The *ἀξίωσις* of Words at Thucydides 3.82.4

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In his famous chapter on the revolutions engendered by the Peloponnesian War Thucydides notes that the effects of *stasis* reached even to the words people used: καὶ τὴν εἰσωθήναν ἀξίωσιν τῶν ὄνομάτων ἐς τὰ ἔργα ἀντήλλαξαν τῇ δίκαιώσει (3.82.4). Scholars have usually taken this as an assertion that the political partisans changed the *meanings* of the words they used, and by this is understood the denotations of the words, their referents:¹ thus (to use Thucydides’ first example) acts which once were called ‘rash boldness’ (τόλμα ἄλογοστος) were now called ‘courageous loyalty’ (ἄνδρεια πιθήκαμος)—the first phrase was abandoned while the second changed its referent. I wish to argue that this interpretation of Thucydides is imprecise. The root of ἀξίωσις suggests that it ought strictly to mean ‘act of assigning worth or value’.² In addition to denoting objects or persons, words of the sort Thucydides gives as examples also have a certain value in themselves and are used to assign values to the objects denoted.³ In the normal course of affairs these words have generally accepted estimations; they carry praise or blame in accordance with

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² The term thus should not refer to the result of an action, *i.e.*, to a commonly assigned ‘meaning’. See P. Chantraine, *La formation des noms en grec ancien* (Collection Linguistique 38 [Paris 1933]) 286–89. On the other hand, Thucydides’ use of -sis nouns is relatively free, and *axiosis* can refer to the result of an estimation. Cf. Gomme ad 2.37.1, 2.62.3–4, and 2.65.8; and LSJ s.v. ἀξίωσις 1.1.2.

³ I am indebted to an anonymous referee for this last phrase.
traditional customs. In *stasis*, however, men may assign different values to these words, or they may confuse normal estimations by designating foul deeds by fair names (or vice versa). A determination of whether Thucydides is in fact describing a change in the estimation or value of words depends on an investigation of the passage in general and of the particular words in this introductory sentence.  

To take ἄξιωσις first, while it occurs relatively infrequently in Greek, LSJ cite many of the passages in which it appears. Apart from the present use, which they put into a special category by itself, translating the phrase as "the established meaning of words," they divide the word into three different senses: (1) 'thinking worthy', etc., (2) 'demand, claim (on grounds of merit)', (3) 'opinion, principle, maxim'.

The first two definitions are very close to the root meaning of the verb ἄξιος. The third in fact is suspect. LSJ refer to Thucydides 2.88 and compare Aeschines 3.220. In 2.88 Thucydides prefaces Phormio's speech to his troops before the second battle in the Corinthian Gulf. Phormio had always told his men that they must not retire before any multitude of Peloponnesian ships, no matter how great. As a consequence: καὶ οἱ στρατιώται ἐκ πολλοῦ ἐν σφίσιν αὐτοῖς τὴν ἄξιωσιν ταύτην εἰλήφεσαν, μηδένα ὅχλον Ἀθηναίοι ὅντες Πελοποννησίων νεῶν ὑποχωρεῖν—"and the soldiers for a long time among themselves had held this appraisal [of themselves], that, being Athenians, they must not retire before any multitude of Peloponnesian ships." μηδένα . . . ὑποχωρεῖν expresses the content of the *axiosis* that the soldiers had taken up. This *axiosis* is the soldiers' appraisal (or estimate) of their abilities, as they have formed it in accordance with Phormio's exhortations, which he had based on an evaluation of his men's worth. The root meaning of the word closely determines its sense here; 'opinion' would not adequately render the sense.

Again, Aeschines is addressing Demosthenes: ἐπιτιμᾶς δὲ μοι, εἰ μὴ συνεχῶς, ἀλλὰ διαλείπων πρὸς τὸν δήμον προσέρχομαι, καί


*5 'Existimatio' E.-A. Béant, Lexicon Thucydideum I (Geneva 1843) s.v. ἄξιωσις; 'Anspruch' Classen-Steup.
"You censure me for coming before the people not constantly, but only at intervals. And you think it will escape notice that you borrow this evaluation from another form of government, not democracy." Here axiōsis, usually translated 'demand', refers to the content of Demosthenes' criticism of Aeschines. It should not be weakened to 'principle' or 'opinion'. Since Demosthenes makes his assessment on the basis of what he thinks is right, the root meaning of the word is close to the surface.

The other occurrences of axiōsis in classical Greek (in addition to those cited by LSJ) will be seen also to retain the root meaning, 'worth', 'value'. At Thucydides 3.9.2 axiōsis has an active meaning. The Mytileneans are asking for Spartan help in their revolt from Athens. They must first dispose of the commonplace that a deserter will not be a trustworthy ally to the one to whom he deserts. They say that this appraisal is not unjust (καὶ οὐκ ἀδίκος αὐτή ἡ αξίωσις ἐστὶ), when the rebels and those from whom they are revolting are united in policy and sympathy and there is no ground for deserting. Their cause, of course, is different. Axiōsis means 'judgement' or 'estimation', 6 and refers to the value judgement the Mytileneans must combat to win their plea.

At 2.34.6 Thucydides describes the basis for the selection of the man to speak the funeral oration: ἐπειδὰν δὲ κρύψωσι γῆ, ἀνὴρ ἡρμημένος ὑπὸ τῆς πόλεως δὲ ἀν γνώμῃ τε δοκῇ μὴ ἀξίνετος εἶναι καὶ ἀξίωσει προκήρυ, λέγει ἐπ' αὐτοῖς ἐπαινὸν τὸν πρέποντα—"But when they have buried the remains in the earth, a man chosen by the city, who is thought well-endowed with wisdom and who stands out in reputation, speaks over them the fitting praise." The wise man of outstanding reputation is chosen by the city. The passive sense of axiōsis is uppermost. 7 The word means almost exactly the same thing at 2.37.1: μέτεστι δὲ κατὰ μὲν τοὺς νόμους πρὸς τὰ ἴδια διάφορα πάσι τὸ ἱσον, κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἀξίωσιν, ὡς ἐκαστὸς ἐν τῷ εὐθύ­κμει, οὐκ ἀπὸ μέρους τὸ πλέον ἐς τὰ κοίνα ἡ ἀπ’ ἀρετῆς προτιμᾶται—"Concerning private disputes there is equality for all according to the laws, but in respect to a recognition of worth, as each one is in any way highly regarded, he is preferred to public honors not more because of his rank than because of his virtue." Men are

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6 The scholiast (Scholia in Thucydidum, ed. Carolus Hude [Leipzig 1927]) defines the word here as ἡ δόξα, ἡ κρίσις, ὁ λογισμός. Poppo-Stahl compare 2.88.2; 'Ansicht, Beurteilung' Classen-Stuep.

7 So Classen-Stuep; E. C. Marchant, Thucydid Book II (London 1891) ad loc.; 'dignatio' Bétant and Poppo-Stahl.
preferred to public office in accordance with their merit or a recognition of worth. So too at 2.65.8, the esteem in which Pericles was held (ἐξων ἐπὶ ἀξιώσει) allowed him even to anger and contradict the people.

At Thucydides 1.69 the Corinthians castigate the Spartans for allowing the Athenians to increase their power. The Spartans are the true subjugators of Hellas: οὐ γὰρ ὁ δουλωσάμενος, ἀλλ' ὁ δυνάμενος μὲν παύσαι περιορῶν δὲ ἀληθεστέρον αὐτὸ δρά, εἶπερ καὶ τὴν ἀξιώσιν τῆς ἀρετῆς ὡς ἐλευθερῶν τὴν Ἑλλάδα φέρεται—"Not the one who enslaves, but the one who is able to stop enslavement and overlooks it, is the truer enslaver, especially if he carries the axiōsis of the excellence of liberating Greece." Here axiōsis may have either an active or passive sense, 'claim' or 'esteem'.

In fr.15N. of Euripides the physical beauty of royal offspring is envisioned:

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\text{ίδοιμι δ' αὐτῶν ἐκγυν' ἀρσεν' ἀρσένων'}
\text{πρότον μὲν εἰδος ἀξιον τυραννίδος;}
\text{πλείστη γὰρ ἀρετὴ τοῦθ' ὑπάρχον ἐν βίῳ,}
\text{τὴν ἀξιώσιν τῶν καλῶν τὸ σῶμ' ἐχειν.}
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The last line seems to mean "for the body to have the esteem of the handsome." The last important instance of axiōsis to be considered comes from the Definitiones, a work spuriously ascribed to Plato: μεγαλοπρέπεια ἀξιωσις κατὰ λογισμόν ὅρθον τοῦ σεμνοτάτου (412ε), "Magnificence is being esteemed in accordance with a right reckoning of the most noble." The idea of evaluating is here again predominant in axiōsis.

Thus, in all its occurrences the meaning of axiōsis is determined by its root. If, then, axiōsis at Thucydides 3.82.4 is defined in agreement with its root, it will be translated 'judgement of worth' or 'estimation', and it will refer (when taken with ἐκωθιάν) to the

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8 Cf. Marchant: "ἀξιωσις—existimatio, the consideration accorded to merit, recognition of personal claims." Classen-Steup (followed by Gomme): "Den νόμοι, welche einem jeden ein unbedingtes Recht gewähren, ist die ἀξιωσις, das Urteil der öffentlichen Meinung, entgegengestellt, das durch Verdiene gewonnen sein will." 'Dignatio' Bétant.

9 Poppo-Stahl: "ἀξιωσις aut passivam hic vim habet, ut sit dignitas... vel existimatio, laus, aut activam, ut sit assertio, vindicatio." Classen-Steup take it as passive, 'Anerkennung'. 'Existimatio' Bétant.

10 See to a rather different effect C. B. Gulick Athenaeus VI (Cambridge [Mass.] 1970 [LCL]) 57 note g.: "The poet goes on to say that it is a great merit to have a physical beauty in keeping with noble estate."

11 D. F. Ast, Lexicon Platonicum 1 (Leipzig 1835) s.v. ἀξιωσις, defines the word here as 'dignitas'. For the text see H. Richards, ClQ 3 (1909) 15.
customary use of words to assess worth, to praise and blame. Thucydides is saying that in *stasis* men changed the customary evaluative power of words. A consideration of the remainder of the sentence confirms this.

Different and specialized meanings have also sometimes been given to *τῇ δικαιώσει.* Thucydides' use of it conforms to this core meaning. *τῇ δικαιώσει* is a type of instrumental dative, the dative of cause, expressing a motive. Its grammar resembles the second dative in the following expression from Thucydides: *οἶ μὲν ἀπορίᾳ ἀκολούθων, οἶ δὲ ἀπιστίᾳ* "some (carried their own food) because they lacked servants, others through distrust of them" (7.75.5). Since this dative is frequently used with verbs of emotion, it is appropriate here in the context of the heightened emotions of partisans in *stasis*. Because men made their own self-serving judgements of what right was, they changed the *axiosis* of words to suit and support their judgement.

*ἐξ ἃ τὰ ἔργα* has also created some difficulty. Classen-Steup take the phrase with *τὴν ἀξίωσιν* and translate it 'für die Dinge'. Gomme, on the other hand, asserts that "*ἐξ ἃ τὰ ἔργα* goes surely with ἀντήλλαξαν ‘with a view to their actions’, not with τὴν ἀξίωσιν." But *ἐξ* often means ‘with respect to’ in Thucydides, and it can easily mean that here. There is no reason to regard *ἐξ ἃ τὰ ἔργα* as narrowly referring only to the purposes of each party, and to say that party-members changed the *axiosis* of words in order to accomplish ('with a view to') certain ends (τὰ ἔργα). Rather *ἐξ ἃ τὰ ἔργα* goes with both τὴν ἀξίωσιν and with ἀντήλλαξαν. The partisans changed the estimations of words as applied to deeds, but they had

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12 'At their will and pleasure' LSJ s.v. δικαιώσις III; cf. Walter Müri, "Politische Metonomasie," *MusHelv* 26 (1969) 67f, 'nach ihrer Willkühr'. Classen-Steup: "die subjektive Auslegung, wie sie nach dem Umstanden recht d.i. gelegen war."

13 δικαιώσις occurs in four other places in Thucydides. At 1.141.1 it means ‘claim of right’—so LSJ s.v. II, cf. Classen-Steup ("eine mit dem Anspruch auf ein Recht . . . gestellte Forderung"). The same meaning is at 5.17.2. At 4.86.6 ἱσχύος δικαιώσει must mean ‘right of the stronger’, that is, justification consisting in strength. For 8.66.2 LSJ s.v. 1.1 translate ‘condemnation, punishment’. The word could easily be understood here as ‘judgement of right’ (which would lead to punishment). In any case, ‘condemnation’ implies a ‘judgement of right’.


their own purposes in mind. The real point of ἐν τά ἔργα, however, is that the 
ἀξιόσεις were changed in respect to the true value of the deeds (in the eyes of a neutral observer).

ἀντῆλλαξαν literally means ‘exchange’ rather than ‘change’, but the latter translation better conveys the sense of the sentence, for ‘exchange’ requires that what a thing was exchanged for be specified, which Thucydides does not do. He only implies that the customary ἀξιόσεις of words were exchanged for new ones. Thucydides’ sentence may now be translated: “Men changed the customary estimation of words in respect to deeds in judging what right was.”

Thucydides’ full meaning becomes clear in an examination of his examples: τόλμα μὲν γὰρ ἀλόγιστος ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος ἐνομίσθη, μέλλησις δὲ προμηθῆς δειλία εὑπρεπῆς κτλ. (3.82.4). The traditional interpretation of these clauses originates with Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who understands the introductory sentence to mean: τά τε εἰσθότα ὄνοματα ἐπὶ τοῖς πράγμασι λέγεσθαι μετατιθέντες ἄλλως ἥζιον αὐτά καλεῖν—“Changing the names customarily applied to deeds they deemed it right to call them by new names.”16 When this interpretation is applied to the examples, the first member of each clause denotes what Thucydides considers the customary (τά εἰσθότα ὄνοματα) and correct name for the ἐργα, the second member gives what the partisans thought the action was, and what they called it. It gives the new name (ἄλλως) for the ἐργα.

Friedrich Solmsen asks the following question about the examples Thucydides offers:

... the longer we look at the sentences purporting to acquaint us with the new meanings of words, the more we are bound to wonder whether people really developed the habit of praising a man for ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος or blaming him for δειλία εὑπρεπῆς. Had they ever, when discussing ruthless daring, spoken of ἀλόγιστος τόλμα;17

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16 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, De Thucydide 29. Cf. W. K. Pritchett, Dionysius of Halicarnassus: On Thucydides (Berkeley 1975) 113 n.10 (I have followed Pritchett's translation closely). So too several of the scholia on Thucydides (M, φ, ε2, in the notation of Hude): τήν σημασιαν ... μετέθεσαν τά ὄνοματα ... περιφραστικῶς ἀντὶ τοῦ εἴπειν τά ὄνοματα ἐρηκε τήν ἄξιωσιν τῶν ὄνομάτων.

17 Intellectual Experiments of the Greek Enlightenment (Princeton 1975) 110. Solmsen decides in favor of the traditional interpretation both here and in his article “Thucydides' Treatment of Words and Concepts,” Hermes 99 (1971) 395. Solmsen describes Thucydides’ observations as the discovery of a “new type of synonym.” For Solmsen, the synonymy consists in, for instance, τόλμα ἀλόγιστος being called ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος during stasis and
No satisfactory answer to this question can be given unless it is kept in mind that Thucydides does not use the verb καλέω but rather νομίζω. If he had used ἐκλήθη, this would have supported Dionysius' interpretation: deeds were called by new words (a change in referent).

But ἐνομίσθη invokes not what men said but what they thought. During stasis citizens confounded in thought previously distinguishable concepts. This confusion revealed itself in two different ways. When men saw an action that was objectively τόλμα ἀλόγιστος, either they thought (or pretended to think) that it was ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος and called it that (Dionysius' interpretation); or they considered τόλμα ἀλόγιστος to be a good thing and when praising it called it by its right name. Certainly the latter is not an impossible occurrence, and Thucydides knew of examples similar to it. Cleon, for instance, in his speech concerning the Mytileneans, praises ἁμαθία (3.37.3–4) and urges the Athenians not to show themselves soft, but to go out with ὀργή. Cleon praises a kind of τόλμα ἀλόγιστος, yet he calls it by its correct name and even claims that it is just (3.40.4). This situation I will call 'realistic' from the 'realistic' use of words to denote what they usually denote. In a similar fashion, during normal times men would consider μέλλησις προμηθής a good thing, a sign of intelligence and wisdom, while in stasis they might sometimes 'realistically' have called it μέλλησις προμηθής, but used the phrase to express disapproval. It is precisely because Dionysius does not take account of this common phenomenon, in which there is no change of denotation or referent, that his interpretation is insufficient.

Yet of course his interpretation is partly true. Politicians very often call bad deeds by good names (or vice versa), as Thucydides was well aware: οὔστε ἐνσεβεία μὲν οὐδέτεροι ἑνόμιζον, εὐπρεπεία δὲ λόγον οἷς ξυμβαίνῃ ἐπιφθόνος τι διαπράξασθαι, ἄμεινον ἥκοιον (3.82.8). This common occurrence, which I will call the 'deceptive'

tόλμα ἀλόγιστος in normal times. I, on the other hand, believe that these different words were used at the same time and under the same conditions (stasis) to describe the same deed. Werner Jaeger, Paideia I (New York 1945) 335–36, seems to interpret Thucydides along the lines suggested by Solmsen's question, although he still speaks of "a change in the meaning of words."

18 See Gomme ad 3.82.2 for ὀργή.
19 For Pericles' view of stupidity cf. 1.140.1; of intelligence, 2.40ff. For Thucydides' own opinion cf. 1.138.3 and 2.65.13.
20 ἀντιλαξαν does not then refer to an exchange of one word for another, but to the assumption of the new valuations for words. In any case, Thucydides does not say that men exchanged words, but their ἄξιος.
rhetorical situation, from the deceptive or misleading use of words to indicate deeds other than those to which they normally refer, also involves a change in the estimation or evaluative power of words. To Thucydides τόλμα ἀλόγιστος was doubtless a bad thing, and ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος a good thing.\(^{21}\) In stasis when men thought of τόλμα ἀλόγιστος as ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος and called it ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος, they devalued this phrase (from Thucydides' point of view) by using it as praise for unworthy deeds. Of course, those who employed ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος to name what was actually τόλμα ἀλόγιστος relied (whether consciously or unconsciously) on the high estimation of ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος in order to carry their points. In this sense they did not change the estimation of words, but in fact depended on its remaining the same. Yet they did, from Thucydides' point of view, ultimately lower this evaluative power: through frequent application to what was actually blameworthy, the praise the word formerly conveyed was worn away. The same analysis applies to the next example. Faction members thought that what Thucydides would call μέλλησις προμηθής was δειλία εὐπρεπής. In condemning μέλλησις προμηθής as δειλία εὐπρεπής they have increased the estimation of the latter by using it to refer to what had been a good thing.

When someone uses ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος for what is τόλμα ἀλόγιστος, it may seem that he has changed the meaning of ἀνδρεία φιλέταιρος so that it includes τόλμα ἀλόγιστος. But in what sense has he changed the meaning? Certainly for an objective observer the word retains its original meaning. If the man tries to deceive his audience by his conscious misuse of terms, he has not even changed the meaning in his own mind. If, caught up in the rhetoric of the moment, he is himself deceived, he does not know what he is saying. But Thucydides avoids the difficult issue of how conscious the speaker is of the true meanings, or even of the true estimations, of his words. He simply notes the surface phenomenon, the perversion of the customary estimations of value-laden words—when these words are compared with the true estimations of the deeds.

Thucydides' next two examples—τὸ δὲ σῶφρον τοῦ ἀνάνδρου πρόσχημα, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ἄπαν ξύνετον ἐπὶ πᾶν ἄργον—are in the form of the second example. An (objectively) good thing was considered bad. In the fifth example (τὸ δ' ἐμπληκτῶς ἄγ′ ἄνδρός μοίρα προσ-

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\(^{21}\) There is no reason to suppose that in Thucydides φιλέταιρος should have an obviously bad connotation. At 82.5 the implication is not that ἦ ἑταρεία is bad, but that men value it too highly; the same is true of ἑταιρικὸν in 3.82.6.
etéth), although a new verb has taken the place of ἐνομίσθη, there is only a superficial difference. For ἀνδρὸς μοίρα is a virtue, and τὸ δ’ ἐμπλήκτως δένυ is an opposing vice. This example thus resembles the first. ἀσφαλεία δὲ τὸ ἐπιβουλεύσασθαι ἀποτροπῆς πρόφασις εὔλογος, the next example, for which the verb to be supplied is ἤν or ἐνομίσθη, is like the second, third, and fourth.

In section 82.5 Thucydides shifts from the abstract nouns of 82.4 to more ‘active’ participial forms: καὶ ὁ χαλεπαίνων πιστὸς αἰεί, ὁ δ’ ἄντιλεγων αὐτὸ ὑποτοσ. ἐπιβουλεύσας δὲ τις τυχών ξυνετὸς καὶ ὑπονόησας ἔτι δεινότερος: προβουλεύσας δὲ ὁποις μηδὲν αὐτῶν δεήσει, τῆς δὲ ἔταιρίας διαλυτῆς καὶ τοὺς ἕναντίους ἐκπεπληγμένος.22 Despite the change, these clauses, like their predecessors, may be analyzed according to both the ‘deceptive’ and ‘realistic’ interpretations. The example ἐπιβουλεύσας . . . δεινότερος presents some difficulty. When the phrase τὸ πρὸς ἀπαν ξυνετὸν was ‘realistically’ used for condemnation, it was devalued, but here the successful plotter is ξυνετός, so that this case resembles the first and fifth. When the plotter was ‘deceptively’ called ξυνετός, praise was intended. Thucydides thus implies that the word was used both for praise and for blame. And here too there is a devaluation. Before the staseis the word referred to intelligence, yet in civil strife it was devalued (in Thucydides’ eyes) to a praise for success. Thucydides (and Pericles) surely rated mere success lower than synesis. καί ὑπονόησας ἔτι δεινότερος is more complicated. Either an objectively bad thing (suspicion) would be called by a good name (synesis), or what had been a bad name (suspicion) would become a good one. But δεινότερος, as well as meaning more clever, also has the familiar undertone of more terrible (cf. Gomme ad loc.). Thucydides thus suggests the same types of changes in praise and blame as in the other examples, and in addition implies that these new estimations of suspicion and success are false, for the one who suspected was in his eyes more terrible.

In 82.5 Thucydides moves beyond words to more general comments about how men acted and felt in stasis, while at the same time reinforcing his remarks about the revolution of values in Hellas.23 He who anticipated an evil-doer, or he who provoked someone who was not intending a crime, was praised (82.5).

22 The verb to be supplied with these examples is apparently ἤν or ἐνομίσθη. If ἤν is supplied, we should probably understand “was by custom, that is the new custom,” as Solmsen says (supra n.17), 109 n.49.
ship began to have a weaker hold on men than party or faction (82.6). Revenge was of more account than not suffering at all (82.7). Oaths lost their power (82.7, 83.2). No longer did men practice piety, but those who used fair-seeming words had a better reputation (82.8). Finally, simplicity (τὸ εὖθες), in which honor holds the largest share, was ridiculed and disappeared. In short, Thucydides’ examples suggest that it was the power of words to evaluate, not simply to denote, that changed in stasis.

In Book 8 of the Republic Socrates’ discussion of the democratic man and the stasis in his soul parallels Thucydides’ description of what happens to political discourse in stasis. Both Thucydides and Plato see that stasis is naturally fostered when parties in the state bring in outside allies, and that in stasis political discourse degenerates. In Republic 8 (560D) the boasting speeches in the soul of the democratic man do battle with the speeches of the older men and at last conquer them. As Socrates outlines the battle, the boasting speeches, calling shame simplicity, thrust out αἰδώς as a dishonored fugitive (άτύμως φυγάδα); calling moderation a lack of manliness, they spatter mud on it and exile it (προηλακίζοντες ἐκβάλλουσι). They also drive out measure and well-ordered expenditure, while castigating them as rustic and illiberal (ἄγροικίαν καὶ ἁνέλευθερίαν). Although he here refers only to calling things by new names (i.e., to ‘deceptive’ rhetoric), Socrates does, by his use of vivid metaphors, emphasize that the boasting speeches blame those qualities that were formerly praised. He does not say that in stasis men change the denotation of words such as ‘moderation’ (σωφροσύνη) and ‘measure’ (μετριότης). After Adeimantus agrees with Socrates’ description, Socrates recounts the corresponding new praise of what had been blameworthy: the boasting speeches next in blazing light bring back from exile insolence, anarchy, wastefulness, and shamelessness (ὁδῆριν καὶ ἀναρχίαν καὶ ἁσωτίαν καὶ ἀναῖδειαν) directly praising them and also calling them by fair names (ἐγκομιάζοντες καὶ ὑποκορίζομενοι). They call insolence a good education, anarchy freedom, wastefulness magnificence, and shamelessness manliness.

In Republic 1 Thrasymachus’ arguments provide a good example of a ‘realistic’ change in the estimation of words, when Socrates

24 With Plato’s σωφροσύνην δὲ ἀνανδρίαν καλοῦντες (560D) compare Thucydides’ τὸ δὲ σῶφρον τοῦ ἀνάνδρου πρόσχημα (3.82.4), noted by James Adam, The Republic of Plato (Cambridge 1902) ad loc.

presses him for his true views on the nature of justice and injustice. Thrasymachus had begun by asserting that justice is the interest of the stronger (338c), which is a redefinition of justice. But Socrates forces Thrasymachus to reveal his true position (cf. 349A), that perfect injustice is more profitable than perfect justice (348b). Finally Thrasymachus denies that justice is a virtue and injustice a vice; he calls justice γενναία εὐθεία and injustice εὐβούλια (348c–d). This is a new and more difficult position, Socrates concludes (348e). For if Thrasymachus had set down injustice as profitable, but nevertheless agreed that it is base or shameful, Socrates and Thrasymachus would be able to speak in accordance with the customary usage (κατὰ τὰ νομίζομενα). But Thrasymachus will clearly ascribe to injustice beauty and strength (καλὸν καὶ ἵσχυρὸν), and all the other qualities that used to be granted to justice, since he has dared to place it with virtue and wisdom (ἀρετή...καὶ σοφία, 349A). As Socrates understands it, Thrasymachus still calls injustice by its proper name, yet he praises it, and, we may infer, condemns justice.27

Thus, in Plato as in Thucydides stasis overturns normal customs of praise and blame. Plato also shows in this argument of Thrasymachus that he was aware that an angry man who had a new case to make might continue to use the same words for the same ideas, but might value those words and ideas differently.28

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26 With this view of εὐθεία cf. Thuc. 8.83.1, with Adam (supra n.24) ad 348d. For a summary of Thrasymachus’ arguments and a review of the scholarship on them see W. K. C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy III (Cambridge 1969) 88–97, esp. 92 and 94, where Guthrie discusses the parallels between Thrasymachus’ positions and Thuc. 3.82.4ff.

27 Edmunds (supra n.1) 86–87 draws several close parallels between Hesiod’s description of the Iron Age (Op. 174–201) and Thucydides’ treatment of stasis, among them the inversion of language (Op. 190–92). It is interesting that Hesiod speaks in terms of the perversion of customs of praise and blame rather than of the changing denotations of words.

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