

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

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Preprint v1

May 19, 2023

<https://doi.org/10.32388/F0CNLD>

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Everett Wheeler's hypothesis that the Greek concept of *ankhinoia* finds its equivalent in eighteenth-century military writers' notion of the *coup d'oeil* is tested by comparing treatises on the art of war written in the two periods. After highlighting the different meanings of the *coup d'oeil* in 18th century military terminology, Clausewitz's approach is examined in the light of his concept of the genius for war.

Keywords: *Coup d'oeil*, genius for war, intuition, Folard, Clausewitz

In his important study of the vocabulary of military trickery in Antiquity, Everett Wheeler suggests that the Greek notion of *ankhinoia* (ἀγχίνοια) – shrewdness, sagacity – has its equivalent in the concept of *coup d'oeil* used by 18th- and early 19th-century military writers.¹ A discussion of this hypothesis is of intrinsic interest and may contribute to the reflection on “strategic intuition”. William Duggan assimilates strategic intuition to a flash of insight but distinguishes it from what psychologists and cognitive scientists call expert intuition: “Expert intuition is always fast and only works in familiar situations. Strategic intuition is always slow and works for new situations, which is when you need your best ideas”.² In Duggan’s view, Clausewitz’s conception of *coup d'oeil* “shows remarkable similarity to what modern research tells us about strategic intuition”, making the Prussian theoretician a forerunner of what is now the “science of intelligent memory”.³

Thus, according to Duggan, the concept of *coup d'oeil* is the strong link in a chain forged in Antiquity, to which new links have since been added by the cognitive sciences. This idea deserves to be examined more closely and in two stages. Before considering the relationship between *coup d'oeil* and strategic intuition, it is important to set the stage for the analysis by carefully examining Wheeler’s hypothesis.

Contrary to what one might think, the notion of *coup d'oeil* used by 18th-century military writers is not a simple translation of the Greek *ankhinoia*. Jean-Charles de Folard – the first author to really conceptualise *coup d'oeil* – was indeed a commentator of Polybius. However, he did not rely directly on the Greek historian’s terminology, which he did not read in its

¹ Everett L. Wheeler, *Stratagem and the Vocabulary of Military Trickery* (Leiden: Brill 1988), 46-47.

² William Duggan, *Strategic Intuition* (New-York: Columbia University Press 2007), 2.

³ William Duggan, *Coup d'oeil: Strategic intuition in army planning*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2005, 3-4. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11718>.

original form. The explanation for this convergence is simple: several centuries apart, the same question (that of the general's skill) was raised but was conceptualized in different ways. What is the difference between a great general and a mediocre one? The answer lies in each of the two concepts, which are in fact, if not identical, at least homologous. In order to fully understand them, however, it is important to situate the term *ankhínoia* within the network of ideas that gives it meaning, and to take into account the polysemy of the concept of *coup d'oeil* in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Shrewdness in ancient wars

In the military treatises of Greek antiquity, the term *ankhínoia* is only used in passing and is not explicitly defined. What Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant have said of *mētis* (μητις) – cunning intelligence, of which *ankhínoia* is a component – is also valid for *ankhínoia*: this mental category does not give rise to a theoretical account or to any form of conceptualisation by Greek military writers.⁴

Xenophon's *Memorabilia* is not, strictly speaking, a military treatise, but part of the text relates a dialogue between Socrates and one of his disciples about the qualities that a good general should possess. Sagacity (*ankhínoia*) appears in the long list drawn up by the former, alongside skill (*mēkhanikòn*, μηχανικόν), prudence (*phulaktikòn*, φυλακτικόν), the ability to inspire confidence (*asphalēs*, ἀσφαλής) or boldness (*epithetikòn*, ἐπιθετικόν).⁵ The term also appears in the *Cyropaedia*, though not in a military context. Referring to Cyrus' personality in his youth, Xenophon notes that he had a quick mind (*ankhínous*, ἀγχίνους), which enabled him to respond promptly to questions put to him.⁶

In Aeneas the Tactician, a few details help to define the term. First of all, this quality of mind is not specific to the general as other ordinary soldiers can also possess it. The author recommends entrusting the guarding of the city gates to shrewd (*ankhínous*) and wise men (*phronímous*, φρονίμους), so that their vigilance will thwart any hostile attempt.⁷ The second occurrence of the word is interesting in that it provides an example of this finesse of mind, in this case, that of the general: on his way to aid the citadel of Ilium, Athenodorus of Imbros did

⁴ Marcel Detienne, Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (Chicago: UCP 1991), 3.

⁵ Xen. Mem. 3.1.6.

⁶ Xen. Cyr. 1.4.3.

⁷ Aen. Tact. V.

not take the paths in which ambushes were awaiting him, but chose other routes in order to steal his march by night. Athenodorus' acuteness of judgement, or intelligence (*ankhínōs*, ἀγχίνως), in these circumstances comes from his ability to thwart his opponent's ruse by anticipating the trap that has been set and taking steps to escape it.⁸ In a third instance, the term is used in the adverbial form (*ankhinóōs*, ἀγχινόως) and denotes the cleverness of a process in which potential conspirators among other citizens are dispersed in order to destroy their ability to act together.⁹ In Aeneas the Tactician, the term is thus systematically associated with the capacity for anticipation and the prudent measures that this capacity makes it possible to adopt.

In the preface to his treatise, Onasander already introduces the term using an original formulation in which he characterises his own cognitive abilities. To explain the choice of procedures used by the generals, and studied in the treatise, the author puts forward his own wisdom of judgement (*idías ankhinoías*, *ιδίας ἀγχινοίας*), which enabled him to grasp the intelligence (*alotrías epinoías*, ἀλλοτριάς ἐπινοίας) on which those procedures were based.¹⁰ In this context, the term is not directly associated with the ability to anticipate an action and adopt appropriate measures, but with the ability to recognise in the actions of others the essential characteristics of the art of war considered from the perspective of the art of military leadership. It should not be imagined, however, that Onasander is trying to make a terminological distinction between two forms of intelligence – one theoretical, the other practical – for he goes on to use the term to refer to the natural intelligence (*phusikḗs ankhinoías*, φυσικῆς ἀγχινοίας) of the general.¹¹ Wheller finds two occurrences of the term in the body of the text. One, in Book 42, uses a phrase from the preface (*idías ankhinoías*) to refer to the skill a general must have when positioning siege engines.¹² In the second occurrence identified by Wheller in Book I, the term is not actually used, but the text contains a periphrasis that can reasonably be taken as a kind of definition of shrewdness: an agility of mind (*ōkútētos psukhḗs*, ὠκύτητος ψυχῆς) in dealing with any situation.¹³

Unlike the above authors, Polybius uses the term *ankhinoia* frequently, which clearly indicates that he considers this attribute as an essential characteristic of an accomplished general. After Hasdrubal's death, the Carthaginians put Hannibal in charge, despite his youth,

⁸ Aen. Tact. XXIV.

⁹ Aen. Tact. XI.10.

¹⁰ Onos. praef.9.

¹¹ Onos. praef.10.

¹² Onos. 42.4.

¹³ Onos. 1.7.

because he possessed this quality as well as boldness (*tólma*, τόλμα).¹⁴ The same two terms – *ankhínoia* and *tólma* – are also used to explain the boundless admiration of the people of Taranto for Hannibal: in their eyes, no one could triumph over the wisdom and audacity of the Punic general.¹⁵ The latter, a skilful commander (*agathòn hēgemóna*, ἀγαθὸν ἡγεμόνα), managed – thanks to his shrewdness – not only to lead his enemies into his traps, but also to persuade different peoples to fight together.¹⁶ When he inflicted terrible defeats on the Romans, it was not because of the superiority of his weapons or even his battle orders (*súntaxis*, σύνταξις), but because of the shrewdness and flexibility (*epidexiótēs*, ἐπιδεξιότης) of his mind.¹⁷

Polybius believes that Scipio also possessed this quality, which he demonstrated both politically and militarily, particularly by reducing sedition. The examples provided give rise to a new terminological association of *ankhínoia*, which, as in the case of Hannibal, is associated with flexibility of mind (*epidexiótēs*, ἐπιδεξιότης), but also with the ability to anticipate (*prónoia*, πρόνοια) – an association which was not explicit in the case of Hannibal.¹⁸ However, Scipio was not the shrewdest of Romans; Polybius states that Titus Quinctius Falminus was the shrewdest of his countrymen.¹⁹

Four other figures are endowed with the virtue of *ankhínoia* and are positively portrayed by Polybius. Philip II shows that he possesses this cognitive quality in a context not directly related to military action, since it concerns the greatness of soul (*megalopsukhía*, μεγαλοψυχία) that the king of Macedonia demonstrated after his victory at Chaeronea (338 BC), a quality that enabled him to rally the Athenians to his cause.²⁰ Philopoemen, general of the Achaean League, used his good military judgement to win the battle of Mantineum (207 BC), as did Quintus Opimius in the war against the Ligurians (154-155 BC); Polybius considered that the consul combined shrewdness and action (*prāgma*, πρᾶγμα) in his undertakings.²¹ As for Eumenes II, King of Pergamon, he also combines this cognitive faculty with an ability to act, which Polybius characterises in terms of industrious activities (*philoponía*, φιλοπονία).²²

¹⁴ Plb. 2.36.3.

¹⁵ Plb. 8.34.10.

¹⁶ Plb. 10.33.1-2 ; 11.19.5.

¹⁷ Plb. 18.28.6.

¹⁸ Plb. 10.5.8 ; 10.3.1 ; 11.25.5.

¹⁹ Plb. 18.12.3.

²⁰ Plb. 5.10.4-5.

²¹ Plb. 11.16.4 ; 33.10.6.

²² Plb. 32.8.4.

Finally, Polybius mentions three figures endowed with great shrewdness, while portraying them negatively: A certain Heraclius, adviser to Philip V, who is portrayed as malicious (*κακός*, κακός); Sosibios, minister of Ptolemy IV, who is himself evil (*κακοροϊός*, κακοποιός); and Chaeron of Sparta, who appropriates public wealth and commits assassinations.²³ None of them develop their shrewdness in the military field, but all of them perpetuate reprehensible acts that are revealing of their personalities. In other words, in Polybius, *ankhinoia* is a cognitive ability that is independent of a specific field of action and of the moral qualities of the person who possesses it. In the case of Heraclides, Sosibios and Chaeron, it is associated with wrongdoing; in the case of Hannibal or Quintus Opimius, it is associated with excellence in the art of war.

This approach differs markedly from that of Aristotle, the Greek author who wrote the most about the idea of *ankhinoia*. In the *Rhetoric*, it is defined as a virtue alongside natural talent (*εὐφυΐα*, εὐφυΐα), memory (*μνήμη*, μνήμη) and ease of learning (*εὐμάθεια*, εὐμάθεια), and one need not refer to *On Virtues and Vices* to understand that it is an attribute of the virtuous man.²⁴ The *Magna Moralia* makes it clear, however, that it belongs to the rational part (*λόγος*, λόγος) of the soul, while its irrational part (*ἄλογος*, ἄλογος) is made up of true virtues, such as temperance, justice and courage.²⁵

Rational as it is, this form of intelligence does not rely on reasoning. In the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle defines it as the ability to grasp a relationship instantly: “a sort of flair for grasping the middle term (*τοῦ μέσου*, τοῦ μέσου) without hesitation or reflection (*ἄσκεπτος*, ἄσκεπτος)”. By mentioning the “middle term”, Aristotle alludes to the second premise of a syllogism; he thus allusively makes an analogy between the construction of a syllogism and the cognitive functioning of an intuition. The analogy with the construction of a syllogism means that one who is endowed with such alertness is able to spontaneously identify the second premise of an argument on the basis of knowledge of the conclusion, by reconstructing a causal relationship (*αἰτία*, αἰτία). Among the examples Aristotle provides, that of the moon is the most significant: “A man sees that the moon always has its bright side facing the sun, and he immediately realises the reason: that it is because the moon derives its brightness from the sun”.²⁶ The *Nicomachean Ethics* follows a similar line of thought, distinguishing between the deliberative intellect (*βουλευῖον*, βουλευῖον), which takes time, and the liveliness of the mind, which operates instantly. In this respect, this sharpness of mind (*ankhinoia*) comes close to the

²³ Plb. 13.4.5 ; 15.25.1 ; 24.7.1.

²⁴ Arist. Rh, 1362b.20. Arist. Vir. 1250a.35.

²⁵ Arist. Mag. mor., 1.5.1.

²⁶ Arist. An. post, I, 34, 89b10-11.

ability to grasp the conjuncture correctly (*eustokhía*, εὐστοχία), a faculty that operates without calculation (*logízomai*, λογίζομαι).²⁷

Aristotle does not explicitly relate *ankhínoia* to the qualities of the general or to the military field. Instead, he offers an example of a practical activity in which this alertness is at work. This is the art of the midwife, which requires skill in cutting the umbilical cord. The act requires not only dexterity (*eukhéreia*, εὐχέρεια), but also presence of mind to avert the unexpected.²⁸ Detienne and Vernant pointed out that the skill of the midwife is linked to the experience of her art. They also noted that Aristotle's example illustrates the inseparability of the two qualities of intelligence, *ankhínoia* and *eustokhía* (εὐστοχία).²⁹ It does not matter here that the author does not use the second of these terms precisely in his example; indeed, the latter allows us to better understand the close terminological association made – with little precision, as Sophie Aubert-Baillet has noted – in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.³⁰ The liveliness of the mind denotes the speed of a cognitive process; the ability to grasp a situation denotes a capacity of observation related to a goal to be achieved. It is not enough for the midwife to have a sharp mind; she must also assess the risks of the situation and adapt her art accordingly. As Detienne and Vernant have pointed out, *eustokhía* refers, first of all, to the archer's ability to aim and hit his target. In this respect, both authors associate it with the notion of *coup d'oeil*, whereas *ankhínoia* is associated with speed. What is really important, however, is the inseparability of the two terms as main components of the *mētis*.

The use of the term *ankhínoia* in Polybius or Onasander is too general to conclude that they had in mind the notional association made by Aristotle. Procopius, a Byzantine author, associates the term with a different concept – that of *epinoéō* (ἐπινοέω) – but he clearly expresses the same idea as that developed by Aristotle. Describing the qualities of Flavius Belisarius, he explains that he “was also remarkably shrewd [*ankhínoia*, ἀγχίνοια], and in difficult situations was able to decide with unerring judgement [*epinoéō*, ἐπινοέω] on the best course of action”.³¹ Both terms – *epinoéō* and *eustokhía* – refer to the same idea of understanding and assessing a situation and then acting effectively on it. Procopius' formulation seems to have an identical meaning to that given by Plutarch, who, on the subject of openness,

²⁷ Arist. Nic. Eth. 1142.b.1-10.

²⁸ Arist. Hist. An. 587.a.10-15.

²⁹ Detienne, Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, 309-310.

³⁰ Sophie Aubert-Baillet, “La conception stoïcienne de la « bonne délibération » (εὐβουλία): une réponse à Platon et Aristote ?”, *Aitia*, 4, 2014. <https://journals.openedition.org/aitia/1112>.

³¹ Procop. Pers. 7.1.13.

explains that it should be used at the right time (*eustokhías te kairoũ*, εὐστοχίας τε καιροῦ).³² The ability to seize a good opportunity or chance (*καιρός*, *kairós*) is thus closely related to the alertness with which it can be grasped, as well as to the ability to translate it into a completed action.

The association between *ankhínoia* and *eustokhía* is quite clear in the *Suda*, the massive Byzantine encyclopaedia of the late 10th century. The entry for the first of these terms defines it as “a disposition of character for finding out immediately what is the appropriate action, or a certain ability [*eustokhía*] to guess properly in a brief period of time”.³³ This definition, which is very explicit about the speed of the cognitive process, does not mean that Byzantine military treatises developed the concept better than Greek ones. Its occurrence is variable and general in nature.

In *On Skirmishing*, Nikephoros Phokas mentions it in passing, and associates it with precision (*akríðeia*, ἀκρίθεια); he does not do so to characterise an attribute of the general, but to indicate the correct behaviour for a unit that is following the enemy from a short distance and needs to avoid being ambushed.³⁴ In the *Taktika* of Leo VI, the term is often associated with precision, but also with experience (*πεῖρα*, *peîra*), which gives the general a better basis for reflection than signs or omens.³⁵ In most of its occurrences it has the general meaning of skill without further specification, a quality that may also be possessed by certain officers from whom the general may take advice or to whom he may delegate offensive operations. On two occasions *ankhínoia* is used to refer more explicitly to the ability to take advantage of an opportunity (*epikairía*, ἐπικαιρία) or to seize an occasion when it arises (*aphormḗ*, ἀφορμή).³⁶ One can certainly consider that the idea of quickness of mind is implicit in both occurrences of the term *ankhínoia*, but the point is that it is less explicit than in the *Suda* definition, which emphasises the instantaneous quality (*parakhrḗma*, παραχρῆμα) of the cognitive ability. In short, the Byzantine military treatises, like the Greek ones, do not offer a true conceptualisation of the term. They sketch the contours of a cognitive process that, in the consummate general, combines alertness, the ability to seize an opportunity, and the capacity to conceive a completed action.

³² Plut. *Adulator*, 74d.

³³ <http://www.stoa.org/sol-entries/alpha/403>.

³⁴ Georges T. Dennis, *Three Byzantine Military Treatises* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks 1985), 170-171.

³⁵ *The Taktika of Leo VI* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks 1985), 614.

³⁶ *The Taktika of Leo VI*, 344 and 436.

Folard's *coup d'oeil*

According to Lorraine Daston, Folard “did not invent the military term *coup d'oeil*, but he elevated it to a position of primary importance”.³⁷ Indeed, occurrences of the term are so rare among the military writers who preceded Folard that he can be credited with introducing the term into the military lexicon. At the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, two treatises on the art of fortification mention the *coup d'oeil*, which makes it possible to determine immediately whether a place is well fortified.³⁸ The occurrence that comes closest to the meaning that the term would later acquire in the military lexicon is to be found in the longest historical novel in French literature, *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus*, in which Madeleine de Scudéry gives her hero the ability to assess a critical situation with a *coup d'oeil*, again during a siege, and to turn it to his advantage.³⁹ Finally, there is the special case of the memoirs of the Marquis de Feuquière, who speaks of the “*coup d'oeil* of a general who decides on a particular action in war”.⁴⁰ Feuquière, who died in 1711, could obviously not have been influenced by the ideas developed by Folard some fifteen years later. The problem is that the Marquis' memoirs were published posthumously from 1731 onwards, in various versions, not all of which include the phrase, and one cannot rule out that the original text was altered.

In any case, these were casual uses of a common French expression that turns out to be polysemous, and even ambiguous. A *coup d'oeil* can be a synonym for an *oeillade*, in which case it simply means a motivated gaze which one does not know whether it is loving, contemptuous or threatening. When referring to a landscape, a place or a building, the *coup d'oeil* refers to a pleasant sensation one gets from looking at it. It can also refer to an action – to give or cast a *coup d'oeil* – which, according to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, means to look at something as if in passing, i.e., without giving it sustained attention. As for the *premier* [first] *coup d'oeil*, it corresponds to what is first presented to the eye and implies that a closer examination will either confirm or modify this first impression.⁴¹ However, language dictionaries do not always succeed in identifying the nuances in a word's or expression's meaning and usage. The nuance that we are interested in here relates to a *coup d'oeil* that should

³⁷ Lorraine Daston, “The coup d'œil. On a mode of understanding”, *Critical Inquiry* 45, 2019, 313.

³⁸ Jean-François Bernard, *Nouvelle manière de fortifier les places, tirée des méthodes du chevalier de Ville, du comte de Pagan, & M. de Vauban* (Paris: Estienne Michallet 1689), 27. Bernard Forest de Belidor, *Sommaire d'un cours d'architecture militaire, civile, hydraulique, et des autres traités les plus utiles aux ingénieurs et architectes* (Paris: Jombert 1720), 24.

³⁹ Madeleine de Scudéry, *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus*, III (Paris: Augustin Courbe 1654), 26.

⁴⁰ *Mémoires de M. le marquis de Feuquière* (Londres: Pierre Dunoyer 1736), 137.

⁴¹ *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, II (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard 1694), 141.

not be understood as a quick or superficial glance, but as one which, on the contrary, refers to an acuity of a judgment. The following two examples show a significant semantic gap between dictionary definitions and specific uses of the expression.

The first example comes from the praise made of mathematician Pierre Varignon by Bernard Le Bouyer de Fontenelle. To underline Varignon's "genius", Fontenelle uses an analogy between looking at a landscape and looking at "geometrical truths". Just as looking at the isolated parts of a landscape does not allow us to appreciate it as a whole, understanding geometric truths "scattered here and there, without order between them, without connection" is not equivalent to understanding geometry as a whole. Varignon's genius thus lay in being able to see these geometrical truths "all together and at a *coup d'oeil*".⁴² The second example comes from the pamphlet attributed to Pierre Le Noble, *Les Amours d'Anne d'Autriche*, which includes a passage portraying Cardinal de Richelieu. Thanks to the "penetration of his judgement", he was able to "see at a *coup d'oeil* the whole interior of a man, perhaps better than anyone else in the century".⁴³ In both cases, it is the quality of a superior mind that gives the *coup d'oeil* a special cognitive ability to grasp something that is not available to the average person.

At first, Folard used the term in this way. In his first publications, the *coup d'oeil* was not yet formally defined, but was mentioned in passing to characterise the Prince of Condé's military prowess by associating it with his "presence of mind".⁴⁴ The few additional elements added by the author only partially develop the concept, and are partly invalidated when, shortly afterwards, he develops his ideas on what he calls the *coup d'oeil militaire*. In 1724, Folard argued that *coup d'œil* could not be acquired as it was a "gift from God". However, it could be perfected so that the person who possessed it could stimulate his cognitive faculties. Indeed, Folard argues that in the heat of the moment, a "slow gaze" is dangerous in that it is important to grasp the advantages and disadvantages of the battlefield "at the first moment". Folard does not, of course, use the notion of decision-making, but he does distinguish between the different phases of such a process, stressing the need for "the reflection that results from seeing an object to be followed immediately by the execution, and for the latter to be as quick as the act of seeing that object".⁴⁵ It is clear here that the notion of *coup d'oeil* refers not only to the visual

⁴² Bernard Le Bouyer de Fontenelle, "Eloge de M. Varignon", in *Histoire de l'Académie royale des sciences, année 1722* (Paris: Imprimerie royale 1724), 141.

⁴³ *Les Amours d'Anne d'Autriche, épouse de Louis XIII avec M. le CDR* (Cologne: Pierre Marteau 1693), 71.

⁴⁴ Folard, *Nouvelles découvertes sur la guerre* (Paris: Jean-François Josse 1724), 75.

⁴⁵ Folard, "Dissertation où l'on examine si l'usage où l'on est de mettre la cavalerie sur les ailes et l'infanterie au centre, dans une bataille rangée, est aussi bien fondé qu'il est ancien et universel", in *Nouvelles découvertes sur la guerre*, 369-370.

perception of the object, but also to the processing of the resulting information that leads to a decision.

Folard's concept of *coup d'oeil* bears undeniable similarities to the notional pair of *ankhinoia/eustokhia*. The temptation to establish an intellectual lineage is all the greater because Folard made his reputation as a military writer as a commentator on Polybius (two of his three works published in 1724 are separate from his "great work" – his commentaries on Polybius' *Histories* – published from 1727). It is important, however, to be cautious about the nature of this filiation, as Folard's *coup d'oeil* is certainly not a simple translation of one of the Greek terms. The French military writer, who could not read Greek, was never directly confronted with these terms. His comments on Polybius are based on a translation that he himself commissioned from Vincent Thuillier, a Benedictine monk who was well versed in Greek. It is not impossible that the latter discussed the terminology of the original text with Folard, but the fact remains that Thuillier does not use the term *coup d'oeil* in his translation and that the reflection Folard develops at length on the concept in his commentaries refers to a chapter of Polybius in which neither the term *ankhinoia* nor the term *eustokhia* is mentioned.

The reflection on the *coup d'oeil militaire* which Folard develops in his commentaries on Polybius refers to chapter 62 of Book 1 (chapter 14 in Thuillier's numbering). The only part of the chapter that justifies this development concerns Hamilcar, whose military qualities Polybius emphasises. According to Thuillier's translation, the Punic general is wise (*nounekhés*, *νουνεχής*), prudent (*oudèn tōn parabólōn*, *οὐδὲν τῶν παραβόλων*) and enlightened (*phrónimos*, *φρόνιμος*).⁴⁶ In his commentary, Folard adds that Hamilcar had a "very good and very fine" *coup d'oeil*. Although Hamilcar is only mentioned in passing in the three "Observations" – the 2nd, 3rd and 4th in chapter 14 – devoted to the *coup d'oeil*, they are all inspired by his campaigns in Sicily and the Mercenaries' War. In order to fully understand Folard's conception of *coup d'oeil*, it is important to add to these three observations – which are explicitly dedicated to the concept – the 6th observation, which provides a portrait of Hamilcar, and, in the following volume of commentaries, the various observations relating to the skills deployed by the Punic general in the Mercenaries' War.

With the publication of his magnum opus, Folard changed his perspective on the *coup d'oeil*. From now on, he believed that everyone had it – the *coup d'oeil* was no longer a gift from God or nature – and that everyone could work to refine it. Hunting, travelling, studying maps,

⁴⁶ *Histoire de Polybe [...] avec un commentaire ou un corps de science militaire*, I, trans. Vincent Thuillier (Paris: Pierre Gandoin 1727), 248. Plb. 1.62.

foraging, “meditating” on the notes made while travelling through the terrain, and working out a plan of attack or defence by “imagination” according to the characteristics of the terrain, are all ways of training and perfecting it. This list can be understood in light of the author’s explicit definition: “The military *coup d’oeil* is nothing other than the art of knowing the nature and different sites of the country in which one is at war or wants to prosecute a war, the advantages and disadvantages of the camps and posts one wants to occupy, as well as those that could be favourable or unfavourable to the enemy”.⁴⁷

Compared to Folard’s early ideas, this definition is clearly restrictive, since it no longer requires presence of mind or speed in the *coup d’oeil* itself and in the execution of the action. As Daston has rightly pointed out, Folard’s *coup d’oeil* is not “instantaneous, holistic, structural or indubitable” and therefore cannot be a matter of intuition.⁴⁸ Thus, the relationship with *ankhinoia* and *eustokhia*, as understood by the Greeks, is no longer clear and Wheller’s hypothesis is invalidated. The perspective is different, however, if we take into account other comments made by the author. Folard is a prolix writer, with sometimes disordered arguments, a military writer who must be considered in all the complexity of his subject. Thus, Wheller’s hypothesis becomes relevant again when the portrait of Hamilcar and the comments on the Mercenaries’ War are included in the analysis.

For Folard, Hamilcar is one of the greatest generals of antiquity, and his campaigns deserve “all the attention of those in the business”. His conduct in the Mercenaries’ War, and particularly in the manoeuvres that led to his victory at the Battle of the Saw (238 BC) – “Straits of the Axe” for Folard – bear witness to this. The “depth and wisdom” of the measures taken in these circumstances are based on three qualities of the Punic general: skill, *coup d’oeil* and experience.⁴⁹ Hamilcar’s “keen” and “fine” *coup d’oeil* enabled him to grasp the “precious moments” and “favourable moments” that “move with surprising speed” in war. To illustrate the need for the general’s quick *coup d’oeil*, Folard uses an analogy with the *jeu de paume*: the general must seize the opportunity that occurs between the moment when the ball hits the ground and the moment when it moves back up in the air (or *entre le bond et la volée*).⁵⁰ By the early 18th century, the French expression had become metaphorical, meaning to “seize an opportunity” which, without a *coup d’oeil*, one could “easily miss”.⁵¹ Folard emphasises this

⁴⁷ *Histoire de Polybe*, I, 258.

⁴⁸ Daston, “The coup d’œil”, 314.

⁴⁹ *Histoire de Polybe*, II, 313 et 378.

⁵⁰ *Histoire de Polybe*, I, 233.

⁵¹ *Nouveau dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, II (Paris: Jean-Baptiste Coignard 1718), 804.

quality in Hamilcar, whom he presents as the “master of events” or the “master of opportunities”, not only because of his ability to seize them, but also because of his ability to “create” them. The author’s precise formulation is that the Punic general sought to “create opportunities rather than wait for them to happen”.⁵²

In fact, in Folard’s commentaries, two different conceptions of *coup d’oeil* coexist. One is the previous definition of *coup d’oeil* which corresponds to a passive knowledge of the place and the terrain; Hamilcar certainly possessed it, since “the ordinary exercise of his mind was to know the place well”. The other, more interesting definition, is that of a “sharp and incisive” *coup d’oeil* which, based on this knowledge of the terrain, enables one to seize or create favourable opportunities and actively exploit them. Hamilcar also has this second *coup d’oeil*. It is this, combined with his “astonishing keenness to penetrate the plans of others”, that forms the basis of his skill and “genius” in the conduct of the “great and small” parts of the war.⁵³

In the early 18th century, the term “genius” referred to a natural inclination or disposition, and thus did not merely denote the superior talent of an individual. Thus, Hamilcar “extends his views beyond the study of the terrain”; he “studies the genius and character of the enemy generals” in order to discern their plans and apply his own *superior* genius.⁵⁴ Folard does not explicitly state that this second form of knowledge – that of the psychology of the enemy – is also a dimension of *coup d’oeil*, but the choice of words places the subject in the same perspective. To “extend one’s vision” beyond the knowledge of the terrain – that is, the *coup d’oeil* in its restricted definition – is a formulation that once again mobilises the lexicon of vision, but better signifies the cognitive nature of the act. The word “vision” should be understood here as “the act by which the mind knows”,⁵⁵ in this case the general’s ability to penetrate the enemy’s plans.

Folard’s legacy

As early as 1732, the *coup d’oeil militaire* was included in the *Richelet* dictionary. The entry for the expression includes Folard’s restrictive definition and the specification that it is a “term of war”.⁵⁶ The first edition of Aubert de La Chesnaye Des Bois’s *Dictionnaire militaire*,

⁵² *Histoire de Polybe*, II, 313, 315 and 380.

⁵³ *Histoire de Polybe*, I, 233.

⁵⁴ *Histoire de Polybe*, II, 387.

⁵⁵ *Nouveau dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, II, 777.

⁵⁶ *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, II (Amsterdam: aux dépens de la compagnie 1732), 266.

published in 1744, contains no such entry, and the term does not appear until the 1751 edition. There, too, *coup d'oeil* is defined as “the art of knowing the nature and the different situations of the country”, the author paraphrasing Folard at length, without apparently understanding the second meaning of the term. As for the encyclopaedia entry entitled *La Science des personnes de cour, d'épée et de robe*, it gives the same abbreviated definition without mentioning Folard.⁵⁷

However, the presence of a word in a dictionary does not necessarily mean that its definition is consensually accepted among professionals and therefore part of a fully shared terminology. In this case, 18th-century military writers can be divided into five categories.

The first is made up of authors who do not use the term *coup d'oeil*: Grandmaison in *La petite guerre* (1756), De La Croix in his *Traité de la petite guerre* (1752) or Savornin in his *Sentimens d'un homme de guerre* (1732). The latter, which is entirely devoted to a criticism of Folard's theses, concentrates on the orders of battle without in any way dwelling on the idea of *coup d'oeil*.

A second category comprises authors who use the term in one of its common meanings, without any obvious connection with Folard's ideas. This is the case of Bardet de Villeneuve in his *Cours de la science militaire* (1740), Giuseppe Nicolis di Robilant in *La Science de la guerre* (1744), Nicolas de Héricourt in the 5th volume of the posthumous edition of his *Elemens de l'art militaire* (1744), Claude Bottée in his *Etudes militaires* (1750), Puysegur in his *Art de la guerre par principes et par règles* (1748), Brézé in his *Réflexions sur les préjugés militaires* (1779) or Mesnil-Durand in his various publications. The case of the latter is the most interesting in that he does not ignore the specific meaning of the military *coup d'oeil*. In his *Collection de diverses pièces et mémoires*, the expression occurs several times in its terminological sense, but always in quotations from texts (an anonymous article in the *Journal encyclopédique*, Guibert's *Essai général de tactique*, the Ordonnance royale du 1er juin 1776) that contradicted his own theses. Mesnil-Durand thus opposes the demonstrative rigour of his system (the *ordre profond*) to phrases that say, “nothing precise”, i.e., the subjectivism of the terms “*coup d'oeil*”, “genius”, “talent” or “presence of mind” of the general, all of which are used in the quotations in question.⁵⁸

A third category consists of authors who use the term *coup d'oeil* in the first sense given by Folard. Contrary to what the inclusion of this definition in linguistic and specialist dictionaries

⁵⁷ *La Science des personnes de cour, d'épée et de robe*, VII (Amsterdam: Chatelain et fils 1752), 193.

⁵⁸ *Collection de diverses pièces et mémoires, nécessaires pour instruire la grande affaire de tactique*, I-II (Amsterdam: s.n, 1780), IX, 274 and 150.

might suggest, these authors are few in numbers: Spar in his *Instructions militaires* (1753), Traverse in the second volume of his *Etude militaire* (1757), the anonymous author of *Lettres militaires* (1779), and Pirscher in his *Coup d'oeil militaire* (1775). The latter work offers a long development of Folard's restrictive definition by proposing a practical method for assessing the different types of terrain and for drawing up a plan.

A fourth category comprises authors who accepted Folard's idea, but in its broadest sense and without discussing it: Quincy in the second volume of *L'Art de la guerre ou maximes et instructions sur l'art militaire* (1728), Le Blond in his *Elemens de tactique* (1758), Maubert in his *Mémoires militaires sur les Anciens* (1762), Bosroger in his *Principes élémentaires de la tactique* (1768), Sinclaire in his *Institutions militaires* (1773), Saxe in his *Réveries* (1757), Pictet in his *Essai sur la tactique de l'infanterie* (1761), Maizeroy in his *Cours de tactique théorique, pratique et historique* (1766), Warnery in his *Remarques sur le militaire des Turcs et des Russes* (1771), his *Anecdotes et pensées historiques et militaires* (1781) and his *Mélange de remarques* (1782), or Guibert in his *Essai général de tactique* (1772). It is the associations of *coup d'oeil* with other concepts that help us to understand the general but undefined meaning that the leading military writers of the 18th century gave to the *coup d'oeil*. Saxe associates the *coup d'oeil* with "boldness of spirit".⁵⁹ For Pictet, *coup d'oeil* and "swiftness of judgement" are likely to take the place of rules and principles when one must make the appropriate decision according to the circumstances.⁶⁰ Maizeroy associates Caius Claudius Nero's *coup d'oeil* with his "presence of mind", which contributes to the quality of the Roman consul's "judgement" and "skill".⁶¹ According to Warnery, this association between *coup d'oeil* and "presence of mind" is systematic.⁶² As for Guibert, he associates *coup d'oeil* with the officer's "intelligence" and "genius". In all cases, it is clearly a cognitive disposition that is not limited to knowledge of the terrain.⁶³

Finally, a fifth category consists of four military writers who critically engage with the concept.

⁵⁹ Maurice de Saxe, *Mes rêveries*, I (Amsterdam: Arkstée et Merkus 1757), 117.

⁶⁰ Gabriel Pictet, *Essai sur la tactique de l'infanterie*, I (Amsterdam: Marc-Michel Rey 1761), 317.

⁶¹ Joly de Maizeroy, *Cours de tactique théorique, pratique et historique*, I (Paris: Claude-Antoine Jombert 1766), 408.

⁶² Charles de Warnery, *Remarques sur le militaire des Turcs et des Russes* (Breslau: Theophile Korn 1771), 199. *Anecdotes et pensées historiques et militaires* (Halle: Jean-Jacques Court 1781), 27 and 88. *Mélange de remarques, surtout sur César, et autres auteurs militaires anciens et modernes* (Varsovie: s.n. 1782), 139, 145 and 268.

⁶³ Jacques Antoine Hippolyte de Guibert, *Essai général de tactique*, I (Londres: Les libraires associés 1772), 92 and 308.

Without explicitly referring to Folard, Turpin de Crissé, in his *Essai sur l'art de la guerre* (1754), distinguishes between a *coup d'oeil* “dependent” on the enemy and a *coup d'oeil* that is “independent” of the enemy. The first consists, in the presence of the enemy, of plotting manoeuvres and attacks according to the enemy’s positions, in order to render them “defective”; the other consists, in the absence of the enemy, of choosing wise positions that will provide advantages in the encounter with the enemy. In both cases, *coup d'oeil* is “that piercing genius from which nothing escapes; it sees in the hearts even the slightest impressions that may agitate them”. To this first, somewhat obscure, definition is added the regular association of the term with the ideas of speed, accuracy and penetration of judgement, a *coup d'oeil* having to be “prompt”, “fair” and “penetrating”.⁶⁴

The more in-depth analysis proposed by the Marquis de Silva on the subject in his *Pensées sur la tactique* of 1768 had a definite influence on military writers of the following decades. Silva begins by insisting that most writers confuse *coup d'oeil* with knowledge of the terrain. Although he explains that it is easier to “feel” what *coup d'oeil* is than to define it, he outlines the following definition: “the art of drawing, from the first inspection of the terrain, the best possible advantage from all the situations, from all the local circumstances, for the dispositions and manoeuvres to be carried out in the field”. As with Turpin de Crissé, the term is associated with the ideas of speed, accuracy and penetration of judgement, but Silva is more precise about the impact of this cognitive ability on the action of the general: the one who possesses a *coup d'oeil* is “able to take advantage of the slightest mistake made by the enemy and to seize the favourable and decisive moment in a battle”.⁶⁵

At first sight, Pierre de Bourcet seems to share the same perspective, and distinguishes between *coup d'oeil* thanks to which the general can decide on a position – that is, the choice of a battlefield or the establishment of an army camp for the offensive or the defensive – and the *coup d'oeil* “by which a general makes his troops move and manoeuvre on the day of battle”. In fact, unlike Turpin de Crissé and Silva, he is more interested in the former – which is purely “speculative” – than in the latter, which requires “only good judgement”. Is this approach to *coup d'oeil* by Bourcet in his 1775 manuscript, *Principes de la guerre de montagnes*, compatible with Daston’s analysis of this author’s theses?

To understand the answer to this question, it is important to note that Daston did not base his analysis on the 1775 manuscript, but on another text attributed to Bourcet, in which the

⁶⁴ Lancelot Turpin de Crissé, *Essai sur l'art de la guerre*, I (Paris: Jombert 1754), 12-13, 91 and 93.

⁶⁵ Marquis de Silva, *Pensées sur la tactique et sur quelques autres parties de la guerre* (Paris: Jombert 1768), 269 and 275.

French military writer used the term *coup d'oeil* in a third sense, namely the *coup d'oeil* of the staff officer, who is responsible for recognising the terrain, understanding its advantages and disadvantages, and drawing up plans. This view, that of the topographer, is indeed “detailed and synoptic, analytical and synthetic”,⁶⁶ but it is not that of the general. In other words, Bourcet identifies three types of *coup d'oeil*. Two are the attributes of the general: the *coup d'oeil d'action*, to use Valeria Pansini’s well-judged expression, which consists, in the presence of the enemy, of manoeuvring troops;⁶⁷ and the *coup d'oeil de prévoyance* (foresight) – Bourcet’s expression – which consists, out of the presence of the enemy, of choosing a favourable terrain for battle or encampment. The third is not directly related to the art of command; it is the attribute of the staff officer and is a matter of “visual know-how” – as Pansini put it – on which another know-how is based, that of decision-making.

The fourth military author to have discussed the term is François Nockhern de Schorn (or Friedrich Nockhern von Schorn), who proposed to distinguish between the optical and the tactical *coup d'oeil militaire*. The former differs somewhat from Folard’s restrictive definition in that it involves not only knowledge of the terrain but also the ability to estimate the number of enemy troops. Although it has analogies with the visual skills of the topographer – in that this optical military *coup d'oeil* must make it possible to judge distances, widths, heights and depths – the author sees it as an attribute of the commander-in-chief and as such participates in the cognitive process of which the tactical military *coup d'oeil* is the result. Nockhern de Schorn defines the latter as “the art of immediately grasping the advantages of the terrain in relation to the dispositions, the manoeuvres that one wishes to carry out, and of instantly deciphering the enemy’s objective”. It is this *coup d'oeil* in action that leads to the “sublime” of war manoeuvres; it is this that gives the “promptness”, the “rightness of mind” that is the prerogative of great captains.⁶⁸ Although it is not explicitly mentioned, Silva’s influence is evident; indeed, Nockhern de Schorn’s contribution in this area is mainly terminological as the tactical *coup d'oeil* is nothing other than the *coup d'oeil* in action.

It is therefore Folard’s broad definition of the term, which became established among military writers in the second half of the 18th century, and not the dictionary definition of *coup d'oeil militaire*. The use of the term is not limited to treatises on the art of war. It is also used

⁶⁶ Daston, “The coup d’œil”, 319.

⁶⁷ Valeria Pansini, “Pratique de la description militaire. L’exemple des topographes de l’armée française (1760-1820)”, in G. Blundo, J.-P. Olivier de Sardan (ed), *Pratiques de la description* (Paris: Éditions de l’École des hautes études en sciences sociales 2003), 125.

⁶⁸ François Nockhern de Schorn, *Idées raisonnées sur un système général et sur une méthode lumineuse pour étudier la science de la guerre avec ordre et discernement* (Nuremberg: George Pierre Monath 1783), 208-209.

in everyday military vocabulary, for example in the Royal Order of 1 June 1776 on infantry drills, which refers to “the leader’s *coup d’oeil* and presence of mind”, which enable him to grasp “the most suitable moment and means” for carrying out a movement.⁶⁹ However, this conception of *coup d’oeil* in action remains largely undefined and seems doubly intuitive: On the one hand, it denotes a cognitive ability based not on reasoning but on tacit knowledge. On the other hand, and as Silva puts it, it is “felt” rather than defined by authors who intuitively grasp the interest of the term in explaining the difference between the mediocre general and the brilliant one.

The Clausewitzian *coup d’oeil*

The concept was quickly adopted in the German-speaking world in three different forms. First, in the translation of *coup d’oeil* as *Augenmerk*, the term is understood in the narrow sense given to it by Folard.⁷⁰ Secondly, in Heinrich Dietrich von Bülow’s notion *Augenmaß*, which no longer only relates to tactics, but also to strategy. The third approach does not translate the expression into German but uses the French term.

Frederick II, an attentive reader of Folard, was probably responsible for the usage in German of the French term *coup d’oeil*. As early as 1746 or 1747, he devoted a section to the *coup d’oeil* in the manuscript – written in French – of his *Instruction pour les généraux*. This first manuscript was amended and edited two years later and re-titled *Principes généraux de la guerre*. On the eve of the Seven Years’ War, Frederick II had this second manuscript translated and published in German for the exclusive use of his generals.⁷¹ Chapter 6 of the German translation is entitled *Von dem Coup d’Œil*, which Frederick equated with the ability to judge “from the first moment” all the advantages to be gained from the field.⁷² The preference for the French expression is also evident in Georg Rudolf Fäsch’ and Gottlob Friedrich von Brück’ works. The former, a Swiss officer in the service of the Prince of Saxony, explains in a note to *Des größten Meisters in der Kriege-Kunst Anweisung um den Krieg mit Vortheil zu führen* (1762) that he could have translated *coup d’œil* as *Augenmerk*, but preferred to keep the French

⁶⁹ *Ordonnance du roi pour régler l’exercice de ses troupes d’infanterie, 1^{er} juin 1776* (Metz: Collignon 1776, 233).

⁷⁰ Johann Theodor Jablonski, *Allgemeines Lexicon der Künste und Wissenschaften*, I (Königsberg und Leipzig: Zeisens und Hartung 1767), 128.

⁷¹ *Œuvres militaires de Frédéric II*, I, Berlin: Rodolphe Decker 1856), XI-XIV.

⁷² *Die General-Principia vom Kriege: appliciret auf die Tactique und auf die Disciplin, derer Preußischen Truppen* (s.l.: s.n. 1753), 39.

term so as not to render the concept unintelligible (*unverständlich*) to his readers.⁷³ A few years later, Gottlob Friedrich von Brück, a captain and teacher at the military school of the Prince of Saxony, published a *Coup d'œil militaire oder das Augenmerk im Kriege*, in which he systematically favoured the first expression of the title over the second.⁷⁴

Bülow, for his part, uses a synonym for *Augenmerk*, namely *Augenmaß*, which is also directly linked to Folard's theses. It occurs in another version of Frederick II's instructions to his generals, the authenticity of which is doubtful.⁷⁵ In this *Geheime Anweisung*, published in 1779, the chapter on *coup d'oeil* no longer uses the French term in its title, but the phrase *Vom militärischen Augenmaß*, and treats the subject differently from the original version distributed by the King of Prussia to his generals in 1753.⁷⁶ Bülow preferred the concept of *militärisches Augenmaß* over that of *militärisches Blick* [look] used in Scharnhorst's 1794 version of the text, but he did not follow Frederic II' ideas and formed his own.⁷⁷ According to his *Geist des neuern Kriegssystem*, published in 1799, the *militärisches Augenmaß* consists in the art of distinguishing two points (*Punkte*): the position key (*Schlüssel zur Position*) and the strategic key (*strategischen Schlüssel*).⁷⁸ The first of these points corresponds to the chosen position from which to fight the enemy; the second refers to the main object (*Hauptobjekt*) of the war, i.e., the elements of the enemy's military power (*Elemente der kriegerischen Macht*). With Bülow, the focus shifted from tactics to strategy, albeit with some terminological hesitation. In his *Neue Taktik der Neuern wie sie seyn sollte* (1805), he argued that in modern warfare the *Augenmaß* could not be purely tactical but had to be strategic-tactical (*strategisch-taktisch*).⁷⁹ In his *Lehrsätze des neuern Krieges*, published the same year, he used the term military-strategic (*kriegerisch-strategische*) *Augenmaß* to characterise one of the qualities of a talented general.⁸⁰

⁷³ Rudolf Fäsch, *Des größten Meisters in der Kriege-Kunst Anweisung um den Krieg mit Vortheil zu führen* (Leipzig: s.n. 1762), 40.

⁷⁴ Gottlob Friedrich von Brück, *Coup d'œil militaire oder das Augenmerk im Kriege nebst denen vorhergehenden darzu nöthigen Wissenschaften* (Dresden und Leipzig: J. N. Gerlach 1777).

⁷⁵ *Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, I (Berlin: Decker 1846), XXX.

⁷⁶ *Geheime Instruction Sr. Majestät des Königs in Preußen an die Officiere seiner Armee* (Prag: Schönfeld 1779), 159.

⁷⁷ The reason why the text edited by Scharnhorst does not contain the same chapter title as the *Geheime Anweisung* is probably that he did not base it on the German edition of 1779, but on a French translation, which in turn was translated back into German. *Œuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, XXX, (Berlin: Decker 1856), I.

⁷⁸ Heinrich von Bülow, *Geist des neuern Kriegssystem* (Hamburg: Hoffman 1799), 54.

⁷⁹ Heinrich von Bülow, *Neue Taktik der Neuern wie sie seyn sollte*, I (Leipzig: Barth, 1805), 216.

⁸⁰ Heinrich von Bülow, *Lehrsätze des neuern Krieges* (Berlin: Frölich 1805), 191.

Bülow did not really succeed in imposing his approach. Georg Wilhelm von Valentini retained the term *Augenmaß*, but used it in the narrow sense of knowledge of the terrain.⁸¹ As for Clausewitz, he accepted – without admitting it – some of Bülow's ideas, but categorically rejected the term *Augenmaß*. Valentini's approach is now of historical interest only, whereas Clausewitz's had a lasting influence.

For Clausewitz, the term *Augenmaß* is too narrow in meaning in that it is limited to the visual. The author of *Vom Kriege* found the term *coup d'oeil* to be the right alternative to *Augenmaß*, as he wanted to strip (*entkleiden*) the concept of its visual connotations. The famous passage in which Clausewitz states that *coup d'oeil* refers to the mind's eye (*geistige Auge*), rather than to the bodily organ, is precisely part of this terminological substitution.⁸² If this is an indirect criticism of Bülow – whom Clausewitz does not name – it is an unfair one. Indeed, Bülow's military-strategic *Augenmaß* was clearly not limited to the “oeil” understood as an organ. Furthermore, Bülow, before Clausewitz, shifted *coup d'oeil* from the sphere of tactics to that of strategy, albeit using a different terminology.

Clausewitz's choice of terminology is not really surprising, since the French term had been somewhat sanctified by Frederick II's use of it. What is surprising is that the term *coup d'oeil* only occurs in *Vom Kriege* and not in any of the author's earlier strategic writings. It should also be noted that the three occurrences of the term are all in chapter 3 of Book 1 – devoted to “the genius for war”, which is obviously no coincidence – that is to say, in a part of the work written late, i.e., probably after 1827. The idea Clausewitz was attempting to develop was already present in his early writings, although he did not initially use the term *coup d'oeil*. In his *Strategy of 1804*, the author lists several attributes of the mind in his discussion on the qualities of the commander-in-chief. In addition to ease of understanding (*leichte Fassungskraft*), clarity of representation (*Deutlichkeit in seinen Vorstellungen*) and sound judgement (*richtige Urteilskraft*), the general's mind must also have the ability to “quickly see” or assess a situation. (*schnellen Überblick*).⁸³ *Überblick* could certainly be understood, at least in French, as *coup d'oeil*, but the word here does not have the meaning that Clausewitz gave

⁸¹ Georg Wilhelm von Valentini, *Die Lehre vom Krieg*, I (Berlin: Boicke 1820), 234.

⁸² Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 30. <https://www.clausewitz-gesellschaft.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/VomKriege-a4.pdf>. The substitution is also made explicitly in a passage from his history of the 1799 campaign, written at the turn of the 1820s and 1830s. Quoting a letter from Suvorov in which the latter uses the term *Augenmaß*, Clausewitz adds in brackets “namely [*nämlich*] *coup d'oeil*”. *Die Feldzüge von 1799 in Italien und der Schweiz*, I (Berlin: Dümmler 1833), 227.

⁸³ Carl von Clausewitz, *Strategie aus dem Jahr 1804 mit Zusätzen von 1808 und 1809* (Hamburg: Hanseat Verl.-Anst. 1937), 41.

later to the term in *Vom Kriege*; in *Strategy*, *coup d'oeil* is the ability to have an overall view, to grasp with the eyes, and not the *coup d'oeil* in action.

In *Vom Kriege*, the definition of the concept is rather convoluted: an inner light (*inneren Licht*) that leads to truth (*Wahrheit*) in the darkness (*Dunkelheit*) of the mind or understanding (*Verstand*).⁸⁴ In contrast to the enumerative approach of 1804, Clausewitz here seeks to specify the conditions under which the mental and moral manifestations (*Äußerungen der Geistes- und Seelenkräfte*) involved in war are exercised. Since war is the domain of chance (*Zufall*) and uncertainty (*Ungewißheit*), the general must demonstrate a superior ability to overcome the unexpected, which Clausewitz calls presence of mind (*Geistesgegenwart*).⁸⁵ This presence of mind is itself the product of insight and resolution (*Entschlossenheit*) in a process that Raymond Aron outlined in his analysis of Book 1, chapter 3, but without paying sufficient attention to the notion of *coup d'oeil*.

As Aron explains, Clausewitz's argument begins with the courage (*Mut*) necessary to assume one's responsibilities and ends with the determination (*Entschlossenheit*) that the general must show in a context of uncertainty.⁸⁶ Between courage and determination, however, there is an intermediate term, which is precisely *coup d'oeil*. This concept is much more closely related – the term comes from Clausewitz (*verwandten*) – to the concepts of resolution and presence of mind than is suggested by Aron, who also fails to highlight the idea of promptness associated with *coup d'oeil*. The author of *Vom Kriege* is, however, very clear on this point: *Coup d'oeil* is nothing more (*nichts als*) than the instantaneous perception of a truth (*schnelles Treffen einer Wahrheit*) that remains invisible (*gar nicht sichtbar*) to the ordinary mind (*gewöhnlicher Blick des Geistes*), or which only becomes visible after long observation and mature reflection (*nach langem Betrachten und Überlegen*). It is therefore not only a question of understanding and penetrating judgement, but also of the speed of the process. While the ordinary mind has the greatest difficulty in dealing with the many factors it has to assess in the fog of war – the realm of uncertainty – the eye of the genius (*Blick des Genies*) discerns the significant factors that guide action. Clausewitz refers to a particular turn of mind or spirit (*einer eigentümlichen Richtung des Verstandes*) when he discusses the whole process in which the *coup d'oeil* is made.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 30.

⁸⁵ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 32.

⁸⁶ Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz, Philosopher of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster 1986), 136.

⁸⁷ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 31.

How are we to understand this second definitional sketch, which conceives of *coup d'oeil* in terms of a capacity to rapidly perceive the truth? Clausewitz does not use the notion of intuitive knowledge (*anschauliche Erkenntnis*), which was widely developed at the time by Schopenhauer, but he seems to come close to it when he speaks of the presentiment (*Ahnen*) and intuition (*Herausfühlen*) of the truth according to which one must act (*der Wahrheit, nach welcher gehandelt werden muß*).⁸⁸ The concept of truth must not be misinterpreted. It has the same meaning as in the first sketch of the definition of *coup d'oeil*, or in the passage where the author mentions the gaze of a mind that senses the truth (*mit dem Blick eines die Wahrheit überall ahnenden Geistes träfe*): the truth here is the right decision that the genius discerns in the fog of war. As Lukas Milevski has pointed out, the Clausewitzian *coup d'oeil* refers not only to understanding a situation through an “act of intuitive imagination”, but also to identifying the solution.⁸⁹ To be precise, one could say that *coup d'oeil* implies finding the solution which terminologically corresponds to the truth.

The explanation of the origin of this capacity to anticipate is not clear in the chapter on the genius for war. It is a matter of sensitivity or temperament (*Gemüt*) and understanding or intellect (*Verstand*), but it is unclear how the combination (*Legierung*) between these two components takes place.⁹⁰

The most explicit answer is not to be found in the chapter on genius, but in the chapter on friction. After stating that the understanding (*Kenntnis*) of friction is an essential part of the experience of war (*Kriegserfahrung*), Clausewitz specifies that it is this experience that offers the “practice of judgement” (*Übung des Urteils*) through which a general will form the ideas that will guide his action. At the end of the chapter, he uses the famous expression *Takt* [tact] *seines Urteils* [judgement], which is difficult to interpret and therefore to translate.⁹¹

The importance of this concept has been amply commented upon: it is the essence of what Clausewitz calls genius.⁹² The origins of his ideas regarding “tact of judgement” have been the object of debate and controversy among historians. Similarities with the Kantian notion of *logischer Takt* are undeniable, but it is an exaggeration to assume, as Hartmut Böhme does, that

⁸⁸ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 37.

⁸⁹ Lukas Milevski, “The idea of genius in Clausewitz and Sun Tzu”, *Comparative Strategy*, 38, 2019, 145.

⁹⁰ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 41.

⁹¹ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 47.

⁹² Dirk Freudenberg, “Kunst oder Wissenschaft – Anmerkungen zu Carl von Clausewitz’s Verhältnis zur (Militär-)Wissenschaft”, in Uwe Hartmann, Claus von Rosen (ed.), *Jahrbuch Innere Führung 2013: Wissenschaften und ihre Relevanz für die Bundeswehr als Armee im Einsatz* (Berlin: Carola Hartmann Miles Verlag 2013), 129.

there is a “complete correspondence” between the two approaches.⁹³ As Ernest Vollrath has shown, it is not necessary to refer to Johann Gottfried Kiesewetter – a student of Kant and teacher at the military academy attended by Clausewitz at the beginning of the 19th century – to explain the development of the concept of the *Takt des Urteils*.⁹⁴ Its foundations lay in the intellectual debate of the time, and the scholarly circles that Clausewitz frequented in Berlin in the 1810s and 1820s were good incubators of ideas. In this respect, Alexander von Humboldt’s casual linking of the concepts of experience, judgement and tact is clearly close to the ideas developed by Clausewitz a few years later. In his travelogues, the naturalist refers to the long experience (*lange Erfahrung*) of the Mexican Indians in the cultivation of agave, which enabled them to acquire a sound judgement (*sicheres Urteil*), or rather, as Humboldt put it, *einen richtigen* [correct] *Takt*.⁹⁵ More important than a decisive intellectual influence in the emergence of the concept of *Takt des Urteils* is the polysemy of the word *Takt*, which in German today, or in Clausewitz’s time, is more important than the English and French terms “tact”.

Takt can mean the act of touching (*Berührung*), a quick feeling (*schnelles Gefühl*), a fine sense (*feines Gefühl*), the quality of being sensitive (*Feingefühl*), a measure of time (*Tonmaß*), a sound step (*Tonschritt*) or a certain duration of the sound (*bestimmte Dauer des Tones*).⁹⁶ However, Clausewitz does not always use the word in the same sense, as the end of the chapter on friction shows. First of all, the author opposes the theory to *Takt*, stating that the latter is identified with the practice of judgement (*Übung des Urteils*). The meaning of the word seems to connote a finesse of judgement sharpened by experience, but one of the translators of *Vom Kriege* also discerns a tactile connotation, i.e., the ability to *touch* the object of reflection.⁹⁷ The immediately following analogy, which introduces the expression *Takt seines Urteils*, brings in another meaning of the word, which is the quality of being sensitive: the tact of the gentleman (*Weltmann*) who always speaks, acts and moves appropriately.⁹⁸ In other occurrences of the term – there are nine in *Vom Kriege* – *Takt des Urteils* refers more to the

⁹³ Hartmut Böhme, “Krieg und Zufall. Die Transformation der Kriegskunst bei Carl von Clausewitz”, in Marco Formisano, Hartmut Böhme (ed.), *War in Words: Transformations of War from Antiquity to Clausewitz* (Berlin: De Gruyter 2011), 411.

⁹⁴ Ernst Vollrath, ““Neue Wege der Klugheit”: Zum methodischen Prinzip der Theorie des Handelns bei Clausewitz”, *Zeitschrift für Politik*, 31, 1984, 63.

⁹⁵ Alexander von Humboldt, *Versuch über den politischen Zustand des Königreichs Neu-Spanien*, III (Tübingen: Cotta 1812), 97.

⁹⁶ Johann Daniel Rumpf, *Vollständiges Wörterbuch zur Verdeutschung der in unsere Schrift- und Umgangssprache eingeschlichenen, fremden Ausdrücke; nebst Erklärung der wichtigsten sinnverwandten Wörter* (Berlin: Hayn 1824), 288.

⁹⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, *De la guerre*, trans. Laurent Murawiec (Paris: Perrin 1999), 86.

⁹⁸ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 47.

speed of judgement and thus to the role of *coup d'oeil*. This is the case in the famous passage in the last part of the book, devoted to the plan of war, where Clausewitz contrasts the intuition of judgement with logical reasoning in order to define war as an art (*Kunst*) and a skill (*Fertigkeit*).⁹⁹ In short, the invariable translation of *Takt des Urteils* as “tact of judgment” does not always convey the subtlety in the original meaning, including the rhythmic connotation of the term in German.

For both Clausewitz and Bülow, the concept of *coup d'oeil* was emancipated from its initial visual and topographical anchorage. The author of *Vom Kriege* obviously does not ignore the importance of terrain and the general's appreciation of it, but he places it in a different conceptual category, which he simply calls sense of locality (*Ortssinn*). In this respect, Daston's comparison between Clausewitz and Pierre Alexandre Joseph Allent – a high-ranking French military engineer – is adventurous and has its limitations, since they do not use the term *coup d'oeil* in the same sense. The Prussian author is concerned with warfare in general, with the genius for war; and he is interested in the intuitive judgement that guides the general's decisions. The French writer, on the other hand, is concerned with military reconnaissance, the tasks entrusted to staff officers, and he is interested in the appreciation of the shape of the terrain, the disposition of the troops and their movements. However, Daston is right to point out that Allent, at least at his own scale, celebrated the “unconscious tact of the body at the expense of the conscious exactitude of the mind”, and that such an intuitive approach was gradually seen as a source of error in the course of the 19th century.¹⁰⁰

The problem seems all the more relevant to Clausewitz's approach because he operates a double change of perspective. The first change has already been mentioned: the author of *Vom Kriege* does not speak of the physical eye, but of the eye of the mind. The second change is a change of scale: his *coup d'oeil* in action has shifted from the realm of tactics or reconnaissance to that of strategy. For Clausewitz, if the idea and the thing (*der Ausdruck wie die Sache*) cannot be absent from strategic thinking, it is because of the main characteristic of *coup d'oeil*: its speed when quick decisions are required (*schnelle Entscheidungen erforderlich sind*). These decisions are those of the general, not those of an executor. The intuition on which the general must base his decisions is not an ordinary intuition; it replaces the reasoning of the ordinary mind, which operates through long observation and reflection (*nach langem Betrachten und Überlegen*). In other words, the source of potential error does not actually lie in how knowledge

⁹⁹ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 450.

¹⁰⁰ Daston, “The coup d'œil”, 320.

is formed (intuition), but in the general's inability to possess a certain form of intuition, i.e., the genius for war (*Der kriegerische Genius*).¹⁰¹

Without delving into a question that will be addressed in a future essay on the relationship between *coup d'oeil* of action and strategic intuition, it is important to clear up an ambiguity in Duggan's analysis. Duggan associates the three notions of resolution, presence of mind and experience with the Clausewitzian *coup d'oeil*. The first two, as we have seen, are indeed closely associated with *coup d'oeil*; the problem lies in his approach to the notion of experience. According to Duggan, this experience is not only the personal experience of the general, but also historical experience ("examples from history").¹⁰² However, there is a confusion here between the question dealt with in the chapter on the genius for war – in a section of the book dealing with the nature of war – and the question dealt with in the chapter on "examples", which is in a part of the book that focuses on the theory of war. One should not confuse the spirit of resolution (*Entschlossenheit*) at the heart of action with the theory of war (*die Theorie der Kriegskunst*). The experience that nourishes the spirit of resolution is a concrete experience of war (*Kriegserfahrung*), which fosters the general's "practice" of judgement and, in turn, his know-how (*Fertigkeit*).

In short, the third concept that must be considered to understand the Clausewitzian conception of *coup d'oeil* is that of the genius for war. The experience of war is certainly at the root of the know-how of the general, whether good or mediocre; but what distinguishes the ordinary general from the great warrior is what might be called a particular cognitive configuration of that experience. This is the "inner light" illuminating the genius for war.

Genius is one of the most difficult concepts to grasp when analysing Clausewitz. The controversy over the relationship between genius – the person – and rules illustrates this and in turn contributes to the confusion over the meaning of the concept of genius. Without going into the details of the controversy between Clifford Rogers and Jon Sumida, let us set out some useful guidelines to avoid misunderstanding the meaning and scope of the concept.¹⁰³

First, the term "genius" in Clausewitz has several meanings. In some cases, it refers to a person of superior mental (*Seelenkräfte*) ability. In *Vom Kriege*, the term seldom has this denotation; it occurs once in a negative formulation, meaning that Charles XII and Henry IV are not considered warrior geniuses; another is in the passage where Clausewitz states that it is

¹⁰¹ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 31.

¹⁰² Duggan, *Coup d'œil*, 3.

¹⁰³ Clifford J. Rogers, "Clausewitz, genius, and the rules", *The Journal of Military History*, 66, 2002, 1167-1176.

rare to find a warrior genius (*kriegerisches Genie*) among primitive peoples.¹⁰⁴ Sometimes the term is used to describe a specific mental capacity found at all levels of the military hierarchy, from “top to bottom”.¹⁰⁵ The use of the term in this sense is as marginal as the previous one. As for the dominant meaning of the term, it refers to a concept – which Milevski rightly sees as holistic – that characterises the specific mental dispositions of the outstanding commander-in-chief that enable him to find his way in the fog of war. The question of the relationship between genius and rules – and, more fundamentally, the theory of war – concerns this holistic concept, and not a genius understood as a person endowed with a superior intellectual capacity.

Secondly, the key to understanding Clausewitz’s approach to the concept of genius lies, as Aron has suggested, in the manuscript on Art Theory, probably written in the early 1820s.¹⁰⁶ Concerning the relationship between the laws of an art theory (*Gesetzen einer Kunsttheorie*) and the creative power of the artist – or productive force (*hervorbringende Kraft*) – Clausewitz makes clear that this power is completely independent of the theory (*diese Kraft ist von der Theorie ganz unabhängig*) and that it resides in talent, which is characterised by the term genius, when it has reached an eminent height (*eine vorzügliche Höhe*). To be more precise, theory can give direction (*Richtung*) to the creative power; but more often than not, talent follows its path without a guide (*geht seinen Weg meistens ohne Führer*), and the artist’s activity will very seldom be guided by a rule that is clearly before his eyes (*ihm deutlich vor Augen stehende Regel geleitet werden*).¹⁰⁷ The difference between the fine arts and the art of war lies not in the relationship between theory and creative power, but in the environment in which the creative power of the commander-in-chief is deployed, and in the fact that he is not manipulating an inert matter, but confronting another will.¹⁰⁸

Thirdly, Clausewitz uses the concepts of laws (*Gesetzen*), rules (*Regeln*), principles (*Grundsätze*), doctrines (*Lehren*), procedures (*Verfahren*) and methodism (*Methodismus*) – to be understood as schemes or modes of operation – in very different argumentative contexts. Any interrogation of the relationship between the concept of genius and any of these terms must take into account this argumentative context, and one should not over-simplify the question by

¹⁰⁴ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 29 and 40.

¹⁰⁵ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 40.

¹⁰⁶ Aron, *Clausewitz*, 180-181.

¹⁰⁷ Carl von Clausewitz, *Kleine Schriften* (Hamburg: Tredition 2012), 130.

¹⁰⁸ Aron, *Clausewitz*, 181. Milevski’s claim that the stroke – and thus the genius of which the stroke is an attribute – is “one-sided” is difficult to grasp. Clearly, genius belongs to one of the opposing parties, but it cannot be considered to “stand apart from and uninfluenced by any adversarial interaction”, since it unfolds within the framework of the reciprocal action that is the condition of its manifestation. Milevski, “The idea of genius”, 145.

ignoring the nuances in the other German concepts. In *Vom Kriege*, there are only three passages in which the concept of genius is explicitly confronted with one or other of these notions. The first two do not pose any difficulty of interpretation: Clausewitz denounces the poor rules (*Betteltum von Regeln*) of war theories that do not integrate the genius factor. Indeed, he argues that one cannot formulate a positive doctrine of war (*eine positive Lehre ist unmöglich*) that does not integrate the genius factor, as it would then be in contradiction with reality.¹⁰⁹ In both cases, we are dealing with rules and doctrines that are not those of Clausewitz's theory. The third passage deals with audacity (*Kühnheit*) and argues that this quality strongly supports the "higher calculation" – carried out in a flash and half unconsciously – performed through genius and tact of judgement (*höheren Kalküls, den das Genie, der Takt des Urteils in Blitzesschnelle und nur halb bewußt durchlaufen hat*), without violating the laws of probability (*Wahrscheinlichkeitsgesetzen*).¹¹⁰

The concept of laws of probability occurs four times in *Vom Kriege* and only once in the chapter on genius, but the two concepts are closely related, even if the choice of words might suggest otherwise. The laws of probability make it possible to estimate (*geschätzt*) the multiple and indeterminate variables (*Größen*) that influence the course of war; faced with this complexity, the man of action (*Handelnder*) feels the truth of a glance (*Blick*) of the mind (*Geist*).¹¹¹ The "higher calculation" carried out in a flash by the tact of judgement is nothing other than the calculation of probability (*Wahrscheinlichkeitskalkül* and *Wahrscheinlichkeitsberechnung*) mentioned in some of the most famous passages of *Vom Kriege*. It is not a calculation in the mathematical sense, but a capacity of the mind to grasp the truth. Aron calls this capacity "a kind of intuition";¹¹² it is the cognitive capacity denoted by the concept of *coup d'oeil*.

The close connection between the concepts of *coup d'oeil*, genius and the calculation of probability implies that the genius – in this case the person who possesses the attribute of the same name – cannot actually violate the laws of probability, since he, by definition, masters them. Can he free himself from rules, principles, procedures or methodism? In fact, the question is wrongly put. The correct question is twofold: are these factors consciously at the root of the calculation of probability? Have they contributed to the formation of that exceptional ability that Clausewitz calls genius?

¹⁰⁹ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 58 and 61.

¹¹⁰ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 108.

¹¹¹ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 41.

¹¹² Aron, *Clausewitz*, 185.

As far as methodism is concerned, Clausewitz's answer seems categorical: method is part of tactics, not strategy. At the highest levels of the military hierarchy, its importance is even lost (*bis sie sich in den höchsten Stellen ganz verliert*).¹¹³ On closer inspection, however, the answer is more nuanced. In fact, generals resort to operational schemes either because they are trying to imitate a genius (Frederick II, Bonaparte) or because these schemes fit into the operational arrangements they want to achieve. Under these conditions, the influence of these patterns remains important at the highest level of the hierarchy as long as a true theory of war – that of Clausewitz – has not shaped the minds and judgements of generals. In other words, methodism shapes the judgement of generals without genius, who would benefit from a good theory of war that would open their mind. As for the exceptional men who possess that attribute of the mind, namely genius, they have necessarily been exposed to methodism, but they possess the ability to emancipate themselves from it to operate the higher calculation that enables them to navigate the fog of war. What is true of methodism is also true of pre-established procedures.

The question of rules and principles is presented in the same perspective: Clausewitz links them more to tactics than to strategy. The example of a rule given in *Vom Kriege* illustrates this: to attack the enemy with renewed energy when he withdraws his batteries from the battle, because this last action is an indication of the enemy's willingness to break off the engagement.¹¹⁴ Like principles, this rule must be present in the mind (*gegenwärtig*) of the man of action, and it may well have helped to shape his judgement. Can the exceptional general emancipate himself from it? Obviously, yes, since he has the option of letting the enemy retreat without intervening. Because real wars do not always aim to destroy the enemy, rules and principles are only *conditionally* valid.¹¹⁵ The problem is that Clifford Rogers, in his controversy with Jon Sumida, gives a different meaning to the term rule. The two examples of "rules" he uses actually correspond to the propositions (*Sätzen*) formulated by Clausewitz in his "Final Note".¹¹⁶

These propositions state rather obvious realities, things that are, all things considered, easy to understand (*ganz evident*), and form the core of Clausewitzian theory of the art of war.¹¹⁷ The function of this theory is to help acquire the vision of things (*Einsicht der Dinge*) – fused (*verschmolzen*) in thought (*Denken*) – which will make the march (*Gang*) of the man of action

¹¹³ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 73.

¹¹⁴ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 72.

¹¹⁵ Aron, *Clausewitz*, 221.

¹¹⁶ Rogers, "Clausewitz, genius, and the rules", 1173.

¹¹⁷ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, XIV.

easier and safer.¹¹⁸ Clausewitz does not use the terms *coup d'oeil* or intuition, but the idea is to compensate for the absence of this quality in generals who do not possess genius. Thus, the relationship between the concept of genius and theory in Clausewitz has little to do with the controversy about the relationship between the genius – the person – and the rules.

A final difficulty with the concept of genius is its relationship to the concept of tact of judgement. In an earlier passage of *Vom Kriege*, the two concepts are apparently regarded as equivalent (*higher kalküls, den das Genie, der Takt des Urteils in Blitzesschnelle und nur halb bewußt durchlaufen hat*). But the “Final Note” offers a substantially different approach, which is in fact more coherent: the tact of judgement is an ordinary intuition that most generals use and which enables them to hit the mark more or less accurately (*mehr oder weniger gut trifft*) depending on their degree of genius (*mehr oder weniger Genie in ihnen ist*). On the other hand, the great generals – and this is, according to Clausewitz, what makes them great – always hit the mark with their intuition (*immer das Rechte trafen*). In other words, genius does not, strictly speaking, lie in tact of judgement, but in one of its extraordinary manifestations, i.e., extraordinary intuition.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

The homology between the concepts of *ankhinoia* and *coup d'oeil* is sufficiently obvious to support Wheeler's hypothesis. Both terms denote the skill of the consummate general, refer to a cognitive ability – however undefined – and characterise the ability to seize an opportunity and exploit it. Folard was probably not inspired by the Greek term, but the questions raised by the mastery of the art of war were sufficiently similar from one era to another for this convergence to manifest itself in the thinking of military writers.

It is important to note, however, that this reflection was not developed with the same degree of conceptualisation. The Greek military treatises are not very conceptual, and it is necessary to turn to Aristotle to understand the real scope of the concept of *ankhinoia*, which is inseparable from that of *eustokhia*. It was not until Procopius, and thus the Byzantine period, that an explicit link was established between the general's wit and his ability to seize the moment. As for the explicit link between *ankhinoia* and *eustokhia*, it is not found in a Byzantine military treaty, but in the *Suda*.

¹¹⁸ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 68-69.

¹¹⁹ Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, XIII.

The more conceptual military thinking of the 18th and early 19th centuries is also more difficult to pin down when it comes to the military *coup d'oeil*. The term is indeed polysemous and can lead to confusion. Folard gives a very restrictive definition, while his analyses of Hamilcar's campaigns are much more subtle. The most perceptive military writers of the late 18th century adopted a broad definition of *coup d'oeil*. Nockhern von Schorn, following Silva, drew a fundamental distinction between the optical military *coup d'oeil* – the topographer's perspective – and the tactical military *coup d'oeil*, which can be characterised as the general's *coup d'oeil* in action. Bülow, and later Clausewitz, changed the scale of analysis by raising it to the strategic level. The *coup d'oeil* is then explicitly emancipated from its visual denotation. As the eye of the mind, it presides over the genius of the outstanding general who knows how to discern the right decision in the fog of war. It remains to be seen what the “inner light” touched upon by Clausewitz and the role of tacit knowledge in the “warrior genius” can correspond to on a cognitive level.

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