**Συνετός as Aristocratic Self-Description**

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Συνετός is a verbal adjective formed from the verb συνέμι; 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 συνετός 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 συνετοί, 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 συνετοί.3 The question arises who these συνετοί 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

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: φορεύοντι συνετο γαρόω.
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 wealth 7 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 (συνετοίς), but they demand interpreters to the vulgar herd (τὸ πᾶν, 85).” The scholiast explains these verses by quoting Aristarchus: ὡστε τοῖς μὲν σοφοῖς σοφὰ διαλέγονται καὶ μὴ ἐκθέμα, τοῦ δὲ ἴδιωταῖς μὴ κατάθηλα γίνεσθαι. The synetoi and the sophoi are all those who differentiate themselves from the mob of ἴδιωτα through their knowledge and are able to understand Pindar’s verses.


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-scienza» 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.”

Alcaeus is ἄσυννέτος because he cannot comprehend the forces of political action represented by the restless movement of the winds (=factions). 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, ἀμμες) 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.

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

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10 For the verb συνίημι cf. Snell (supra n.9) 40-52.
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 δυσχερά, προνοώσαι ὡς μὴ γένηται, ἀνδρείων δὲ, 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): Πιττακός δ’ εἰς μὲν τὴν τῶν δυναστειῶν κατάλυσιν ἔχρησα τῇ μοναρχίᾳ καὶ αὐτός, καταλύσας δὲ ἀκέδωκε 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 Aisymnetea: 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.
tocracy. 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 (σοφίν), to understand (τοῦ συνείν) 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 σοφί as an aristocratic and exclusive mastery of a certain ‘knowledge’ and τι σοφόν as the message of a shared ethical code, τοῦ συνείν is the decodification of the message, which requires the right knowledge. The symposium offers the means of acquiring this knowledge. In these lines of Theognis, then, the verb συνείν provides the semantic context in which to place σύνεις and related words. Synesis is an exclusive intelligence that is characteristic of aristocrats and a product of a specific education. 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 και συνείται παρέρχεται), though he cannot express himself openly (315–18).


14 συνείν 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 existimatus 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” (τους ξυνετοῖς δ’ ἀν τις πείσει τάχιστα λέγων εὐ, οὐτέρ καὶ ράστης εἰσὶ διδασκαλίης); and Dionysius Chalcus (fr.4 Gentili/Prato), ἀγγελίας ἀγαθής δεύρ′ ην πεποίημενοι καὶ κυλίκων ἑμίδος διαλύσατε καὶ κατάθεσθε τὴν ξύνειν παρ′ ἐμοί καὶ τάδε μανήσατε.

16 Other significant examples: 1163f, όφθαλμοι καὶ γλῶσσα καὶ οὐσία καὶ νόσος ἄνδρῶν ἐν μέσαι στήθεαν ἐν συνετοῖς φύται; 903f, ὅστις ἀνάλωσιν τηρεῖ κατὰ χρήματα θηρῶν, κυδίστην ἀρετῆν τοῖς συνείσιν ἔχει; cf. 1237, 1240, 1284.

17 For analysis of these verses see L. Edmunds, “Theognis 815–18 and the Banquet of Attaginus,” 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 ξύνεν ἕκριμωμένην. 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, 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 εὐγενείς, σώφρονας, δικαίους, καλούς τε κάγαθους καὶ τραφέντας ἐν παλαιστραῖς. For Aeschylus, Euripides’ bad influence has an ideological connotation, since physical activity is considered an important part of the education of the καλοὶ κάγαθοι.

Dionysus confirms this characterization. Hesitant about which poet to bring back on earth, he recognizes that Euripides diverts him (ἡδομαί) but he considers Aeschylus σοφόν (1413; cf. 1434, ὁ μὲν σοφός γὰρ ἔπειν, ὁ δ’ ἔτερος σοφῶς). Dionysus thus sums up the value of Aeschylus’ poetry in a catchword of the aristocratic scheme of virtues. Aeschylus in fact will be the one who, chosen by Dionysus, will persuade the polis to change her hatred against τοῖς χρηστοῖς 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 φίλοις, 1489). Aeschylus’ return is important not only for the welfare of the polis but also for genos and philoi, according to a

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18 For Euripides as champion of the democratic view see Donlan 150–53; but cf. W. B. Stanford, ed., Aristophanes, The Frogs2 (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 ἄμαθεστερόν πος ... 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: αἱδὴρ, ἐμὸν βόσκημα, καὶ γλώττης στροφής καὶ ξύνεσι καὶ μυκτήρες ὀσφραντήριοι. 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, ὡς 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


\(^{24}\) 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: λεπτολόγοις ξυνέταις φρόνοις ... ἀνδρῶν γνωμοτύπων, ὅταν εἰς ἔριν δξυμερίμνοις ἐλθοσι στρέβλοισι παλαιώσασιν ἄντιλογουντες.

\(^{26}\) 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.
συνετών 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 συνετών, Euripides may be questioning the old view that τὸ συνετών is an aristocratic prerogative like τὸ φρόνημα.

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 ἔφαίνετο (930) is an αὐτούργος (920) who is nevertheless intelligent (921, ξυνετός δὲ).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 (ἀνεπιπληκτον ἕσκηκώς 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 [II. 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


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

of political turmoil and competition, and held a conservative and moderate attitude based on traditional values.\textsuperscript{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 ἄνδρεῖος, 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 antidemocratic implications.\textsuperscript{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· θρασύς εἰς ἀλκάν, ξυνετὸς πολέμων, φόνιος τε δράκων. It is particularly significant that in a description with an archaic flavor, the adjective ξυνετὸς indicates one of the elements of φιλία.\textsuperscript{33}

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

\textsuperscript{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 εὔνοιαν towards Orestes and Electra also comes from the countryside (866ff). Though a peasant, he is γενναῖον in χρήσισαι ... 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 ἀσυνετότερος, because Orestes despises the right and the Greek κοινὸν νόμον (491–95). Since Tyndareus measures an act of unjustice 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 ὡρὰ Δίκα κακοῦς, σοῦ ἀμείβεται βροτῶν ἃςοννοιας; and fr.645.4f N.: ἡ τάρα θηντῶν εἶσαι ἀσυνετῶτεροι ἡ τάπειτική πρόσθεν ἦγουνται δίκης).

\textsuperscript{32} Cf. Di Benedetto (supra n.31) 208f.

\textsuperscript{33} Cf. n.23 supra.
native to words like καλός, ἀγαθός, φιλός, 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. 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.

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. 411α–12c), synesis is closely linked to the aristocrats' ethical virtues. Socrates assembles under τὰ καλὰ ὀνόματα words such as ἁρετή, σύνεσις, δικαιοσύνη, "and all the others of the same kind" that are opposed to the φαύλον γένος ὀνόματα. This opposition καλὸν ~ φαύλον γένος is quite remarkable, particularly because Socrates, in the course of his analysis, adds to the list σωφροσύνη, ἀγθόν, 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) 96£: "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...."


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 φόρμιμα βαστάζον πολίτας ἰσχίας θηγέμεν. 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' οὐκ ὑπὲρ ἐνενεί σύμμορφον καὶ σώφρονας ἄνδρας ῥείνας καὶ δικαιοίς καὶ καλοῖς τοῖς κάσιθεσι καὶ τραφέντας ἐν παλαιστραῖς καὶ χοροῖς καὶ μουσικῆς. 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, φέρενα τερπόμενον φόρμιμα λίγεις; 189, τῇ ὂ γε θυμὸν ἔτερπεν, ἀεὶ δὲ ἄρα κλέα ἄνδρῶν, 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.\textsuperscript{37} The evidence of the \textit{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 (ἰσον) system, and that those who have the money are also the best rulers. But I say, first, that what is meant by the \textit{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.”\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{37} Cf. Rose (\textit{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 \textit{physis} to be supplemented by \textit{paideia}.”

\textsuperscript{38} Cf. L. Edmunds, “Thucydides’ Ethics as Reflected in the Description of Stasis (3.82–83),” \textit{HSCP} 79 (1975) 73–92 at 80ff with n.22 for bibliography.

\textsuperscript{39} Cf. P. Huart, \textit{Le vocabulaire de l’analyse psychologique dans l’oeuvre de Thucydiade} (Paris 1968) 279–90. The only two examples of the word’s use for a practical skill are at 1.84.3, 142.8.

\textsuperscript{40} R. Warner, tr., \textit{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.\footnote{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.} Democracy is not ξυνετόν, because those who rule are neither ‘intelligent’ nor ‘rich’. Athenagoras, in his effort to demonstrate the advantages of democracy,\footnote{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.”} reports an argument of its opponents in which ‘intelligence’ hints at their code of values.\footnote{In a different historical context Demodocus of Mytilene comments (fr.1 Gentili/Prato): “The Mytilenians are not ἀξιόνετοι but they act as if they were such” (δρόσιν δ' οία περ ἀξιόνετοι). In other fragments he employs vocabulary typical of the aristocratic code: κακοὶ ἄνερες (fr.4), Χίοι κακοὶ (fr.3) and Καπ-παδόκαι φαύλοι ... κέρδους δ' εἶνεκα φαυλότατοι (fr.6).} 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.\footnote{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 φαύλον, τὸ μέσον, τὸ πάνω ἄκριβές).} 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.\footnote{At the end of the speech, Athenagoras invites the demos not to appear ἀξιόνετοτατοί (6.40.1): almost an exhortation to the demos to avoid looking more “foolish” than the aristocrats think it already does.} The political implication of the adjective ξυνετόν is clear.\footnote{An explicit correspondence between intelligence and the reward of power in Aesop Fab. 109 Hausrath-Hunger: Zeus gives the fox τὸ βασιλείον over τῶν ἀλέγων ζῷων because he loved τὸ συνετῶν τῶν φρένων καὶ τὸ ποικίλον of the fox.}

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.
In attacking the critics of his decision on Mytilene (3.37.3), Cleon opposes the φαυλότεροι to the ξυνετότεροι. The former, as he explains, are more clever at administering the polis, while the ξυνετότεροι 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 (ἀμοθία 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). Synetoi are characterized by a particular intellectual conceit because of their education, and this conceit moulds their political behavior.

Cleon’s use of synetos can be elucidated by comparison with Archidamus’ speech at 1.84.3: “And we are wise (εὐσυνέλοι) because we are not so highly educated (παιδεύμενοι) 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 (ξυνετοί ἁγαν) in matters that are of no use (τὰ ἄχρεια)—such as being able to produce an excellent reasoning about one’s enemies’ dispositions, and then failing in practice (ἐργῷ) 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 ἐργόν, ironically hints that such competition is the basic element of democracy. There is, however, an important difference between their views. While Cleon attacks the synetoi in toto, Archidamus is critical of those synetoi 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 ξυνετῶτας, Themistocles (1.74.1). In the same context, the Athenians are proud of their συνεσία (1.75.1) because of their successful intervention against the Persians. This Athenian praise implies that the Spartan audience would not have considered συνεσία a totally negative quality. 

συνεσία here is an important element of their strategy of persuasion. But having συνεσία in Sparta must be different from having συνεσία 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 συνεσία should not be, but we still lack a positive definition of the term. If we compare


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, συνεσία. A counterpart to this rhetorical use of συνεσία 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' ὑς ἄξυνετοι διδασκόμενοι). The Spartans must persuade the Athenians to return their men. Therefore, probably against their will, they grant them συνεσία. It is significant that the Spartans assume a link between being ἀξυνετοί and the need of being taught. Evidently there is still an explicit connection between συνεσία and education. Perhaps the Spartans are here saying one thing and implying something else. If the Athenians want to boast of συνεσία, they should try to please them. Nevertheless this does not exclude that they think that the Athenians’ συνεσία is something different. In fact at 6.76.4 the Spartans, defining the Athenian empire, say: δεσπότου ... οὐκ ἄξυνετωτέρου, κακο-ξυνετωτέρου δὲ. The Athenian power does not lack intelligence, but has a bad kind of intelligence. The Spartans grant συνεσία 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 πολὺν ἄξιον βραχεῖαν παρεχομένους καὶ ξύνειν δοκοῦντος ἔχειν. Brasidas emphasizes συνεσία 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 ἄδοινας, ὡς Λακεδαιμόνιος, εἰτείν (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, ἀμαθεστεροτ), it becomes clear that Cleon implicitly endows the term with its traditional aristocratic meaning. 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 (η ξύνεσις) that confirms courage (τὴν τόλμαν)—the intelligence that makes one able to look down on one's opponent” (6.25.5, cf. 65.1). Elsewhere in Thucydides, however, τόλμα can be a vice (3.82.4). Snell has shown that *synesis* is opposed by Pindar to τόλμα. 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

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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 ἄξυνεσια — τόλμα. Cf. also Eur. fr.552.1f N.: ποτέρα γενέσθαι δήτα χρησιμωτερον συνετὸν ἀτόλμον ἢ τραύσθν τε κάμαθη, 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 αξιομαχία 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’ έπογί alle soglie della spedizione in Sicilia. Analisi lessicale di Thuc. VI 9–18,” *StIt* 44 (1972) 145–83.


\(^{57}\) The Spartans imply that εὐξυνετότερον can be shown only by those who are already *sophrones*: 4.18.4.
SYNETOS AS ARISTOCRATIC SELF-DESCRIPTION

conservative virtue. It is not by chance that such a combination occurs in a Spartan who is politically conservative. Thucydides believes that Brasidas' a'retē kai xúnesis (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 ἀγαθὸς that allowed him to gain good will kata pánta (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 ἄνηρ καὶ ἐς τἀλλα ξύνεσιν οὐδὲνος λειτόμενος (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, Δωρίης ἐλεύθεροι ἀπ' αὐτονόμου τῆς Πελοποννήσου τὴν Σικελίαν οἰκούντες (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 ἀλλὰ Φρύνιχος κατέστη, οὐκ ἄξιοντος 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 ἀλλα Φρύνιχος κατέστη must refer to political offices he might have held. Phrynichus is οὖκ ἄξιοντος 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 προθυμότατον ἐς τὴν ὀλιγαρχίαν (8.68.3). Emphasizing Phrynichus' faith
enthusiastic adherence to the oligarchy. The use of οὐκ ἀξίωνετος 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 ἄλλα αὐτὴ ἡ πόλις τῶν πρὸς κειμένων νόμων ἔχρητο, πλὴν καθ’ ὦσον 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 και 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

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60 On this point the account in Ath.Pol. is close to Thucydides’. In this version Peisander, Antiphon, and Theramenes are called ἀνδρῶν καὶ γεγενημένων ἐκ καὶ συνετές καὶ γνώμη δοκοῦντων 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 Athenaios Politeia [Oxford 1981] ad loc.) believes that the omission is due to a copyist’s error.
iconographically with Pisistratus.\textsuperscript{61} It has been argued that the festival of the Synoikia, which Thucydides subsequently mentions as instituted after this reorganization, has “an aristocratic appearance.”\textsuperscript{62} Theseus may have been called \textit{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 \textit{synesis} and \textit{synetos} are in fact consistent with the ethical outlook of these individuals.\textsuperscript{63} Only two other \textit{synetoi} are apparently remote from this group: Themistocles and Pericles.

At 1.138.2f Thucydides enthusiastically attributes \textit{synesis} to Themistocles. This \textit{synesis} is political ability wedded to an acute foresight. The most admirable (\textit{αξιώς θεωμάσαι}) aspect of Themistocles’ \textit{synesis} is its unlearned character (οἰκεία γὰρ ξινέσει καὶ οὕτε προμαθῶν ἐς αὐτὴν οὐδὲν οὕτε ἐπιμαθῆ).Unlike Cleon, who had generally asserted that the \textit{αξιωτότεροι} were uneducated, Thucydides finds in Themistocles an instance of an uncultivated \textit{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 \textit{synesis}, he was nevertheless \textit{synetos}. Themistocles is the exception to the rule.

Thucydides also refers to Pericles as \textit{synetos}, describing him as someone chosen by the city who ἄν γνώμη τε δοκή μὴ \textit{αξιόντος} εἶναι καὶ \textit{αξιώσει} προήκη (2.34.6). 2.65 is dedicated to praising his \textit{πρόνοια} ... ἐς τὸν πόλεμον. \textit{πρόνοια}, understood as strategic intelligence and sharp foresight, is a quality equivalent to \textit{synesis}. It has been argued elsewhere that Thucydides’ appreciation of Pericles has a quite strong aristocratic bias. Notwith-\textsuperscript{61} J. Boardman, “Herakles, Peisistratos, and Sons,” \textit{RA} (1972) 57–72, and “Herakles, Peisistratos and Eleusis,” \textit{JHS} 95 (1975) 1–12; K. Schefold, “Kleisthenes,” \textit{MusHelv} 3 (1946) 59–93.
\textsuperscript{62} Figueira (\textit{supra} n.7) 465f.
\textsuperscript{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.] \textit{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/ξύνετος 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 (φανερότεροι) showed the greater power of survival. Such people recognized their own deficiencies and the superior intelligence (τὸ ξύνετόν) of their opponents; fearing that they might lose a debate or find themselves out-maneuvered 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 ξύνετόν is evident. A scholiast at 3.83.4 explains οἱ καταφρονοῦντες as “those who seemed to be σύνετοι 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 ἰγαθῶν δύναν νέον, surpassing all the people of his age more in συνέσει than in the beauty of his body.” The synesis of this καλὸς κἀγαθὸς 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 (ἐπιβουλέυσας δὲ τις τυχόν) 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 ἀπαν ξυνετὸν 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 ἀξίωμας 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.

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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