

# Review of: "Shrewdness, coup d'œil, and genius: the cognitive attributes of the consummate general (Greek antiquity, Byzantine era, modern times)"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This paper makes an important contribution to a much-studied topic: the meaning of the phrase *coup d'œil*, famous now mostly for its prominence as a rare quality of great generals in Carl von Clausewitz's *On War*. With revision, this should make a very fine article. This paper looks to an impressive array of sources from ancient Greece to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in developing its argument. It would benefit from more clearly stating its key findings in its introduction. I take the argument to be that *coup d'œil* should not be taken as either a synonym of nor a direct descendent of the ancient Greek notion of shrewdness (ἀγχινοία), even though there are many similarities to be found. Such a connection has been over-emphasized because of Jean-Charles de Folard's work on both Polybius and in popularizing the term *coup d'œil* (a point that does not get mentioned until p. 11 but should be in the intro). But given de Folard's lack of knowledge of Greek, and the meanings of *coup d'œil* that do not map onto Greek shrewdness, this paper shows how shaky this connection is. It might be more accurate to conclude, on the basis of the investigation conducted here, that de Folard projects anachronistically onto Polybius rather than deriving much from him. It is not, however, clear to me that Everett Wheeler would actually disagree with the finding of this paper, since he does not argue that there is such a "simple translation" (p.2) from one word to the other, so the claimed contrast should perhaps be softened.

The article argues that Polybius's usages of ἀγχινοία and cognates are not fleshed out, and claims they did not identifiably overlap with Aristotle's cognitive usages. It was not clear to me that this negative claim could be proven—how does one definitively show a lack of influence? Also, the similarities across centuries of Greek texts might cut against such a claim. The translation of the most relevant passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1142b) somewhat obscures the meaning of the Greek, which classifies ἀγχινοία as "a certain εὐστοχία (good aim)," not simply "coming close" to it, as is rendered here. This is actually very similar to the definition provided from the Suda, so it seems to me a stronger connection could be drawn--and a stronger genealogical conclusion reached--than that there are various meanings to the word.

In general, more explanation of the Greek (and consistency in rendering key terms into English) would strengthen the paper. Readers might benefit from knowing that ἀγχινοία is not only shrewdness but is more often "quickness of wit," which captures some of the double valence of comprehension and responsiveness that also characterizes *coup d'œil*. Similarly, the core meaning of εὐστοχία as a "good aim" might help frame the analysis of the terms from the beginning, rather than holding back this definition until page 7.

The reference to μῆτις (cunning), drawing from Vernant and Detienne, is puzzling, since it is not an Aristotelian term. Vernant and Detienne's contention that Aristotle is operating in an intellectual landscape shaped by a cultural value of μῆτις is, it seems to me, besides the point for this piece. Conversely, Plato's use of ἀγχινοῖα in the *Charmides* goes oddly unexamined. If the article seeks to give a survey of the meaning of ἀγχινοῖα, more explanation of Plato's and Aristotle's terms is necessary, and a clearer explanation of why it is inappropriate to read Polybius's usage as drawing on his Greek predecessors and their notions of cognition.

The development of the term *coup d'oeil* from a literal to a metaphorical perceptiveness in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century is covered well. On Clausewitz and in the conclusion, it seemed to me that the analysis would be strengthened by clearer statements as to 1) what precisely is Clausewitz's original contribution with respect to *coup d'oeil*, and 2) how does a better understanding of de Folard's lack of indebtedness to the Greek uses of ἀγχινοῖα help us to better understand the enduring value of Clausewitz's conceptualization of *coup d'oeil*?

I look forward to reading a future publication of this piece and other contributions by the author.