

## VALUATION DRIFTS, MEANING ENDURES: THUCYDIDES 3.82.4\*

### ABSTRACT

*Arguing against the long-standing belief that Thuc. 3.82.4 refers to words changing their meanings, this article shows that, according to the passage, the way in which people value actions and apply value-words to actions in peace differs from how they value and apply value-words to the same types of actions in stasis. But the meaning of the value-words themselves remains the same in both circumstances. The passage is about neither meaning nor the propagandistic manipulation of language but about the distorting effect of stasis on the moral assessment of actions.*

**Keywords:** Thucydides; meaning; reference; value; *stasis*; rational impairment

καὶ τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν τῇ δικαιοῦσει is a famous passage of Thucydides (3.82.4), ‘the *stasis*-passage’, which established translations have misunderstood; for a list of translations (henceforth, T1, T2, and so on), see Appendix I below. In what follows, I would like (1) to show that the traditional translation of this passage is inconsistent with its textual context, and (2) to clarify what the passage means and implies. Some interpreters have already noticed, rightly, that the passage cannot be about meaning.<sup>1</sup> However, I argue that they do not fully appreciate the way in which the passage is about value. In my view, the passage is about how the same people value the same type of action and attitude differently in different circumstances, in peace and in *stasis*.

### (1)

Some translators have taken the *stasis*-passage to imply that words change their meanings in times of *stasis*. Jowett, for instance, translated: ‘The meaning of words had no longer the same relation to things, but was changed by them as they thought proper’ (T1).<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Crawley translated: ‘Words had to change their ordinary meaning and to take that which was now given them’ (T2).<sup>3</sup> In the same spirit, Foster substitutes ‘meaning’ for ‘acceptation’ (the recognized meaning of a word),

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<sup>1</sup> See J.T. Hogan, ‘The ἀξίωσις of words at Thucydides 3.82.4’, *GRBS* 21 (1980), 139–50; J. Wilson, ‘“The customary meanings of words were changed” – or were they? A note on Thucydides 3.82.4’, *CQ* 32 (1982), 18–20.

<sup>2</sup> B. Jowett, *Thucydides, Translated into English with Introduction, Marginal Analysis, Notes and Indices in Two Volumes* (Oxford, 1881).

<sup>3</sup> R. Crawley, *Thucydides. The Peloponnesian War* (London and New York, 1910).

translating: ‘the ordinary acceptance of words in their relation to things was changed as men thought fit’ (T3).<sup>4</sup>

Such translations follow Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who, finding Thucydides’ style at this point obfuscating and sensational (*Thuc.* 29.24–34), took the *stasis*-passage to claim: ‘As they changed the words usually said of things, people thought it fit to call [things] in a different way’.<sup>5</sup> According to Dionysius, the passage speaks about changing the words people customarily apply to things and changing the way in which people call things. Along these lines, the scholia take Thucydides to use ἄξιωσιν as signifying either σημασίαν (meaning)<sup>6</sup> or τῶν ὀνομάτων χρῆσιν (word-use)<sup>7</sup> or just τὰ ὀνόματα (words).<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, this reading faces textual and lexical difficulties. I shall begin by (1.1) clarifying what change of meaning or semantic drift is. This will allow me to explain (1.2) why these translations and semantic drifts are incompatible with the textual context of the *stasis*-passage and (1.3) precisely where the translations go wrong. In (2), I elucidate the *stasis*-passage.

### (1.1)

One textual difficulty is that the notion of ‘change of meaning’ is inconsistent with the context of the *stasis*-passage.<sup>9</sup> When Dionysius says ‘as they changed the words usually said of things, people thought it fit to call [things] in a different way’, he seems to imply that people changed the words they used to name things. Let us name this linguistic phenomenon ‘word change’: *Given an item x, at a time T<sup>1</sup> a word N<sup>1</sup> means x; and at a time T<sup>2</sup>, N<sup>2</sup> (and not N<sup>1</sup>) means x.* In Dionysius’ reading, we have an item x and two names, N<sup>1</sup> and N<sup>2</sup>. Item x remains invariable. However, the name that names x

<sup>4</sup> C. Foster Smith, *Thucydides* (Cambridge, MA and London, 1958).

<sup>5</sup> τὰ τε εἰωθότα ὀνόματα ἐπὶ τοῖς πράγμασι λέγεσθαι μετατιθέντες ἄλλως ἤξιουν αὐτὰ καλεῖν (29.30–1). I follow the Latin translation published by I.I. Reiske (ed.), *Dionysii Halicarnassensis opera omnia Graece et Latine* (Leipzig, 1777), 6: ‘Quae vero vulgo rebus vocabula tribuebantur, ea ipsi immutantes, alia nomina rebus imposuerunt.’ This takes Dionysius to pair Thucydides’ ‘words’ (ὀνομάτων) with ‘things’ (τὰ ἔργα). W.K. Pritchett, *On Thucydides* (Berkeley, 1975), 23, however, pairs ‘words’ (ὀνομάτων) with ‘deeds’ (τὰ ἔργα): ‘changing the names as ordinarily applied to acts, they claimed the right to call them by other names’. On the pairing of words with things or deeds/actions, see (1.3) below. On Dionysius’ criticism of Thucydides’ style, see J.G.A. Ross, *Die Metabolē (Variatio) als Stilprinzip des Thukydides* (Amsterdam, 1968), 49–68; R. Hunter, ‘Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the idea of the critic’, in id. and C.C. de Jonge (edd.), *Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Augustan Rome: Rhetoric, Criticism and Historiography* (Cambridge, 2019), 37–55.

<sup>6</sup> “ἄξιωσιν” μὲν τὴν σημασίαν εἶπε ... Φ(MFφC<sup>3</sup>PI<sup>2</sup>) βούλεται δὲ εἰπεῖν, ὅτι μετέθεσαν τὰ ὀνόματα. οὐ γὰρ, ὡς νενομίστο πρόσθεν, ἐχρῶντο κατὰ τῶν πραγμάτων, ἀλλὰ μεθῆρμοσαν κατὰ τὴν εαυτῶν κρίσιν ... Φ(FφC<sup>3</sup>PI<sup>2</sup>); from A. Kleinlogel and K. Alpers, *Scholia Graeca in Thucydidem, Scholia vetustiora et lexicon Thucydidium Patmense* (Berlin and Boston, 2019), 666.

<sup>7</sup> τὴν κειμένην, φησί, τῶν ὀνομάτων χρῆσιν ἀντήλλαξαν Θ(C ABFM PIUD), Kleinlogel and Alpers (n. 6), 666.

<sup>8</sup> περιφραστικῶς ἀντὶ τοῦ εἰπεῖν τὰ ὀνόματα εἶρηκεν τὴν ἄξιωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ... (MφC<sub>2</sub>), K. Hude, *Scholia in Thucydidem ad optimos codices collata* (Leipzig, 1927), 211. This scholium is not in Kleinlogel and Alpers (n. 6); they presumably thought it belonged to the scholia recentiora. (Stefano Valente has communicated to me that this is also his opinion.) Notice that Dionysius thinks that ἡ “εἰωθία τῶν ὀνομάτων ἄξιωσις” ... περιφράσεως ποιητικῆς ἐστὶν οἰκειότερα (*Thuc.* 29.34).

<sup>9</sup> According to Wilson (n. 1), 18, the traditional interpretations are inconsistent with Thucydides’ examples, because ‘unless the words *retained* their usual meaning this alteration of descriptions would have no point’. Wilson is right, but the inconsistency is more profound.

shifts. First, at a time  $T^1$  people customarily name  $x N^1$  and then at a time  $T^2$  people abnormally name  $x N^2$ .

When we think of a word changing its meaning, however, we think of semantic drift. ‘Nice’, for instance, is today a commendatory adjective and means agreeable. But in the late thirteenth century, it was pejorative and meant silly. In contrast, ‘silly’ was in the thirteenth century a commendatory adjective and meant blessed, while today it is a pejorative adjective and means lack of judgement. Semantic drift occurs when the senses of a word vary, disappear or new senses crop up, transforming its overall meaning. In the case of ‘silly’, the view that the blessed are inoffensive and naïve led to the assumption that the blessed are helpless and therefore lack judgement. Whereas in the case of ‘nice’, the view that silly people are harmless led to the assumption that the silly are inoffensive and therefore agreeable.<sup>10</sup>

In a semantic drift, a word remains the same, but it switches an old meaning for a new one. In this case, a word—the phonetic or written mark—is a subject of change, and the change consists in the substitution of an old meaning for a new one. Accordingly, when we describe a semantic drift, the subject of description is a word, and the predicate contains (at least) two different meanings with different time indexations. For instance, ‘nice’ today means agreeable, but in the late thirteenth century it meant silly. This description is about the word ‘nice’, an entity which we can characterize as having four letters. For this reason, the description does not use, but mentions, the word ‘nice’ and places it—following contemporary academic usage—between single quotation marks.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, the description attributes meanings to the word ‘nice’. These meanings—agreeable and silly—are not entities we can characterize as having nine or five letters. Accordingly, the description uses the words ‘agreeable’ and ‘silly’ and does not place them between single quotation marks.

Wilson suggests that the *stasis*-passage cannot be about semantic drift because semantic drift takes a long time, and the passage is about a sudden change.<sup>12</sup> However, semantic drift need not take centuries to develop; the most interesting cases, indeed, are sudden and traumatic. In Tsarist Russia, for instance, the word ‘kulak’ meant a rich peasant. But after the October Revolution it came to mean a peasant who opposed collectivization. Similarly, the word ‘proletarian’, which used to mean a working-class person, came to mean a supporter of the government or Communist Party. In the Soviet Union, it was good to be a proletarian, as it was also to be a communist. But not all communists were proletarians; consequently, ‘proletarian’ drifted to mean a supporter of the government, and party-leaders such as Lenin (who was of noble origin) were able to be both a communist and a proletarian.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> For the etymologies of ‘nice’ and ‘silly’, see E. Klein, *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language: Dealing with the Origin of Words and their Sense Development thus Illustrating the History of Civilization and Culture* (Amsterdam and New York, 1971). See also J.A.H. Murray, H. Bradley and W.A. Craigie, *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1989<sup>2</sup>), 10 and 15.

<sup>11</sup> Wilson (n. 1), 19 is aware of this issue. However, he uses scare quotes (“”) instead of single quotation marks (‘’) and does not employ the ‘use’ and ‘mention’ terminology.

<sup>12</sup> Wilson (n. 1), 19.

<sup>13</sup> The ‘kulak’ and the ‘proletarian’ examples are from B. Russell, ‘An outline of intellectual rubbish’, in *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell* (London and New York, 2010), 58; originally published as B. Russell, *An Outline of Intellectual Rubbish: A Hilarious Catalogue of Organized and Individual Stupidity* (Girard, KS, 1943), subsequently reprinted in *Unpopular Essays* (London and New York, 1950); to be reprinted by Routledge in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell. Volume 23: The Problems of Democracy, 1941–44*.

Semantic drift is a social phenomenon of linguistic behaviour that may respond to a semantic-linguistic incentive, and sometimes also to socio-cultural pressure. This phenomenon consists in a word—the phonetic or written mark—remaining invariable but switching meanings. For instance, while Marx intended the word ‘proletarian’ to mean working-class person, the Soviets came to use the word as meaning supporter of the government and the communist party. We may also describe semantic drift as a word remaining invariable but switching the conventions that govern its use. A working description of semantic drift may be the following: *Given a name N, at a time  $T^1$  N means x, and at a time  $T^2$  N means y.* Semantic drift differs from word change, the linguistic phenomenon Dionysius of Halicarnassus attributes to the *stasis*-passage. In semantic drift, words—the phonetic or written marks—do not change, but their meaning does; whereas in word change, words—not their meaning—change.

Despite these differences, word change and semantic drift are related phenomena. Semantic drift may follow word change and vice versa. Take ‘nice’ and ‘silly’ as an example. People used to call the agreeable (that is, those who easily agree) ‘nice’ and the brilliant ‘silly’. However, they began to call the agreeable ‘silly’ and the brilliant ‘nice’. We can equally describe these semantic changes as word changes or as semantic drifts. We can say that people used to call the agreeable ‘nice’, but now they call them ‘silly’; and correspondingly they used to call the brilliant ‘silly’, but now they call them ‘nice’. These are word changes. But we can also say that ‘nice’ meant first agreeable and later brilliant, while ‘silly’ meant first brilliant and later agreeable.<sup>14</sup> These are semantic drifts. What does Thucydides have in mind in the *stasis*-passage, semantic drift or word change as Dionysius believed? To answer this question, we must look at Thucydides’ examples.

(1.2)

When Thucydides explains the *stasis*-passage by means of examples (all of which are cited in Appendix II), we do encounter social phenomena, though nothing resembling a description of word change, semantic drift or linguistic behaviour. His first example (Ex.1) is:

τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίσθη

reckless audacity was regarded as courage in the protection of partisan interests.

This example describes a social phenomenon, with the passive verb ἐνομίσθη suggesting a general agent, ‘people’. However, Thucydides does not intend the subject of this description, τόλμα ἀλόγιστος, to be a linguistic expression and to have fourteen letters. He does not mention, but uses, the expression “τόλμα ἀλόγιστος”, and τόλμα ἀλόγιστος is an action, the sort of action we deem good or bad, a moral action.

By contrast, ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος is here intended neither as a linguistic expression nor as the referent of one. To be precise, ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος is what people, in unusual circumstances, take τόλμα ἀλόγιστος to be. While in this text τόλμα ἀλόγιστος is an action type, ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος is here a belief about τόλμα ἀλόγιστος. And this belief, as both ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος and the passive verbal form ἐνομίσθη (be

<sup>14</sup> Hogan (n. 1) considers what I call word change and semantic drift, but does not perceive their relationship.

believed/esteemed) suggest, involves a moral assessment.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, Ex.1 is about moral assessment, not about linguistic behaviour; it is about a drift in moral assessment, not a semantic drift.

The question arises whether Ex.1 is a representative case of what the *stasis*-passage says. It must be, since Ex.1 is the first of ten consecutive examples that share the same verbal form, ἐνομίσθη. This verbal form is explicit in Ex.1 but implicit in the eight following examples, all of which are consistently about types of moral actions and excellence (or wickedness) in performing moral actions.<sup>16</sup> This consistency indicates that the *stasis*-passage must be about drift in moral assessment.

Thucydides provides even more examples: at least fifteen distributed through 3.82.4–3.83.4, all of which involve types of moral actions and excellence (or wickedness) in performing moral actions.<sup>17</sup> Eight display unequivocal verbal expressions of moral assessment; for instance ‘being prized’ (ἐπηνεῖτο), ‘accept ... not out of noble character’ (ἐνεδέχοντο ... οὐ γενναϊότητι), ‘being called righteous’ (δεξιοὶ κέκληνται), etc.<sup>18</sup> Some of these expressions do exhibit vocabulary that may suggest talk about meaning and semantics, as, for instance, κέκληνται. However, καλέω can have evaluative and moral undertones. To call people righteous (δεξιοί) or honourable (ἀγαθοί) is to praise them and to pass judgement on them; for example οἱ πολλοὶ κακοῦργοι ὄντες δεξιοὶ κέκληνται ἢ ἀμαθεῖς ἀγαθοί, 3.82.7 (Ex.17). The other seven examples claim that moral actions and abilities that prevail in *stasis* do not prevail in normal circumstances, and this claim presupposes a moral assessment.<sup>19</sup>

Thucydides’ multiple examples are consistent with drift in moral assessment, not with semantic drift. Since these examples intend to explain the *stasis*-passage, Thucydides must take this line to be about drift in moral assessment. And if that is the case, then the traditional translations and readings that take the *stasis*-passage to be about meaning must be wrong, saddling Thucydides with the inconsistency of explaining cases of semantic drift by offering examples of drift in moral assessment. The *stasis*-passage, therefore, cannot be about semantic drift and must be about drift in moral assessment.

### (1.3)

Where exactly does the traditional reading of the passage go wrong? LSJ lists ‘meaning’ as a definition of ἀξίωσις, but the only example it provides for such definition is Thuc. 3.82.4.<sup>20</sup> As it appears, the traditional reading—for example Jowett’s, Crawley’s and Foster’s translations—defies the etymology of ἀξίωσις, which speaks for valour or

<sup>15</sup> A.W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (Cambridge, 1956), 2.384 translates ἐνομίσθη as ‘call’ and forces ἐνομίσθη into the semantic understanding of the passage. On this point, see Wilson (n. 1), 18. Hogan (n. 1), 145 is aware that Thucydides’ use of ἐνομίσθη, and not of ἐκλήθη, represents a problem for Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ reading. F. Solmsen, ‘Thucydides’ treatment of words and concepts’, *Hermes* 99 (1971), 385–408, at 396 points out that Thucydides first speaks of ὀνομάτων at 3.82.4, but loses touch with ‘names’, since he uses ἐνομίσθη instead of ὀνομάσθη.

<sup>16</sup> See Ex.1 to Ex.9.

<sup>17</sup> Hogan (n. 1), 147 points out that the examples in 3.82.4 exhibit abstract nouns, whereas those in 3.82.5 deploy more active participial forms and amount to a general description of how humans behave in *stasis*. Ex.7, Ex.8, Ex.17, Ex.22 and Ex.24 each involve a pair of examples, both of which explicitly introduce an ‘exchange’ or ‘substitution’.

<sup>18</sup> See Ex.10, Ex.12, Ex.13, Ex.16, Ex.17, Ex.19, Ex.20, Ex.22.

<sup>19</sup> See Ex.11, Ex.14, Ex.15, Ex.18, Ex.21, Ex.23, Ex.24.

<sup>20</sup> F.R. Adrados, *Diccionario Griego-Español* (henceforth, *DGE*) (Madrid, 1991), 3 translates

moral value.<sup>21</sup> The action nominal suffix -σις suggests that ἀξίωσις means valuation. Valuation, unlike meaning, is a meaning of ἀξίωσις compatible with Thucydides' examples. However, the traditional reading seems to have been so entrenched by Hobbes's (T4) time that he respects the etymology of ἀξίωσις but inserts the term 'signification'. He translates: 'The received value of names imposed for signification of things was changed into arbitrary'.<sup>22</sup>

Now, if ἀξίωσις in 3.82.4 means value or valuation, we need to modify other features of the traditional translation of the *stasis*-passage. Jowett's (T1) and Foster's (T3) translations, although inconsistent with the subsequent examples, are internally consistent. Consistently with their rendering of ἀξίωσις as meaning, Jowett and Foster read τῶν ὀνομάτων and τὰ ἔργα as a dichotomy between words and the things they mean. However, if ἀξίωσις means value or valuation, τῶν ὀνομάτων–τὰ ἔργα must be a dichotomy between words and actions. And actions are the proper object of moral value or valuation. Connor's translation (T5) gets this right: 'And they modify at their discretion the customary valences of names for actions';<sup>23</sup> similarly Mynott's (T6): 'Men assumed the right to reverse the usual values in the application of words to actions'.<sup>24</sup>

The *stasis*-passage is about value or valuation, and Thucydides explains this passage by appealing to examples of drift in moral assessment. Unfortunately, the role words play in this picture is unclear. One possibility is that drift in moral assessment may trigger semantic drift. None the less, Thucydides might well have something else in mind.

Before discussing the role of the words in the *stasis*-passage, we need to work out what precisely the passage says: whether ἀξίωσιν in this passage means value or valuation, whether ἐς τὰ ἔργα complements ἀξίωσιν or δικαιοῦσαι, and what δικαιοῦσαι and ἀντιγλαξάν mean. I clarify all these issues in the next section. But to do all this, we need first to study some of the examples that follow the *stasis*-passage.

ἀξίωσις in the *stasis*-passage as 'significado, sentido'. F. Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (Leiden and Boston, 2015) places ἀξίωσις in the *stasis*-passage and in Heliod. *Aeth.* 8.4.2 under the heading 'value'. But it translates ἀξίωσις in *Aeth.* 8.4.2 as 'significance of words'. 'Significance' is ambiguous between 'meaning' and 'importance'. I think that ἀξίωσις in *Aeth.* 8.4.2 means 'dignity': εἰρήνην δὲ καὶ πόλεμον οὐχ ἢ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἀξίωσις ἀλλ' ἢ τῶν χρομένων διάταξις ἀληθέστερον γνωρίζειν πέφυκε, 'but [it is] not the dignity of words, but the disposition of those who use [them which] naturally makes peace and war truly known' (*Aeth.* 8.4.2.1–3). M. Stahl, *Thucydides De bello Peloponnesiaco libri octo* (Leipzig, 1875), 2.146 takes ἀξίωσις in the *stasis*-passage to mean signification or meaning: 'propria aestimatio hic significationis vim habet'. He commented: 'usitatum vocabulorum significationem in rebus (propr. quod attinet ad res, ut supra ἐς τὸ κοινοῦσθαι) arbitrato suo immutarunt.' Solmsen (n. 15), 395 and 397 reads ἀξίωσις in the *stasis*-passage as 'value', but is inconsistent, insisting that Thucydides makes a semantic point about substitution and innovation in linguistic usage. J. Diggle et al., *The Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (henceforth, *CGL*) (Cambridge, 2021) lists 'prestige', 'social status', 'claim', 'assessment', 'evaluation' as meanings of ἀξίωσις in Thucydides, not 'meaning'. It is unclear whether ἀξίωσις at Thuc. 2.65.8 has the passive meaning 'value', 'worth' (as at 2.34.6, 2.37), or the active meaning 'valuation', 'evaluation', 'assessment', 'appraisal' (as at 3.9.2, 2.88). See Hogan (n. 1), 140–1.

<sup>21</sup> P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: histoire des mots* (Paris, 1968), 94.

<sup>22</sup> T. Hobbes, *Eight Books of the Peloponnesian Warre Written by Thucydides the Sonne of Olorus, Interpreted with Faith and Diligence Immediately out of Greek* (London, 1629); R. Schlatter, *Hobbes's Thucydides* (New Brunswick, 1975).

<sup>23</sup> R. Connor, *Thucydides* (Princeton, 1984), 101.

<sup>24</sup> J. Mynott, *The War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians* (Cambridge, 2013).

## (2)

To elucidate the *stasis*-passage, I will briefly revert to its preceding context and its immediately following first example. These references will help me (2.1) clarify the vocabulary—*εἰωθυῖαν*, *ἀξίωσιν*, *ἐς τὰ ἔργα*, *ἀντήλλαξαν* and *δικαιώσει*—and bring to the fore some of Thucydides' assumptions. I will devote a sub-section (2.2) to discussing *τῶν ὀνομάτων* and how it qualifies *ἀξίωσιν*. These elucidations will allow me (2.3) to produce a translation and flesh out the meaning of the passage. I will conclude (2.4) by hinting at cultural motivations behind the *stasis*-passage.

## (2.1)

Let us take a look at the *stasis*-passage (henceforth, S-P) and Ex.1 together:

(S-P) καὶ τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν τῇ δικαιώσει.

(Ex.1) τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίσθη (3.82.4).

The preceding context dwells on how human nature responds to the different circumstances of peace and *stasis* (3.82.1). In times of peace, people lack the excuses, motives, constraints and necessities they have in times of *stasis* (3.82.2; 3.82.3). For this reason, people have better judgement in peace than in *stasis*. We have here three different interconnected antitheses: peace—*stasis*, prosperity—necessity, sound judgement—bad judgement. The first example assumes these antitheses:

(Ex.1) [In *stasis*, when necessity swayed and people lacked judgement,] reckless audacity was regarded as courage in the protection of partisan interests; [whereas in peace, when people prospered and had good judgement, reckless audacity was regarded as reckless audacity].

This expanded reading of the first example illuminates part of the vocabulary of the *stasis*-passage, *εἰωθυῖαν* and *ἀντήλλαξαν*. The standard translation of *εἰωθυῖαν* is 'usual', 'accustomed', or 'ordinary'. However, the context between brackets suggests that what the text calls 'usual' coincides with peace, prosperity and good judgement. Consequently, *εἰωθυῖαν* in this text is not any old usual, but what good judgement grasps and what we expect to be normal. This is a 'normal' which contrasts with judging things wrongly, the abnormality of *stasis* and the undesirability of necessity. More than usual, "εἰωθυῖαν" in the *stasis*-passage means normal.

Normal (*εἰωθυῖαν*) in the *stasis*-passage contrasts with an implicit 'abnormal'. This is key to understanding *ἀντήλλαξαν*. The verb *ἀνταλλάσσω* demands two complements, one in the accusative case, the other in the dative (τί τινι). Here the required accusative is *τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν*; however, *τῇ δικαιώσει* does not appear to be the required dative. It lacks the expected qualification 'abnormal', and fails to be the antithesis of *τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν*. Hence there appears to be an ellipsis in the *stasis*-passage. The text does not explicitly express, but assumes, a dative expression antithetical to *τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν*, something like *τῇ οὐκ εἰωθυῖα* or *τῇ ἀήθει ἀξιώσει*.

Thucydides speaks of exchanging or substituting (*ἀντήλλαξαν*) the normal *ἀξίωσιν*—which results from good judgement, prosperity and peace—for an abnormal *ἀξιώσει*—which results from lack of judgement, necessity and *stasis*. As Wilson observes, translations that render *ἀντήλλαξαν* as 'to change' overlook *ἀντ*-. A change

is merely a process in which an item becomes different in some respect or another. By contrast, an exchange is the substitution of an item for an altogether different item.<sup>25</sup> In this case, we have the substitution of a certain sort of ἀξίωσις or way of regarding things (ἐνομίσθη) for an altogether different sort of ἀξίωσις or way of regarding things (ἐνομίσθη).

The question remains: if τῇ δικαίωσει is not the dative complement of ἀντήλλαξαν, what is it? It must be some sort of adverbial modifier or dative of circumstances. However, it is unclear which dative or sort of adverbial modifier. Interpreters and translators have proposed readings such as ‘at their will and pleasure’,<sup>26</sup> ‘at their discretion’,<sup>27</sup> ‘at their pleasure’,<sup>28</sup> ‘arbitrary’,<sup>29</sup> and ‘by the arbitrary construction’.<sup>30</sup> This family of translations probably developed from the fact that δικαίωσις sometimes means the action of claiming a right, not to mention that the etymology of the word harks back to opinion. However, it is a stretch to move from ‘claiming what is right for oneself’ to ‘personal whim’ and ‘random (choice)’.

A different and more etymologically minded family of translations stems from Dionysius of Halicarnassus. He paraphrases ‘they considered it right to call things differently and transposed the accustomed words said for the actions’ (τά τε εἰωθότα ὀνόματα ἐπὶ τοῖς πράγμασι λέγεσθαι μεταπιθέντες ἄλλως ἤξιουν αὐτὰ καλεῖν, *Thuc.* 29.30–1). Translations of this family read δικαίωσει in the *stasis*-passage as follows: ‘claiming a right’, ‘as one judges right’, ‘men claimed the right to’,<sup>31</sup> ‘as they thought proper’,<sup>32</sup> ‘as men thought fit’,<sup>33</sup> ‘men assumed the right to’.<sup>34</sup>

These two families of translations are objectionable. The first—‘arbitrary’—is far too distant from the etymology of the term. Moreover, the only example of such meaning of δικαίωσις LSJ quotes is the passage we are discussing at *Thuc.* 3.82.4. Just like Dionysius’ reading of ἀξίωσις, this is an *ad hoc* reading of δικαίωσις. Further, these translations wrongly construct an adverbial modifier, or dative of circumstances, which should qualify the verb and action at issue—namely, ‘substituted’ (ἀντήλλαξαν). This mistake also applies to the second family of translations. By translating ‘as one judges right’ or ‘as they thought right (proper, fit)’, this second family of translations applies the dative of circumstances ‘judging (or claiming) what is right’ to the subject, not to the verb ‘substituted’ (ἀντήλλαξαν), as one may expect.

The context suggests a better translation of τῇ δικαίωσει. In Ex.1, ἐνομίσθη manifestly shows that the *stasis*-passage involves moral assessment. If that is the case, then τῇ δικαίωσει in that passage should mean ‘judging what is right’, ‘in passing judgement’, as Wilson has suggested.<sup>35</sup> ‘In passing judgement’ adverbially and circumstantially qualifies ‘substituted’ (ἀντήλλαξαν). Thucydides is therefore saying

<sup>25</sup> Wilson (n. 1), 20.

<sup>26</sup> See LSJ. Strictly speaking, δικαίωσις is (1) the activity of claiming (or judging) a right or what is right, (2) or the activity of doing justice (e.g. punishing or condemning). In Thucydides we find δικαίωσις (1) at 1.141.1, 3.82.4, 4.86.6, 5.17.2; and δικαίωσις (2) at 8.66.2.

<sup>27</sup> Connor (n. 23).

<sup>28</sup> S.T. Bloomfield, *The History of the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides* (London, 1842), 515.

<sup>29</sup> Hobbes (n. 22). *CGL* (n. 20) does not list ‘arbitrary’ or anything similar under δικαίωσις.

<sup>30</sup> E.C. Marchant, *Thucydides Book III* (London, 1909).

<sup>31</sup> Gomme (n. 15), 384.

<sup>32</sup> Jowett (n. 2).

<sup>33</sup> Foster Smith (n. 4).

<sup>34</sup> Mynott (n. 24).

<sup>35</sup> Wilson (n. 1), 20.



‘people substituted when passing judgement’ or ‘people substituted in passing judgement’.

One mistake leads to another. Some translators who did not construe τῆ δικαιοῦσαι with ἀντήλλαξαν have construed ἐς τὰ ἔργα with τῆ δικαιοῦσαι. Gomme, for instance, translated: ‘the customary meanings of words were changed *as men claimed the right to use them as they would to suit their actions*: an unreasoning daring was called courage’ (*my emphasis*) (T10).<sup>36</sup> Commentators have complained about this construal, insisting that ἐς τὰ ἔργα goes with ἀξίωσιν.<sup>37</sup> This point is crucial. If ἐς τὰ ἔργα expresses the goal of ἀξίωσιν, then clearly ἀξίωσιν expresses action, and it means valuation, attribution or assessment of value. Pace Hogan and Wilson, ἀξίωσιν means not value but valuation.<sup>38</sup> We can, at this point, provisionally conclude that the *stasis*-passage claims:

(S-P) In passing judgement (τῆ δικαιοῦσαι), [people in *stasis*, in necessity and lacking judgement] substituted the normal valuation (ἀξίωσιν) ... of actions [that is, the valuation people make in peace, prosperity and when they have good judgement, for an abnormal valuation (τῆ ἀήθει ἀξίωσαι) of the same types of actions].

We still need to explain what τῶν ὀνομάτων in these lines means and how it qualifies ‘valuation’ (ἀξίωσιν).

## (2.2)

τῶν ὀνομάτων is an attributive genitive that limits the meaning of ἀξίωσιν. What sort of attributive genitive is it? What does ὀνομάτων mean? Thucydides is certainly talking about words without specifying any category, such as nouns and verbs. However, the question about the meaning of ὀνομάτων is relevant because it is possible to read ‘words’ in different ways. There are two issues here. First, when Thucydides mentions τῶν ὀνομάτων, it is unclear whether he means single words, phrases, sentences, or all of these. Second, it is also unclear whether he means meaningful linguistic expressions or only phonetic/written marks detached from their semantic content, meaning, or referent.

Let us begin with the first issue. We can describe Ex.17 as applying single words to people (δεξιοί, ἀγαθοί) to praise or morally assess them. Most examples, however, talk about applying phrases to actions or people to praise, blame, or morally assess them. But the point is always to show ways in which people pass moral judgement. And when people pass moral judgement, they not only produce words and phrases but also produce or imply declarative sentences. Take Ex.1 and Ex.17. According to Ex.1, people in *stasis* consider reckless audacity to be courage in the protection of partisan interests. This means that people in *stasis* must at least be committed to claiming that ‘such and such acts are instances of courage in the protection of partisan interests’. The same applies to Ex.17. According to Ex.17, people in *stasis* call evil-doers righteous. All this implies that people in *stasis* must at the very least be committed to claiming that ‘such and such an individual is righteous’. If this is the case, then τῶν ὀνομάτων in the *stasis*-passage must refer to all sorts of linguistic qualifications people attribute

<sup>36</sup> Gomme (n. 15), 354.

<sup>37</sup> Marchant (n. 30); Solmsen (n. 15), 393. Marchant, however, takes δικαιοῦσαι to mean ‘arbitrary’.

<sup>38</sup> Hogan (n. 1), 41; Wilson (n. 1), 19.

to actions when they express moral assessment, including words, sentences, statements and descriptions.

Similar considerations apply to the second issue. As we saw, the expression τῶν ὀνομάτων refers to the linguistic qualifications, descriptions and sentences people use to express moral assessment. But if this is the case, then τῶν ὀνομάτων must refer to meaningful words, phrases and sentences, not to phonetic/written marks without their semantic content.

This treatment of linguistic expressions confirms that Thucydides is concerned neither with word change nor with semantic drift. Word change is about a particular referent (or meaning) *x*, to which a phonetic/written mark<sup>1</sup> refers (or means) at a time *T*<sup>1</sup> and to which a different phonetic/written mark<sup>2</sup> refers (or means) at a time *T*<sup>2</sup>. Semantic drift is about a particular phonetic/written mark, which refers to (or means) *x* at a time *T*<sup>1</sup> and refers to (or means) *y* at a time *T*<sup>2</sup>. To talk about these linguistic phenomena, one must analyse a word into a phonetic/written mark and its referent (or meaning). But since Thucydides is considering words as meaningful linguistic expressions, he is not analysing them into phonetic/written marks and their semantic content. In the text, there is no indication that Thucydides is analysing words. And it seems we can make sense of the text without importing such analysis. For these reasons, Thucydides does not appear to be talking about word change and/or semantic drift.

Now that we know that ἀξίωσιν in the *stasis*-passage means valuation and that ὀνομάτων refers to meaningful words (terms, descriptions, sentences), we can finally answer the second question. What sort of attributive genitive is ὀνομάτων? In other words, how does ‘words’ qualify valuation? For sure, ὀνομάτων cannot be an attributive genitive of material, content, praise, or value, let alone a partitive genitive. What is it then?

Let us assume for the sake of argument that ἀξίωσιν means value. In this case, τῶν ὀνομάτων should be (1) a genitive of possession or (2) an objective genitive, and ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων would mean ‘the value words have’. On the other hand, if ἀξίωσιν means—as I think it does—the activity of valuation, τῶν ὀνομάτων should be (2) an objective or (3) a subjective genitive. In cases (1) and (2), words would be the objects that suffer the activity of valuation. But again actions, not words, are the objects of valuation in this text. In case (3), words would be the subjects that do the activity of valuation. But humans, not words, are agents of valuation.<sup>39</sup>

We can confirm that τῶν ὀνομάτων is neither a subjective genitive nor an objective genitive—it is not a genitive of special determination—nor a genitive of possession. Consequently, we cannot translate ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων as ‘valuation of words’, because ‘of’ suggests that words are the object or possessors of valuation. What sort of genitive is it? τῶν ὀνομάτων certainly determines ἀξίωσιν and it could be a genitive

<sup>39</sup> Hogan (n. 1), 143 translates ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων as ‘evaluative power of words’ and forces the subjective genitive into a case of means or instrument. He thinks that Thucydides assumes a distinction between the meaning of a word and its evaluative power, which attributes value to the meaning of the word. And while the evaluative power may change, the meaning may remain the same. See also I. Worthington, ‘A note on Thucydides 3. 82. 4’, *LCM* 7 (1982), 124 and J.J. Price, *Thucydides and Internal War* (Cambridge, 2001), 41. Pace Hogan, words may be instrumental to valuation, but they are not agents of valuation. In the *stasis*-passage, people are the agents (note ἀντίλλαξαν and ἐνομίσθη). Moreover, Thucydides is not committed to analysing words into phonetic/written marks and semantic content, let alone moral connotations. For a similar criticism of Hogan’s interpretation, see Wilson (n. 1), 19–20.

of general determination, such as τὰς ξυμφορὰς ... τῶν βουλευμάτων (Soph. *OT* 44–5), ‘the events derived from the resolutions’.<sup>40</sup>

The genitive of general determination provides any possible determination derived from the context or meaning of the words involved.<sup>41</sup> This suggests that any interpreter has leeway to construe τῶν ὀνομάτων as their interpretation requires. However, in my view Dionysius was right to think that the passage aspires to high literary airs and that Thucydides forced the grammar. Following Dionysius, I submit that τῶν ὀνομάτων is a genitive of apposition, also called of inherence, epegetic, or of explanation, a poetic construction also frequent in prose.

The boundaries between the genitive of general determination and the genitive of apposition are blurry. However, the different uses of the genitive of apposition help clarify the construction of ἀξιώσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων. Usually the head-term and the genitive-modifier in apposition refer to the same item, though sometimes the genitive-modifier refers to something inherent to the referent of the head-term. This ambivalence explains the blurry boundary between these genitives. ἀξιώσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων is perhaps a blurry case. The genitive of apposition specifies an individual item that falls under the extension of the term it qualifies, as in Ἰλίου ... πόλιν (Hom. *Il.* 5.642).<sup>42</sup> But sometimes the genitive-modifier gives new meaning to the term it qualifies, as in ἔρκος ὀδόντων, which means ‘the teeth as a fence’,<sup>43</sup> because the inherent feature ὀδόντων becomes a salient feature and more prominent than ἔρκος.<sup>44</sup> Sometimes the head-term and the genitive-modifier are synonyms of sorts, as in θανάτοιο τέλος, ‘death as the ultimate end’ (Hom. *Il.* 3.309, 9.411, 13.602).<sup>45</sup> And sometimes the genitive of apposition narrows the meaning of the head-term by referring to a property of the head-term’s referent, as in βίη Διομήδους, ‘mighty Diomedes’ (Hom. *Il.* 5.781).<sup>46</sup> However, the emphasis on the referent of the genitive-modifier disappears in prose,<sup>47</sup> as in πηγῆς ὄνομα, ‘the noun “fountain”’ (Pl. *Cra.* 402c6–7), where πηγῆς tells us that the ὄνομα in question is the noun “πηγῆς”.

Our case, ἀξιώσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων, is akin to πηγῆς ὄνομα. But it is even more proximate to cases where a common word in the genitive narrows the meaning of a general or less common word. In this usage, the genitive-modifier defines the application of the head-term: for example καὶ τοι πῶς οὐκ ἀμαθία ἐστὶν αὐτὲ ἢ ἐπονεϊδιστος, ἢ τοῦ οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι ἃ οὐκ οἶδεν; ‘however, how is this not the most reprehensible ignorance, the one of believing that one knows what one does not

<sup>40</sup> On Soph. *OT* 44 and its genitive, see P.J. Finglass, *Sophocles Oedipus the King* (Cambridge, 2018), 181–2.

<sup>41</sup> F.R. Adrados, *Nueva Sintaxis del Griego Antiguo* (Madrid, 1992), 132.

<sup>42</sup> See also Τροίης ἱερὸν πολιεθρον (Hom. *Od.* 1.2), Θῆβης ἔδος (*Il.* 4.406) and Καύστρου πεδῖον (Xen. *An.* 1.2.11). For apposition in general and its different forms, see E.E. Boas et al., *The Cambridge Grammar of Classical Greek* (Cambridge, 2019), 27.13–14.

<sup>43</sup> This is a formulaic phrase with many instances in Homer: *Il.* 4.350, 9.409, 14.83; *Od.* 1.64, 3.230, 5.22, 10.328, 19.492, 21.168, 23.70.

<sup>44</sup> Adrados (n. 41), 137.

<sup>45</sup> See also ἄθρα τῶν ... κύκλων, ‘socket of the eyes’, i.e. ‘eyes’ (Soph. *OT* 1270); and βουκόλοι τῶν βοῶν καὶ οἱ ὑποφορβοὶ τῶν ἵππων (Xen. *Cyr.* 1.1.2). Grammarians classify these genitives as genitives of apposition because they derive from genitives such as the one in θανάτοιο τέλος. However, this instance of βοῶν can be an objective genitive. See Adrados (n. 41), 139.

<sup>46</sup> See also ποταμοῦ σθένος, ‘the powerful river’ (Soph. *Trach.* 507).

<sup>47</sup> R. Kühner and B. Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache* (Darmstadt, 1898), 2.1.265–6, §402.d; 2.1.333, §414.g.

know?’ (Pl. *Ap.* 29b1–2).<sup>48</sup> Here the genitive τοῦ οἰεσθαι εἰδέναι specifies one among many kinds of ignorance. Similarly, τῶν ὀνομάτων in the *stasis*-passage seems to specify one among different possible sorts of valuation.

There is, however, a difference between *Ap.* 29b1–2 and the *stasis*-passage. τοῦ οἰεσθαι εἰδέναι indicates what the ignorance in question essentially consists in. By contrast, τῶν ὀνομάτων indicates an inherent, non-essential feature of the valuation at stake. In the *stasis*-passage, Thucydides refers to valuations that are distinctive because people express them in words, that is, single words, phrases and sentences. We find better examples in Thucydides: for instance ἡ δὲ διαγνώμη αὕτη τῆς ἐκκλησίας τοῦ τὰς σπονδὰς λελύσθαι, ‘the assembly’s decision to break the truce’ (1.87.6), where the genitive “τοῦ τὰς σπονδὰς λελύσθαι” elaborates on διαγνώμη by explaining the content of the decision. An even better example is Thuc. 7.42.2:

καὶ τοῖς μὲν Συρακοσίοις καὶ ξυμμαχοῖς κατάπληξις ἐν τῷ αὐτίκα οὐκ ὀλίγη ἐγένετο, εἰ πέρασ μηδὲν ἔσται σφίσι τοῦ ἀπαλλαγῆναι τοῦ κινδύνου

and the Syracusans and their allies were at that instant in no small consternation, should there be no resolution until/before the removal of the danger.<sup>49</sup>

τοῦ ἀπαλλαγῆναι cannot be an objective genitive: the text is not about ‘an end to the removal of the danger’. Ending such removal may involve the continuity or restitution of the danger. Rather τοῦ ἀπαλλαγῆναι narrows the meaning of πέρασ by introducing an inherent feature which distinguishes that πέρασ from any other πέρασ. Thucydides, therefore, speaks about the resolution of a situation different from any other resolution. And this resolution is different because it involves or coincides with the removal of a danger.<sup>50</sup>

Just as τοῦ ἀπαλλαγῆναι narrows the meaning of πέρασ μηδὲν in 7.42.2, τῶν ὀνομάτων narrows the meaning of ἀξίωσιν in the *stasis*-passage. The genitive τῶν ὀνομάτων introduces an inherent feature which distinguishes one ἀξίωσιν from any other ἀξίωσιν. The valuation of the *stasis*-passage is thus a valuation that has words as an inherent distinctive feature. How should we then translate ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων? I translated πέρασ μηδὲν ... τοῦ ἀπαλλαγῆναι τοῦ κινδύνου as ‘no resolution until/before the removal of the danger’ to disclose the relationship between πέρασ μηδὲν and τοῦ ἀπαλλαγῆναι. I propose to do the same with ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὀνομάτων and suggest ‘the normal valuation (τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν) [expressed/made with] words (τῶν ὀνομάτων)’ or just ‘the normal valuation (τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξίωσιν) in words (τῶν ὀνομάτων)’.<sup>51</sup> We can thus translate the *stasis*-passage as follows (3.82.4):

<sup>48</sup> See also ὄελλαι | παντοίων ἀνέμων, ‘blasts [formed] of winds of every sort’ (Hom. *Od.* 5.304–5, 5.292–3). H.W. Smyth, *A Greek Grammar for Colleges* (Cambridge, MA, 1920), §1322.

<sup>49</sup> For this translation of the genitive, see P. Landmann, *Thukydides, Geschichte des Peloponnesischen Krieges* (Munich, 1993): ‘bis die Gefahr vorüber wäre’.

<sup>50</sup> See E.C. Marchant, *Thucydides Book VII* (London and New York, 1893). C.F. Smith, *Thucydides Book VII* (Boston, 1886) compares πέρασ ... τοῦ ἀπαλλαγῆναι with πέρασ ἡμῖν τοῦ διαλυθῆναι, ‘final settlement’ (Dem. 40.40), τέλος δὲ τῆς ἀπαλλαγῆς τοῦ Αἰθίοπος, ‘the final end of the Ethiopian’ (Hdt. 2.139.1), and τερπνὸν γάμου ... τελευτήν, ‘delightful consummation of marriage’ (Pind. *Pyth.* 9.66).

<sup>51</sup> Wilson (n. 1), 20 in (T11) understands τῶν ὀνομάτων as I do, translating ‘verbal valuation of deeds’. *CGL* (n. 20), s.v. ἀνταλλάσσω translates ‘verbal valuation’. I would retain the etymology of ὀνομάτων. S. Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides. Vol. I, Books I–III* (Oxford, 1991), 483 follows Wilson’s translation: ‘they exchange their usual verbal evaluation of actions for new ones, in the light of what they thought justified’ (T11).

(S-P) In passing judgement (τῆ δικαιοῦσαι), they [that is, people] substituted (ἀντήλλαξαν) the normal valuation (τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξιῶσιν) in words (τῶν ὀνομάτων) of actions (ἐς τὰ ἔργα).

In the *stasis*-passage, τῶν ὀνομάτων perhaps refers to valuations and acts of moral assessment that occur in political speeches, political discussion and political undertakings. Such acts of moral assessment are what the examples depict. Although words are not at issue in some examples, Thucydides must assume that the acts of valuations he describes in those examples find linguistic expression. We can read Ex.1 as follows:

(Ex.1) [In *stasis*, when necessity swayed and people lacked judgement,] reckless audacity was regarded (ἐνομίσθη) as courage in the protection of partisan interests [and people described it in words as ‘courage in the protection of partisan interests’]; [whereas in peace, when people prospered and had good judgement, reckless audacity was regarded as reckless audacity and people described it in words as ‘reckless audacity’].

The subject matter of the *stasis*-passage is valuation or moral assessment. The line is committed to valuation finding expression in words, and the term ‘words’ here specifies what sort of valuation is at stake. Similarly, Ex.1 merely assumes the linguistic expression of valuation and its subject matter is an example of valuation. Neither the *stasis*-passage nor Ex.1 and the following examples are about words themselves and linguistic expressions, let alone about semantics, meaning, or reference. They all are about valuation.

### (2.3)

Let us finally flesh out both the *stasis*-passage and the first example. As we have seen, these passages involve assumptions imported from the preceding context as well as assumptions related to the expression τῶν ὀνομάτων:

(S-P) In passing judgement (τῆ δικαιοῦσαι), they [that is, people in *stasis*, in necessity and lacking judgement] substituted (ἀντήλλαξαν) the normal valuation (τὴν εἰωθυῖαν ἀξιῶσιν) of actions (ἐς τὰ ἔργα) [expressed] in words (τῶν ὀνομάτων) [that is, the valuation people make in peace, prosperity and when they have good judgement, for an abnormal valuation (τῆ ἀήθει ἀξιῶσει) of the same types of actions] (3.82.4).

(Ex.1) [In *stasis*, when necessity swayed and people lacked judgement,] reckless audacity was regarded as courage in the protection of partisan interests [and people described it as ‘courage in the protection of partisan interests’]; [whereas in peace, when people prospered and had good judgement, reckless audacity was regarded as reckless audacity and people described it as ‘reckless audacity’] (3.82.4).

According to these lines: (1) Action types remain the same in peace and in *stasis*. Reckless audacity is reckless audacity in peace as well as in *stasis*. (2) However, people morally assess or value the same action types differently depending upon whether they are in peace or in *stasis*. In peace, people morally assess reckless audacity normally as reckless audacity. But in *stasis*, they morally assess reckless audacity abnormally as courage in the protection of partisan interests. (3) Consequently, people describe the same action types differently depending upon whether they are in peace or in *stasis*. In brief: (1) Reckless audacity is reckless audacity in peace and in *stasis*. (2) People’s moral assessment of reckless audacity in peace is different from their assessment of the very same type of action in *stasis*. And (3) their description of reckless audacity in peace is different from their description of the very same type of action in *stasis*.

Two things drift from peace to *stasis*, moral assessment and the words chosen to describe types of actions. Moral assessment drifts from normal to abnormal; word choice varies from choices that match normal assessments to choices that match abnormal assessments. Two things, however, remain the same in peace and in *stasis*: action types and words themselves. Indeed, since action types remain the same, we can use them as a criterion to tell that moral assessment and word choice vary between peace and *stasis*. On the other hand, words themselves, their meaning, do not appear to vary. Indeed, to understand what Thucydides describes, the reader does not need to assume an analysis of words into their phonetic/written marks and their meaning or reference. Moreover, the text is also committed to the possibility that people in *stasis* are prepared to defend their views, to defend their description of reckless audacity as ‘courage in the protection of partisan interests’, even to argue that it would be wrong to describe reckless audacity as ‘reckless audacity’.<sup>52</sup> Any variation in word meaning is out of the question.

The *stasis*-passage implies that the way in which people in *stasis* assess and describe actions is perverse. This way of assessing and describing actions is perverse not merely because, against common sense and the weight of evidence, people in *stasis* obstinately insist that what is right is wrong and what is wrong is right. This way of assessing and describing is perverse also because people in *stasis* use the wrong vocabulary to talk about what is right and what is wrong. The question then arises what in particular is perverse and unsettling about assessing reckless audacity as courage in the protection of partisan interests and calling it ‘courage in the protection of partisan interests’?

Reckless audacity is a type of disposition for action which consists in being irrationally overconfident. A consequence of such overconfidence is failing to assess the circumstances and risks in actions. And failing to assess the circumstances and risks eventually prevents people from doing what is morally and practically best. ‘Reckless’ in ‘reckless audacity’ is perhaps an intensifier. The expression ‘reckless audacity’ (τόλμα ἀλόγιστος) is redundant, since audacity is by itself reckless or irrational. Courage, by contrast, is a type of disposition for action which consists in rational confidence, which allows agents to assess the circumstances and risks associated with different courses of action despite their fear; this in turn eventually leads to accomplishing what is morally or practically best. Regarding reckless audacity as courage and calling it ‘courage’ confuses not only right and wrong but also rational and irrational. Thucydides, however, has something more nuanced in mind.

Thucydides is considering not just courage but courage in the protection of partisan interests. While courage is a positive disposition all things considered, courage with the qualification ‘in the protection of partisan interests’ need not always be positive. Courage in the protection of partisan interests is beneficial to a fraction of society, the party and its members; but it may be harmful to the state as a whole. This last point is crucial because democracy demands loyalty to the city-state and its laws over loyalty to a faction, the family, selfish interests and foreign interests.

Thucydides is suggesting that in *stasis* people place party interests before those of the city-state. This inversion of values and priorities must be part of what he finds perverse.

<sup>52</sup> Price (n. 39), 40 is correct to say that reckless daring ‘will always be reckless daring, no matter what expression is used to describe it’. This implies that the expression ‘reckless daring’ will similarly always express condemnation. C.W. Macleod, ‘Thucydides on faction (3.82–3)’, *PCPhS* 205 (1979), 52–68, at 54 = *Collected Essays* (Oxford, 1983), 123–39, at 125, however, thinks that the *stasiōtai* brought about a revolution in language as well as in morality.

It is also perverse to insist that the right description of ‘failing to assess risks that impend the city-state owing to overconfidence and prioritizing party interests over state interests’ is not ‘reckless audacity’ but ‘courage in the protection of partisan interests’. It is redundant to talk of ‘reckless audacity’, because audacity is always reckless; but it is not redundant to speak of ‘courage in the protection of partisan interests’, because courage is a virtue and courage in the protection of partisan interests is a vice.<sup>53</sup>

Thucydides is diagnosing a pathology which consists in a collective impairment of moral judgement in political matters. We may find it hard to fully appreciate why he finds such impairment scandalous. A close-to-home example would be illuminating. Here is an example involving personal relationships: the loving gaslighting partner. This individual perfectly understands what love and abuse are. Yet they are sincerely convinced that they genuinely love their victim. They are convinced they treat their victim lovingly, and they call their treatment ‘passionate love’, ‘complicated love’, or ‘tough love’. They are even prepared to argue that they are not an abuser but a loving partner and that we should call them a ‘loving partner’. This pathology is perverse by all accounts. Thucydides brings home something similarly unsettling at a collective level.<sup>54</sup> In *stasis*, people correctly understand what reckless audacity is. Yet they sincerely take cases of reckless audacity to be courage in the protection of partisan interests and describe them as such.

#### (2.4)

Let us conclude with how we should appreciate the *stasis*-passage. The passage is not about meaning, semantic drift, or word change but about drift in moral assessment. Word choice, however, does come into consideration. Difference in moral assessment implies difference in word choice in the description of actions. But difference in word choice does not imply any change in the meaning of words. Since the passage is not about any change in meaning and describes a collective spontaneous pathology, it cannot allude to the deliberate creation of new words and meanings characteristic of authoritarian regimes.

Although he denies that the passage is about meaning, Wilson misleadingly uses an example from the USSR to elucidate Thucydides’ point.<sup>55</sup> The USSR had a policy of describing and treating political dissidents as mentally ill,<sup>56</sup> which was a deliberate and systematically planned act of oppression and political propaganda. Its organizers were not sincere when they described and treated political dissidents as mentally ill.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> The qualification ‘in the protection of partisan interests’ gives a new meaning to ‘courage’, Hogan (n. 1), 141. A similar analysis applies to Ex.1, Ex.2, Ex.3. Other examples are more straightforward: e.g. (Ex.4) ‘being intelligent at everything [*was considered*] to be lazy in everything’ (3.82.4.), and see also Ex.17, Ex.21. But in general the examples indicate an inversion of values, social practices and the dictates of common sense: Ex.5, Ex.6, Ex.7, Ex.9, Ex.11, Ex.12, Ex.13, Ex.14, Ex.18, Ex.19, Ex.20, Ex.22. Some examples describe the supremacy of cunning, lack of judgement, and treachery over rationality and intelligence in *stasis*: e.g. (Ex.8) ‘who succeeded at plotting [*was considered*] intelligent and who anticipated [the plot] even more intelligent’, and also Ex.10, Ex.15, Ex.16, Ex.23, Ex.24.

<sup>54</sup> For a modern example involving a collective pathology, see n. 59 below.

<sup>55</sup> Wilson (n. 1), 20.

<sup>56</sup> S. Bloch and P. Reddaway, *Soviet Psychiatric Abuse: The Shadow over World Psychiatry* (Boulder, 1985); S. Bloch and P. Reddaway, *Russia’s Political Hospitals: The Abuse of Psychiatry in the Soviet Union* (London, 1977).

<sup>57</sup> The KGB deliberately organized these policies and pressured psychiatrists, who were aware of their political character, to implement them. See A. Koryagin, ‘The involvement of Soviet psychiatry

Thucydides, however, is talking about an unconscious, unintentional and spontaneous collective condition which leads people to value sincerely what is right as wrong and what is wrong as right.<sup>58</sup> His point is about the obstruction of correct moral judgement in a society which can, in principle, judge correctly. The authoritarian, manipulative and oppressive linguistic practices of the USSR are not a proper cultural and historical context for the *stasis*-passage. It would be more accurate to compare this passage with antecedent and subsequent Greek views on human flaws, rational impairment and lack of self-control.<sup>59</sup>

Homer regarded ἄτη as a certain negative godly or daemonic external force which drives humans out of their senses making them commit terrible irreparable mistakes (*Il.* 19.85–9, 2.110–15, 8.236–40; *Od.* 12.371–3, 21.299–302). Aeschylus had a secularized view of ἄτη as mental aberration (*Aesch. Sept.* 312–16).<sup>60</sup> Early in his career, Plato shared a Socratic view, according to which human flaw results from lack of knowledge (*Prt.* 345d6–346b8, 352a8–359a1), though he later explains moral failure as resulting from internal conflict among parts of the soul (*Resp.* 437b7–441c3). For Aristotle moral failure results from internal psychological pressure that prevents humans from firmly grasping that a particular action falls under a general rule (*Eth. Nic.* 1146b35–1148a11; *De motu an.* 701a7–29).<sup>61</sup>

Unlike all the authors quoted above, however, Thucydides specifically and explicitly considers collective impairment of moral judgement, which may explain his introduction of collective phenomena such as words, descriptions and language. But like Aeschylus, Plato and Aristotle—and unlike Homer—Thucydides produces a rational explanation centred in human beings. Like Aristotle, he seems to think that psychological pressure obstructs knowledge and good judgement, though he attributes such psychological pressure to external circumstances such as war, danger and need.

The reading of Thuc. 3.82.4 that I propose preserves consistency between these passages and their preceding and following textual context. It also inserts the passage in a broader intellectual and cultural context of reflection on human flaw. And perhaps more importantly it extracts from Thucydides a valuable observation on human nature:

in the persecution of dissidents', *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 154 (1989), 336–40; R. van Voren, 'Political abuse of psychiatry—an historical overview', *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 36 (2010), 33–5. Some members of the general public and police forces manipulated by state propaganda may have sincerely believed that the dissidents were mad.

<sup>58</sup> Price (n. 39), 47 is aware that the passage is about unintentional and sincere distortion of social values.

<sup>59</sup> I do not mean that Thucydides describes a phenomenon strange to the modern world. We find something uncannily similar in G. Orwell, 'Notes on nationalism', *Polemical Magazine of Philosophy, Psychology, and Aesthetic* 1 (1945), 141–57 = *Essays* (London, 2014), 865–84, at 883: 'The point is that as soon as fear, hatred, jealousy and power worship are involved, the sense of reality becomes unhinged.' However, we must distinguish Orwellian Newspeak (an invention of a well-established totalitarian regime, which is in principle intentional, systematic and conscious, though it may become non-conscious) from the spontaneous, genuine and unconscious phenomenon Thucydides reports in 3.82.4. (I owe this point to Geir Thorarinsson.)

<sup>60</sup> Though usually ἄτη in Aeschylus means 'disaster' and most of the time 'disaster a human being brought to themselves' (*Ag.* 1124, 1192, 1432–6, *Cho.* 382–5). See A.H. Sommerstein, 'Atē in Aeschylus', in D.L. Cairns (ed.), *Tragedy and Archaic Greek Thought* (Swansea, 2013), 1–15, at 5–6, 9–10, 11–12.

<sup>61</sup> J. Adam, *The Republic of Plato: Edited with Critical Notes, Commentary and Appendices* (Cambridge, 1921) calls attention to the similarity between *Pl. Resp.* 260d–e, *Isoc. Aeropagiticus* 20.1–10, *Panath.* 131.1–133.11 and Thuc. 3.82.4. However, *Resp.* 260d–e uses an analysis of the democratic man to explain the features of the democratic form of government, and in this respect strongly differs from Thuc. 3.82.4. Isocrates' texts are about πολιτεία and δημοκρατία respectively.



violence, misery, danger, calamity and fear impair our thinking and moral strength both individually and collectively.

#### APPENDIX I: SOME TRANSLATIONS OF THE *STASIS*-PASSAGE

- (T1) ‘The meaning of words had no longer the same relation to things, but was changed by them as they thought proper’, Jowett (n. 2).
- (T2) ‘Words had to change their ordinary meaning and to take that which was now given them’, Crawley (n. 3).
- (T3) ‘The ordinary acceptation of words in their relation to things was changed as men thought fit’, Foster Smith (n. 4).
- (T4) ‘The received value of names imposed for signification of things was changed into arbitrary’, Hobbes (n. 22).
- (T5) ‘And they modify at their discretion the customary valences of names for actions’, Connor (n. 23), 101.
- (T6) ‘Men assumed the right to reverse the usual values in the application of words to actions’, Mynott (n. 24).
- (T7) ‘On changea justqu’au sens usuel des mots par rapport aux actes, dans les justifications qu’on donnait’, J. de Romilly and R. Weil, *Thucydide, Histoire de la Guerre du Péloponnèse* (Paris, 1967).
- (T8) ‘Nay, they changed at their pleasure the accustomed acceptation of words (as applied) to actions’, Bloomfield (n. 28).
- (T9) ‘to fit with the change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings. What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded as the courage one would expect in a party member’, R. Warner, *Thucydides, The History of the Peloponnesian War* (Harmondsworth and Baltimore, 1972).
- (T10) ‘the customary meanings of words were changed as men claimed the right to use them as they would to suit their actions: an unreasoning daring was called courage’, Gomme (n. 15), 384.
- (T11) ‘they exchanged their usual verbal valuation of deeds for new ones, in the light of what they now thought justified; thus irrational daring was considered courage for the sake of the party ...’, Wilson (n. 1), 20.
- (T12) ‘Und den bislang gültigen Gebraucht der Namen für die Dinge vertauschen sie nach ihrer Willkür’, Landmann (n. 49), 445.
- (T13) ‘L’ordinario rapporto tra i nomi e gli atti rispettivamente espressi dal loro significato, cioè l’accezione consueta, fu stravolto e interpretato in chiave assolutamente arbitraria’, E. Savino, *La guerra del Peloponneso* (Milan, 1974).

#### APPENDIX II: THE EXAMPLES FOLLOWING THE *STASIS*-PASSAGE

- (Ex.1) ‘Reckless audacity *was considered* courage in the protection of partisan interests’ (Thuc. 3.82.4).
- (Ex.2) ‘Forethoughtful delay [*was considered*] specious cowardice’ (3.82.4).
- (Ex.3) ‘Being reasonable [*was considered*] a disguise for lack of manliness’ (3.82.4).
- (Ex.4) ‘Being intelligent at everything [*was considered*] to be lazy in everything’ (3.82.4).
- (Ex.5) ‘Acute panic [*was considered*] a property allotted to a man’ (3.82.4).

- (Ex.6) ‘And planning for safety [*was considered*] a suitable excuse to turn away’ (3.82.4).
- (Ex.7) ‘Who imposed himself forcefully [*was*] always [*considered*] trustworthy, while the one who contradicted him [*was considered*] suspicious’ (3.82.5).
- (Ex.8) ‘Who succeeded at plotting [*was considered*] intelligent and who anticipated [the plot] even more intelligent’ (3.82.5).
- (Ex.9) ‘But the one who contrived that none of these was needed [*was considered*] a divider of the faction and to be terrified by the enemy’ (3.82.5).
- (Ex.10) ‘Who anticipated a damaging action, as well as who instigated the one who had no intention [of carrying a damaging action], was *prized*’ (3.82.5).
- (Ex.11) ‘Family ties *became more alien* than the ties of the faction because [faction ties] make people readier to dare without scruples’ (3.82.6).
- (Ex.12) ‘Fair proposals made by adversaries *were accepted*, if the adversaries were superior, and for the safeguard of their own interests [that is, of those who accepted the proposals] and not *out of noble character*’ (3.82.7).
- (Ex.13) ‘Taking revenge *was more valuable* than not suffering at all’ (3.82.7).
- (Ex.14) ‘If oaths of reconciliation were taken, they had force for each side in the spur of the moment and in regard to a difficulty provided that no other possibility was available’ (3.82.7).
- (Ex.15) ‘When there was a chance, the side that caught the adversary off guard dared first and thanks to its confidence it took a sweeter vengeance than [if it had acted] openly’ (3.82.7).
- (Ex.16) ‘Security was reckoned with and prevailing by treachery *won the prize* of intelligence’ (3.82.7).
- (Ex.17) ‘And the majority, if they are evil-doers, *they are called righteous*, and if they are idiots, *they are rather called honourable*, indeed they *are ashamed* of the first and *proud* of the second’ (3.82.7).
- (Ex.18) ‘Those who held higher offices in the city states, each one ... pretended in word to care for public prizes. However, while they fought by all means in order to prevail over one another, they dared to commit the most dreadful acts and took vengeance in even more people’ (3.82.8).
- (Ex.19) ‘[Those who held higher offices] found no limit in what was just and advantageous for the city and set as limit what was in each occasion pleasurable to each one of them. They were prepared to satiate their lust for contention by seizing power either by denouncing an unjust ballot or by force’ (3.82.8).
- (Ex.20) ‘Neither side held piety in honour, but thanks to good-sounding words those who did something odious used to *have a better reputation*, while those moderate among citizens were killed by both sides, either because they did not fight on their side or because their lives were not spared’ (3.82.8).
- (Ex.21) ‘Owing to factionalism all sorts of depravity befell the Hellenic people’ (3.83.1).
- (Ex.22) ‘Frankness, on which integrity so much depends, *was laughed at* and disappeared, whereas mutual antagonism with distrustful sentiment largely prevailed’ (3.83.1).
- (Ex.23) ‘In fact, there was no end to enmity [ὁ διαλύσων, reconciliation], no word of binding force, no oath to be regarded with fear. And since they were stronger by assessing the improbability of security, they were wont to make provision

against getting harmed more than they were able to trust [one another]' (3.83.2).

- (Ex.24) 'Those of poor [practical] judgement survived the most. Since they feared their own deficiencies and the intelligence of the adversary, they engage in action in a daring way, in order not to lose arguments and not to be outplotted first by the adversary's versatility in judgement. Whereas [those of sharp practical judgement] were killed unguarded more frequently, for they arrogantly presumed they were capable of anticipating and had no need to get down to work on anything that judgement could handle' (3.83.4).

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