.

²⁰ On monopolization of this word by the oligarchs and the conservative groups in fifth-century Athens see A. W. Gomme, "The Interpretation of ΚΑΛΟΙ ΚΑΓΑΘΟΙ in Thucydides 4.40.2," *CQ* 47 (1953) 65–68.

²¹ Cf. another subtle allusion at 1445, where Dionysos invites Euripides to speak ἀμαθέστερόν πως ... καὶ σαφέστερον.

²² On the political meaning of this word see Donlan 203 n.23.

traditional political pattern in which *philia* and the ties to one's own group have as much or more importance than the polis.²³

Euripides offers a different use of *synesis* in his invocation at 892f: αἰθήρ, ἐμὸν βόσκημα, καὶ γλώττης στρόφιγξ καὶ ξύνεσι καὶ μυκτῆρες ὄσφραντήριοι. Aristophanes, using sophistic language, here emphasizes the celebration of intelligence (ξύνεσι) that is so prominent in Euripides' plays.²⁴ Snell, as we have noted, has shown that *synesis* becomes intellectual skill for Euripides and the sophists.²⁵ Accordingly, Euripides' *synesis* is the result of a different education, one that is centered on the sophists' teaching of philosophy and rhetoric (cf. Aeschylus' reproaches at 1069ff). The opposition between the two poets appears therefore to involve not only two different views of *paideia*, but also a different ethical exploitation of intelligence.²⁶ Aeschylus' *synesis* is the product of the traditional aristocratic *paideia*, which is restricted to a select group.²⁷ Euripides' *synesis*, on the other hand, seems to imply a new concept of intelligence common to all men: τὸ φρόνιμον εὐγένεια καὶ τὸ συνετὸν ὁ θεὸς δίδωσιν, οὐχ ὁ πλοῦτος (fr.52.8f N.). In these lines there is an interesting coupling of two virtues that (despite their different sources) are associated on the basis of their common independence from wealth, for neither of the two can be bought or achieved with money. 'Prudence' is mainly an aristocratic attribute, for it is strictly related to nobility of birth. τὸ

²³ On *philia* cf. W. R. Connor, *The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens* (Princeton 1971) 40ff.

²⁴ Among classical authors in the TLG data-base, Euripides provides the most numerous occurrences, followed by Thucydides. Only two instances appear in Aeschylus (frr.44 A.5, 36 B Mette). Sophocles uses *synetos* twice (*OT* 498, fr.269.52 Radt), in both cases referring to gods (Zeus, Apollo, and Ge).

²⁵ Cf. n.9 and Stanford (*supra* n.18) *ad loc.* for the belief that here Aristophanes is mocking Euripides' materialism. For the sophistic use of these words cf. J. Schmidt, *Aristophanes und Euripides* (Greifswald 1940) 347f. A sophistic connotation may also be present at 876f: λεπτολόγους ξυνετὰς φρένας ... ἀνδρῶν γνωμοτύπων, ὅταν εἰς ἔριν ὀξυμερίμοις ἔλθωσι στρεβλοῖσι παλαίσμασιν ἀντιλογοῦντες.

²⁶ Aristophanes seems to be not particularly fond of *synesis* and its derivatives. This dislike is perhaps a reaction to the sophistic reinterpretation of the term. The fact that it occurs four times in this comedy (against once in *Vesp.* 632f, *Av.* 456, *Thes.* 464, *Eccl.* 204) may be related to Aristophanes' desire to emphasize the older connotation of the word in his contrast of the two poets.

²⁷ As P. W. Rose has shown for Sophocles in "Sophocles' *Philoctetes* and the Teachings of the Sophists," *HSCP* 80 (1976) 49-105.

συνετόν is a quality that everyone can possess, for it is granted by the gods to mortals without consideration of their social status. Since the entire context is unknown, interpretation is open to dispute. But in his emphasis on the universal nature of τὸ συνετόν, Euripides may be questioning the old view that τὸ συνετόν is an aristocratic prerogative like τὸ φρόνιμον.

Elsewhere in Euripides, the meaning of *synesis* and *synetos* varies according to the context.²⁸ Sometimes an aristocratic connotation seems to be at issue. At *Orestes* 920f, for example, the messenger reports that during the debate at Argos the only one who τοῖς γε χρηστοῖς εὖ λέγειν ἐφαίνετο (930) is an αὐτουργός (920) who is nevertheless intelligent (921, ξυνετὸς δέ).²⁹ The way in which Euripides claims *synesis* for the farmer is apologetic, as if he expects resistance to the idea. But it is clear that he means to challenge this response. In characterizing the farmer, Euripides indicates that he rarely comes into the city and the agora (919f); he is ἀκέραιος and his life is blameless (ἀνεπίπληκτον ἡσκηκῶς βίον, 922). He is not one of those shrewd and ambitious persons who pay a sophist for instruction in political success. That he is not an aristocrat by birth is suggested by the remark that he is not good-looking (918), for good looks are conventionally a distinctive aristocratic trait (*cf.* the characterization of Thersites [*Il.* 2.211–19], who is altogether unattractive, morally, socially, and physically).³⁰ Euripides' point cannot be clearer: even though the farmer is not noble by birth, he is *synetos*. The emphatic way in which Euripides remarks on the mutual agreement of views between him and the χρηστοῖς brings out a particular connotation of *synetos*. As Di Benedetto has shown, the farmer belongs to that group who were sincerely opposed to demagogic politics, preferred to stay out

²⁸ *Cf.* A. Rodgers' interpretation of *synesis* at *Orestes* 396 as "a growing awareness of the inner self, and an increasingly subtle psychological analysis," in "Σύνεσις and the Expression of Conscience," *GRBS* 10 [1969] 241–54 at 254; see also C. W. Willink, *Euripides, Orestes* [Oxford 1986] 150f.

²⁹ On the political meaning of *χρηστός* see Connor [*supra* n.23] 88, 189; Willink *ad* 930).

³⁰ *Cf.* W. G. Thalmann, "Thersites: Comedy, Scapegoats, and Heroic Ideology in the *Iliad*," *TAPA* 118 (1988) 1–28.

of political turmoil and competition, and held a conservative and moderate attitude based on traditional values.³¹

For Pindar and Theognis only aristocrats were *synetoi*; here the farmer can be *synetos* so long as he shows a conservative ethical outlook. In the same way he can be ἀνδρεῖος, even if he is not good-looking. There is thus a shift in the traditional usage. In the past, only the aristocrats were *synetoi*, for they shared the same ethical views, embodied and shaped in that education which made them intelligent. In Euripides, *synetos* still emphasizes that ethical outlook with a loss, however, of the class and educational component. *Orestes* was written after the restoration of democracy in 410, and such usage must be viewed within this particular historical framework. At this time Euripides is equally distant from both the extreme oligarchs and the democrats. He expounds a political ideal with conscious anti-democratic implications.³² The aristocrats have betrayed their own ethics of measure and moderation. An echo, however, of the old view persists also in the Phrygian's sketch of Pylades as the true aristocratic φίλος (1405f): πιστὸς δὲ φίλοις· θρασοῦς εἰς ἀλκάν, ξυνετὸς πολέμου, φόνιός τε δράκων. It is particularly significant that in a description with an archaic flavor, the adjective ξυνετός indicates one of the elements of φιλία.³³

Thus despite exceptional usage in Euripides, it seems clear that *synetos* is traditionally identified with a social group. As an alter-

³¹ V. Di Benedetto, *Euripides, Orestes* [Florence 1965] 209: "Nell' *Oreste* i contadini sono visti soprattutto in termini di contrapposizione ai demogoghi." The old man who reports the debate and who shows εὐνοίαν towards Orestes and Electra also comes from the countryside (866ff). Though a peasant, he is γενναῖον in χρῆσθαι ... φίλοις. *Synetos* thus does not convey here an intellectual quality, but rather a particular political and ethical outlook. Euripides implies that although *synesis* cannot be attributed on the basis of class, the man who is *synetos* acts in accordance with a particular code of political behavior. This political connotation can also be perceived in Tyndareus' reproach to Orestes for being ἀσυνετώτερος, because Orestes despises the right and the Greek κοινὸν νόμον (491–95). Since Tyndareus measures an act of injustice in terms of lack of *synesis*, such a statement cannot be in any sense a simple assertion of foolishness; *synesis* then must be linked to a specific political and social ethic (cf. *Phoin.* 1726f, οὐχ ὄρα Δίκα κακούς, οὐδ' ἀμείβεται βροτῶν ἀσυνεσίας; and fr.645.4f N.: ἢ τάρᾳ θνητῶν εἰσιν ἀσυνετώτεροι ἢ τὰπεικῆ πρόσθεν ἡγούνηται δίκης).

³² Cf. Di Benedetto (*supra* n.31) 208f.

³³ Cf. n.23 *supra*.

native to words like *καλός*, *ἀγαθός*, *φίλος*,³⁴ it expresses a specific characteristic of ‘intelligence’, or more precisely an ‘ethical intelligence’. The historical origins of this sense of *synetos* lie in the archaic period and reflect the political crisis of the aristocrats. Its hegemony reduced in political terms, the aristocracy proclaims its superiority in moral and intellectual terms, as Theognis and later Pindar testify. *Synetos* asserts the identity of social aristocracy and aristocracy of the intellect: class identity is expressed in terms of sharing the same intellectual experience.³⁵ The word thus marks semantic intersection of two categories that are not necessarily related but are thought to be: mental and moral attitude and membership in a social class.³⁶

The aristocracy employs its cultural prerogatives to confirm the exclusiveness of its ‘intelligence’. If one accepts that native intelligence can be improved upon by a specific educational process, it is no surprise that aristocrats, who alone had this privilege, could with reason call themselves the *synetoi*. Education takes on a symbolic value, becoming a social ‘sign’, a status

³⁴ In Plato too the old aristocratic connotation of *synesis* is still alive. In the category of τὰ καλὰ ὀνόματα (*Cra.* 411A–12C), *synesis* is closely linked to the aristocrats’ ethical virtues. Socrates assembles under τὰ καλὰ ὀνόματα words such as ἀρετή, σύνεσις, δικαιοσύνη, “and all the others of the same kind” that are opposed to the φαῦλον γένος ὀνομάτων. This opposition καλὸν ~ φαῦλον γένος is quite remarkable, particularly because Socrates, in the course of his analysis, adds to the list σωφροσύνη, ἀγαθόν, and σοφία. What makes these words καλὰ is their coded representation of the aristocratic claim. Plato specifies, intentionally or unintentionally, a word field: a καλὸν γένος that gathers linguistic stereotypes, *semata* of a social stereotype. On Plato’s attitude towards the aristocratic ethical view cf. Rose (*supra* n.27) 96f: “The ethical values and ‘skills’ with which Plato’s pupils were to be indoctrinated have the same names as the old heroic virtue celebrated in Pindar....”

³⁵ Cf. Donlan 127ff, 153, 155–77.

³⁶ Pindar provides a good example, equating the readmission of the exiled Damophilus into the social fabric with his participation in the banquet by playing the lyre (*Pyth.* 4.295f): ἐν τε σοφοῖς δαιδαλέαν φόρμιγγα βαστάζω πολίταις ἡσυχίᾳ θιγέμεν. This equivalence of the acquisition of his right place in the society and the performance of a poetic *sophia* gives a special value to the latter, as if it were a class attribute. Cf. Ar. *Frogs* 727–30: τῶν πολιτῶν θ’ οἷς μὲν ἴσμεν εὐγενεῖς καὶ σῶφρονας ἄνδρας ὄντας καὶ δικαίους καὶ καλοὺς τε κάγαθούς καὶ τραφέντας ἐν παλαιστραῖς καὶ χοροῖς καὶ μουσικῇ. Cf. Connor (*supra* n.23) 190–93 for the interpretation of these verses. On the significance of the banquet see D. B. Levine, “Symposium and the Polis,” in Figueira and Nagy (*supra* n.13) 176–96. Cf. *Il.* 9.186, φρένα τερπόμενον φόρμιγγι λιγείη; 189, τῇ ὃ γε θυμὸν ἔτερπεν, ἄειδε δ’ ἄρα κλέα ἀνδρῶν, where Achilles, the perfect young aristocrat, plays the *phorminx*.

symbol, signifying membership in a selected group and opposition to those outside it; and *synetos* emphasizes this privileged cultural 'skill'. By the time of Aristophanes, this status is threatened by a new form of *synesis*—the new education offered by the sophists.³⁷ The evidence of the *Frogs* might lead one to believe that the older *synesis* had disappeared. On the contrary, it persisted through the period of the Peloponnesian War, as the following discussion will show.

II. Thucydides

Thucydides often employs *synesis* and *synetos* to refer to political and strategic intelligence strictly relating to a knowledge of possible consequences and future events.³⁸ Elsewhere *synesis* is applied to quite different people and situations; but an analysis of the context in each case will indicate when and how it is used according to the aristocratic code.³⁹

The aristocratic background of the word is clearly evident in the Sicilian demagogue Athenagoras' defense of democracy against certain unnamed opponents (6.39.1f): "There are people who will say that democracy is neither an intelligent (ξυνετόν) nor a fair (ἴσον) system, and that those who have the money are also the best rulers. But I say, first, that what is meant by the *demos*, or people, is the whole (ξύμπαν) State, whereas an oligarchy is only a section of the State; and I say next that though the rich are the best people for looking after money, the best counsellors are the intelligent (τοὺς ξυνετούς), and that it is the many (τοὺς πολλούς) who are the best at listening to the different arguments and judging between them. And all alike, whether taken all together or as a separate class, have equal rights in a democracy."⁴⁰

³⁷ Cf. Rose (*supra* n.27) 86ff, esp. 87f: "Rather than attacking the pretensions of the aristocrats, they chose to set them in a new context which stressed the need for the noble *physis* to be supplemented by *paideia*."

³⁸ Cf. L. Edmunds, "Thucydides' Ethics as Reflected in the Description of Stasis (3.82–83)," *HSCP* 79 (1975) 73–92 at 80ff with n.22 for bibliography.

³⁹ Cf. P. Huart, *Le vocabulaire de l'analyse psychologique dans l'oeuvre de Thucydide* (Paris 1968) 279–90. The only two examples of the word's use for a practical skill are at 1.84.3, 142.8.

⁴⁰ R. Warner, tr., *Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War* (Harmondsworth 1954) 435f. All quotations are from this translation.

The criticism of democracy at the beginning of this passage can only come from aristocratic circles, where those who rule are the ‘rich’ or the ‘intelligent’: for there is no longer a sharp distinction between two groups, which are considered—as already in Pindar—as an *unicum*.⁴¹ Democracy is not *ξυνετόν*, because those who rule are neither ‘intelligent’ nor ‘rich’. Athenagoras, in his effort to demonstrate the advantages of democracy,⁴² reports an argument of its opponents in which ‘intelligence’ hints at their code of values.⁴³ οἱ πολλοί, who have the last and decisive word in democracy, lack intelligence, for they lack that kind of education and culture of which *synesis* is the result.⁴⁴ Democracy cannot offer *synesis* in principle, since its constitutional form denies the predominance of those who are *synetoi*; it is in fact opposed to their interests and their values.⁴⁵ The political implication of the adjective *ξυνετόν* is clear.⁴⁶

These examples show that *synetos* is not a simple adjective referring to mental ability; Athenagoras appropriates the term for οἱ πολλοί in a clear criticism of the aristocratic code. There are, however, cases in which the word is used with less obvious implications.

⁴¹ Figueira (*supra* n.7: esp. 450–56) considers such a distinction based on wealth and inherited status within the system of the nine archons at Athens.

⁴² Donlan emphasizes (142) the “weakness of the Sicilian’s rebuttal of this doctrine”; *cf.* his n.38: “Nor, as a matter of fact, does he refute the claim to superiority based on the wisdom of the upper class—the many are implicitly contrasted with the wise counsellors, their role is merely to listen and to vote.”

⁴³ In a different historical context Demodocus of Mytilene comments (fr.1 Gentili/Prato): “The Mytilenians are not *ἀξύνετοι* but they act as if they were such” (δρῶσιν δ’ οἷά περ *ἀξύνετοι*). In other fragments he employs vocabulary typical of the aristocratic code: *κακοὶ ἄνδρες* (fr.4), *Χῖοι κακοί* (fr.3) and *Καππαδόκαι φαῦλοι ... κέρδους δ’ εἵνεκα φαυλότατοι* (fr.6).

⁴⁴ Alcibiades defines the political and social structure in terms of intellectual shrewdness, stating (6.18.6) that a *polis* needs three kinds of people in order to obtain the greatest strength and safety: “the inferior types, the middle types, the profoundly calculating types” (τὸ τε φαῦλον, τὸ μέσον, τὸ πάνυ ἀκριβές).

⁴⁵ At the end of the speech, Athenagoras invites the *demos* not to appear *ἀξυνετώτατοι* (6.40.1): almost an exhortation to the *demos* to avoid looking more “foolish” than the aristocrats think it already does.

⁴⁶ An explicit correspondence between intelligence and the reward of power in Aesop *Fab.* 109 Hausrath-Hunger: Zeus gives the fox τὸ βασιλείον over τῶν ἀλόγων ζώων because he loved τὸ συνετόν τῶν φρένων καὶ τὸ ποικίλον of the fox.

In attacking the critics of his decision on Mytilene (3.37.3), Cleon opposes the φαυλότεροι to the ξυνετώτεροι. The former, as he explains, are more clever at administering the polis, while the ξυνετώτεροι want to appear wiser than the law. The φαυλότεροι are less confident in their ξύνεσις and are indeed uneducated, but they preserve an ignorant prudence (ἀμαθία μετὰ σωφροσύνης) and are quicker to admit to being less wise than the laws (ἀμαθέστεροι). In this case the “more intelligent” are his very opponents. Cleon ends (3.37.5) by saying that speakers before the assembly should not be motivated by “intelligent shrewdness” and “competition for intelligence” (*synesis*).⁴⁷ *Synetoι* are characterized by a particular intellectual conceit because of their education, and this conceit moulds their political behavior.⁴⁸

Cleon’s use of *synetos* can be elucidated by comparison with Archidamus’ speech at 1.84.3: “And we are wise (εὐβουλοί) because we are not so highly educated (παιδευόμενοι) as to look down upon our laws and customs, and are too rigorously trained in self-control (σωφρονέστερον) to be able to disobey them. We are trained to avoid being too clever (ξυνετοὶ ἄγαν) in matters that are of no use (τὰ ἀχρεῖα)—such as being able to produce an excellent reasoning about one’s enemies’ dispositions, and then failing in practice (ἔργῳ) to do quite well against them.” Cleon exploits a connection between too much education and disregard for laws. Both Cleon and Archidamus express the same proud disdain for too much *synesis*; both identify *synesis* with an intellectual cleverness pursued with rhetorical, hence political, skill. Cleon seems to allude to a competition among demagogues to gain the *demos*’ favor by using the subtle art of persuasion; Archidamus, in his opposition of λόγος to ἔργον, ironically hints that such competition is the basic element of democracy. There is, however, an important difference between their views. While Cleon attacks the *synetoι in toto*, Archidamus is critical of those *synetoι* who do not apply their intelligence in an effective way. His criticism is less radical than Cleon’s. For him, therefore, *synesis* is circumstantially negative but not objectionable as a whole.

⁴⁷ On the anti-intellectualism of Cleon’s words cf. Connor (*supra* n.23) 95, 167f.

⁴⁸ Cf. 4.10.1, where ξυνετός implies moderate reasoning.

The context of the speech is the debate at Sparta of 432, where Archidamus is responding to the Athenians' accusations. The Athenian delegation, reminding the audience of their achievements during the Persian War, and in particular at Salamis, boasts that they provided the στρατηγὸς ξυνετώτατος, Themistocles (1.74.1). In the same context, the Athenians are proud of their *synesis* (1.75.1) because of their successful intervention against the Persians.⁴⁹ This Athenian praise implies that the Spartan audience would not have considered *synesis* a totally negative quality. *Synesis* here is an important element of their strategy of persuasion.⁵⁰ But having *synesis* in Sparta must be different from having *synesis* in Athens, in quality and in use. The Spartans and the Athenians share a word but not the value it implies.

Archidamus' speech illustrates what a *synetos* should not be, but we still lack a positive definition of the term. If we compare

⁴⁹ Here *synesis* is associated with *gnome*. Cf. L. Edmunds, *Chance and Intelligence in Thucydides* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1975) 9f.

⁵⁰ As C. Perelman has shown (*L'empire rhétorique. Rhétorique et argumentation* [Paris 1977] 35–45), the goal of the argumentation is not to prove the truth of the conclusions by means of the premises, but rather to transfer to the conclusions the agreement already obtained in the premises. The common premise here is, of course, *synesis*. A counterpart to this rhetorical use of *synesis* is offered after the Athenian success at Pylos in 425: "And do not listen [Athenians] to what we have to say in a hostile spirit or imagine that we think you are ignorant and are trying to lecture you" (4.17.3, μηδ' ὡς ἀξύνετοι διδασκόμενοι). The Spartans must persuade the Athenians to return their men. Therefore, probably against their will, they grant them *synesis*. It is significant that the Spartans assume a link between being *axynetoi* and the need of being taught. Evidently there is still an explicit connection between *synesis* and education. Perhaps the Spartans are here saying one thing and implying something else. If the Athenians want to boast of *synesis*, they should try to please them. Nevertheless this does not exclude that they think that the Athenians' *synesis* is something different. In fact at 6.76.4 the Spartans, defining the Athenian empire, say: δεσπότην ... οὐκ ἀξυνετωτέρου, κακοξυνετωτέρου δέ. The Athenian power does not lack intelligence, but has a bad kind of intelligence. The Spartans grant *synesis* to the Athenian policy but it is the ethical referent of the word which is different. An analogous case of persuasion occurs at 4.85.6: Brasidas reproaches the Acanthians for having failed to welcome the Spartans into the town, even though πόλιν ἀξιόχρεων παρεχομένους καὶ ξύνεσιν δοκοῦντας ἔχειν. Brasidas emphasizes *synesis* as the common virtue by which the Acanthians should allow them to enter their city. Brasidas, in a sort of *captatio benevolentiae*, recognizes the "intelligence" of his audience. His rhetorical strategy is complex. Thucydides remarks ἦν δὲ οὐδὲ ἀδύνατος, ὡς Λακεδαιμόνιος, εἰπεῖν (4.84.2).

the accusation against democracy in Athenagoras' speech with Cleon's connection between the positive value of a lack of *synesis* and lack of education (ἀμαθία, ἀμαθέστεροι), it becomes clear that Cleon implicitly endows the term with its traditional aristocratic meaning.⁵¹ In these contexts, the word indicates the way in which individuals or groups positioned themselves within the polis or in relation to the decisions that had to be made in the polis. In a changing cultural and political background, the word is a relic of a specific way of thinking and of representing the world. The *synetoi* are a social group with precise 'ethical' views, and the word still recalls the aristocratic code of values. Archidamus, therefore, must be thinking about this type of *synetoi* as the object of Cleon's attack. What looked like an intriguing agreement between two different personalities is actually an artfully conceived interplay of different attitudes.

Pericles offers another paradoxical use of the word showing how it preserves its traditional meaning: "And when the chances on both sides are equal, it is intelligence (ἡ ξύνεσις) that confirms courage (τὴν τόλμαν)—the intelligence that makes one able to look down on one's opponent" (2.62.5, cf. 65.1). Elsewhere in Thucydides, however, τόλμα can be a vice (3.82.4).⁵² Snell has shown that *synesis* is opposed by Pindar to τόλμα.⁵³ But in Pericles' words, *synesis* is not only associated with τόλμα but is its source. This apparent contradiction may be explained by the particular moment at which the speech takes place. Pericles in fact gives this speech after the plague, when he is trying to reconcile himself with, and to encourage, the *demos*. All his language is paradoxical, showing the rhetorical mechanism of strong effects and emotions. Pericles is intentionally changing the meaning of the word. This change involves the dissolution of an opposition: the association of these two antithetical words produces an oxymoron, an intellectual paradox that goes beyond the *communis opinio* and

⁵¹ Donlan (148f) sees in Cleon's words an attempt to show that the *demos* is actually the repository "of the qualities claimed by the upper class."

⁵² Cf. Edmunds (*supra* n.38) 76–79.

⁵³ *Nem.* 7.60; fr.231; Snell (*supra* n.9) 55; cf. Thuc. 6.36.1, where Athenagoras establishes the opposition ἀξυνεσία ~ τόλμα. Cf. also Eur. fr.552.1f N.: πόττερα γενέσθαι δῆτα χρησιμώτερον συνετὸν ἄτολμον ἢ θρασύν τε κάμαθῆ. τόλμα is contrasted with σωφροσύνη in Thucydides: see Edmunds (*supra* n.38) 80 n.22.

probably Pericles' too.⁵⁴ Pericles thus knows the ethical implications of *synesis*. In spite of this awareness, he credits democratic Athens, as did the Athenians at Sparta, with a virtue that seems by definition to be aristocratic.

In all the Thucydidean cases so far considered, the word appears in speeches, where speakers may give different meanings to the same term.⁵⁵ There are, however, cases in which Thucydides himself uses the word. He attributes the quality of *synesis* to a group of historical characters, some of whom, apparently, have little in common: Archidamus (1.79.2), Hermocrates (6.72.2), Brasidas (4.81.2), Theseus (2.15.2), the Pisistratids (6.54.5), Phrynichus (8.27.5), the oligarchs of the 400 (8.68.4). The first three characters, however, are related to one another by their common 'Spartan' roots.⁵⁶ Archidamus is the king of Sparta, καὶ ξυνετός ... καὶ σώφρων (1.79.2): he is not only intelligent but also moderate. Such an association, at least here, equates *synesis* with a quality typical of a conservative and traditional way of thinking: σωφροσύνη.⁵⁷ The plain sense of 'intelligence', then, is extended by the additional nuance of a

⁵⁴ The rhetorical figure of paradox is typical of the *acutum dicendi genus*. This kind of speech uses all those rhetorical means which produce an intellectual confusion. A speaker who uses this kind of figure must believe that the audience is intelligent (*synetos*) enough to grasp the difference between the paradox and the common meaning; otherwise there is no such effect. Pericles' paradox is complex: he must keep the demos *asynetos*, unaware of the intellectual joke, in order to reach persuasion. But in spite of that, he and a part of his audience as well had to be accomplices to this rhetorical deceit. Cf. H. Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik* (Munich 1960) §64.3ff.

⁵⁵ Very often Thucydides makes different characters reuse the same words with a different meaning, alluding to these possible different senses. His style is not simply an impartial historical narration but a rhetorical construction in which different characters speak the same language and use the same judgments with a different value. An example is Athenagoras, who blames the ἄξυνεσία of those who, like Hermocrates, oppose Athens (6.35.1), while Hermocrates is *synetos* for Thucydides (6.72.2). Cf. also G. Caiani, "Nicia e Alcibiade. Il dibattito sull' ἄρχή alle soglie della spedizione in Sicilia. Analisi lessicale di Thuc. VI 9–18," *StIt* 44 (1972) 145–83.

⁵⁶ On Thucydides' attitude towards the Spartan manner and his praise of its moderation cf. L. Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago 1964) esp. 145–54; but see W. R. Connor, *Thucydides* (Princeton 1984) esp. 36–51, 126–40, 176–80, 231–42, for his more complex and controversial disposition towards the characters and their political views.

⁵⁷ The Spartans imply that εὐξυνετώτερον can be shown only by those who are already *sophrones*: 4.18.4.

conservative virtue. It is not by chance that such a combination occurs in a Spartan who is politically conservative.⁵⁸ Thucydides believes that Brasidas' ἀρετὴ καὶ ξύνεσις (4.81.2) were the main cause of a pro-Spartan feeling among the Athenian allies after the Sicilian expedition. Thucydides also states that it was his reputation for being ἀγαθός that allowed him to gain good will κατὰ πάντα (81.3). The adverb specifies that Brasidas' popularity also won over many who were against Sparta. His *synesis*, therefore, is a quality widely admired.

The Syracusan Hermocrates is said to be ἀνὴρ καὶ ἐς τὰλλα ξύνεσιν οὐδενὸς λειπόμενος (6.72.2). Thucydides has this strong opponent of Athens express his hostility in terms of racial and cultural difference. Explaining his distrust of the Athenian manoeuvres, he draws attention to the Syracusans' distance from those who had accepted Athenian rule with the statement, Δωριῆς ἐλεύθεροι ἀπ' αὐτονόμου τῆς Πελοποννήσου τὴν Σικελίαν οἰκοῦντες (6.77.1). This refusal of possible Athenian control is expressed not only in political terms, but also with a strong assertion of a kinship that lies rather with the Dorians.

If in these three cases, we allow to 'Spartan' not just a geographical or racial definition, but also an ethical and political emphasis, we may link to these examples several further characters. Phrynichus is the commander of the Athenian fleet during the year of the Persian intervention in 411. Thucydides praises Phrynichus as *synetos*, reporting his decision not to confront the Peloponnesian fleet during a military operation against Miletus: οὐκ ἐς τοῦτο μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐς ὅσα ἄλλα Φρύνιχος κατέστη, οὐκ ἀξύνετος εἶναι (8.27.5). Phrynichus' case might seem contradictory in that he is a general of democratic Athens. But although the reference here is to his particular strategic ability, Thucydides specifies that his *synesis* is not limited to his strategy. All the other references to Phrynichus are to his oligarchic political involvement: the phrase ἐς ὅσα ἄλλα Φρύνιχος κατέστη must refer to political offices he might have held.⁵⁹ Phrynichus is οὐκ ἀξύνετος because of his

⁵⁸ Cf. Edmunds (*supra* n.38) 80.

⁵⁹ Thucydides' further information on Phrynichus is in fact concentrated on his part in the oligarchic coup of 411: ὁ Φρύνιχος ἑαυτὸν πάντων διαφερόντως προθυμώτατον ἐς τὴν ὀλιγαρχίαν (8.68.3). Emphasizing Phrynichus' faith

enthusiastic adherence to the oligarchy. The use of οὐκ ἀξύνετος implies the system of values of which Phrynichus' choice is almost an inevitable result. Consequently, Phrynichus is close to Archidamus, Brasidas, and Hermocrates, and *synetos* as applied to him does have a traditional and conservative nuance.

An analogous usage appears in the case of the 400. Thucydides addresses the oligarchs of 411, those men who deprived the Athenian people of their freedom one hundred years after the expulsion of the tyrants, as ἀνδρῶν πολλῶν καὶ ξυνετῶν (8.68.4). *Synetos* here is virtually synonymous with 'oligarch', describing those who act according to a conservative bias.⁶⁰

The traditional meanings of *synesis* and *synetos* are seen also in two other examples. First, though the Pisistratids are τύραννοι, Thucydides believes they had *synesis*, for τὰ δὲ ἄλλα αὐτῇ ἢ πόλις τοῖς πρὶν κειμένοις νόμοις ἐχρῆτο, πλὴν καθ' ὅσον αἰεὶ τινα ἐπεμέλοντο σφῶν αὐτῶν ἐν ταῖς ἀρχαῖς εἶναι (6.54.6). Their personal power was not a traditional aristocratic or oligarchic form of government; that they left the laws of the polis unchanged clearly defines the nature of their government as traditionally moderate.

Second, in explaining the early political organization of Attica, Thucydides attributes to Theseus the unification of the separate councils and governments of small cities into the central government in Athens. In this decisive action, Theseus proved to be both *synetos* and powerful: γενόμενος μετὰ τοῦ ξυνετοῦ καὶ δυνατός (2.15.2). It is unlikely that these are casual attributes. Theseus was a prominent figure in oligarchic propaganda, used in opposition to Heracles, who had been associated

in oligarchy, Thucydides adds that once he had joined this movement, he was πρὸς τὰ δεινὰ ... φερεγγυώτατος, "the most dependable" (68.3). In 8.90.1 Phrynichus is among the leaders of the 400, who were particularly opposed to democracy: οἱ δὲ τῶν τετρακοσίων μάλιστα ἐναντίοι ὄντες τῷ τοιοῦτῳ εἶδει (i.e. democracy) καὶ προεστῶτες Φρύνιχος τε.

⁶⁰ On this point the account in *Ath. Pol.* is close to Thucydides'. In this version Peisander, Antiphon, and Theramenes are called ἀνδρῶν καὶ γεγεννημένων εὖ καὶ συνέσει καὶ γνώμῃ δοκούντων διαφέρειν (32.2). In *Ath. Pol.* *synesis* is thus associated with 'good birth'. Phrynichus' name is not on this list, but P. J. Rhodes (*A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* [Oxford 1981] *ad loc.*) believes that the omission is due to a copyist's error.

iconographically with Pisistratus.⁶¹ It has been argued that the festival of the Synoikia, which Thucydides subsequently mentions as instituted after this reorganization, has “an aristocratic appearance.”⁶² Theseus may have been called *synetos* not simply because of the foresight of his decision, but also to evoke the aristocratic association of his mythological *persona*.

In these examples, it may be argued that *synesis* and *synetos* are in fact consistent with the ethical outlook of these individuals.⁶³ Only two other *synetoi* are apparently remote from this group: Themistocles and Pericles.

At 1.138.2f Thucydides enthusiastically attributes *synesis* to Themistocles. This *synesis* is political ability wedded to an acute foresight. The most admirable (ἄξιος θαυμάσαι) aspect of Themistocles’ *synesis* is its unlearned character (οἰκεία γὰρ ξυνέσει καὶ οὔτε προμαθῶν ἐς αὐτὴν οὐδὲν οὔτ’ ἐπιμαθῶν). Unlike Cleon, who had generally asserted that the ἀξυνετώτεροι were uneducated, Thucydides finds in Themistocles an instance of an uncultivated *synetos*. Still, he does not so much contradict Cleon’s point as strengthen it, emphasizing the paradoxical nature of this characteristic. Themistocles is not the scion of an aristocratic family. Although he was not given an aristocratic upbringing and did not receive the education that produces *synesis*, he was nevertheless *synetos*. Themistocles is the exception to the rule.

Thucydides also refers to Pericles as *synetos*, describing him as someone chosen by the city who ἂν γνώμη τε δοκῆ μη ἀξύνετος εἶναι καὶ ἀξιώσει προήκη (2.34.6). 2.65 is dedicated to praising his πρόνοια ... ἐς τὸν πόλεμον. πρόνοια, understood as strategic intelligence and sharp foresight, is a quality equivalent to *synesis*. It has been argued elsewhere that Thucydides’ appreciation of Pericles has a quite strong aristocratic bias. Notwith-

⁶¹ J. Boardman, “Herakles, Peisistratos, and Sons,” *RA* (1972) 57–72, and “Herakles, Peisistratos and Eleusis,” *JHS* 95 (1975) 1–12; K. Schefold, “Kleisthenes,” *MusHelv* 3 (1946) 59–93.

⁶² Figueira (*supra* n.7) 465f.

⁶³ In all these examples the traditional value of the word is also preserved because of the aristocratic birth of the characters. In the case of the Pisistratids cf. [Pl.] *Hipparch*. 228c.

standing his leadership of the democracy, Pericles is *synetos*, for his *ethos* is aristocratic.⁶⁴

In addition to these examples, Thucydides uses the word ξύνεσις/ξυνετός three times in the description of *stasis* (3.82f). At 3.83.3f he distinguishes two separate categories of behavior:

As a rule those who were least remarkable for intelligence (φαυλότεροι) showed the greater power of survival. Such people recognized their own deficiencies and the superior intelligence (τὸ ξυνετόν) of their opponents; fearing that they might lose a debate or find themselves out-manoeuvred in intrigue by their quick-witted enemies, they boldly launched straight into action; while their opponents, over-confident in the belief that they would see what was happening in advance (καταφρονοῦντες), and not thinking it necessary to seize by force what they could secure by policy, were the more easily destroyed because they were off their guard.

The coincidence of καταφρονοῦντες and those who have τὸ ξυνετόν is evident. A scholiast at 3.83.4 explains οἱ καταφρονοῦντες as “those who seemed to be συνετοί and were confident they would prevail with the help of their shrewdness, without need of force, where they could succeed by skill, were

⁶⁴ On the particular nature of Thucydides' admiration for Pericles cf. L. Edmunds and R. Martin, “Thucydides 2.65.8: ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΩΣ,” *HSCP* 81 (1977) 187–93, who argue that Thucydides' praise of Pericles should not be equated with his possible conversion to democracy. Rather, Pericles' rule must be regarded as the aristocratic side of the Athenian constitution. The other ancient author who mentions Pericles' *synesis* is Demosthenes (*Erot.* 2), who says that Pericles exceeded in *synesis* all people of his age, having gained it at the school of Anaxagoras of Clazomenae. This last example clearly shows an ideological evolution in the interpretation of the word. Demosthenes makes *synesis* no longer an inherited aristocratic virtue, but something more ‘democratic’ that can be taught. Cf. this ‘sophistic’ tendency at *Erot.* 1: “The writer wishes to praise Ephicrates who was according to his judgment the most fascinating among πολλῶν καὶ καλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν ὄντων νέων, surpassing all the people of his age more in συνέσει than in the beauty of his body.” The *synesis* of this καλὸς κάγαθός must come from schooling as distinguished from aristocratic acculturation. Thucydides is aware of the sophistic character of Pericles' intelligence (cf. Edmunds [*supra* n.49] 13f). But if *synesis* is no longer a prerogative of an aristocratic education, it still signifies a political attitude of moderation and prudence typical of the conservative approach more common among aristocrats or oligarchs. For Demosthenes, instead, *synesis* does not have any strict connotation of class, since it can be acquired by anyone at school. Cf. n.27 *supra*.

destroyed defenseless.” Since Thucydides is generalizing we cannot say whether these were oligarchs. But he does state a political attitude in terms of “intelligence,” which marks a particular *praxis*. The general tone of the narrative does not hint at an ironic awareness of the class valence of the term but rather at the confusion of language created by *stasis*.

In spite of their positive original meaning, *synesis* and *synetos* can also be used with other associations, producing an ethical equivocation. A clear example occurs at 3.83.7. Thucydides declares that “a victory won by treachery gave one a title for superior intelligence. And indeed most people are more ready to call villainy cleverness than simple-mindedness honesty.” In the same context, at 3.82.5, the man who succeeds by plotting (ἐπιβουλεύσας δέ τις τυχών) is *synetos*. The change in the customary vocabulary of praise and blame has modified the semantic value of the word. At 3.82.4, τὸ πρὸς ἅπαν ζυνητόν is a positive quality that then becomes a vice: “one totally unfitted for action” (ἐπὶ πᾶν ἀργόν). Thucydides seems to distinguish between those who are really *synetoi* and those who confuse *synesis* with low cunning. This semantic ambiguity is a product of connotative variation. Like other words, *synesis* no longer retains its old-fashioned ethical implications.⁶⁵

Thus it is quite evident that *synetos* in Thucydides does not always have a neutral connotation, but may in fact be regarded as another catchword for conservative factions in Athens.⁶⁶ Nonetheless it remains difficult to ascertain whether Thucydides’ usage implies his own ideological assent to the aristocratic flavor of *synetos* in his characters’ use of the term. It is clear, however, that in general *synetos* retains a particular ideological sense in very different historical periods. Propaganda is often expressed through catchwords. *Synetos* is one of these, conveying the self-representation of a particular group. Its special

⁶⁵ J. T. Hogan, “The ἀξίωσις of Words at Thucydides 3.82.4,” *GRBS* 21 (1980) 139–49, argues that *stasis* entails a semantic revolution in the system of values. The traditional vocabulary of praise and blame is used with a different connotation; the terminology is the same but the categories of judgment are transformed. Cf. also N. Loraux, “Thucydide et la sédition dans les mots,” *QuadStor* 23 (1986) 105, 114.

⁶⁶ Cf. A. J. Graham and G. Forsythe, “A New Slogan for Oligarchy in Thucydides III.82.8,” *HSCP* 88 (1984) 25–45, on προτιμήσει.

connotation survived even among those who were no longer authentic aristocrats but still wished to be identified with the old group and its values.⁶⁷

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