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The Rhetoric of Combat: Greek Military Theory and Roman Culture in Julius Caesar's Battle Descriptions

For David Ralston

War eclipses all other subjects in the classical historians: not without reason did the Cretan in Plato's *Laws* (625e) describe war as the permanent condition of mankind. Battle descriptions in ancient authors are legion; Xenophon's *Hellenica* alone describes or mentions over one hundred and fifty military engagements.¹ So too is modern interest in old battles perennial. A gigantic scholarly literature seeks to locate ancient battlefields, to reconstruct the movements of armies upon them, and to divine the strategies of the great captains. Methods improve with time: the floppy sun-hat of today's wanderer over ancient fields shelters modern instruments of source-comparison far more sensitive than the clumsy engines cooled by the trim kepi of his nineteenth-century predecessor. Yet the intellectual underpinnings (to say nothing of the motivations) of this project remain firmly rooted in the nineteenth century. "How very much superior to Caesar's is Thucydides' style of battle narrative," writes the military historian John Keegan, exemplifying the easy assumption that there is a timeless ideal towards which military history tends, and that each ancient writer, and each battle description in that writer, can be evaluated in terms of how closely that ideal is approached.² But that timeless ideal is a mirage: nothing more, in fact, than our own conception of how

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1. Tuplin 1986: 37.

2. Keegan 1976: 68.

battles work, a historically contingent vision not necessarily any less freighted with the arbitrary than the vision of any generation before. For battle descriptions are by nature highly artificial, ours no less than theirs, and both our and ancient conventions of battle description are products as much of culture as of observation.

No one is born able to describe what happens in a battle, and the experience of battle does not in itself supply the necessary language. "What was Iwo Jima like? It was . . . it was . . . it was fucking rough, man! I know that, but what was it like? Really . . . really . . . really tough!"³ Yet since earliest times men have talked about battles even more than they have fought them, and so in every land an idiom has grown up to abet such talk, a treasury of images and metaphors, the creation and resource of soldiers—armed or armchair—and historians, of epic poets and drunks in bars. This inherited way of talking and writing about battle, this rhetoric of combat, seems perfectly natural to those who use it, a polished mirror held up to reality. Yet in fact it has many arbitrary and fanciful elements: where (nowadays) is the pushing when troops push forward? Where is the pulling when they pull back? More than a half-awareness of this artificiality, is, of course, impossible because this rhetoric is not merely a machine to convert experience into words, but the very armature upon which that experience is organized and made sense of. For the soldier the raw experience of battle is one of sights, noises, terrors, and alimentary misadventures. But when he mentally files those experiences under "the decisive flank-battle near Ypres during the retirement to Dunkirk" he is already ensorcelled by the inherited rhetoric of battle description.⁴

Noticing the differences between our own ways of describing battle and those of other lands and the past should make us notice the unreality of both. Yet these differences are easy to miss, since they are not instantly shocking and revolting, like pulling in a three-eyed trout. Modern readers can read and understand battle descriptions in Greek or Latin authors quite without the baffled frustration with which they greet ancient technical descriptions of music, or classical poetry's ubiquitous weaving metaphors. The mind does not like to be confused, and so insensibly shunts the minecarts of alien concepts onto familiar tracks. The abiding similarity of the experience described, as well as cultural influence over many centuries, have ensured a high degree of likeness over time and borders in the way battles are thought about in the Western tradition. And the universalizing claims of the modern theory of war discourage notice of cultural eccentricity: if military science is a science indeed, its algebra can hardly be different in different lands.

The first purpose of this paper is to convey a sense of the alienness of battle description in an alien culture. At its heart lies a detailed exposition of the mechanics of battle description in Julius Caesar's accounts of his Gallic and Civil Wars. From the broad use made of Caesar in sixteenth- through nineteenth-century

3. Frankel and Smith 1978: 74.

4. Cf. Keegan 1976: 36 and Fussell 1975: 169–90.

military thinking, one might imagine him the classical author whose conceptions of battle translated most easily into modern terms.⁵ But this expectation is confounded: analysis of Caesar's way of understanding battles reveals that his conceptions are further from our own than are those of his Greek predecessors. What is described in a battle description depends on unconscious cultural and conscious intellectual decisions about what it is important to describe, and Greek decisions were closer to ours than were Caesar's.

If battle description reflects culture, moreover, the study of Roman battle description promises insight into Roman culture. Traditional military history, where the exact details of battle are the object of inquiry, can be turned on its head: the way ancient authors describe the details of battle can tell us about the mental rigging of the societies in which they lived.

Understanding the mechanics of battle in ancient authors also offers a corrective to traditional methods of reconstructing ancient battles. Very rarely have the battle pieces of ancient historians been studied as a group within the work of an author, or as a group compared to those of other authors. Scholarship in ancient military history has traditionally proceeded battle by battle, and often with a tone of austere fault-finding, carping about the incompleteness and topographical inexactness of ancient authors' accounts. Modern authors become grumpy because ancient authors often do not write in accord with modern conventions of battle description. But comparison of many ancient battle descriptions reveals that ancient authors have their own conventions with which to accord: not merely obvious large-scale stylistic models like the invented paired harangues with which some classical historians adorn their battles, but deep-seated inherited convictions about what factors were decisive in battle, what details ought to be related, and how the narrative of events should be structured. These grand intellectual heirlooms are assembled from small-scale hand-me-down metaphorical schemata, like the "push" of the Greek phalanx, which guide authors' understanding of battles unawares. No one now would study speeches in the classical historians without a knowledge of their conventions, and few would judge such speeches except within the bounds of those conventions. No one should study or judge ancient battle descriptions—in the very same historians—as unproblematic attempts to depict reality, independent of convention and ideology. For the reader who does so may mistake for observed fact what convention shrilly demands, and accept as absent what convention blindly excludes. Study of ancient convention may, at the same time, offer insight into ancient realities which the arrogant imposition of modern convention hides: Caesar offers a broader set of explanations for victory in battle than our modern convention allows.

Caesar's battle descriptions are interesting also because he stands at the end of a tradition of soldier-authors: Thucydides, Xenophon, Polybius, and Caesar

5. On Caesar's later influence, references gathered by Loreto 1993[1990]: n. 6. See also Keegan 1976: 63–66.

had all witnessed battles, and all had a professional interest in how they worked. The tradition of battle descriptions flows on after Caesar, indeed rises to a torrent in Livy, but often as a purely literary tradition, historians learning how to describe battles from reading other historians.⁶ The tradition from Thucydides to Caesar, on the other hand, is far richer. These writers may have read and directly influenced each other, or read other lost accounts of battles (it makes little difference), but, more important, they also borrowed naturally from the talk of the camp, and, from Xenophon's day on, consciously or unconsciously from the thinking and writing of professional Greek military experts. This paper also attempts to trace the many-skeined intellectual tradition of ancient military thinking, to follow its progress over the boundary from Greece to Rome, and to investigate how it was received in a foreign land. This is done by contrasting Caesar's battle descriptions with those of Greek predecessors, especially Xenophon and Polybius. The success of Greek military thinking at Rome is a particularly interesting case of Hellenization: war was hardly an area—like bucolic poetry, for example—where the Romans had no tradition of their own. And Caesar is uniquely suited to be the subject of such a study: at once a bilingual Hellenistic intellectual with broad cultural interests⁷ (in this, super-typical of his age), and at the same time a Roman marshal who reports, by and large, on events he himself has seen, ensuring that the mix of Roman and Greek ideas that appears in his work also existed in his head, and was not the incidental result of a patchwork composition from Greek and Roman sources.

Finally, Caesar's conquest of Gaul—so many nations and millions subdued with so modest a force in so few years—is an astonishing military achievement. A close examination of how Caesar describes battle may reveal how he understands battle, and how Caesar understands battle may offer a path towards understanding his military genius and the success of Roman arms in the late Republic.

I. CAESAR AND MILITARY THEORY

Clausewitz had little patience for those who larded their military treatises with classical examples. "Vanity and charlatanism" were at the bottom of it, he suspected, and classical allusions were usually "embellishments to cover up holes and errors."⁸ Yet it might have eased his dyspepsia somewhat to realize that the author of a favorite treasury of such classical persiflage, Julius Caesar, wrestled in his own writings with problems similar to those of Clausewitz. For Clausewitz was a Romantic, a Schiller with cannon, a thinker who violently rejected the materialist military theories of Enlightenment military sages. Away with von Bülow's doctrine of the base, and his fallacious reduction of warfare to geometry! Away with Jomini's doctrine of interior lines! Such theories "direct their attention

6. Velleius Paterculus, Josephus, Arrian, and Ammianus Marcellinus are, of course, exceptions.

7. On Caesar's education and interests, conveniently, Zecchini 1990: 449–53.

8. *Vom Kriege* bk. 2 ch. 6.

only to physical quantities, while all of military action is shot through with psychological forces and effects.” Yet the very fact of their unquantifiability makes the incorporation of such non-material elements into theory problematic: Clausewitz’s solution was to view military theory not as an arid set of rules to be applied but as a body of historical knowledge upon which the commander might draw.⁹ To both Clausewitz’s Romanticism and his method Caesar would have been sympathetic: despite his debt to inherited ways of making sense of combat, the Roman stood in opposition to contemporary materialist strains of military thinking and offered a narrative of his campaigns which, *en passant*, armed its reader with a more powerful set of intellectual tools with which to understand the complex and ever-changing phenomena of battle.¹⁰

Although one of the classical historians’ most typical enterprises, describing battles was hardly the easiest.¹¹ Remarking on the confusion of a night engagement, Thucydides observes that battles by day are hard enough to reconstruct, since each witness only knows what goes on in his own vicinity (7.44.1). And however conscientious the classical historian is in gathering information, he must still structure his account: select the events to describe, and both order and rank his material, deciding which of many incidents were important to the outcome of the battle and which were worth telling for their own sake, perhaps imposing an armature of cause and effect, perhaps creating a linear account out of simultaneous events. Thus, however accurately the historian represents a battle, and however mundane the results of his effort may be, all battle descriptions are works of artistry. Caesar’s battle descriptions are not works of fiction, but attempts to reduce the chaos of reality to understandable narrative, perhaps favorable to himself and his men. For this he necessarily relies upon preconceived models for interpreting his and his army’s experience of combat. He makes use of pre-existing schemes, however implicit, about how battles work.¹² In a dismissive context Sallust reveals the intellectual tradition upon which Caesar—or any other late-Republican Roman writer—could draw for such theories: “the records of our ancestors and the military precepts of the Greeks” (*acta maiorum et Graecorum militaria praecepta*, *Jug.* 85.12).¹³ But Roman records that might have influenced Caesar—Latin battle descriptions written before Caesar’s day—have almost en-

9. *Vom Kriege* bk. 2 ch. 2. On Clausewitz and the tradition he was reacting against, Gat 1989.

10. For speculation on the didactic purpose of Caesar’s work and esp. his battle descriptions, Rüpke 1992: 209; cf. Adcock 1956: 22–23 and Loreto 1993[1990]: 311, 333–35; and for the didactic purpose of another kind of *commentarii* (pontifical), Linderski 1985: 215–22.

11. See Polybius’ strictures on his predecessors, Polyb. 12.17–22, 12.25^f, 16.18–20; and cf. Whatley 1964: 120–23.

12. As any writer describing a battle must, Keegan 1976: 36–46, and esp. 63 (of later European use of Caesar): “[b]attles are extremely confusing; and confronted with the need to make sense of something he does not understand, even the cleverest, indeed pre-eminently the cleverest man, realizing his need for a language and metaphor he does not possess, will turn to look at what someone else has made of a similar set of events to guide his own pen.”

13. For speculations on Caesar’s military reading, Loreto 1993[1990]: 243–44.

tirely perished.¹⁴ And vanished without a trace as well is the rough wisdom of the generations of centurions that would have formed the basis of the military knowledge of those who, like Sallust's Marius, learned about battle from fighting rather than reading (*Jug.* 85.7–14; cf. Pliny *Ep.* 8.14.4–5).¹⁵ No firm conclusions, therefore, can be drawn about Caesar's originality in the Latin tradition.¹⁶ Yet Sallust says that Romans relied also on Greek military writers, and it was to them that a correspondent of Cicero's turned when writing to the orator with advice about his command in Cilicia (*ad Fam.* 9.25.1).¹⁷ Indeed, any late-Republican Roman seeking theoretical works on warfare necessarily resorted to Greek authors, since technical Latin military writing seems to have dwindled after its founding in Cato the Elder's (lost) second-century BC *de Re Militari*, and only revives under the empire.¹⁸ And about this Greek tradition we know a great deal, both because works in it survive and because of its influence on Greek historians, especially Polybius. Yet in the end, although profoundly indebted to the Greek tradition of military theory,¹⁹ Caesar went far beyond it, creating in his battle descriptions an artistic unity that blended Greek theory with aspects of traditional Roman military thinking and his own experience. If Caesar's battles are often frustrating to the modern military historian to reconstruct, it is because his conceptions about what was important in battle are so very different from ours, and so different too from those of his Greek predecessors.²⁰

14. With a few exceptions (extended passages are Cato fr. 83 [Peter] = Aul. Gell. 3.7; Claudius Quadrigarius fr. 10b [Peter] = Aul. Gell. 9.13.6–19; fr. 12 [Peter; authorship uncertain] = Aul. Gell. 9.11; and see the parody in Plaut. *Amph.* 188–261). In writing *commentarii* (the genre is much discussed, Gesche 1976: 70 gathers references), Caesar was preceded by great men like M. Aemilius Scaurus and Sulla, whose works fail to survive. Livy describes many early battles, often drawing on Latin predecessors, but his style in such descriptions depends heavily on Caesar (Walsh 1961: 43), and so renders deduction about the pre-Caesarian Latin tradition problematic.

15. For the military tenor of aristocratic education during the Republic, Harris 1979: 14–15.

16. Thus for "Caesar" below it may often be necessary to read, "the lost Latin tradition that Caesar inherited." Some insight into that Latin tradition may be possible by triangulating between Caesar and his contemporaries, Sallust, Hirtius (=Hirt. *BG*), and the anonymous chroniclers of Caesar's Alexandrian (=B.Alex.), African (=B.Afr.), and Spanish wars (=B.Hisp.); but it is impossible to establish the independence from Caesarian influence of these battle descriptions written by Caesar's friends. Best, then, to use these works as *comparanda* only.

17. More generally on the late-Republican use of military handbooks, Campbell 1987: 21.

18. For the fragments of Cato's *de Re Militari* (on which see Astin 1978: 184–85, 204–205), Jordan 1860: 80–82. Note also the (inconclusive) attempts of Schenk 1930 to distill some Cato from Vegetius. Some have detected signs of other early Roman works: it has been suggested that Polybius' description of the Roman army (6.19–42) may draw upon a Roman handbook for military tribunes (Rawson 1971: 14–15) and that Val. Max. 2.3.2 may allude to a military handbook of the Marian period (Neumann 1956: col. 356).

19. As he was to many other Greek models: for Caesar's debt to the conventions of Hellenistic history writing, see Feller 1929 and Gärtner 1975: 63–134. For tragic motifs, Rowe 1967 and Mutschler 1975; and for his ethnography, references are gathered in Mensching 1988: 39.

20. Caesarian battles have called forth a vast topographical literature, dedicated to locating the battlefields and explaining the military movements of the armies engaged. Gesche 1976: 247–57, 269–73, 277–79, 286–87 gathers many references. To gauge the difficulties see (e.g.) Béquignon 1970: cols. 1073–74 for eight proposed locations for the battle of Pharsalus, or Pelling 1981: 754 for

II. THE PROBLEM OF PHARSALUS

Caesar's method of battle description, and some of the problems it poses, are vividly on display in his depiction of the battle of Pharsalus (*C* [= *Bellum Civile*] 3.85–95).²¹ Caesar is quite clear about the reason for his victory, but much of Caesar's narrative seems implicitly to contradict his explicit statement about why he won the battle.

As Caesar tells it, when he realizes that Pompey is willing to offer battle, he addresses a few remarks to his troops: they are to make themselves ready in *animus*, in spirit, or morale, for the fray. Next, Caesar's brief harangue is balanced by a report of a council of the Pompeian leaders some days earlier. Pompey there discussed tactics—he preened over the prospect of a flanking move by his much superior cavalry that would win the battle before the legions engaged. His stated motivation for explaining his plan was to encourage his officers, in order that they might go into battle with a stouter *animus*; he too urged them to make themselves ready in *animus* for the struggle. Labienus' remarks that followed were on the same theme. He explained that Caesar's army was—because of casualties and wastage—much inferior to that which conquered Gaul. The conference broke up “in great hopefulness and universal high spirits.” Now Caesar leaves the *animus* theme and describes in detail the dispositions of both armies on the field, noting that he, Caesar, arranged a special reserve—a fourth line in addition to the usual three of a legionary deployment—to face the flanking Pompeian cavalry, exhorting this force in particular that victory would depend on their *virtus*, their bravery. He also gives strict instructions that his third line especially should not engage without specific orders from himself. Then he returns to the *animus* theme, exhorting the rest of the army, so that his troops are “burning with enthusiasm for the fight” (*studio pugnae ardentibus*), and then gives the signal for the attack. An *excursus* then follows, describing the boasting of C. Crastinus, formerly first centurion of Caesar's Tenth Legion, a man of unique *virtus* (*vir singulari virtute*). “Today, imperator, I will give you reason to thank me, whether I am living or dead,” says he, and bravely charges the enemy with one hundred and twenty volunteers. The high *virtus* of Caesar's soldiers is confirmed.

We learn next, however, that Pompey has made a terrible mistake. On the advice of C. Triarius, Pompey ordered his legionaries to receive the charge of Caesar's legions at a stand, in order to face with undisrupted formation an enemy

five candidates for the location of the defeat of Ariovistus. For other interpretations of Caesar's topographical vagueness, Rambaud 1966: 40–43, 63–64 (a result of the official reports Caesar drew upon in his writing); Rambaud 1954/1955: 347–50 (purposefully vague from *Tendenz*); Rambaud 1967: 193 (simplified for aesthetic reasons); Pelling 1981: 741–42 (simplified for an impatient Roman audience ignorant of topography); Rüpke 1992: 209 (simplified for didactic purposes). All may well be right.

21. On this battle description see Rasmussen 1963: 119–29, Gärtner 1975: 130–33, and Rambaud 1954/1955 (to be used with care).

whose ranks had become disordered by their rapid advance. Pompey reasoned that his own infantry would also be better protected against Caesar's javelins in close formation, and Caesar's troops would be tired out by the run. Caesar singles out this plan for criticism, editorializing—with a rare reference to himself in the first person—that

it seems to me that in this Pompey acted against the dictates of reason, for there is a certain excitement of *animus* and enthusiasm [*alacritas*] naturally innate to all men, which is kindled by eagerness for the fight. Commanders ought to increase this, rather than repress it. It was not in vain that the ancients ordained that signals ring out in every direction and that the whole army raise a cry, thinking that the foe would thereby be terrified [*terreri*] and their own men inspired [*incitari*]. (C 3.92)

Caesar, in short, thinks Pompey took a tactically blinkered view of the situation and failed to consider the psychological dimension of his orders. The reader expects this striking homily, the climax of extensive attention to morale in this battle description, to bring on the climax of the battle as well: the inspired Caesarians should charge the deflated Pompeians and victory should be theirs. But nothing of the sort happens. The Caesarians do charge (because of their great experience they deftly stop to rest halfway to the enemy, so as not to arrive exhausted), but the Pompeians receive their attack and resist, fighting at close quarters. Caesar's account now shifts to the flank. Here Pompey's cavalry begin to surround Caesar's army and meets the fourth line, the reserve that Caesar had provided against them, which charges the cavalry with such force (*tanta vi*) that they are driven from the field. This reserve then begins to surround Pompey's army in turn and attack it in the rear. Now Caesar releases the third line of his legionaries into the stalemate of the legionary battle, replacing exhausted (*defessi*) men with those he had carefully kept fresh (*integri*). Finally the Pompeians, attacked both front and rear, break. Caesar remarks with some complacency that he "had not erred in thinking that victory would originate from those cohorts which he had posted opposite the cavalry in the fourth line, as he had said when he was exhorting the troops."

Why Caesar thinks he won—the encirclement of Pompey's legions by Caesar's deftly deployed fourth line at the same time that they were being attacked from the front by fresh troops—seems clear. Caesar concluded that he had won because of his superior tactics, a judgment confirmed by the expert Frontinus (*Strat.* 2.3.22). Yet there is much in Caesar's account which seems to tell in other directions. First there is Caesar's remarkable finger-wagging at the moral consequences of Pompey's not letting his troops charge. What is the relationship of that passage to the actual outcome of the battle? Why, more generally, in a battle that Caesar depicts as turning on his tactical expertise, is he so careful to describe at length the measures of both sides to ensure the morale, *animus*, of

their soldiers? Why, finally, do we hear so much about the courage—*virtus*—of Crastinus, to whom Caesar returns after his account of the surrender of Pompey's army in the wake of the battle proper, to offer an epitaph. "Caesar judged that Crastinus had shown the highest *virtus* in that battle, and judged that he had received a very great favor from him" (C 3.99). All this talk of *virtus* recalls Caesar's exhortation to his fourth line, that victory would depend on their *virtus*, courage.

It is attractive to attribute this seemingly irrelevant material—sallies against Pompey's stupidity and arrogance and praise for the courage of Caesar's soldiers—to propagandistic aims in Caesar's narrative.²² To do so accords with the widest skein of twentieth-century scholarship on Caesar's writing, the relentless quest to show that Caesar's accounts are deeply tendentious, the truth ingeniously concealed and transformed for political ends.²³ Nor will the myriad snufflers after this succulent truffle be put off the scent by the objection that attacks on Pompey's generalship might actually detract from Caesar's achievement in defeating him, or that Caesar's praise of his soldiers might plant in his reader's mind the unwelcome suspicion that their excellence, rather than their marshal's, was decisive. Yet even assuming a devious and thorough-going *Tendenz* on Caesar's part, that exhausted conclusion demands an answer to a more interesting prior question. Why, given the infinity of possible ways of deforming or falsifying the narrative of a battle, does Caesar choose to emphasize morale and courage in addition to tactics? Perhaps Caesar's battle descriptions are tendentious, but to tell lies Caesar must have a grammar of battle description from which to build the lies, a grammar which exists before the lies. How does that grammar work and where does it come from? To understand why Caesar describes battles as he does it is necessary to trace through his writings the three themes that articulate his account of the battle of Pharsalus—tactics, *animus*, and *virtus*—while investigating Caesar's relationship to older traditions of military thinking; and finally to consider how he uses those three themes to assemble battle descriptions that reflect his vision of generalship.

III. THEORIES OF TACTICS

Understanding the detailed mechanics of battle and how to describe those mechanics in writing is learned, not natural. The Greeks had evolved a metaphorical system to understand and depict the ordering, movement, and clash of troops on the field of battle. Julius Caesar uses a similar system, probably adapted from the Greeks, but with significant differences based on Roman experience.

22. E.g. Rambaud 1954/1955: 353 for Crastinus and Rambaud 1966: 356–57 for Pompey.

23. See Richter 1977: 96 n. 3 and Gesche 1976: 71–78 with 257–58 and 124–25 with 279–80 for catalogues of the vast literature. Most recently, see the papers collected in Welch and Powell 1998.

POLYBIUS AND THE GREEK TRADITION OF TACTICS

Caesar's criticism of the immobility of Pompey's legions at Pharsalus leaps out at the modern reader, just as it leapt out at Caesar's ancient readers, Plutarch (*Caes.* 44.4, *Pomp.* 69.5) and Appian (*BC* 2.79), so many centuries ago. Caesar notes that this foolish plan was pressed upon Pompey by one C. Triarius.²⁴ But where did C. Triarius, that "very serious and learned young man" (*Cic. Fin.* 1.5.13), get it? Plutarch attributes the decision to fear that Pompey's inexperienced legions would fall into disorder (*Pomp.* 69.4), while Appian observes that "some persons praise this stratagem as the best thing to do when encircled." Plutarch's concern with disorder and Appian's allusion to an erudite "some" guide us into a stream of Greek military science that emphasized proper deployment and formation, τάξις (from which we get the word "tactics"), and the maintenance of good order, εὐταξία, as the keys to victory. The seeds of this outlook can be detected in Herodotus. Although his descriptions of battle by land and sea often make the reader feel he has wandered into the heroic world of the *Iliad*, nevertheless the historian puts down Greek survival at Artemisium to the confusion into which the Persian fleet fell (8.16) and attributes the Greek victory at Salamis to the same cause, "since the Greeks fought with proper discipline and in ordered ranks, and the barbarians with no order" (8.86, τῶν μὲν Ἑλλήνων σὺν κόσμῳ ναυμαχεόντων καὶ κατὰ τάξιν, τῶν δὲ βαρβάρων οὔτε τεταγμένων). The Persian loss at Plataea should not be set down to inferiority in courage or strength, he notes, but to inferior equipment, skill, and tactics, since they hurled themselves against the Spartan line in small groups (9.62–63). To Thucydides falling into disorder is the most common cause of defeat in battle (5.10.6–8, 7.23.3, 7.36.6, 7.43.7–44.1, 8.105.2–3),²⁵ a fate that especially befalls those inferior in practice and military experience, a favorite theme of Thucydides (2.84.3, 2.91.4–92.1 [with 2.87–89], 6.72). Seeing his forces fall into disorder, the wise general withdraws his army before the onset (7.3.3). To Xenophon too disorder is disastrous (*Anab.* 3.4.19, 6.5.9, *Cyr.* 1.6.35).²⁶

These historians' analyses are based on an understanding of the realities of sea and land battle in their time—in engagements between tight lines of oared galleys or heavy infantry closely arrayed in the phalanx, keeping proper order was essential. But perhaps to be associated with the rise of professional experts in tactics in the late fifth century BC²⁷ was the transformation of such observations into doctrine and the elevation of such doctrines of deployment and formation—tactics narrowly conceived—to be queen of the intellectual battlefield. The earliest Greek

24. *RE* 8A/1: col. 234 s.v. Valerius nr. 365.

25. Cf. de Romilly 1956: 168–72.

26. Cf. Dillery 1995: 28–29.

27. On professors of tactics, and their lessons, Anderson 1970: 94–110, Wheeler 1983, and Whitehead 1990: 34–35.

tactical manual that survives, the first-century BC treatise of Asclepiodotus, stands in a tradition old by its day.²⁸ He teaches the proper order and formation of an army based on the Macedonian phalanx, conceived in highly abstract mathematical and geometrical terms.²⁹

The historian Polybius—also the author of a lost manual on tactics (9.20.4)³⁰—is an inheritor of this same tradition, albeit a less doctrinaire one, and when he asks himself in his *Histories* “why it has occurred that the Romans have prevailed and borne away first place in the contests of war” (18.28.4), it is to questions of formation and armament—the phalanx against the deployment of the Roman legion—that he naturally turns. Nose to nose on a flat battlefield the phalanx is irresistible, he says; but its tight formation is easily broken up by irregular terrain or enemy action, and the phalanx becomes ineffective in confusion. That is why the Romans win (18.29–32). Just as in Thucydides and Xenophon, the disorder of one side or the other in a battle is often decisive in Polybius (1.19.10, 1.40.13–14, 10.39.6–8).³¹ Indeed, order’s pivotal role is so natural that its consequences can simply be assumed. “As he [the Carthaginian admiral] was rounding the Cape of Italy he came upon the enemy sailing in good order and formation, and he lost most of his ships” (ἐν νόσμῳ καὶ τάξει, 1.21.11; cf. 1.25.1–4; Thuc. 4.129.4, 6.97.4; Xen. *Hell.* 1.5.14, 4.8.18–19), writes Polybius, confident that the causal connection between order and victory, disorder and defeat, will be understood. So Philopoemen’s careful training of the Achaean cavalry to ride in formation and keep station meets with Polybian approval, with his hero naturally “taking it for granted that there is nothing more dangerous or useless, than for cavalry who have broken their formation (τάξις) in squadrons to essay to engage in combat” (10.23.8).³²

To prevent (potentially decisive) disorder in his own army, and inflict it upon the foe, the Polybian general must attend particularly to his deployment. When Hannibal arranges a perfect deployment at Zama, but loses anyway, Polybius must appeal to fortune for an explanation (15.15–16). Different formations and armaments work differently on different terrain, and the general who fails to deploy in a fashion appropriate to the terrain will lose. Aratus foolishly decided to

28. Bauer 1893 and Wheeler 1983: nn. 30–31 collect references to Hellenistic theorists. And despite his late date Asclepiodotus did not stand at the end of the tradition. The Roman imperial tactical works of Aelian and Arrian draw heavily (although perhaps indirectly) upon Asclepiodotus’ own source, probably Poseidonius (see Dain 1946: 26–40 and Stadter 1978: 118; but *contra* Wheeler 1978: n. 9), although they wrote at an even greater remove from the world of Hellenistic warfare that was a fading memory even in Asclepiodotus’ day.

29. Some Greek philosophers—and the Peripatetics were especially interested in tactics—considered tactics a branch of mathematics, and treated it as such: see Wheeler 1988a: 179.

30. For thoughts on the relationship between Polybius’ tactical work and his *Histories*, Sacks 1981: 125–32. Polybius’ *Tactica* has also been proposed as the root source of the later Greek tactical manuals, Devine 1995.

31. Poznanski 1994: 33–34.

32. Cf. Eckstein 1995: 161–93 for the (164) “Polybian ideology of command in war as the imposition of order and control—upon oneself, upon others, upon battle.”

face the Aetolians on rough ground, with gloomy consequences: “the result of the battle was that which follows naturally on such an outset” (4.11.7–9 with 4.14.6; cf. 1.30, 2.68). Thus “in most battles by land and sea in a war differences of position cause defeat,” and it is the duty of the historian to report knowledgeably about topography (5.21.3–9). Indeed to Polybius the essential duty of an historian when describing a battle is to lay out the physical deployment—the formations and evolutions (τὰς ἐκτάξεις καὶ μετατάξεις, 12.25^f.3)—of the forces on the field. The wretched Callisthenes (12.17–22), Ephorus (12.25^f), and Zeno (16.18–19), all too ignorant to get such descriptions right, are severely castigated. The expert Polybius sometimes offers criticism of the deployments he describes: Regulus did well to deploy a deep infantry line against elephants, but against the numerous Carthaginian cavalry his arrangements were hopeless (1.33.10; cf. 1.26.16, 2.28.6, 2.33). This Greek conception of tactics—generalship conceived as a matter of order, deployment, formation, and terrain—is a deep structure which undergirds Polybius’ battle descriptions.

Polybius’ account of the battle of Cynoscephalae, which is followed (and implicitly explained) by his contrast between the legion and phalanx, illustrates Polybius’ tactical conception of battle, and offers a tour of the analytical concepts and terminology the Greeks had developed to understand battle conceived in this light (18.21–26).³³ The Macedonian army of Philip V and the Roman army of T. Flamininus were groping for one another in the fog. Advance parties of both armies met unexpectedly and were briefly “thrown into confusion” (διαταραχθέντες). Recovering, they fought, but “in the close struggle (κατὰ τὴν συμπλοκὴν [also embrace or intertwining]), the Romans were over-weighed (κατεβαροῦντο) and suffered badly.” But Flamininus sent help, and the Macedonians “were pressed (πιεζοῦμενοι) in their turn and over-weighed (καταβαροῦμενοι)” and fled to the heights, sending to Philip for aid. He sent reinforcements, and having added to their number a “heavy band” (βαρείας χειρός, a homericism), the Macedonians “pressed upon” (ἐνέκειντο) the Romans and drove them from the high ground. Flamininus then arrayed his whole force in line of battle, and Philip, despite his well-grounded concern about the unsuitability of the terrain for his phalanx, was lured into a general engagement by the sanguine reports of messengers. The Roman legionaries now supported their light-armed troops, and the latter, “taking advantage of the additional help thrown into the scale, as it were (οἷον εἰ σήκωμα), and pressing the enemy heavily (βαρέως ἐπέκειντο), they killed many of them.” To recover the situation Philip charges with his phalanx, although all his heavy troops have yet to come over the hill. “His right wing acquitted itself brilliantly in the fight, making its onset from an advantageous position (ἔφοδον ἐξ ὑπερδεξίου), being superior in the weight of their formation (τῷ βάρει τῆς συντάξεως ὑπερέχον; cf. 2.3.5–6, 2.68.9), and excelling greatly because of the difference in armament (theirs being suited to the occasion)” (cf. 2.30.7–8, 2.33;

33. Generally on the Greek vocabulary of battle, Pritchett 1985: 44–93.

Xen. *Hell.* 3.4.14). So the Roman left was “squeezed back” (ἐκπιεζομένων). But on the other flank the Macedonians were still crossing the hill and there Flamininus attacked with his elephants leading the Roman troops. “The Macedonians, having no-one to give them orders, were unable to form up and assume the formation suitable for the phalanx both because of the difficulty of the ground and because, busy making an approach to those fighting, they were in marching order rather than in line of battle (πορείας ἔχειν διάθεσιν καὶ μὴ παρατάξεως), and so they did not even receive the Romans into hand-to-hand combat, but gave way terrified and broken up by the elephants alone.” Now the Roman left—which the Macedonian phalanx was “pressing with its weight” (πιεζοῦντας τῷ βάρει)—was rescued. Romans from the victorious right took the phalanx in the rear with terrible slaughter: a phalanx cannot turn about, nor can its members fight individually, Polybius notes. This unanswerable attack put the victorious phalanx to flight, and the day belonged to the Romans.

This selective summary of Polybius’ account of Cynoscephalae highlights his focus on formation and order, the dangers of disorder, and the physical metaphors—weight and pressing—that he uses to describe combat. These metaphors are not fanciful in their origins, but drawn from Greek experience. For battles which pitted phalanx against phalanx often involved a good deal of actual pushing of one side against another.³⁴ And thus to conceive the action of bodies of troops upon one another in terms of weight, as here, or mass or power (δύναμις, Polyb. 18.29.1, 18.30.1; cf. βία, 2.69.9; βιαιάν . . . τὴν ἔφοδον, 18.30.4), was natural.³⁵ But in Polybius’ mental world not only phalanxes push and weigh, at Cynoscephalae light troops and Romans with their more open formations do as well, as elsewhere do ships (1.51.5, 1.51.8; cf. Xen. *Hell.* 4.6.8, 5.4.42–43). A set of metaphors drawn from experience has been elaborated into a physical theory of battle.³⁶ And that theory of order and physical forces produces highly geometrical battle descriptions, like those of Cannae by land (3.113–16) and Ecnomus by sea (1.26–8).

CAESAR

The tactical mechanics of Caesar’s battle descriptions betray a debt to Greek theories of tactics, but Caesar bases his metaphorical system on Roman rather than Greek methods of fighting. This Roman scheme is elaborated to cover the same phenomena as Greek tactical science—disorder, deployment, formation, maneuver, terrain—but its elements fit in Caesar’s mechanical system differently and receive different emphasis.

34. Hanson 1989: 171–84 and Pritchett 1985: 65–68, who notes (29) that the push image can be traced back to Homer, and Homer will have influenced later accounts. How much *actual* pushing occurred in the usual hoplite battle is controversial (see the literature collected in Goldsworthy 1997), but irrelevant to this argument.

35. Pritchett 1985: 67–68.

36. Cf. Krentz 1985: 55–56.

Like that of the Greeks, Caesar's conception of combat depends upon physical metaphors. An attack exerts *vis*, force (C 3.93; cf. *B.Afr.* 69–70),³⁷ parallel to Polybius' δύναμις. The pressing metaphor, so common in Greek battle descriptions, is prominent as well.³⁸ Caesar's bilingual education allowed him to draw upon Greek thinking and theory for a metaphorical arsenal to describe the mechanics of combat.³⁹ But Caesar adapts Greek conceptions to his experience of Roman reality: unlike the Greeks, Caesar tends to envisage the fundamental mechanics of battle not as the pushing of a weight but as the crash of one moving force, an *impetus*, against a stationary one, which must sustain (*sustinere*, G 1.24, 26, 4.37) or bear (*ferre*, G 5.21, C 2.25) that force.⁴⁰ Battle is envisaged as a bare-knuckle boxing match, where fast fists crash into immobile jaws, until one jaw or the other breaks. "Caesar's horsemen made an *impetus* against the cohorts, and men with small shields could not long sustain (*sustinere*) the *vis* of the cavalry. They were all surrounded by the cavalry . . . and slain" (C 1.70). This structure manifests itself by sea as well as by land (C 2.6, 3.101). So dominating, indeed, is this metaphor that Caesar relies on it even when *both* armies are in rapid motion towards each other, as at the battle against Ariovistus when

our men made their *impetus* upon the enemy so fiercely . . . and the enemy ran to the attack (*procurrerunt*) so suddenly and fast, that there was no space to throw javelins at the enemy. With javelins cast aside the fighting was with swords at close quarters. But in accord with their custom the Germans quickly formed a tight formation (*phalange facta*) and successfully sustained the *impetus* of the swords. (G 1.52)

Caesar assigns the *impetus* to the Romans; yet it would have been equally true, in this collision of mutually charging soldiers, to imagine the Romans as sustaining the German *impetus*.

Into this basic physical model of battle Caesar integrates the events and phenomena of combat. A hail of missiles exerts a *vis* (C 2.6; cf. G 5.43; *B.Alex.* 20), and numbers push: "on the right wing they pressed our battle line forcefully by virtue of the multitude of them" (*vehementer multitudine suorum nostram aciem premebant*, G 1.52; cf. C 1.46, G 7.80; *vim multitudinis*, *B.Afr.* 66, 52). Cavalry can push as well (C 1.70, *premeretur*). The physical strength, *vires*, of soldiers tends to be conflated in Caesar's mind with the metaphorical *vis* of the *impetus* or of resistance to it. When the Seduni and Veragri attack Galba's camp in the Alps, they imagine that the Romans "could not even sustain their first *impetus*"

37. See the lexicons, Merguet 1886, Menge and Preuss 1890, and Meusel 1887–93 s.v. *vis* for more references.

38. Many instances *infra*, and see the lexicons (*supra*, n. 37) s.v. *insto* and *premo*.

39. There is no direct evidence that Caesar had read Polybius, but see Loreto 1993[1990]: 243–44 for speculations on some Polybian echoes.

40. See the lexicons (*supra*, n. 37) s.v. *impetus*. Contrast the range of words—with various connotations—that Greeks used to describe the onset, Lindauer 1889: 10–11.

(*G* 3.2). They charge the camp (*G* 3.4–5; cf. 7.48; *B.Afr.* 78), but “at first our men resisted strongly with their strength intact” (*integris viribus fortiter repugnare*), and “whatever part of the camp, denuded of defenders, seemed pressed (*premi*), they rushed there and bore aid.” Yet as the day advanced the alpine tribesmen could replace their wounded and tired with fresh men, which, because of their scanty numbers, the Romans could not. “Now the fighting had gone on continually for more than six hours, and not only our *vires* but our missiles were running out, and the enemy pressed more violently (*instarent acrius*), and began to break down the rampart and fill the trenches as our men became more tired” (*languidioribusque nostris*). The Romans are going to lose this imagined pushing match, and a change of tactics is needed to win the day. Caesar tends to conflate wounds and exhaustion (thus *vulneribus defessi*, “worn out by wounds,” *G* 1.25) since their result, the reduction of *vires*, and thus pressure to the front, is the same. “The soldiers of the Ninth and Tenth Legions . . . cast their javelins and at the charge from high ground quickly drove the Atrebatas . . . fatigued with tiredness and exhausted by wounds, into the river” (*lassitudine exanimatos vulneribusque confectos*, *G* 2.23).

Other factors that might weaken an *impetus*, or the resistance to it, Caesar classifies in two broad overlapping categories: forces are *impediti*, encumbered, or *perturbati*, in confusion (*C* 2.26 for the pair). Two enemy ships have rammed each other: “the ships . . . close by . . . made an *impetus* against those ships that were *impediti*, and quickly sank them” (*C* 2.6). By land an army in line of march with its baggage is encumbered (*G* 6.8, 7.66, *C* 3.75), as are soldiers carrying stuff to fill up Roman trenches (*G* 3.19) or bearing shields pierced by javelins (*G* 1.25). Confusion consists of inability to maintain formation or follow the correct standards (*G* 4.26), and it may result from receiving an *impetus* (*G* 5.37), a hail of missiles (*G* 1.25; cf. Polyb. 11.12.5), and especially from being attacked unexpectedly (*G* 4.12, 4.32, *C* 3.101 at sea). It is partially to benefit from the hoped-for confusion of Caesar’s ranks that Pompey commands that his legions should hold their ground at Pharsalus, “to allow the [Caesarian] line to break up” during their long charge, “in order that the first onslaught and *vis* be broken and the line of battle spread out, and for Pompey’s men, properly arranged in their ranks, to assail scattered troops” (*C* 3.92). Close formation, like that of Ariovistus’ Germans, makes it easier to sustain an *impetus* (cf. *G* 1.24). But for soldiers to be pressed so close together that they cannot ply their weapons is a form of confusion (*G* 4.32) and encumberment (*G* 2.25); it makes it impossible to avoid missiles cast at them (*G* 5.35).

Integrated too into Caesar’s physics of battle is terrain, whether natural or man-made.⁴¹ At Alesia during the final Gallic assault “neither earthworks nor trenches could sustain the force (*vim*) of the enemies” (*G* 7.87). But at Massilia

41. For a more general treatment of Caesar’s conception of the physical space of his battlefields, Rambaud 1974.

later Caesar's besieging soldiers built a brick tower near the walls of the city. "It was to here they used to retire, and it was from here, if a greater *vis* crushed against them (*oppresserat*), they fought back" (C 2.8). On the opposite side of the Thames ford stands an army of Britons; they have fortified the bank with stakes and hidden others under the water. Caesar orders the attack. "The soldiers moved with such speed (*celeritate*) and momentum (*impetu*), even though only their heads were above water, that the enemy could not sustain the *impetus* of the legions and the cavalry, quitted the bank, and fled" (G 5.18). Water, then, is expected to soften an *impetus*. Those fighting from a river (G 2.10) or the sea (G 4.26) or a swamp (G 2.9) against those on dry land fight *impediti*, encumbered. Terrain which produces this effect—forest (G 3.28, 5.19), or swamp (G 6.34, 7.19), or river banks (C 3.75, 3.88)—is itself by projection an encumbered place, an *impeditus locus*.⁴²

Caesar's simplifying physical conception of battle allows him to reduce most considerations of terrain to the category of *locus iniquus*, where the lay of the land places one side at a disadvantage.⁴³ A place can simply be described thus, with no indication of exactly in what the *iniquitas* consists (C 1.81). A place offering only a narrow approach against the enemy, where only a few men can fight, and where relief of the exhausted will be difficult, is a *locus iniquus* (C 1.45). But the most common form of *locus iniquus* is a lower position on a slope (e.g. G 2.23, C 3.51). A charge up a hill is exhausting (G 3.19), and the higher army can cast its javelins with greater force and accuracy (C 1.45, G 3.4; cf. Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.15–16). At the battle against the Helvetii the Gauls advance in close formation (*phalange*) against Caesar's army on a hillside. But the Romans' javelins were thrown from the higher ground and thus easily broke the Gallic mass; indeed some with such force that they pierced two Gallic shields, encumbering their bearers when the Romans made their *impetus* against the disordered Helvetii (G 1.25). The same advantage with missiles is gained by casting them from sea-side cliffs (G 4.23), entrenchments (G 3.4, 3.25; Hirt. *BG* 8.9), a wagon laager (G 1.26), high ships (G 3.14), or a pile of bodies (G 2.27). If it is easy to throw downwards, it is hard to throw upwards (G 3.14). In general, an *impetus* made downhill is expected to be very hard for the enemy to sustain (G 3.2); those higher press (*premere*) on those lower (C 1.45).

In a battle conceived according to this tactical schema the business of the general is cerebral management of physical realities. As the Gauls probe Caesar's great double ring of defenses at Alesia for weak points, as they shift their points of attack, Caesar secures a position with a broad outlook and from there artfully doles

42. Cf. Rambaud 1954/1955: 361.

43. The opposite, the *locus aequus*, is sometimes a fair field, where neither side has an advantage, C 1.41, but often where the enemy is in a *locus iniquus*, G 3.17, C 2.33–34. On the *locus iniquus* in Caesar cf. Loreto 1993[1990]: n. 203. By contrast the Greek tradition elaborated a doctrine of the position of advantage, ὑπερδέξις, usually a higher position on a slope; see Pritchett 1985: 76–81.

out reinforcements to wherever the Romans are hard-pressed (*G* 7.85–87). Where his troops are outnumbered the tactical general sends up reinforcements (*G* 1.52); he takes measures to prevent the units of his army from being outflanked (*G* 2.8, 3.28, *C* 1.40; cf. *B.Afr.* 15, 17, 58) especially on the right, shieldless, “open” side, where the soldiers are especially vulnerable to missiles (*G* 4.26, 5.35), and contrives to outflank and surround his enemy (*G* 3.26, *C* 3.86; cf. *B.Afr.* 59; *Xen. Hell.* 4.2.22) and cast missiles upon their open side (*G* 4.25). He attends to the *vires* of his troops—replacing the wounded and the tired (*C* 1.45), avoiding battle when his army is exhausted (*C* 1.65; cf. *B.Afr.* 42), and striving to tire out his enemy (*C* 3.85; cf. *B.Afr.* 75). Since the *vires* of soldiers lessen when they run short of food (*G* 7.20, *C* 1.52), Caesar attends carefully to the supplies of his army (*C* 3.42, 3.85), maneuvering to ensure that they are not disrupted, and maneuvers as well to cut off the supplies of his enemy (*G* 3.23: this tactic is the *consuetudo populi Romani*; *G* 6.10, *C* 3.41, 3.58). Plotting and maneuvering to place the enemy in a *locus iniquus* and to avoid one himself, the tactical general is acutely sensitive to the lay of the land, and must “take counsel from the nature of the place” (*C* 3.43; cf. *G* 7.74), as Caesar puts it.

It seems highly likely (although it cannot, of course, be proved) that Caesar’s sophisticated tactical physics was an adaptation (by him or lost Latin predecessors) of the Greek conception of battle to Roman experience. Caesar depends on the Greeks for the fundamental metaphors, that of pressing, and the conception of the clash of arms in terms of force, *vis* or δύναμις. It is on the nature of the force exerted that Caesar diverges from the Greek tradition. For the ruling Greek weight metaphor did not describe the impact of the Roman legion, more loosely deployed than the massive Greek phalanx.⁴⁴ Thus Caesar’s physical conception of battle is naturally less one of weighing than of crashing. Caesar’s metaphorical system ramifies from the *impetus* of the legionary charge rather than the ὄθισμός of the phalanx. Caesar’s physics is based on moving forces, the Greek conception, in essence, on stationary, pushing forces. Differences in the basic conceptual model, moreover, create differences of emphasis in battle description. Polybius mentions terrain which might cause disorder (the nemesis of pushing weight) to the easily disordered phalanx. His fastidiousness about topographical reporting—however congenial to us—is the result of tactical thinking that arises from a certain method of fighting. Disorder is less dangerous to Caesar’s legions, and the lay of the land simply less important to him: terrain is primarily interesting to Caesar if it slows (or speeds up) the *impetus* of troops moving across it. Caesar’s model of the physics of battle does not demand Polybius’ topographical precision.

Drawing on the Greeks, we too use metaphors drawn from physics to think about battle. The Greek theory of battle elaborated from the push of the phalanx still influences our conceptions: military forces push, press, weigh, and give

44. Cf. Goldsworthy 1996: 207–208. Which is not to say that Romans did not sometimes fight in very close order, Wheeler 1979: 303–18.

way in our minds much as once they did in Greek minds. Yet the comfortable familiarity of such metaphorical weapons to the modern hand must not conceal the fact that they, like spears and rifles, had to be invented, and once invented adapted to the experience of their users. Julius Caesar offers one such adaptation; comparing his mechanics of battle with Polybius' and our own produces a vivid sense of the artificiality of all of them.

IV. *ANIMUS*

To receive Caesar's charge at a stand was against the dictates of reason, wrote Caesar in his criticism of Pompey at Pharsalus, for that was to ignore the psychological dimension of the *impetus*. He attacks the elevation of formation over psychology elsewhere too: in 54 BC a detachment of Caesar's army under Sabinus and Cotta was ambushed on the road by the Gauls (*G* 5.32–37), and Cotta made the decision to abandon the baggage and form a defensive circle (*orbis*). "This plan, which is hardly to be scorned in such a situation, nevertheless turned out badly. For it reduced the hope of our troops and made the enemy more eager for the fight (*ad pugnam alacriores effecit*), since it could not be done without creating the appearance of the greatest fear and desperation" (*G* 5.33; cf. 2.17 on the moral effect of loss of the baggage). This was the beginning of disaster, and Caesar uses the occasion to editorialize on the inadequacy of command conceived as too narrowly tactical—command which might approve the abandonment of the baggage regardless of the psychological consequences—and to call for a kind of generalship that gave due attention to the relative morale of the armies in contention, to the *animus* of the troops.⁴⁵

XENOPHON AND THE GREEK TRADITION OF MILITARY PSYCHOLOGY

In insisting upon the salience of psychological factors in battle, Caesar enters on one side of an old Greek argument. "He taught me drawing up soldiers (τακτικά)—and nothing else," complains a character in Xenophon about an early military sophist (*Mem.* 3.1.5), and then has Socrates dilate on other aspects of military knowledge the professional failed to teach. Xenophon expands his attack on this narrowly tactical conception of military education in the *Cyropaedia*, when he imagines Cyrus asking his father to pay a similar expert who had promised to teach him generalship (*Cyr.* 1.6.12–14).⁴⁶ Was his training any use? asked his father. Had the professional taught him about supplies, or health, and "had he taught me so that I would be able to instill enthusiasm (προθυμία) in an army,

45. For morale in the Roman army, see R. MacMullen 1984[1990], Goldsworthy 1996 *passim*, and Lee 1996.

46. The *Cyropaedia* is a didactic work posing as an historical account of the life of Cyrus: Due 1989: 10–12, Gera 1993: 2, and esp. for the similarity of military material in the *Cyropaedia* to Spartan practice, see Anderson 1970: 11–12, 43–44, 75–78, 84–85, 96–104, and 165–91.

noting that in every undertaking enthusiasm or discouragement (ἀθυμία) made a tremendous difference?" (cf. *Cyr.* 1.6.19). The hired expert had not, and it was left to Cyrus' father to make clear to the young conqueror "that formations (τὰ τακτικά) were only a small part of generalship" (cf. *Cyr.* 8.5.15).

Xenophon was attacking a strain of Greek military thinking which survives to us in the tradition of the Greek tactical manuals, and, to a lesser degree, in Polybius.⁴⁷ For battle conceived strictly as a matter of forms and forces was covertly reductionist and totalizing. "These, in short, are the principles of the tactician," writes Asclepiodotus in conclusion to his tactical work, "they bring safety to those who employ them, and danger to those who do not" (12.11). So, he implies, victory is simply a matter of drawing up troops, since that is all he discusses.

Xenophon, by contrast, thought that "neither numbers nor physical strength make for victory in war, but whichever side—with the gods' help—advances upon the enemy stouter in spirit (ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἔρρωμενέστεροι), their foes usually do not stand against them" (*Xen. Anab.* 3.1.42; cf. *Cyr.* 3.3.19). Xenophon's stated opinion was that psychology was the most important factor in winning battles. A survey of his writings suggests that he has overstated his case in the passion of controversy. For Xenophon was no scorner of tactics: he often stops his narrative for detailed dissertations on formation and drill in the spirit of the later tactical manuals (*Anab.* 3.4.19–23, 4.3.26–29, 4.8.10–13, *Cyr.* 2.3.21–22, 2.4.2–4, *Lac. Pol.* 11.5–10).⁴⁸ And a great many of his battle descriptions are austere tactical, or have psychology sprinkled here and there as decoration like the confectioner's sugar of a stingy pastry chef (e.g. *Hell.* 1.6.29–34, 2.4.32–34, 4.2.13–23, 6.4.9–14, *Cyr.* 6.3.18–7.1.40). But there are plenty of battle descriptions in Xenophon—both of historical battles (*Hell.* 4.4.9–12, 4.5.13–17, 5.4.42–45, 7.1.31, 7.2.22–23) and an imagined battle in the *Cyropaedia* (3.3.25–67)—where psychological factors are decisive.

Just as schemata the Greeks used for describing battle in physical terms are visible in Polybius, so Xenophon offers a tour of the simplifying assumptions with which Greeks made a science of the psychology of soldiers in battle. Xenophon's machinery of military psychology—ψυχή—is founded on a dichotomy between θάρσος, confidence, boldness, martial enthusiasm, and φόβος, fear or panic (*Anab.* 3.2.16, *Cyr.* 3.3.19, 5.2.33, 5.3.47, *Eq. Mag.* 5.3). Almost synonymous is the polarity between εὐθυμία (or προθυμία), high spirits, and ἀθυμία, low spirits (*Anab.* 3.1.39–41, *Hell.* 7.4.24, *Cyr.* 1.6.13). Φόβος, ἀθυμία, and their near synonyms are disastrous in battle, tending to produce panicked flight, while θάρσος, εὐθυμία, and their near synonyms are highly desirable. Reciprocity operates between the opposite ends of the axis: the extreme high spirits of one army can be enough alone to produce panic in the other army (*Cyr.* 3.3.59–63, *Hell.*

47. Cf. Delatte 1933: 23–24.

48. Cf. Breitenbach 1967: 1722, 1732–37 and Anderson 1970: 96–110, 165–91.

7.2.21–23; cf. *Cyr.* 3.3.30), while signs of fear raise the spirits of the enemy (*Hell.* 3.5.22, *Anab.* 4.6.9). Soldiers' very high spirits shade in Xenophon's mind into the insolent aggressiveness of *hybris* (*Hell.* 3.5.22–24): contempt (καταφρονεῖν) for the enemy is valuable because it makes soldiers fight more boldly in battle (*Hell.* 3.4.19, *Cyr.* 3.3.31), but it can be dangerous because contemptuous soldiers are careless (*Hell.* 4.1.17, 5.3.1).

The Greeks had an old, deep-rooted respect for the terrifying irrationality of the moods of soldiers in battle, a respect manifested in cults to Pan, the god of panic, and sacrifices to Artemis.⁴⁹ Drawing upon this tradition, Xenophon knows that states of high and low spirits can be wholly irrational.⁵⁰ The gods may bring high spirits (*Hell.* 7.1.31, 7.2.21, *Anab.* 3.1.42), and panic may crash down like a thunderbolt from a clear sky (*Anab.* 2.2.19–21).⁵¹ Panics are contagious (*Hell.* 5.2.41, 5.4.45, 7.5.24; cf. *Thuc.* 4.96), and psychological effects, whether θάρσος or φόβος, are exaggerated in large bodies of men (*Cyr.* 5.2.33–34).

Within the realm of the predictable, victory—or the prospect of it—is the essential source of θάρσος (*Anab.* 6.3.12; cf. 5.4.18). “Being in pursuit inspires θάρσος even in cowards” (*Anab.* 6.5.17). Defeat and death—or the prospect of them—are the essential sources of ἀθυμία (*Hell.* 7.5.23, *Anab.* 5.4.18–19). Thus casualties inspire the side inflicting them (*Hell.* 4.5.16) and demoralize the side suffering them, especially if the fallen are generals or men of distinction (*Hell.* 7.4.24, 7.5.25). Situations dangerous in the battle conceived tactically cause fear in the battle viewed psychologically: seeing one's battle line fall into disorder (*Anab.* 4.8.10), being surrounded (*Cyr.* 7.1.24), or having enemies behind (*Anab.* 3.4.20, *Hell.* 4.4.11–12, 7.5.24), thinking one is being ambushed or that the enemy is receiving reinforcements (*Eq. Mag.* 5.8, 8.20).

Xenophon has an interlocutor of Cyrus urge him to raise the spirits of his army before battle with a speech, but Xenophon has Cyrus reply that careful training beforehand is much more significant to the psychology of soldiers in battle than oratory on the field (*Cyr.* 3.3.49–55). By the way Xenophon treats the subject, the utility of the pre-battle harangue was evidently controversial in his day, and Xenophon takes a pessimistic view.⁵² Oratory is more useful for reviving the spirits of a discouraged army (*Anab.* 3.1.39–42; cf. *Onasander* 1.13–14), an end which can also be accomplished by rest or victory (*Cyr.* 5.2.32, 5.2.34, *Hell.* 7.1.19, *Anab.* 6.5.30).

49. Pan, Borgeaud 1988: 133–37; Artemis, Vernant 1991.

50. See Eckstein 1995: 168–71 for similar observations in Polybius.

51. On Greek conceptions of military panic, Wheeler 1988a: 172–81; see esp. *Thuc.* 7.80; *Aeneas Tacticus* 27; *Polyaenus* 1.2.

52. That Xenophon (an expert) discountenances the speech before battle is ample proof that such speeches were regularly given (*pace* Hansen 1993), whatever the historicity of the actual speeches which appear in the historians. For why criticize something that people did not do?

More than giving speeches, Xenophon's general is most often found devising and employing psychological tricks and stratagems.⁵³ In this, Xenophon was carried along by powerful Greek intellectual currents: besides tactics, the second great stream of Greek military thinking was the collection of cunning stratagems, the systematic application of *metis* to warfare.⁵⁴ Herodotus hastens to point out warlike tricks (e.g. 1.21–22, 8.22, 8.75) and a systematic interest in stratagem can be detected in Thucydides.⁵⁵ In the Hellenistic period stratagem collections began to be compiled and two Roman-era collections of ancient military stratagems survive.⁵⁶ Appian describes the immobility of Pompey's infantry at Pharsalus as a stratagem, and many Greek stratagems were tactical in nature, but Greek collections of stratagems represented an anecdotal tradition independent of Greek tactical science that comprehended, indeed emphasized, the psychological aspects of warfare.⁵⁷ It is to a great extent through Greek interest in military trickery that psychology makes its way onto the Greek mental battlefield.⁵⁸

Xenophon's description of the battle of Mantinea in 362 BC (*Hell.* 7.5.20–25) is an excellent instance of the integration of psychological factors into battle description through the medium of stratagem. Epaminondas' first trick is to form his army into line of battle—to give the impression that he intended to fight that day—but then to move away and pretend to make camp. “By doing this he caused a relaxation in the enemy's psychological readiness for the fight (ἔλυσε . . . τὴν ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς πρὸς μάχην παρασκευήν), and a relaxation of their formation (τὴν ἐν ταῖς συντάξεσιν).” And indeed when Epaminondas ordered the attack he fell upon an enemy unprepared both in order and spirit: “all were like men about to suffer, rather than accomplish, something” (cf. *Cyr.* 7.5.21, *Hell.* 4.8.38). Before the onset Epaminondas deepened the left wing of his phalanx, replicating his famous tactic at Leuctra (*Xen. Hell.* 6.4.12; cf. *Cyr.* 7.5.3), and drew his weaker right wing back to protect it from early engagement. But the rationale Xenophon attributes to Epaminondas for this arrangement at Mantinea is psychological: the moral consequences of the first clash of arms, he thought, were contagious, and if his weak right wing were put to flight, it would discourage the rest of his army and strengthen the enemy. The same logic dictated the stratagem of strengthening his cavalry with a leavening of infantry. It was essential to win the first encounter,

53. On Xenophon and stratagem, Wheeler 1988b: 11. See especially Xenophon's *Hipparchicus*; and cf. the contemporary work of Aeneas Tacticus (with Whitehead 1990: 36–37 on the similarity of his outlook to Xenophon's).

54. For the tradition see Lammert 1931, Wheeler 1988c, 1988b: 11–13, and for their importance, esp. *Xen. Cyr.* 1.6.27, 1.6.37–41, *Hell.* 5.1.4, 6.1.15; Polyb. 9.12.2.

55. Herodotus, Krentz 1997: 58–59; Thucydides, Heza 1974 and Krentz 1997: 57–58.

56. The *Strategica* of Polyaeus and the *Strategemata* of Frontinus. On both, conveniently, Wheeler 1988b: 12–13 and Campbell 1987: 14–16.

57. Emphasizing the contrast between tactics and stratagem in the Greek mind, Polybius depicts Aratus as a genius at stratagems but hopeless in pitched battles (4.8.3–5).

58. For the psychological dimension of stratagem, Wheeler 1988a: 174–76.

he thought, "for it is hard to find men willing to hold their positions, when they see any of their own side fleeing." Finally, to prevent the enemy troops opposed to his lagging right from assisting those attacked by his powerful left, Epaminondas posted troops on hills overlooking them, to place them in fear (φόβος) of being attacked from the rear if they went to help their allies. And Epaminondas was correct in all his psychological strategizing. "By gaining mastery where he struck, he made the whole of the enemy flee."

The salience of psychological factors in this battle description is striking, but no less striking is the nexus between those factors and stratagem. Xenophon's interest in military psychology is greatest where he is not just reporting panics and the like, but pointing out the stratagems that gave rise to them. One of the two great imaginary battles in the *Cyropaedia* is conceived as a tutorial in psychological stratagems (*Cyr.* 3.3.12–67; the other, 6.3.18–7.1.40, is a tutorial on tactics): among the topics covered are the terror inspired by the offensive (3.3.18–19), by revealing one's strength all at once (3.3.28), the need to conceal one's small numbers lest the enemy have contempt for one's army and be reassured (3.3.31), as well as the futility of oratory before battle in contrast to training (3.3.49–55), already mentioned. So utter is Cyrus' psychological mastery that the enemy flees without a blow (3.3.63).

In contrast to Xenophon's enthusiasm for military psychology, the austere Polybius looks first to tactics and only second to psychology to understand battles: his is a middle position between Xenophon and the tactical writers, who tend to ignore psychology. Polybius may have the widest general interest in human psychology of all the surviving classical historians,⁵⁹ but the prominence of psychology in his battle descriptions is not proportionate to his expansiveness on psychology in general. On the eve of Pharsalus, Brutus sat making an epitome of Polybius (Plut. *Brutus* 4.4). If C. Triarius had been reading Polybius' description of Cynoscephalae over Brutus' shoulder that would certainly explain the advice he gave to Pompey about the primacy of formation over psychology to oppose Caesar's charge. Where psychology does feature in Polybius' descriptions of battles, it is often poorly integrated into the chain of causation that leads to victory: in Polybius' account of Drepanum, for example, Adherbal's encouragement of the Carthaginians is depicted, as well as the resulting lather of martial enthusiasm (1.49.10–11), but Carthaginian high spirits have no role in Polybius' careful analysis of the reasons the Carthaginians win (1.51), all of them tactical (cf. 1.32–34). The nexus between military psychology and stratagem, moreover, is even more marked in Polybius than in Xenophon (e.g. 3.116.8, 11.16, 11.22.1–4, and 24.6); in Polybius, for the most part, psychological events occur because generals plan for them. Polybius describes how the stratagems of Hamilcar Barca produced panic in his foes during the Carthaginian war against their mercenaries

59. Wunderer 1905, Pédech 1964: 210–53, and Davidson 1991.

(1.84.8; cf. 1.75–76).⁶⁰ At the siege of New Carthage, just as Scipio sounded the attack, Mago cunningly launched a sortie to astound (καταπλήξεται) the Romans. But Scipio had foreseen this stratagem and countered with one of his own: he planned to lure the enemy troops far from the walls, so that, destroying them, he would demoralize (διατραπήσεται) the defenders of the town and ensure that they would never sortie again (10.12.4–7). Scipio encouraged his troops by his presence, arousing their enthusiasm (προθυμία), and thus contributed greatly to the victory (cf. 5.85.8). Yet this too is conceived as a stratagem: he had arranged to be protected by three men bearing large shields (10.13.1–5). To Xenophon stratagem is a useful avenue to military psychology, but Polybius finds it hard to turn off that road. The science of stratagem could be a constraint on Greek understanding of soldiers' psychology, because it encouraged Greeks to look for psychology only where stratagem could also be found. Experts who thought along Polybius' lines were confident that their science of stratagem offered the general mastery of human emotion.

The ironic end of Xenophon's Mantinea might be conceived as Xenophon's answer to Polybius: Epaminondas' death at the moment of triumph deprived his side of a decisive victory, because the fall of the master of psychological stratagem threw his army into an unplanned-for panic. The victorious hoplites of Epaminondas' left simply stopped where they were, and his victorious cavalry "escaped through the fleeing enemy like beaten and terrified men." The end result was that although everyone predicted a decisive battle, and a clear decision as to who should be master of Greece, "the god so arranged it that both sides should set up a trophy as victors . . . and in Greece there was even more confusion and chaos after the battle than before" (*Hell.* 7.5.25–27). So Xenophon reasserts the essential irrationality of military psychology. Although interested in stratagem, Xenophon is not prepared to confine his understanding of soldiers' moods in battle to the inherited structures of that science.

CAESAR

Caesar's strictures on Pompey's plan at Pharsalus signify his participation in the Greek debate on the importance of psychology in battle and signal that on this question he sailed the same intellectual currents as Xenophon.⁶¹ To Caesar morale was not to be ignored, nor was it a sporadic, occasional concern (as conceiving it narrowly in terms of stratagem implicitly made it): to Caesar morale was a constant preoccupation.⁶² The outlines of Caesar's understanding of *animus*—simply a translation of the way Xenophon uses the word ψυχή—are very similar to, and

60. On the inculcation of fear in Polybius, Guelfucci 1986: 232–33.

61. For what it is worth, Suetonius (*Jul.* 87) says that Caesar knew the *Cyropaedia*; it was much read in his generation (Cic. *Brutus* 112), and Cicero used it as a guide during his campaign in Cilicia (*ad Fam.* 9.25.1). See Münscher 1920: 74–83.

62. On Caesar's military psychology, cf. Loreto 1993[1990]: 297–98.

probably borrowed from, the Greeks. Both gather all forms of low morale—from quiet discouragement, to defeatism, to fear, to desperate irrational panic—into one broad functional category: φόβος, ἄθυμία, and synonyms in Xenophon, *terror* and *timor* in Caesar. Similarly both gather high morale, god-sent inspiration, the thrill of victory, and the mad joy of the attack into another omnibus category. There is nothing inevitable about either grouping: the similarity suggests Greek influence. In describing morale Caesar and Xenophon are often describing the same or similar real phenomena. But even allowing for the consequent natural similarity of their depictions, Caesar's treatment of morale, and his intermittent editorial remarks upon it, are strikingly similar to Xenophon's.

Caesar gives even greater prominence to the theme of morale than Xenophon: no ancient writer who had actually seen a battle gives psychology a larger role in his battle descriptions than Caesar,⁶³ and no ancient writer offers as extensive or elaborated a treatment of the phenomena.⁶⁴ Thus in Caesar we can see how many themes which are treated tersely in Greek authors play out in detail. Like ψυχή in Xenophon, the *animus* of Caesar's soldiers—even steady Roman legionaries—is terrifyingly unstable (*C* 3.72). Like Xenophon, Caesar too has much to say about the internal logic of panic (*C* 2.29, *G* 1.39, 6.37, 7.84) and its disastrous consequences. At the announcement of the defeat of Curio the remnant of his army in Africa, snug and for the moment unthreatened in their well-fortified camp, fell into a panic. "So great was everyone's fear (*terror*), that some said that Juba's forces were approaching, others that Varus' legions were pressing upon them, and that they could see the dust from their approach, when nothing of the kind was happening. Yet others feared that the enemy fleet would quickly fall upon them" (*C* 2.43). The Caesarian warships flee, the cargo ships with them, soldiers rush aboard the few remaining vessels and, overloading them, sink some. The army surrenders (*C* 2.43–44). One of Caesar's continuators refers to "combat and shouting (*congressus . . . et clamor*), the two chief ways an enemy becomes terrified" (*B.Hisp.* 31). But soldiers in Caesar are easily alarmed by any surprise (*G* 6.39, 7.28; cf. *B.Afr.* 29) or anything unfamiliar, by British chariots (*G* 4.33; cf. Polyb. 2.29.5–9); by the catch-as-catch-can tactics of the Pompeians in Spain, learned from the Lusitanians (*C* 1.44–45); by having to fight half-submerged in the English Channel (*G* 4.24), a crisis which Caesar reverses by sending Roman warships, bristling with artillery, against the Britons on the shore, which frighten them as unfamiliar in turn (*G* 4.25). Green troops are especially vulnerable to such panic (*G* 6.39), while long experience provides some protection against it (*C* 3.84).

Just as in Xenophon, the aspects of battle conceived tactically cast reflections in the world of morale, because they may inspire terror. The prospect of being outnumbered may inspire fear (*C* 1.56, 3.84), while fighting encumbered with baggage is expected to reduce the *animus* of the soldiers (*G* 3.24). But these are

63. Cf. Goldsworthy 1996: 245.

64. Cf. Collins 1952: 107–25.

the huge, misshapen, and terrifying reflections of fun-house mirrors, for soldiers' reactions are often far out of proportion to the real danger, the consequences of their panic sometimes much more dangerous than what they feared. Having seen some of their light-armed troops surrounded and exterminated by Curio's cavalry, the whole Pompeian army near Utica abandons its advantageous position: "the *animus* of Attius' soldiers, seized by fear (*timor*) and flight and the slaughter of their comrades, gave no thought to resistance. All thought they were even now being surrounded by cavalry" (C 2.34; cf. *B.Alex.* 18). They take to flight before Curio's men can land a blow. Vercingetorix's Gauls are also given to such exaggerated panics at the prospect of being surrounded (G 7.67, 7.82). Similarly, soldiers are extremely nervous about being outflanked on their open side. During the civil war in Spain the rushes of small numbers of Pompeian troops play to this fear, which in turn infects much of Caesar's line of battle (C 1.44–45). Before Gergovia friendly Gauls appearing on the *latus apertum* are transformed into enemies by the Roman soldiers' dread (G 7.50).

Like the strategmatic Greek general, Caesar's general must attend to the *animus* of his troops before, during, and after the battle. When deciding whether to offer battle, a general always must attend closely to the relative *animus* of his own and the enemy's army, since it governs their fighting quality. In Spain Caesar's cavalry have ridden down some Pompeian skirmishers.

There was an opportunity for success. It did not escape Caesar that an army terrified (*perterritum*) by such a loss in full sight could not resist (*sustinere*), especially when surrounded on all sides by cavalry, if the conflict was in a flat and open place. Battle was begged of him from every quarter. The *legati*, centurions and military tribunes ran up: he should not hesitate to commit to battle. The *animi* of all the soldiers were ready as could be. But Afranius' troops gave many indications of fear (*timor*): they had not helped their own men, they would not come down from the hill, they were hardly sustaining the attacks of the cavalry and they were crammed together with all the standards collected in one place, observing neither their ranks nor their standards. (C 1.71; cf. C 2.34; Polyb. 1.33.5, 1.45.1–2)

Caesar refuses battle, not because he discountenances the psychological analysis provided by his officers, but because he hopes that the psychological dominance of his army is so great that the enemy will surrender without bloodshed.

In the opposite case, if the enemy has the advantage in *animus*—if they are elated (G 1.15) or Caesar's own troops are cast down—battle is avoided until the balance is restored or a moral advantage can be gained (cf. Front. *Strat.* 2.1.3). Very great decisions, like Caesar's withdrawal from Dyrrachium, are properly made on this basis—Caesar judges his army terrified and retreats (C 3.74), and is not prepared to seek a general engagement with Pompey until he is confident that the passage of time has restored his soldiers' spirits (C 3.84). The general

uses skirmishing before a battle to test the *animus* of his soldiers (*G* 7.36) and, if successful, to increase it (*C* 3.84).⁶⁵ For just as in Xenophon, the low spirits of one army exhilarate the other (*C* 2.31; cf. *B.Alex.* 31). Rattled units are kept in the rear (*G* 4.13). A rattled enemy, on the other hand, is an invitation to attack (*G* 2.12; cf. *B.Afr.* 82), and when soldiers become aware of the enemy's timidity they also become more eager to fight, an enthusiasm of which advantage can be taken (*G* 3.24).

Just as he is alert to theirs, so too Caesar's enemies are alert to the *animus* of his army and make their decisions on the same basis (*G* 1.23). For this reason bad morale may need to be hidden (*C* 2.31) and a bold front maintained (*C* 3.48). But the enemy's eagerness to take advantage of superiority in *animus* can offer the general opportunities for stratagems, since low spirits can be feigned and the enemy induced to attack at a disadvantage. The general pretends that his army is terrified—keeping within his camp, ordering the rampart to be built higher, the gates to be barricaded, confusion and fear to be simulated in the process. This lures the enemy to cross a river and to advance up a hill under the walls of Caesar's camp—lures them into a *locus iniquus* where a sally from the camp destroys them (*G* 5.50–51; cf. 5.57–58).

When battle looms, *animus* prescribes duties to the general. In the Gallic ambush of 54 Caesar thinks Cotta's decision to abandon the baggage (cf. Xen. *Anab.* 7.8.16) and form a circle was lamentable. But Caesar does praise Cotta, not for his tactics, but for his oratory: it is chiefly in encouraging the soldiers that Cotta "does his duty as a commander" (*G* 5.33). To Caesar, harangues to his soldiers before battle are an indispensable part of generalship, a conventional "military custom" (*militari more*, *C* 3.90).⁶⁶ At the battle of the Sambre the Romans were caught by the rapidity of the Gauls' attack. "Caesar had to do everything in a moment: hoist the standard for the call to arms, sound the trumpet, recall the soldiers from entrenching . . . form the line of battle, encourage the soldiers, give the signal" (*G* 2.20). The signals given, encouragement is his next priority, and he harangues the Tenth Legion upon which he happened in the confusion (*G* 2.21, 2.25). Given its importance to the *animus* of the troops, the harangue is not sacrificed even when time is most critical. Xenophon discountenances the speech before battle, while Caesar approves of it. They are both participants in a comfortable old Greek controversy.

Just like Xenophon's Epaminondas, Caesar deploys and maneuvers for psychological reasons, to hurt the *animus* of his foes and to increase that of his own soldiers. When the enemy is trying to fortify a camp, a general might send forth cavalry to attempt to throw them into a state of terror (*C* 1.42; cf. *B.Alex.*

65. Cf. Goldsworthy 1996: 145.

66. Soldiers also encourage each other (*G* 6.40, 7.80; cf. Polyb. 1.76.2). Gauls and Germans share the custom of relying upon their weeping women to inspire the men (*G* 1.51, 7.48); when their city is under siege, the old men and women of the Massilians serve the same function (*C* 2.4).

14; *B.Afr.* 70), and the opposing general might dig a trench to prevent just that (*C* 1.41). If an army seems to cower in its camp, cavalry are sent around it to terrify them further (*G* 5.57). So that Vercingetorix's cavalry will fight *maiore animo*, the Gallic captain deploys all his forces in front of the enemy camp to strike terror into the Romans (*G* 7.66). To counter him Caesar draws up his line, to reassure his cavalry (*G* 7.67). At Alesia Caesar draws up his legions behind the horse, with the result that "the *animus* of our men was increased" (*G* 7.70, *nostris animus augetur*). As battle progresses, when the *animus* general recognizes that his opponents have fallen into a state of panic, he knows to press his advantage. "You see the foe panic-stricken, Curio! Why do you hesitate to take advantage of the opportunity?" (*C* 2.34; cf. 3.95; *B.Alex.* 30; *Xen. Cyr.* 5.2.32, *Anab.* 6.5.30). And so Curio leads his men to the charge and the foe flees.

Finally, in the event of defeat, the general—just like Xenophon's general—turns immediately to restoring the crushed *animus* of his soldiers. He calls an assembly and explains it away, telling them not to take it to heart—attributes it to fortune or over-boldness, and recalls their previous victories (*C* 3.73, *G* 7.52–53). Caesar understands that skirmishes between small forces, especially if witnessed by the whole army, can have a great effect on *animus*. And so before withdrawing from the field after his failure at Gergovia Caesar arranges cavalry skirmishes, which the Romans win. "When he judged that the Gauls' boasting had been diminished and the *animi* of his soldiers firmed up (*confirmandos*), he moved his camp into the territory of the Aedui" (*G* 7.53).

Caesar's depiction of military psychology is fuller than that provided by surviving Greek authors, but for the most part similar to, and very probably derivative from, the strain of Greek military thinking that survives to us in Xenophon. Yet as with Caesar's adaptation of Greek tactical models, his Roman experience led him to modify and elaborate what he inherited from the Greeks, and those modifications have ramifications for the way he describes battles.

Polybius describes—in some surprise—the qualities the Romans looked for in a centurion. "They do not want centurions to be bold and danger-loving (θαρσεῖς καὶ φιλοκινδύνους) as much as authoritative and steady and wise of spirit" (ἡγεμονικοὺς καὶ στασίμους καὶ βαθεῖς μᾶλλον ταῖς ψυχαῖς, 6.24.9). Plutarch allows us to interpret this passage when he expands upon the very similar ethos of the Spartans, which he thinks equally unusual (*Lyc.* 22.3). The Spartans advance to battle "marching in step to the rhythm of the flute with no confusion in their spirits (μήτε ταῖς ψυχαῖς θορυβουμένων), but going calmly (πρᾶως) and cheerfully into danger to the music of their hymn. Nor is it likely that excessive fear or passion (φόβον οὔτε θυμὸν) will befall men so disposed, but rather stability of mind (εὐσταθὲς φρόνημα)." This military ethic—which Greek authors saw in both Spartans and Romans—tried to avoid both positive and negative excesses of morale. A strand of Greek military thinking, traces of which survive in Onasander's first-century AD Greek work on generalship (14.1), advocated this position. But among Greeks it remained controversial:

Onasander must assure his reader that working to frighten overconfident soldiers will not make them terrified, but merely steady (*ἀσφαλείς*). His view stood against the broader Greek preference for high morale: one of the qualities a Greek like Polybius looks for in an effective officer is “Hellenic ardor” (*Ἑλληνικαῖς ὁρμαῖς*) which permits a leader to whip up his soldiers into a froth of enthusiasm (5.64.5–7).

In the Roman case, by contrast, Polybius alludes to a military culture which had a deep strain of admiration for steadiness and calm in battle at the expense of extravagant emotion. This strain of thinking hardly dominated. Roman armies did not enter battle with Quaker solemnity, and Caesar is perfectly aware that elevated spirits made their possessors hard to resist in battle, and criticizes Pompey for ignoring that fact (*C* 3.92; cf. *G* 5.47). But this ethos of calm was prominent enough in the Roman context to manifest itself in the deep structure of the way Caesar thinks about morale. Xenophon’s schema is a very Greek polarity: two categories, high spirits and low, which are good and bad respectively. Caesar, free from the Greek cultural prison of polarities, works with a three-level model: between high spirits, “elated (*elati*) by hope of a speedy victory, the flight of the enemy, and by successful engagements previously” (*G* 7.47), and low, panic (*terror, timor*), there is an intermediate state of calm, *animus aequus* (*C* 1.58; cf. 3.6, 3.41). When troops recover from a panic in Caesar they are “firmed up” in spirit (*firmare* or *confirmare*; esp. *C* 3.65), returned to the middle state of calm. By contrast, in Xenophon troops who recover their spirits spring directly up (the Greek dichotomy) from φόβος to θάρσος (*Cyr.* 5.2.32; cf. *Anab.* 3.1.40–41). For the most part, in Caesar, it is this intermediate state of calm that is desirable: “it is the universal vice of human nature,” Caesar editorializes, “that in unusual and unfamiliar circumstances we are too confident or too violently terrified” (*C* 2.4; cf. *Hirt. BG* 8.13). Caesar agreed all too well with Xenophon on the dangers presented by high and low spirits: high spirits can produce bad judgment and lead their possessors into dangerous places (*G* 7.47, *C* 3.72; cf. *B.Afr.* 82–83); panic or low spirits pose the same hazards of flight and defeat they do in Greek authors.

The impact of Caesar’s three-level scheme of morale on battle description is especially well illustrated by his account of the climactic engagement at Dyrrachium (*C* 3.62–71). Caesar loses at Dyrrachium and eventually has to withdraw from the field to restore the morale of his shaken army. His account of the battle may therefore be apologetic: Caesar blames fortune for disasters for which fortune might well reproach Caesar (*C* 3.68). But apologetic or not, his is not an account which could easily have been constructed by a Greek on the basis of Xenophon’s conception of military psychology.

At Dyrrachium Caesar has a double set of entrenchments running down to the sea, but the envisioned cross-wall is not finished. Using ships to move his soldiers, Pompey attacks both faces of both walls and puts their defenders to flight. Now Caesar’s lieutenant Marcellinus sends up some cohorts in support.

But these, seeing the fleeing men, could not firm them up (*confirmare*) by their coming nor themselves bear the *impetus* of the enemies. Whatever additional help was sent was corrupted by the terror (*timor*) of those fleeing and added to the fear (*terror*) and the peril. . . . Now the Pompeians were approaching the camp of Marcellinus with great slaughter, and no slight *terror* rushed upon our remaining cohorts. But M. Antonius, who held the closest position among the guard posts when he heard the news, was seen descending from higher ground with twelve cohorts. His arrival stopped the Pompeians and firmed up (*firmavit*) our men, so that they recovered themselves from the extremity of fear (*timor*). (C 3.64–65)

Just as in Xenophon, terror is extremely contagious and leaps from unit to unit as terrified men infect those they meet (cf. *G* 6.40, 7.47, *C* 1.45; Hirt. *BG* 8.13). But factors are at work to restore a state of calm, which eventually prevails. The situation is bad: there is, of course, no question of elation among the Caesarians, merely of liberation from panic. Caesar uses his three-level model of morale to depict a limited movement between panic fear and the intermediate state of *aequus animus*. Caesar's scheme notices smaller changes in morale than Xenophon's scheme.

Attention to smaller changes, in turn, requires attention to smaller causes for those changes. Most of the large-scale reasons for improvement in morale in Caesar can be paralleled in Greek authors. In Caesar a respite from fighting can "firm up" (*G* 6.38, *C* 3.84) the terrified, just like a rest can improve morale in Xenophon. In Caesar as in Polybius the arrival of a commander (*G* 2.25, 4.34, 6.41; cf. Polyb. 5.85.8) or (as here) the prospect of reinforcement (cf. *C* 3.69; *B.Afr.* 18, 52; Polyb. 1.28.8, 3.105.6) can also be cheering. But what is striking in Caesar's description of Dyrrachium is not the conventional fact of the reassuring effect of reinforcements, but the topographical detail that accompanies them—the reinforcements firm up Caesar's soldiers because they are seen approaching on the high ground. In Caesar landscape is described not only because of its significance to a battle described tactically, which is why Greek authors usually include it in battle descriptions, but because of its psychological significance.

Caesar's account of Dyrrachium continues with an extended topographical description of an abandoned camp on the battlefield, of a smaller camp within that camp, and of an earthwork running from that camp down to the river (*C* 3.66). This passage is unusual in Caesar for its length and detail. Pompeian troops have occupied the camp: some of the topographical detail is needed to understand Caesar's tactical description of his attack on them. But the major importance of the topographical description is to explain the psychological events that ruin his attack. Taking the Pompeians by surprise, Caesar's troops break into the camp. The cohorts of Caesar's right wing and his cavalry break a narrow passage through the earthwork extending to the river (*C* 3.67–68). But now Pompey arrives with five legions.

At the same moment his cavalry approached our horse, and his formed line of battle came into sight of our troops who were occupying the camp. Suddenly everything was changed. The Pompeian legion [in the camp], firmed up (*confirmata*) by hope that it would soon be helped, attempted to resist at the decuman gate, and on its own made an *impetus* at our men. Caesar's horse, because it had ascended the earthwork by a narrow path, feared for its retreat and began to flee. The right wing, because it was cut off from the left, having noticed the terror of the cavalry, began to withdraw over that part of the earthwork it had thrown down, in order not to be overwhelmed within the fortifications. And many of them, lest they get caught up in the narrow spaces, jumped from the ten-foot parapet into the trenches. When these first men fell the others tried to gain safety and escape over their bodies. The soldiers of the left wing, when they saw from the rampart the approach of Pompey and the flight of our men, feared lest they get caught up in narrow spaces, with an enemy both inside and outside the camp, and took their own counsel for retreat by the way they had entered. Everything was full of tumult, fear (*timor*), and flight, to the extent that when Caesar seized the standards of those in flight and ordered them to halt, some gave their horses their head and fled right on, some released the standards in fear, and not one of them stopped. (*C* 3.69)

There is almost no actual fighting here. Caesar's troops fall into a snowballing terror at the thought of what might happen if they are caught in a *locus iniquus*, and disaster ensues. We understand the origin of their fear from Caesar's careful topographical introduction to his narrative of the catastrophe. Landscape viewed through the lens of *animus* is a monstrously exaggerated version of the tactical landscape, the terrifying high and leaping shadows cast by a fire into a dark wood by night (cf. *G* 1.39). Mixed with those terrible features of terrain are the points of vantage—hilltops and ridge lines—where objects of fear or reassurance come into view or from where they can be seen (cf. Hirt. *BG* 8.29; *B.Afr.* 40). The *animus* landscape is a place of hauntings too. The panic of Roman soldiers when attacked unexpectedly by Germans is added to by the memory that Sabinus and Cotta marched to disaster from that very fort in which the Romans cower (*G* 6.37). In his systematic attribution of psychological consequences to topographical features, and in his description of topographical features because of their psychological—rather than strictly tactical—significance, Caesar goes beyond his Greek models. He does so because his Roman experience suggested a different model of soldiers' psychology, which demanded in turn a more nuanced understanding of exactly how psychological events in battle come about.

Among Greek military experts, there was an old controversy about the role of psychology in battle, and about how that psychology ought to be understood and managed. At one dismissive extreme stood the tactical purists, confident that their science of formations and deployment, their physics of battle, was the key to victory. More open to psychology were those officers—like Polybius—who

collected stratagems to get the better of their enemies. Since many stratagems were psychological in nature, psychology was part of their military art. Yet stratagem also constrained their conception of psychology, tending to reduce psychology to a function of stratagem. At the other Greek extreme Xenophon represents to us a tradition of thinking that elevated psychology to parity with tactics, even to superiority over tactics in the heat of argument. Such thinking was interested in stratagem, psychological and otherwise, but was also keenly aware of the importance of unplanned psychological events, of psychology as it existed outside the box of stratagem, not bound to the agency of a specific individual.

It was from the Greek position on military psychology that survives to us in Xenophon that Julius Caesar set out. There are striking similarities between Caesar's conception of morale and Xenophon's: as with Caesar's conception of tactics, the fundamental intellectual machinery Caesar uses to imagine military psychology is probably borrowed—by Caesar or his Roman predecessors—from the Greeks. Caesar's position as a military intellectual in the Greek tradition is suggested also by his systematic interest in stratagem: his continuator Hirtius notes that Caesar wrote so as to highlight his cunning planning (*consilia*, BG 8. *pr*),⁶⁷ associating him with the Greek stratagem tradition, and the pages of Caesar are filled with tricks and deceptions.⁶⁸ The familiar Greek nexus between stratagem and psychology is also plainly evident in Caesar (*G* 4.25, 7.66–67, *C* 1.41–42). But, like Xenophon, Caesar refused to view psychology strictly as a function of stratagem. With his comments about Pompey at Pharsalus, Caesar takes sides in a Greek debate about the importance of morale in battle, and he situates his writing in a Greek tradition which emphasized morale as a perennial factor to be managed rather than an exceptional factor which came into play when the opportunity for a stratagem presented itself. The most striking quality about Caesar's treatment of morale is simply how extensive it is, and how much more important morale is in Caesar's battle descriptions than in the battle descriptions of earlier Greek writers, even Xenophon.

Yet just as Roman experience with the legion suggested a metaphorical system ramifying from the crash rather than the push of the phalanx, Roman military culture suggested modifications to inherited Greek schemes for understanding military psychology. Although fully aware of the advantages of elation in battle, Roman soldiers esteemed also a calm state of mind situated between the Greek categories of high and low morale. The consequence of this outlook, in Caesar's hands, is a different model of soldiers' psychology than that of the Greeks, which results in turn in a more subtle understanding of the causes of psychological phenomena and the significance of terrain. In Caesar's battle description this psychological vision of battle mixes and mingles with his tactical vision, to

67. On *consilium* as a stratagem word, see Wheeler 1988c: 52–55.

68. On Caesar and stratagems, Feller 1929: 21–24.

produce battle descriptions that would have pleased Clausewitz as “shot through with psychological forces and effects.”

V. *VIRTUS*

The third theme in Caesar's description of Pharsalus is that of courage, *virtus*. In a post-psychoanalytic age we are not very comfortable with a distinction between courage, an abiding—perhaps inborn—aspect of character, and flighty morale, a subdivision of psychology. But ancient psychology was less imperialistic than modern. And ancient men were happier than modern to think that their contemporaries acted thus and so because it was their singular nature to do so: ancient men thought in terms of permanent character, we in terms of fungible personality. In a military context, Greeks and Romans saw no difficulty drawing a sharp categorical line between morale, *ψυχή* or *animus*, and courage, *ἀνδρεία*, *ἀρετή*, or *virtus*. But on the significance of courage in battle Caesar parted company with the Greeks. The two main traditions of Greek military thinking, tactics and stratagem, were dismissive of courage as a decisive factor in battle. Caesar's Roman tradition, by contrast, was conflicted, admiring both victory by guile and victory by sheer bravery. In describing the role of bravery in battle, and in his analysis of that role, Caesar reaches furthest beyond the tradition of Greek military thinking to which he is otherwise so indebted.

THE GREEK TRADITION

Drawing upon their epic past, Greek historians felt that one of the functions of a battle description was to relate the *κλέα ἀνδρῶν*, individuals' glorious deeds of courage. This is especially striking in Herodotus, where, for example, the historian lists those who conducted themselves most bravely at the battle of Plataea (9.71–74; cf. 6.114, 7.181, 7.226–27, 8.17, 8.93, 9.105),⁶⁹ but the custom is still very much alive in Xenophon (*Hell.* 1.2.10, 1.6.32, 4.3.19, 4.8.32, 7.5.16) and Polybius (10.49.14, 11.2.1, 11.18.1–4, 16.5; cf. 16.30.3).⁷⁰ Caesar follows in this tradition with his tale of Crastinus at Pharsalus, and with other *aristeiai*, most strikingly that of the centurions Vorenus and Pullo (*G* 5.44; cf. *G* 7.25, 7.47, 7.50).⁷¹ But to conceive of battle in terms of physical tactics, or in terms of stratagems, did not encourage Greek military thinkers to root victory or defeat in the bravery of individuals or the differences in bravery between military units, armies, or peoples. From Herodotus' depictions of Salamis and Plataea on, Greek military

69. de Romilly 1956: 113–15, Pritchett 1974: 283–86.

70. On Polybius' admiration for courage, Eckstein 1995: 28–55. But the austere Thucydides did not systematically describe deeds of valor.

71. On *aristeiai* in Caesar, Feller 1929: 38–41, and Rasmussen 1963 collects instances where they are made more vivid with passages of direct discourse. *Aristeiai* are prominent in the pre-Caesarian Roman tradition from what we can see of it (*supra*, n. 14), and there is no reason to think Caesar is directly following Greek models.

thinking manifested itself in a strain of Greek historical writing that tended to wall off bravery—although usually worth recording in its own right—from the outcome of battles.⁷² This is especially the lesson of Thucydides' account of Phormio's second victory in the gulf of Corinth. The Peloponnesian commander gives a speech urging his men to rely on their superior courage (ἀνδρεία, 2.87) and discounting the Athenian advantage in experience in fighting at sea; but in his speech the Athenian commander Phormio assails the Peloponnesian thinking, stressing instead Athenian experience in naval tactics; indeed bravery, he argues, is merely a function of experience (2.89).⁷³ The Athenians win the battle against great odds, settling the controversy for the reader (2.90–92; cf. 6.69.1). Viewing bravery as a function of knowledge seems to have been a Socratic position (Arist. *NE* 3.8.6 [=1116b]; cf. Xen. *Mem.* 3.9.2; Plato *Laches* 193–99, *Prot.* 349–51, 359–60),⁷⁴ and Xenophon offers a variation on it when he has Cyrus argue that it is chiefly training that distinguishes the brave man (ἀγαθός) from the coward (κακός) (*Cyr.* 3.3.50, 3.3.55, 7.5.75).⁷⁵

This strain of hostility to the agency of bravery is especially striking if one compares the battle descriptions of Xenophon and Polybius to those of Caesar's Greek contemporary Diodorus Siculus, participant in and heir to a more rhetorical historical tradition. Diodorus diverges from the experts Xenophon and Polybius in his regular attribution of a pivotal role in battle to sheer courage (18.15.2–3, 18.45.2, 19.30.5, 20.38.5, ἀρετή). "In fights on land," he writes, "courage (ἀρετή) becomes evident, because it can gain the upper hand if no accidents intrude" (20.51.5). In Polybius, much closer to the tradition of theoretical Greek military thinking, bravery is sometimes used as a shorthand to explain a victory upon which the author does not then choose to dwell (2.9.5, 2.55.4), or to explain, in general terms, the overall outcome of wars (5.76.11; cf. Xen. *Hell.* 2.4.40–41), like Rome's victories over Carthage. In that context Polybius argues that Italians are by nature stronger and braver than Phoenicians and Libyans; that citizens are braver than mercenaries and become even braver in defeat; and that the customs of the Romans (such as the great aristocratic funerals, which he then describes) make them braver still (6.52; cf. 1.64.6).⁷⁶ But as Polybius' descriptions of warfare move from the distant and general to the closer and specific—to detailed depictions of individual battles—bravery tends to find itself outside the chain of causation that leads to victory, displaced by the tactical conception of battle and discountenanced by the strategmatic outlook, which set victory by art above victory by brute courage. Of the Punic wars, Polybius writes, "in naval matters

72. Cf. Wheeler 1991: 137–38.

73. de Romilly 1956: 142–43 and Crane 1998: 225–29.

74. de Romilly 1980: 309–15 compares the speech of Phormio in Thucydides to Plato's *Laches* and *Protagoras*.

75. For the mixture of birth and education in Xenophon's conception of ἀρετή, Due 1989: 181, 184.

76. Cf. Pédech 1964: 424–25.

the Romans are much inferior in experience . . . but win on the whole because of the bravery of their men (διὰ τὰς τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἀρετάς); for although nautical skill contributes largely to battles on the sea, nevertheless the bravery of the marines (ἡ τῶν ἐπιβατῶν εὐψυχία) weighs most in the scales of victory" (6.52.8–9). Yet this general diagnosis is hardly consistent with his highly tactical depictions of the sea battles of the First Punic War (1.23, 1.25, 1.26–28, 1.50–51), where the superior bravery of the Roman marines merits only a passing mention (1.61.3).⁷⁷ Standing close to the military tradition, Polybius' battles generally turn on tactics and stratagems rather than bravery.⁷⁸ His, instead, is a world where "at first the mercenaries prevailed by virtue of their skill and courage (εὐχερεία καὶ τόλμη), and wounded many of the Romans, but relying on the exactness of their formation and their armament (τῆς συντάξεως ἀκριβεῖ καὶ τῷ καθοπλισμῷ) the Romans kept advancing" (15.13.1–2). In Polybian battle descriptions bravery is more often than not the desperate resort of those who are going to lose (1.30.11–12, 1.84.5, 3.115.4–5, 5.100.1–2, 18.21.8; cf. Herod. 1.176, 5.2).

There is even less discussion of bravery in Xenophon's battles than in Polybius'. Bravery makes its appearance in harangues before battle (*Anab.* 1.7.3, 3.2.15, 6.5.24), but in one such context Xenophon alludes to the artificiality and conventionality of such rhetoric (*Cyr.* 7.1.17–18). Otherwise, bravery appears in paradoxical contexts, as when the traditionally despised Eleans overcome the Arcadians, Argives, and Athenians (*Hell.* 7.4.30), or when Athenian horse overcomes the celebrated Thessalian cavalry (*Hell.* 7.5.16–17). It is almost as if Xenophon is mocking traditional Greek concepts of bravery.

The tenor of Greek military thinking was, thus, to render differences in bravery beside the point. In this tradition the bravery of his army is the involuntary refuge of the inept general, the general who had been bettered in tactics or stratagem. In Thucydides' description of Mantinea, the Spartans, cast into confusion by the imbecile orders of their king, and "utterly worsted in skill" (ἐμπειρία), nevertheless won by bravery (ἀνδρεία, 5.72.2). The Roman deployment against the Insubres was deeply foolish, Polybius complains, but nevertheless the Romans won by their bravery (νικήσαντες ταῖς σφετέραις ἀρεταῖς, 2.33.9).

CAESAR

There are distinct echoes of this dismissive Greek attitude to courage in Caesar. Servius Galba's Twelfth Legion sorties from its camp, "placing all hope of safety in *virtus*" (*G* 3.5), and routs the enemy. But this desperate sortie was needed because Galba's idiocy had left the legion cut off in the Alps, wintering in an incomplete, badly placed camp. Attacked by Alpine tribesmen, outnumbered, exhausted, wounded, and out of missiles, the Romans are saved by bravery—in

77. And sometimes seems to be denied, Polyb. 1.31.1, 1.51.3.

78. There are, of course, exceptions where bravery is important, e.g. Polyb. 5.23.9–10, 10.39.2. For Polybius' lexicon of bravery, Lindauer 1889: 19–20.

pointed contrast to the preparations of their general (cf. Livy 6.30.5–6, 35.6.9–10). And when bravery takes the place of proper planning or good order, in Caesar, it is more usually futile: when the foolishness of Titurius Sabinus has led the Romans into a Gallic ambush, “our soldiers, deserted by their leader and by fortune, nevertheless placed all hope for their safety in *virtus*” (G 5.34). Yet by the cunning of the ambush the Romans were surrounded in a valley and crammed together in a small area. “There was no room left for *virtus*” (*nec virtuti locus relinquebatur*, G 5.35), and the Romans were destroyed. Having foolishly led an outnumbered and exhausted army into battle against impossible odds, Caesar’s marshal Curio “encourages his men to repose all hope in *virtus*.” “Nor was *virtus* lacking for the fight,” notes Caesar, despite the troops’ scantiness and exhaustion, and they drove back the Numidians, until, surrounded, exhausted, and hopeless, their spirit broke, and they took to “bemoaning their own deaths, and commending their parents to those whom fortune might preserve from danger. Everything was fear and wailing” (C 2.41). They were slaughtered.

Caesar uses his description of his defeat at the battle of Gergovia (G 7.45–52) as an opportunity for a homily on the danger of foolish reliance on unreasoning *virtus*. Having contrived by stratagem to draw the Gauls away from their camps on the slope beneath the town, he ordered a limited attack, carefully instructing his legates to hold back the troops—if they advanced too far they would proceed on to disadvantageous ground and be at the mercy of the Gauls. Catching the Gauls by surprise, the Romans rapidly occupy their appointed objectives, but ignoring the recall and the efforts of Caesar’s legates and the military tribunes to call them back, they continue to advance “elated by hope of a speedy victory, the flight of the enemy and by successful engagements previously, and thought nothing so difficult that it could not be done by courage (*virtus*).” The centurion Lucius Fabius mounts the wall, and the demoralization of the Gauls is stressed by a warm description of the hysterical terror of their women. But now the Gauls, overcoming their initial panic, begin to wax in number. “For the Romans the contest was equal in neither ground nor number. Men tired out by the run and the length of the battle could not easily resist men who were fresh and sound.” “The battle was fought most ferociously at close quarters, the enemy trusting to the ground and their numbers, our men to courage (*virtus*).” And the ground and numbers overcame *virtus*, especially when the Romans fell into an alarm because of the approach of the Aedui, allies mistaken for enemies. The Romans are pushed back with losses, and the disaster is rendered vivid by notices of the death of Lucius Fabius and another brave, foolish centurion. The next day Caesar calls his army to assembly, and lectures them (and us). “Although he greatly admired the greatness of spirit (*animi magnitudinem*, used more or less synonymously with *virtus*)⁷⁹ of those whom no camp fortifications, no height of hill, no town wall could slow ... he

79. Cf. Knoche 1962[1935]: 39 and Hellegouarc’h 1963: 291.

wanted obedience and self-control (*modestiam et continentiam*) no less than *virtus* and greatness of spirit" (C 7.52).

So far Caesar seems loyal to the Greek military tradition, esteeming artful generalship and sparing of men. Urged to battle by his army, he thinks, "why should he try fortune? Especially when it was no less the role of the *imperator* to overcome by planning than by the sword" (*consilio superare quam gladio*, C 1.72; cf. G 7.19; B.Afr. 14). But this Greek conception stands in striking contrast—in contradiction—to another, more Roman, understanding of the role of *virtus* in battle, which is no less prominent in Caesar's writings. This manifests itself in Caesar's account of the sea fight in 49 BC between his commander Decimus Brutus and the Pompeian L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, commanding Massilian ships (C 1.56–58; cf. B.Alex. 15–16). Caesar describes the disadvantages under which his side labored: the Massilian fleet was much larger and manned by better seamen, while the Caesarian ships were badly built and slow. The Massilians naturally attempted the sophisticated naval tactics by which a skilled fleet of galleys could press its advantage against an unskilled. But liberal provision of grappling hooks on the Caesarian side created a land battle by sea. For this too the Pompeians were hardly unprepared, having shipped savage warriors of the Albici, barbarians from the hills around Massilia, as marines. "When [the Pompeians] by necessity came closer, instead of the science and tricks of their steersmen they had resort to the *virtus* of the mountaineers." But Caesar had manned his ships with picked centurions and legionaries, the bravest (*fortissimi*) men in his army. "The fighting was carried on with the greatest bravery and intensity (*fortissime atque acerrime*) on both sides, nor did the Albici—harsh mountaineers, practiced in arms—yield much to our men in *virtus*." Not much, perhaps, but enough. And the Caesarians calmly (*animo aequo*) boarded and captured ship after ship.

To Caesar what decided this battle was the difference in *virtus* between his men and the Albici. Nor was this because his officer Decimus Brutus had failed in his duty: the deft maneuvers of the skilled Massilian steersmen (analogous to Caesar's own maneuvers on so many occasions) are sneered at as "tricks," *artificia*, obscurely illegitimate. They are distractions from the crux of the matter, the hand-to-hand combat in which *virtus* reveals itself. The most systematic presentation of this way of conceiving warfare can be found in remarks Caesar attributes to Divico, leader of the Helvetii, warning the Roman general against fighting that tribe.

He ought to remember the old disaster of the Romans [at the hands of the Helvetii, in 107 BC] and the unblemished *virtus* of the Helvetii. He [Caesar, in a recent victory] had set upon one canton unexpectedly when those who had crossed the river could not help them; thus he should not merely on that account rate his own *virtus* highly nor despise them. They had learned from their fathers and ancestors to fight on the basis of *virtus*, rather than tricks and ambushes (*magis virtute quam dolo contenderent aut insidiis niterentur*). (G 1.13; cf. B.Afr. 73)

Virtus is expected to be decisive, and everything that gets in the way of *virtus*—tricks and ambushes—is sordid (cf. *B.Alex.* 29). Caesar has Vercingetorix re-echo this sentiment, telling his army after Avaricum not to be disheartened. “The Romans had not won by *virtus* or in a pitched battle, but by trickery and knowledge of siegecraft” (*G* 7.29, *sed artificio quodam et scientia oppugnationis*).

This is no barbarian gasconade, but the traditional code of the Romans.⁸⁰ Sallust presents Metellus, fighting Jugurtha in Africa, as badly outmaneuvered. “On Metellus’ side was the *virtus* of his soldiers, but the ground was against him; Jugurtha had all advantages except in soldiers” (*Jug.* 52.2). Metellus’ eventual victory is received with special satisfaction at Rome, “because he had led his army in the ancestral manner: although in a bad position he had been victorious by *virtus* nonetheless” (*Jug.* 55.1). “Our ancestors did not wage war by ambushes or night battles, nor by pretended flight and unforeseen return to an enemy off his guard, that they might glory in cunning rather than real *virtus*,” Livy has old senators grumble, about the dubious diplomacy of Marcius Philippus and Aulus Attius in Greece in 171 BC (42.47.5; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 2.88). And Polybius contrasts the Greek enthusiasm for military trickery with a lingering Roman distaste for it, and notes the Roman preference for hard fighting at close quarters (Polyb. 13.3.7; cf. 36.9.9). Despite a venerable Roman tradition of admiration for cunning in battle,⁸¹ there survived a strong sense that Romans ought to prevail by bravery unadorned, that the truest victory was by *virtus*, and that only a defeat by *virtus* was a true defeat.

Caesar picks up this strand after his own defeat at Gergovia, telling his troops not to be downhearted, since they were defeated by the *locus iniquus* rather than the Gauls’ *virtus* (*G* 7.53). Similarly, Caesar notes that the Pompeians should not have become overconfident after his setback at Dyrrachium. They were acting as if they had been victorious by *virtus* rather than by the fortuitous panic of Caesar’s men (*C* 3.72). In the sea battle against the Massilians Caesar betrays a certain satisfaction when the extraneous particularities of battle—of number, of position, of *animus*—are swept away, and courage wrestles undistracted against courage. Like Romans in general,⁸² at some level Caesar thinks that battles are supposed to be fought by *virtus*. Like Romans in general, he does not resolve the contradiction between conceptions of battle dependent on *virtus* and on stratagem. Indeed, as an author Caesar may rely upon that contradiction in the minds of his Roman reader: he and his army can appear in a good light both in battles won by craft and in battles won by hard fighting. If a battle be lost, he can portray his men fighting admirably in one realm, in *virtus*, even if they are defeated in strategy.

80. On *virtus*, Eisenhut 1973 (with 44–46 on Caesar), but see the strictures of Harris 1979: 20 n. 3. On the role of *virtus* in Roman military thinking, Rosenstein 1990: 94. For *virtus* in Caesar cf. Rawlings 1998: 177–80.

81. Wheeler 1988d. Wheeler argues (193) that the Roman suspicion of cunning came late.

82. Perhaps the keen attention to *virtus* of the (rather unimaginative) author of the *B.Hisp.* reflects conventional soldierly views (7, 14, 16, 17, 19, 23–25, 31, 32).

In thinking about battle in terms of *virtus*, Caesar draws upon a very old stratum of Roman thinking about warfare.⁸³ Usually translated “bravery,” *virtus* comes close to “masculinity”: it denotes the competitive male excellence of traditional Mediterranean societies. As such it must be constantly proved and reasserted, and the old custom of the Romans was to do so not in small-scale internal violence (as many feuding peoples do), but instead primarily in war.⁸⁴ As well as being conceived as a matter of physical realities and the vertiginous see-sawing of *animus*, battle in Caesar manifests itself as a contest for masculine dominance, a battle of roosters or of drunkards in a bar, a Florentine duel or a Sicilian vendetta.

The *virtus* battle tests masculine excellence in the eyes of a real or imagined public. In the realm of *virtus* the constant preoccupation of the soldier is with what people will think. “Since the fighting occurred in view of everyone, and nothing done well or shamefully could be concealed, lust for praise and fear of ignominy drove both sides to *virtus*” (*G* 7.80, *laudis cupiditas et timor ignominiae ad virtutem excitabant*; cf. Hirt. *BG* 8.42; Xen. *Hell.* 7.1.30). The display of *virtus* over time earns a reputation, a reputation of which soldiers are fiercely protective. Attacked by surprise by Germans, Caesar’s green legionaries fall apart. Not so their centurions. Promoted to their positions because of their *virtus*, they die fighting bravely, “lest they lose the renown for military accomplishment which they had won in the past” (*G* 6.40, *rei militaris laudem*; cf. *C* 3.28, 3.101; Thuc. 2.11.2; Xen. *Hell.* 7.5.16; Polyb. 15.11.12). At the siege of Avaricum, Caesar tells his soldiers that he will withdraw if the scarcity of food becomes too severe. “All of them begged him not to: they had served many years under his command without incurring any disgrace (*ignominia*), never abandoning anything unachieved. And they would deem it a disgrace if they gave up a siege they had begun” (*G* 7.17). Having established a standard of conduct by their previous performance, soldiers cannot bear to imagine what the world will think of them if they fall away from it (cf. *B.Alex.* 16). Caesar notes with approval that, when starving, his soldiers “say nothing unworthy of the majesty of the Roman people and their own previous victories” (*G* 7.17; cf. 5.35).

Warfare is a contest of masculinity. If an individual like the Pompeian Antistius Turpio jeers that no Caesarian is equal to him, a Caesarian, Q. Pompeius Niger, will accept his challenge to single combat (*B.Hisp.* 25).⁸⁵ So similarly for a commander to offer battle—frequently by coming out of camp or down from

83. Cf. Eisenhut 1973: 40–43. *Virtus* is much emphasized in the handful of surviving pre-Caesarian Latin battle descriptions, see *supra* n. 14.

84. Such competition characterized the Greeks as well, of course, but while a Greek like Xenophon emphasized competition in φιλοτιμία between individual soldiers on the same side (*Cyr.* 3.3.10, 7.1.18, *Anab.* 4.7.12, 5.2.11), Caesar stresses that between generals, armies, and units (but see *G.* 5.44, 7.47, 7.50 for individuals), so its consequences are much greater in Caesar.

85. On the wriggling necessary to refuse a challenge to single combat without loss of face, [Front.] *Strat.* 4.7.5.

a hill to a space where battle will occur on equal terms—is a challenge to the masculinity of the enemy commander and his army.

Sabinus kept himself in camp. . . . Viridovix camped against him two miles away and every day led out his forces to give him the opportunity to fight, so that Sabinus not only fell into contempt among the enemy, but even was somewhat jeered at by our own soldiers. (*G* 3.17; cf. *C* 3.37; Livy 3.60.8; Thuc. 8.27)

To fail to respond to challenges to masculinity of this type is to fall into contempt, to surrender before the watching world one's claim to be a man. Just like a brawler picking a fight thrusts his intended foe back with light nudges, so the challenging army moves closer and closer (*C* 3.84; cf. *B.Afr.* 30–32). If those in camp do not come out, their humiliation is redoubled by the jeers of their enemies (*G* 5.58, *magna cum contumelia verborum*; cf. *B.Afr.* 31; Plut. *Marius* 16.3; Front. *Strat.* 1.11.1).⁸⁶ “The foe mocks us with every kind of insult (*omnibus contumeliis*), just as if we were women hiding behind the rampart,” says a centurion in Livy (7.13.6), drawing an explicit connection between keeping in camp, enemy mockery, and deficiency in masculinity. And so generals do come out, even against their better judgment.

Every day thereafter [Caesar] drew up his army in line of battle on a flat/fair place (*aequum locum*), in case Pompey should desire to fight a battle. He brought up his legions almost to Pompey's camp, so that his first line was only so far from the rampart that it could not be hit by a bolt from an artillery piece. Pompey, in order to maintain his fame and repute in the eyes of men (*famam opinionemque hominum teneret*), deployed his army in front of his camp so that the third line abutted the rampart, and so that the whole drawn-up formation could be protected by missiles cast from the rampart. (*C* 3.55; cf. 1.82; Tac. *Ann.* 3.20)

Pompey comes out as little as his concern for his reputation for *virtus* will allow him to. At Ruspina, Caesar (badly outnumbered and leading inexperienced troops) did not take the field against the taunting Scipio. His continuator felt he had to explain away this passivity: it is not that Caesar was not confident of victory (he asserts loyally), but that Caesar felt his reputation demanded *big* victories (*B.Afr.* 31). The continuator's evident discomfort reflects the strength of the expectation that under the code of *virtus* challenges to battle had to be met.

The fierce competition for primacy in masculinity makes soldiers yearn to expunge any taint. The besieged Massilians, having sued for a truce, take up arms again and surprise the Caesarian soldiers, burning their siegeworks. But Caesar's men erect replacements in record time, “for it grieved them that with the truce broken by a crime their *virtus* would be a subject of ridicule” (*C* 2.15,

86. Pritchett 1974: 153 gathers examples of taunting in the Greek tradition.

suam virtutem irrisui fore). By resisting at all, the Massilians had shown contempt (*contemptione sui*) for Caesar's legions, and this was one of the reasons that a massacre was to be expected if the town fell (C 2.13). "For them to go on boasting so long in our sight is very disgraceful and painful for us," growls a Rhodian ship-captain (but no feeble Greek—"to be compared to our men rather than the Greeks in greatness of spirit and *virtus*") in one of Caesar's continuators; "leave it in our hands, we'll keep up our side" (*B.Alex.* 15; cf. *Front. Strat.* 1.11.1).

In the wake of a lost battle soldiers are overwhelmed with a desire to try their luck again "to repair the disgrace" (C 3.74; cf. *Xen. Hell.* 6.4.14) with *virtus* (C 3.73) or to depart from the scene of their shame (C 3.24; cf. 3.100; *Hirt. BG* 8.13). In battle itself, flight (C 3.24; cf. *B.Afr.* 66, 75; *Xen. Hell.* 1.6.32; *Polyb.* 5.96.3), or the loss of a standard (G 4.25, C 3.64) or ships (C 3.100; cf. *B.Alex.* 11), is conceived as a disgrace. Since retreating is shameful (C 1.44) a commander might order a retreat to proceed "as honorably as possible" (*B.Afr.* 31, *quam honestissime*; cf. *Xen. Hell.* 7.4.13). At the Sambre the cavalry, having recovered their nerve, fight bravely "to wipe out the disgrace of their flight with *virtus*" (G 2.27, *turpitudinem fugae virtute delerent*). An enemy's advance in battle can be conceived of as insolent (*insolenter*, C 3.46; cf. *B.Alex.* 8, 27; *Xen. Hell.* 5.3.3), which drives their opponents to counter-attack. They charge unwisely into a *locus iniquus* (C 1.45). After battle both sides total up their claims to *virtus*, to establish who is best. After Ilerda,

each side thought it had parted as superior. Afranius' men based their claim on the fact that, although they were by general consent thought inferior, they had held their ground for so long in hand-to-hand combat, resisted our men's *impetus*, that at the beginning they captured the place and hill which was the cause of the fighting and at the first clash made our men turn their backs in flight. Our men grounded their claim on the fact that they had sustained a battle for five hours in a *locus iniquus* and outnumbered, that they had ascended the hill with drawn swords and put their adversaries (who were fighting from a higher position) to flight and driven them into the town. (C 1.47)

The more difficult and challenging the circumstances in which they fought, the greater the soldiers' claim to *virtus*. In Caesar's continuators booty stands witness to such claims (*B.Alex.* 42), as do grisly trophies like the severed heads of enemies, insignia of *virtus* when impaled on sword points, and set to regard a besieged town (*B.Hisp.* 32).⁸⁷

The code of *virtus* was not a strange archaic element of soldierly motivation, merely to be understood and accommodated by sophisticated commanders: *virtus* was a day-to-day practical concern of Caesar as general. One of the first duties of generalship is to establish the relative *virtus* of his army, and that of the enemy, for

87. On Roman taking of heads, Goldsworthy 1996: 271–73.

it is a factor in deciding whether he should offer battle (*G* 2.8, 3.24, *C* 2.16, 3.24). He knows from experience that the units of his own army have different *virtus* (*G* 1.40; cf. Hirt. *BG* 8.8), and each of the mass of tribes in Gaul has a particular martial reputation (*opinio virtutis*, *G* 7.59, 7.83; *gloria belli*, *G* 1.2), which can be found out by asking other Gauls (*G* 2.15). But such reputations are hardly infallible (*G* 2.24), and some—like that of Ariovistus’ Germans, who so terrified Caesar’s officers—were highly inflated. So Caesar also reckons *virtus* by logic, on the basis of Roman experience. “Is it of your own *virtus* or my zeal that you despair?” Caesar asks his panicked officers before marching against the Germans, and then proceeds to mobilize historical arguments to prove the Romans’ superiority in *virtus*: Marius’ army beat Germans—the Cimbri and Teutones—in the past; the Romans defeated the forces of Spartacus (many of them of German origin, we are expected to know); his own army beat the Helvetii, who had regularly defeated the Germans in their turn. True, Ariovistus’ Germans had established an ascendancy over other Gauls, but they had taken them by surprise, “defeated them more by planning and craft than by *virtus*” (*magis ratione et consilio quam virtute vicisse*, *G* 1.40). Finally, if inquiry and logic fail to reveal the relative *virtus* of Romans and tribesmen, experiment is resorted to:

Caesar at first decided to abstain from battle because of the multitude of the enemy and their reputation for *virtus* (*opinionem virtutis*). But by cavalry skirmishes every day he tried out what the enemy could accomplish by *virtus* and what our men could dare. When he had come to understand that ours were not inferior he chose a place in front of his camp opportune and suitable for drawing up a line of battle. (*G* 2.8; cf. 7.36)

All possible measures, in short, are undertaken to form an estimate of the *virtus* of the enemy.

When the relative *virtus* of friend and foe have been assessed, and the decision to join battle has been made, the general does what he can to call upon the *virtus* of his troops. The unchanging martial quality of his soldiers, *virtus* cannot be whipped up like *animus*, the volatile morale of the moment (cf. Sal. *Cat.* 58.1–2; Jug. 85.50). In his speech before battle the general urges upon his troops “to remember their *virtus* in the past (*suae pristinae virtutis*) and their very successful battles” (*G* 7.62; cf. 2.21; Sal. *Cat.* 58.12). That is, he reminds them of the reputation they have earned, so that they will strive harder not to lose it. With this done, the general’s main duty (viewed from a *virtus* point of view) is to watch the battle—for *virtus* is public excellence, and is brought to the fore by an audience (*G* 7.80).⁸⁸ Thus in the Romans’ sea battle against the Veneti of Brittany, once Roman machinery had mangled the rigging of the Gauls’ prodigious sailing ships, “the rest of the contest lay in *virtus*; in which our soldiers easily excelled,

88. Cf. Goldsworthy 1996: 153–54 for generals watching battles.

the more so since these events transpired in sight of Caesar and the whole army, so that no deed braver than others could lie hidden" (*G* 3.14; cf. Polyb. 2.69.4). For the same reason, before the battle with Ariovistus, Caesar "placed each of his legates and his quaestor in charge of an individual legion, so that each man might have them as witnesses to his *virtus*" (*G* 1.52; cf. Diod. 19.83.5). When Caesar is not present at a battle, his lieutenants urge his soldiers to imagine that he was there, watching them. "Display under my command that same *virtus* that you have so often shown to our *imperator*, and imagine that he is present and watching with his own eyes" (*G* 6.8; cf. 7.62).

In Caesar's universe, the *virtus* outlook is shared by his army and by his enemies. Foes display predictable *virtus* behavior, which can be ruthlessly exploited by the cunning stratagem-minded general. Indeed, the unresolved contradiction between Caesar's conceptions of the role of *virtus* and stratagem in warfare yawns widest when he proudly reports stratagems which take advantage of his opponents' preoccupation with *virtus*. Outnumbered by the Treveri across a deep river from his camp, and fearing an accession to them of German reinforcements, Labienus pretends terror and orders his camp struck amidst noise and confusion so that his departure will resemble flight. "It was intolerable to their [the Treveri's] dignity (*dignitas*) if they did not dare to attack with such great forces so small a force, especially when fleeing and encumbered. And they did not hesitate to cross the river and commit to battle in a *locus iniquus*" (*G* 6.8). Naturally Labienus thrashes them.

To take advantage of the enemy's *virtus* outlook does not always require such guile. Having decided that the *virtus* of the Belgae is not invincible, Caesar draws up his army to offer them battle, but only if they are willing to fight in an appalling *locus iniquus*. To get to him the Gauls will have to cross a marsh and advance up a hill against a Roman army with its flanks protected by entrenchments (*G* 2.8–9). Why does Caesar think they might attack nonetheless despite the disadvantages? What Caesar expects is that the Belgae will react just as his own soldiers did when facing Vercingetorix's host occupying a hill behind a swamp, when to attack them would have been to fight in a similar *locus iniquus*.

Whoever saw how close they were together might have thought them prepared to fight a battle on equal terms (*aequo Marte*), but whoever considered the inequality of the situation realized that this was a display of empty pretense. The soldiers of Caesar considered it an offense to their dignity (*indignantēs*) that the enemy could endure the sight of them with such a small space in between, and begged for the signal for battle. (*G* 7.19; cf. *B.Alex.* 29)

Naturally Caesar refuses to give the signal, refusing to sacrifice the men that an assault on such unequal conditions would require. But, as Caesar tells it, the Gauls nevertheless claimed this as indicative of their superiority in *virtus*, with

Vercingetorix crowing that “this enables them to despise the *virtus* of those who did not dare to engage and shamefully retreated to their camp” (*G* 7.20). Thus Caesar had every reason to think that a people with an *opinio virtutis* like that of the Belgae would find the challenge of battle irresistible, and contemplation of their humiliation from failing to attack intolerable to their pride. Indeed, to the *virtus*-minded warrior, a *locus iniquus* might appear to make an attack more attractive, not less. For the worse the circumstances, the greater the display of *virtus*. At the siege of the stronghold of the Aduatuci the Gauls make a desperate night attack on the Roman siegeworks. “The enemy fought fiercely (*acriter*), as was meet (*debut*) for brave men (*viris fortibus*) in the last extremity of hope fighting in a *locus iniquus* against men who threw missiles from rampart and towers, when all hope of safety was lodged in *virtus* alone” (*G* 2.33). It is the very difficulty of the situation, including the impossible lay of the ground, that demands the exercise of *virtus*, and that allows its display. It is the fact of their attack uphill in a restricted space, their fighting in a *locus iniquus*, that gives Caesar’s soldiers the right to claim that they came off better in *virtus* at Ilerda (*C* 1.47, and see above). To the soldier bent on displaying *virtus* the terrain of the battlefield looks exactly like that of the battlefield of the tactical general—the slopes which help missiles fall heavy and true, the sucking swamps, the impeding rivers—but its significance is inverted. The more the tactical general would shy away from a *locus iniquus*, the more the soldier eager to display *virtus* yearns to assail it. For conceived in terms of *virtus* landscape takes on a memorial function. Caesar arrives at the camp where Q. Cicero was besieged. “He marveled at the towers erected, the mantlets, and the fortifications of the enemy”; only one Roman in ten is unwounded. “From all these things he judged how great the danger was and with how great *virtus* the affair had been carried on” (*G* 5.52). Or, alarmingly, the Helvetian Divico warns Caesar, “do not let this place, where they were meeting, take a famous name from or perpetuate the memory of a disaster of the Roman people and the destruction of an army” (*G* 1.13; cf. *B.Alex.* 72). Do not, he is saying, let the place become a monument to our *virtus* at your expense.

Greek battle descriptions were filled with accounts of the brave deeds of individuals and groups. Many of the roles bravery plays in Caesar’s battles can be paralleled in scattered references in Greek authors. To a historian near the mainstream of Hellenistic history-writing, like Diodorus Siculus, the pivotal role of courage in battle was an easy assumption. But bravery fell uneasily into the categories in which Greek military experts—like Xenophon and Polybius—thought about how battles were won, and despite a strain of Greek political thinking which sought the origins of high bravery in civic customs and institutions (esp. Xen. *Lac. Pol.*; Polyb. 6.52–55; cf. Arist. *NE* 3.8 [=1116a-b]), the Greek military tradition never entirely succeeded in integrating courage into its conception of battle.

Wistful Greek longing for an honest day before the triumph of stratagem (Polyb. 13.3.2–3)⁸⁹ re-echoed thunderously at Rome. For there, reliance on stratagem—although old and respectable—crashed into a powerful contemporary sentiment that proper battles were won by *virtus* and that victory was greater in proportion to how out-generaled the Romans had been. In his failure to reconcile his reliance on stratagem with his conception of the importance of *virtus*, Caesar simply reproduces the wider conflict of his society. But the conflict betrays the fact that bravery was much more central to the Roman conception of battle than it was in Greek theory, and Caesar fully integrates *virtus* into his battle descriptions. To Caesar bravery is not just something to be admired in passing, or a convenient generalizing short-hand; it is not decoration or *deus ex machina*. It is an essential—potentially decisive—cog in the mechanics of battle, important from minute to minute as a motivation of the troops and commanders, and carefully thought about by generals, who use it as the basis of stratagems. Like tactics and *animus*, *virtus* imposes its own significance upon the topography of the battlefield. It is in his understanding of the workings of bravery that Caesar reaches furthest beyond the Greek military tradition.

To a student of *Tendenz* in Caesar the marshal's attention to the bravery of his soldiers smacks of being a political project: it was upon the loyalty of his soldiers, after all, that Caesar's political predominance rested. Yet a Polybian treatment of bravery in battle—praising it in passing in the course of battle descriptions which hinge on other factors—would have been perfectly adequate for any strictly political end. Caesar may well use his understanding of *virtus* for devious purposes, to make himself and his army appear in a good light, to deflect attention from his mistakes, to deceive his reader. But he can do so because he and his prospective Roman reader share a pre-existing expectation that sheer courage is an important factor at every stage of battle. That shared expectation—an aspect of Roman culture—ramifies into Caesar's understanding of *virtus* on the battlefield. Caesar departs from the Greek understanding of courage not because he is Caesar the politician, but because he is Caesar the Roman.

VI. READING CAESAR'S BATTLE DESCRIPTIONS

Greek historians, heavily influenced by a tactical conception of combat, usually used that model as the structuring armature of their accounts of battles: the formation, deployment, and movement of forces tend to form the backbone of the narrative, with other material—stratagems, the brave deeds of individuals, remarkable occurrences like panics, paradoxes, and touching stories—included intermittently along the way. Caesar has similar descriptions—Alesia is conceived in this way—but he struggles against the domination of tactical schemata, and strives to give *animus* and *virtus* their proper prominence as well. Thus, as

89. Pritchett 1974: 148, 174–76 gathers references to distaste for trickery in the Greek tradition.

is true of Caesar's description of Pharsalus, the building blocks of his battle descriptions tend to be segments of narrative hanging upon all three of these themes; his depictions therefore often lack the firm tactical girdering of so many of Polybius' battles. This shifting of the camera between these different points of view, combined with the rushing speed of Caesar's narrative, produces accounts of battle that are highly artistic and impressionistic, series of self-contained vignettes, rapid slide-shows rather than movies, where the causal relationship between vignettes is often implied rather than stated.⁹⁰

Caesar's conception of the relationship between tactics, *animus*, and *virtus* is fundamentally paratactic. To Caesar, these factors ideally combine to produce victory. This is nowhere more evident, and Caesar's method of describing a battle is nowhere more vividly displayed, than in his highly elaborated account of the battle of the Sambre against the Nervii.⁹¹ Caesar begins with a description of the battlefield. The Roman route of approach, we learn first, was hampered by the formidable hedges characteristic of the country of the Nervii (*G* 2.17).

This was the nature of the place which our men chose for the camp: a hill sloped down to the edge of the River Sabis . . . the angle of the slope consistent from the summit. Opposite and over against it a hill of equal slope arose from the river, the lower part open for two hundred paces, the upper part wooded, so that it could not easily be seen into. In those woods the enemy held themselves in hiding; next to the river on the open ground a few posts of cavalry were to be seen. The river was about three feet in depth. (*G* 2.18)

The opening of the battle is conceived primarily in tactical terms, and the tactical significance of each of the topographical details Caesar has provided quickly becomes evident. Caesar's cavalry and light troops cross the river and attack the enemy horse, but the trees on the enemy hill limit their pursuit to the open hillside and permit the enemy infantry, already in formation, to attack the whole Roman army simultaneously at the moment the first of the Roman baggage crests the hill. Now Caesar emphasizes the twin tactical themes of the speed of the enemy and the disorder of the Romans. "Suddenly they flew forth with all their forces and made an *impetus* upon our cavalry. Having easily repulsed and disordered (*pulsis ac proturbatis*) these they ran down to the river with incredible quickness, so that almost at the same moment the foe were seen at the tree line, in the river, at close quarters. And with the same speed they hastened up hill at our camp and those busy entrenching it" (*G* 2.19). Caesar, assisted by his legates and the experience of the troops, tries to create order out of chaos, but there is great confusion (*G* 2.20–21).

90. Keegan 1976: 65 terms Caesar's style "disjunctive."

91. Discussion of the literary construction of this battle description begins with Oppermann 1933: 37–41, 56–64, 85–89. Later writing is collected by Görler 1980: n. 7. The "Battle of the Sambre" is a conventional name; the actual location of the battle is disputed: Gesche 1976: 249–51 gathers references.

The “nature of the ground and the slope of the hill” (which we learned about in the description of the field), as well as the speed of the enemy attack, divide the legions, which fight independently. The hedges (also previously advertised) block the view to the front and make it hard to deploy reinforcements and command the various elements of the Roman army. The situation is critical (*G* 2.22, *in tanta rerum iniquitate*).

Events now occur simultaneously at various places on the battlefield, and Caesar must put aside his roughly chronological narrative structure for a topographical one. He begins on the left, where the Ninth and Tenth Legions take advantage of the higher ground to drive back the exhausted and wounded Atrebatians into the river, slaughter them while they are *impediti* in the water, and pursue them up the opposite hill (*in locum iniquum*). Caesar’s eyes then sweep to the center where the Eleventh and Eighth Legions similarly advance downhill to the edge of the water, driving those opposed to them before them. But in so doing the legions uncover the flank of the Twelfth and Seventh Legions on the right (to which Caesar now directs his attention) and break a hole in the Roman line, uncovering the Roman camp. Packed in close formation the Nervii exploit this hole, occupy the Roman camp, and take the Twelfth and Seventh Legions in the flank (*G* 2.23).

Now suddenly the focus, and the significance of the description of the battlefield, shifts from tactics—order and disorder, charges down hills, formations—to *animus*. Since the Roman camp was on the crest of a hill, those in it could see and be seen by all. Observing the Romans advancing across the river in victory, the Roman camp-servants (the *calones*, a stern and pragmatic body of men, expected to defend the camp in a crisis) left the camp to plunder. When the Nervii became visible in the denuded camp they inspired desperate panic in the camp-servants, the retreating auxiliaries, and in the baggage train. A great snowballing terror seizes all except the legionaries (*G* 2.24). But suddenly the fortunes of battle turn. Caesar’s focus now shifts back to the right wing where his personal intervention delivers from fear, and firms up the *animi* of, the Twelfth and Seventh Legions (*G* 2.25–26). When Caesar arrived at the Twelfth the legion had taken heavy casualties among its centurions, and lost a standard. Caesar saw that the situation was at a crisis—but diagnosed the crisis as one of spirit. “The rest of the men were becoming slower, and some from the rearmost ranks were deserting the battle, retiring to avoid the missiles.” The men were closely packed together, hampering each other’s fighting, and had gathered all the standards in a mass. We know from elsewhere (*C* 1.71; Hirt. *BG* 8.18) that these were well-understood signs of fear. Caesar’s solution was to seize a shield and plunge into the front line, shouting encouragement to the troops. “His arrival inspired hope in the soldiers and revived their *animus*. Each man, even in extremity, wanted of his own accord to do his duty under the eyes of the *imperator*. The *impetus* of the enemy was slowed a bit.”

The Gauls were still lapping around the edges of the legions, and so Caesar ordered the Seventh, neighbor to the Twelfth, to wheel behind the Twelfth Legion

and stand back to back with it. “This done, each bore aid to the other, and not fearing that they would be surrounded by the enemy from the rear, they began to resist more bravely and fight more strongly.” Again the danger Caesar diagnosed in encirclement was psychological, and he ordered a maneuver to bring psychological relief.

Meanwhile the two legions guarding the baggage crest the hill and come into sight, and from the opposite hill Titus Labienus, having taken the Gallic camp, and seeing what was going on from his own high ground, sends the Tenth Legion back to assist. This effects a revolution in the morale of the Roman forces. “Even our men who were lying down worn out by wounds renewed the fight propped on their shields; the camp-servants, seeing the enemy terrified (*perterritos*), attacked the armed foe even unarmed; and the cavalry fought at all points in rivalry with the legionaries, in order to obliterate the disgrace of their flight by *virtus*” (G 2.27).

And so to close the battle the focus—and with it the significance of the terrain—shifts once again, this time from *animus* to *virtus*. The reader already knows that the Nervii are men of outstanding *virtus*: shortly before he begins his account of the battle Caesar drives this point home by mentioning their scorn for civilized luxuries and their contempt for those who had surrendered to the Romans and thereby “cast away their ancestral *virtus*” (G 2.15). Now Caesar turns from the revival of the *animus* of the Romans to describe the last stand of the Nervii.

The enemy, even with hope of safety gone, showed so great a *virtus*, that when the first rank fell, those behind them stood upon their lying bodies and fought from them, and when they fell, and the corpses were piled up, those who survived threw missiles at us and threw back our javelins as if from a mound. It is not without reason, therefore, that they must be judged to have been men of gigantic *virtus*, since they dared to cross a wide river, climb high banks, and ascend a *locus iniquus*. Greatness of soul (*magnitudo animi* [= *virtus*]) made the most difficult tasks easy. (G 2.27)

Such is Caesar’s epitaph upon the Roman victory “which brought the race and name of the Nervii nearly to utter extermination” (G 2.28). The landscape, important at the beginning of the account to understanding the physics of the battle, then to the see-sawing morale of the sides, finally becomes a monument to the *virtus* of the Nervii.

Caesar’s account takes the reader directly from the revival of the spirits of the Romans to the heroic last stand of the Nervii. But when exactly did the Nervii lose the battle so as to require a last stand? Where, indeed, was the last stand? Against which Roman units? The latest indication had the Nervii in the Roman camp, but if they were defending the camp (as Cassius Dio [39.3.2] interpreted Caesar’s account) they would hardly need to fight on a mound of their own dead. Where too are the Eleventh and Eighth Legions, which pushed their way to the river? Combatants in the part of the battle described tactically, they simply

vanish when Caesar's attention turns to *animus*. Such questions torment military historians trying to reconstruct the tactical progress of Caesar's battles. But so strictly tactical—so Polybian—a conception of battle is what Caesar is trying to avoid, because it would paint a false picture of the events. By describing the battle as he does, Caesar is trying to convey the deeper truth that there came a point in the battle where the location of troops—conceived tactically—was no longer very important; that suddenly what mattered was who could see what from where, and the psychological consequences of it. Then, as topographical indicators fall away altogether from his account, Caesar wants his reader to understand that what is important now is the action of *virtus* upon *virtus*; now he uses the terrain to illustrate that point. The story Caesar is telling is not just that of military movements, blunders, flank attacks, tactics. The story Caesar is telling is signaled early in the battle by his exhortation to his troops “that they should maintain a memory of their ancient *virtus*, that they should not be perturbed in *animus*, and that they should bravely sustain the *impetus* of the enemies (*impetum fortiter sustinerent*)” (G 2.21; cf. 3.19). To Caesar tactics (*impetus*), *animus*, and *virtus* share the battle equally, and by dividing the battle description into tactical, *animus*, and *virtus* segments, the very structure of the Roman general's account elegantly reflects that fact. To Caesar the best victory is victory in tactics, *animus*, and *virtus* all at once.

If Caesar's description of the battle of the Sambre illustrates his distance from the Greek tradition, his depiction of Pharsalus shows his proximity to it. Caesar explicitly describes Pharsalus as a tactical victory, and the diversions to tell the tale of the *virtus* of Crastinus, not clearly related to the outcome of the battle, would be at home in a Greek narrative. The main problem the narrative presents is the attention Caesar gives to *animus*, culminating in his denunciation of Pompey for his failure to understand the psychology of the charge. This passage interrupts the movement towards a tactical victory, but after it the battle description proceeds to its tactical conclusion. *Animus* is exalted, and then abandoned.

Perhaps Caesar's discussion of *animus* has a political motive, as discreditable to Pompey. But Caesar was also tempted to turn aside from his tactical narrative to comment on military psychology for intellectual reasons. For Caesar's tactical victory at Pharsalus placed him in the ironic danger of becoming a prominent *exemplum* for a view of generalship he did not share. The natural lesson of Pharsalus was that what matters most in battle is tactics and deployment. That is certainly the lesson Frontinus took away from the battle (*Strat.* 2.3.22), offering up Caesar's deployment to be admired and emulated. But Caesar was not prepared to become the hollow-cheeked poster-child of that narrow doctrine. Caesar was a general who took Xenophon's view of battle: to Caesar psychology was as important as tactics. The importance of considering the psychological consequences of one's orders was a polemical point which Caesar intended to make regardless of whether it confused the narrative of the battle.

And confuse the narrative it did: Caesar's criticism of Pompey had singular consequences for later Greek descriptions of the battle of Pharsalus. The criticism attracted notice: given Caesar's emphasis upon it, Pompey's failure cried out to be an important factor in his defeat. But Caesar had not made this connection, so those who followed him would have to do so themselves. Appian—who specifically mentions that he had read Caesar's account (*BC* 2.79)—tries to bridge the logical gap between Caesar's reproach of Pompey and the tactical conclusion to the battle. In his version Caesar's fourth line drives away Pompey's cavalry, thus uncovering the flank of Pompey's legions. Next Appian elaborates Caesar's criticism of Pompey for not letting his legionaries charge, and the bad consequences of such a policy. "And so it fell out on that occasion," Appian writes, when the Tenth Legion, inspired by being allowed to charge, took Pompey's legions, deflated by their immobility and with flank uncovered, from the flank. This threw them into confusion, routed them, "and began the victory" (*BC* 2.79). The charge of the inspired Tenth Legion against the Pompeians' uncovered flank elegantly connects the morale of the charge to Caesar's eventual victory. But the flank charge of the Tenth is an event of which neither Caesar—in whom the fourth line makes the attack on flank and rear—nor any other surviving author knows. Appian has had to go a long way from Caesar's narrative to make sense of it.

Even stranger than Appian's reconciliation of Caesar's tactical and *animus* themes is the tradition that takes center stage in Plutarch's account. Here again the intervention of Caesar's fourth line is decisive. Its attack on Pompey's cavalry turns them to flight, and their flight "destroys everything" (*Caes.* 45.1–5). But Pompey's cavalry flee because of a psychological stratagem of Caesar's: according to this well-attested tale Caesar had told the legionaries facing the cavalry not to throw their javelins, but to thrust them into the faces of the young and beautiful cavalymen, who would flee rather than face disfigurement (*Caes.* 45.2–3, *Pomp.* 69.3, 71.4–5; cf. Appian *BC* 2.76, 2.78; [Front.] *Strat.* 4.7.32; Polyaeus 8.23.25). The exact origin of this odd story can hardly be known: perhaps it arises from some dismissive remark Caesar actually made about Pompey's cavalry, reported in an independent tradition. But the elevation of the tale to the battle's decisive psychological stratagem may well be another solution to Appian's *aporia*: having read Caesar's passionate defense of psychological generalship in his criticism of Pompey—as Plutarch, for one, had (*Caes.* 44.8, *Pomp.* 69.5)—the reader looks around for a clear psychological decision to the battle, and what Caesar failed to supply, ingenuity did.

It was Julius Caesar who, by turning aside from his narrative to enter a Greek theoretical controversy, introduced psychology into the deepest stratum of the tradition of describing the battle of Pharsalus. The striking quality of this detour caused his narrative to be thoroughly misunderstood by Greek authors who came to describe the battle after him. Caesar's editorial comment prevailed over his tactical narrative: in the Greek tradition Pharsalus was remembered as a psychological victory. Appian refers to tactical thinkers who defended Pompey's

plan on tactical grounds (*BC* 2.79). But in the face of that knowledge Appian preferred to follow—and try to repair—what he took to be Caesar's account. As a recorder of events Caesar failed, if success be defined as imposing his version on future generations. But as a military thinker in the Greek tradition who advocated a controversial point of view about the importance of psychology in battle, he won his point with posterity.

VII. CONCLUSION

$$dN_a/dt = -N_{dd}p_d(r)$$

*Model of Infantry Attack on Well Defended Position*⁹²

From the fifth century BC there can be detected in descriptions of battles in the Greek historians a substratum of shared assumptions about the factors that were decisive in combat. Soon those shared assumptions were elaborated into a tradition of written theory that stressed above all the importance of tactics—formation and deployment—and also the use of cunning stratagems to confound the enemy. Historical battle descriptions influenced by this tradition carefully described the tactics and stratagems of both sides and traced their consequences through to the outcome of the battle. The domination of this theory over Greek battle descriptions was, however, never complete. Other currents, artistic and rhetorical, were always influential, and authors near the mainstream of Hellenistic history writing often strove for extreme emotional effects, describing, for example, the expressions on the faces of severed heads (*Diod.* 17.58.5). Even sober authors close to the military tradition—Thucydides, himself a general, and Polybius, the author of a treatise on tactics—were not immune. The *locus classicus* of rhetorical battle description is Thucydides' much-imitated account of the climactic battle in the harbor at Syracuse (7.60–72), with its splendid paired speeches of encouragement, its pathetic depiction of the terrors of those watching the battle from the shore, and its absolute failure to reveal why the Syracusans won. Polybius' account of the battle of Chios (16.2–7), with only the sketchiest indication of the deployment, a mass of strange paradoxes, and much about the great deeds of the contending kings, can rank as a characteristically tumid Hellenistic effort (cf. 3.84.8–10, 5.48.9, 16.30–34).⁹³

Julius Caesar was a participant in this lively tradition of Greek battle description. In his account of the battle of Tauroeis (*C* 2.4), the Massilians pathetically besiege their temples to implore the gods for victory, their desperation suspiciously similar to that of the watchers on the shore at Thucydides' Syracuse; and

92. Weiss 1983: 83.

93. On literary devices in Polybius' battle descriptions, D'Huys 1990.

the Massilians' wailing when they hear of their loss (*C* 2.7) may nod at that of the Athenians in Xenophon hearing of the disaster at Aegospotami (*Hell.* 2.2.3–4).⁹⁴ But Caesar was not an uncritical heir to any part of this legacy. The core of the Greek tradition was a physical theory of battle elaborated from centuries of experience with the phalanx. This theory insensibly downplayed the significance of other factors in battle, with the paradoxical consequence that bravery was more prominent in the battle descriptions of less well-informed Greek historians (like Diodorus and some of his sources) than in those of military experts (like Xenophon and Polybius). Caesar's Roman background was less dismissive of courage than Greek military theory was. Greek interest in stratagem—the second great stream of Greek military thinking—offered an *entrée* for other factors, like military psychology, into Greek thinking about battle. But it could also restrict that thinking, and always threatened to reduce military psychology to a special case, only occasionally important. Caesar allied himself with Greek military thinkers who gave psychology pride of place when thinking about battle: Caesar's command of Roman armies made him deem the management of morale (although conceived somewhat differently than by the Greeks) as important as tactics, evidently a polemical position given the stress he places upon it. Finally, Caesar's (or his lost Latin predecessors') experience of battle encouraged him to elaborate a tactical theory from the crash of the legionary charge, rather than the weighty push of the phalanx, and elaborate a psychological theory which incorporated the Roman military ethos of steadiness. Caesar, in short, adapts a Greek model of tactics, chooses (and adapts) a Greek position on psychology, and rejects the Greek dismissal of bravery. Caesar's conception of the mechanics of battle is a mixture of Greek and Roman, an adaptation rather than outright translation of Greek concepts, closer in spirit to the use of Greek models by Plautus than by Terence. Greek theory yields to Roman reality and Roman cultural expectations.

To the cultural historian, it is Caesar's split with the Greeks on the subject of bravery that stands out. Wondering about the significance of gladiatorial combat to Roman identity, Thomas Wiedemann points to the gladiator as the personification of the fundamental Roman value of *virtus*.⁹⁵ But as well as admiring *virtus* from their seats, many Romans of Caesar's day lived according to its stern code. Caesar's full integration of *virtus* into the mechanics of battle shows that *virtus* was not merely an adornment to please readers with a purely literary taste for Roman pluck, and not just a mechanism for flattering his soldiers. *Virtus* was a real part of the motivation of Roman soldiers and their élite officers. So Caesar's treatment of *virtus*, and its ramifications, helps us understand Roman behavior in arenas other than the battlefield. Roman competitiveness, stiff-necked pride, and vengefulness—the offspring of *virtus*—are evident both in the Roman forum and in the forum of Roman foreign relations.

94. Rambaud 1966: 230.

95. Wiedemann 1992: 35–38 and 1996.

The differences between Caesar's and Greek conceptions of how battles work, moreover, and the differences among Greek authors as well, let us look back at all ancient battle descriptions with a wiser eye. Behind a Greek battle description involving pushing and weight there may indeed lie a bloody squash on an historical battlefield. But it will always be hard to know, since the Greek rhetoric of battle was rich with pushing metaphors and might impose them regardless of physical reality. In Polybius' Cynoscephalae tactics are decisive. But Polybius had decided that tactics were, in general, the decisive factor in battles long before he came to describe Cynoscephalae. Xenophon identified a tactical stratagem as decisive at Leuctra (*Hell.* 6.4.12–14), while Diodorus attributes the ultimate victory to the ἀνδραγαθία, the bravery, of the Theban picked men (Diod. 15.56.2). No doubt Xenophon is right, but it is unsettling that he (like other Greek military experts) was inclined to exclude bravery from the results of battles long before he came to write about Leuctra. If Caesar, with his code of *virtus*, had written about Leuctra, the ἀρετή of the Theban Sacred Band might have been more prominent. But Xenophon and Polybius might have dismissed such a description as romantic and silly. All ancient battle descriptions, in short, reflect a series of decisions made beforehand—many of them highly controversial in their own time—about how battles worked, decisions which guided how battle was depicted. When reconstructing an ancient battle, the first necessity is to ascertain the set of conventions the sources are using, to find out what they may be predisposed to see, and to determine what they may be predisposed to ignore. The reconstruction of an ancient battle must be attended with a sense both of how ancient conventions of battle description channel ancient narrative, and with a humble sense of how modern conventions of battle description channel our own evaluation of that narrative.

For if it is hard to reconstruct Caesar's battles, that is because our conception of battle is more like that of a Greek tactical thinker—a Polybius—than a Caesar. Despite Clausewitz and Ardant du Picq, the tenor of modern conceptions of battle is ardently materialist. At the natural end of modern thinking lies the project of conceiving battle in terms of mathematical equations,⁹⁶ and such an understanding necessarily guides the eyes of the reporter on battle to what can be quantified. Even in less arid modern conceptions, the vertiginous psychology of soldiers in battle is sanitized and scientized as “morale,” and modern students of war have even less use than the Greeks for Caesar's category of *virtus*, tending—as the Greeks sometimes did—to confound it with psychology.⁹⁷ To Polybius, or us, exact topography is an essential part of an historian's description of a battle conceived primarily in physical, geometrical terms. But Caesar's divergence from

96. Grounded (in Anglo-Saxon lands) on the equations of F. W. Lanchester, accessible in Lanchester 1916; used in many technical military publications, and subject to continual refinement: e.g. Dupuy 1979 and 1987.

97. See van Creveld's (1982: 11–17) dismissive treatment of “national character.”

this Greek tradition liberated him from Greek expectations about topographical exactitude. To Caesar the movement of troops over terrain was not necessarily the most important aspect of battle, the description of those movements and that terrain not necessarily the most useful way of getting at the heart of what happened in battle. Caesar's understanding of warfare suggested to him alternative topographies—those that psychology and bravery inscribe upon the land. If we have difficulty finding Caesar's battlefields on modern maps it is because he saw battlefields differently than we do, and sometimes many battlefields where we see only one.

Finally, an understanding of the way Caesar understood battle presents historical questions. The excellence of the Roman army has traditionally been explained in terms of its organization, discipline, and professionalism, the army imagined in mechanical terms, as a thundering turbine agleam with oil or as a more perfect *Wehrmacht*. The Roman army of late Republic and Empire conquered as the only modern institution in a primitive, *ad hoc*, world.⁹⁸ Recently, Adrian Goldsworthy has argued that the Roman army's success must be viewed less in tactical, mechanical terms and more in psychological terms.⁹⁹ As usual, ancient history is behind the times: stress on psychological as well as organizational factors in the excellence of Hitler's *Wehrmacht* is years old.¹⁰⁰ Caesar might chuckle at our debate about the Romans, so similar to the Greek debate he was familiar with about the primacy of tactics or morale. Comparing Caesar's conception of battle to that of the Greeks does confirm the need for attention to morale, but it is Caesar's theory of *virtus* that draws the eye as unfamiliar. Perhaps, then, an understanding of the excellence of the Roman army may require attention not only to Roman drill, not only to the wild psychology of the battlefield, but also to the abiding militarism of Roman culture, to the Roman ability to preserve in the camp and display on later battlefields the drunken atavistic bravery of Rome's early, terrible, centuries. If the Roman army excelled as the only modern institution in a savage world, could it be that it excelled also by preserving the culture of a savage tribe in an increasingly modern world? So too the victories of a great Roman marshal, of a Julius Caesar, may not find their full explanation in terms of strategy, tactics, or morale, but also in cultural terms, in deep habits of thought and structures of emotion. Caesar stands between cultures, or was a member of a culture which itself stood between. He looks with a native Roman gleam upon the fiery-eyed world of *virtus*, the world of primitive masculine competition which his soldiers and his enemies share. But at the same time he views that world distantly and dispassionately, as Polybius blandly regards the mechanical evolutions of troops. Perhaps Caesar's Greek education not only equipped him with intellectual means to understand tactics and morale, but encouraged him to devise his own means

98. For summary of this view, Goldsworthy 1996: 1–2, 8–9, 283–84.

99. Goldsworthy 1996: 10, 244–46, 285–86.

100. E.g. van Creveld 1982 *passim*.

to understand *virtus* in the same systematic terms. Perhaps Caesar's conquest of barbarians in Gaul depended in part on his ability to fathom what was barbarous in his own army, and the barbarian in himself.

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