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## INTRODUCTION

I AM A TEACHER of Latin and Greek—mostly Greek, ancient Greek. I accordingly spend an important part of my working day thinking about how to read ancient texts and how to explain them. First, of course, there are the words. What do they mean? How do they change meaning in varying positions, constructions, and contexts? To take a modern example, when a given word is first in a sentence, might it mean something different from what it means when it is third or last in a sentence? In Modern Greek, a word for “how,” viz. πώς, when used by itself and in response to a question such as, “Are you hungry?” means “Yes.” It is a shorthand representation of a full answer, which would be, “How am I not hungry?” (In Classical Greek, this would be πῶς γὰρ οὐ; the explanatory particle γὰρ perhaps signaling a forward nod of the head.) If you do not know the shorthand, you might easily take πώς to mean “no” or “Please explain what you mean by that.”

A modern example of another kind of obstacle in the way of understanding is the regional American usage, “I could care less,” which native speakers know means “I could not care less.” A contemporary novelist, however, with a sense of idiom could include such an expression in her characters’ speech, and readers two millennia hence would find it a puzzle. They are required by instinct or inference to construct an additional, explanatory clause, one that completes the sense: “but I cannot imagine how I could care less.”

Again, today when a train conductor announces, “At the next station, all the doors will not be opened,” passengers understand him to say “some doors but not all the doors,” and so they do not feel uneasy at the prospect of not being allowed to get off the train, although the conductor, strictly speaking, has promised that the doors will all be shut. In cases like these, a native speaker can quickly explain what is really meant, but where ancient, written texts are concerned and there is no native speaker at hand, many of the questions and the hypothetical answers we modern readers contrive fall into the domain of abstraction. No practical display confirms our conjectures. There are, to be sure, written accounts from later antiquity that may tell us in particular instances something like “No, you don’t say that with a rising intonation,” or “If you put that word first in the sentence, it means the opposite of what you intended.” But often such accounts are efforts of later antiquity to understand earlier writers. These scholars are trying to answer questions that puzzled people of their time, and so they anticipate our own later needs only inadvertently. A result is that we present-day students of Greek strain without help from any such informants

to imagine a sympathetic resonance, catching at sounds we will never hear. The frustrations and occasional apparent successes that attend this exercise provide some of the tensions, challenges, and satisfactions that come with the study of ancient languages.

To read these distant texts properly, we compose whole libraries of lexica, grammars, and commentaries, all of which a teacher tries to use, or at least to assess, if only to recommend—both to oneself and to students—the most helpful efforts. These efforts in turn lead to comparisons and rankings and surveys of the various routes one can travel in hope of understanding more of the whole. But now a question presents itself: what limits of their own do those routes impose? It transpires—not surprisingly—that certain well-traveled roads are so safe and sure that recourse to alternate routes may look willful or eccentric. A busy teacher accordingly walks on by the entrances to alternate routes and misses some of the landscape.

One alternate route is the use of studies concerned with nonverbal communication, and that of body language in particular. It is a way for all the world, including ancient Greeks, to communicate, and thoughtful readers of Greek have remarked its manifestations now and then in the course of over two millennia, but a general appreciation of its range and uses is still lacking. I asked a distinguished philologist once, “Do you think we can invoke a reader’s or a performer’s gestures sometimes to explain ellipses of meaning in an ancient Greek literary text?” He (who had been trained and finished in an old, universally admired, and largely emulated tradition) answered, “Well, we were taught to deal pretty much with what we had.” In other words, this able traveler of well-tended roads was saying, “We do not have ‘gesture here’ written out on the manuscript page. Since the direction is not there, we do not use gestures in the interpretation of texts.”

The matter of this book could be described in summary form as an extended demonstration that “gesture here” is often implied on the manuscript page. We only need to be alert for the signs by which those gestures are indicated. To be sure, not everyone needs to be told: some readers do enlist—more or less sporadically, however—a sense of body language to explain one or another seeming anomaly in syntax or sequence. But even these perspicacious few do not systematically try to explain how a putative gesture was conceived and executed. An underlying reason for that omission is a tendency to treat a text as transcript, or as historical account, and not as a work of the imagination, one whose composer visualized his characters as they spoke and at the same time had in mind a reader, who read aloud and by means of gesture and stance performed the text. A second reason may be a widespread and understandable modern assumption that modal particles in varying combinations provide all the direction, nuance, and emphasis required.

If we learn our grammars and lexica by heart and apply ourselves to the richest commentaries, we learn some things that are not explicit in the manuscripts: they are in a way deviations from normal usage and yet at the same time amplifications. For instance, a given dialect can come to be canonical in certain regions of endeavor and as a result have special authority. At least that is a phenomenon that the comic poet Alexis appears to reflect in a play. One of his characters says that Athenians, when ill, will ignore what a doctor tells them to do, unless he says it in Doric. If the doctor does say it in Doric, they are content to follow doctor's orders.<sup>1</sup> A hint of dialect can evoke a race or nation of people<sup>2</sup> or draw attention to particular qualities associated with them. A lisped consonant or flattened vowel may in one context or another evoke a single identifiable person. Conversely, Alcibiades' name at Aristophanes *Wasps* 44 prepares the audience for a play on words where from "crow" (κόραξ) a "toady" (κόλαξ) is lisped into existence.

We are trying to understand the complex, artistically, hence artificially, fashioned myths, legends, and tales of men and women who lived in a different world from ours. That difference can skew our lines of sight so that we miss potentially helpful directions. But if we pay attention to words, phrases, and sentences in Greek texts where a supplementary or independently meaningful gesture could fill out a speaker's expression, we discover hints and clues to the timing and placement of such directions. Although we cannot recover the gestures themselves in all their actuality, we may become better readers if we try to intuit their effect.

To turn to the clues and hints by which a reader can detect the author's intended performer reading aloud and gesticulating, what are they? They are absences or gaps. What the words seem to say is incomplete or contrary, unless something else is supplied to fill out or correct the sense; or the syntax is irregular, and at the same time, there is no evidence that words are missing because of physical damage or copyist's error. In such cases, a reader can very often make better sense by adding in thought the import of a nod or a wave of the hand.

But why specify gesticulation and posture as the modes of nonverbal communication to be applied? Why not instead postulate modulations of voice and tone, or facial expression? To answer the second question first, commentators do posit such modifications, sometimes indeed when it is inappropriate to do so, as when they invoke the expression on an actor's face, despite the masks that covered actors' faces. But even when it is appropriate to speak of tone and facial expression, it is also equally appropriate to speak of gesture and stance. For a variety of sources, written and graphic, show that in antiquity Greeks gestured when they spoke, and

<sup>1</sup> Alexis Μανδραγοριζομένη, *PCG* F 146; cf. Menander *Shield* 574.

<sup>2</sup> Aristophanes *Acharnians* 905 *inter alia*.

most of the Archaic and Classical Greek texts we have were composed to be spoken aloud. If accordingly we try to act out the texts ourselves, we discover that an imagined gesture can often complete the sense where canonical philology falls short.

A notice from Jonathan Swift's *Compleat Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation* (1738) is apposite here: "There is hardly a polite sentence in the following dialogues which doth not absolutely require some peculiar graceful motion in the eyes, or nose, or mouth, or forehead, or chin, or suitable toss of the head, with certain offices assigned to each hand." Swift's prescription, quoted in the preface to the *Oxford Book of Conversation*, concerns a society whose day-to-day intercourse is not generally perceived as informed by modes of nonverbal communication. And yet that whole system was and is firmly in place there. How much more intently, then, should we study all the techniques of communication in an ancient society whose posterity use the language of head, hands, and torso everywhere.

Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were composed to be sung or recited. Archilochus, Sappho, Alcaeus, Stesichorus, Alcman, all the poets of Archaic Greece: no one doubts that their songs were meant to be heard. The forms they used—lyric, dithyrambic, epinician, iambic—all presuppose an audience. Athenian tragedy and comedy put the actors on stage in masks that covered their whole faces. Since they could not express themselves by means of grins and winks and sneers, they used their heads, hands, and bodies instead.

Speakers in the ekklesia and lawcourts, to continue using Athens as an example, did not wear masks, to be sure, but they were addressing audiences that could number anywhere from two hundred to well over six thousand citizens. The shadows and nuances of facial expression, effective as they are in close quarters, are lost when much of the audience sits too far away to see the expression on the orator's face. Speakers accordingly had to move their heads and hands and bodies to be fully effective.<sup>3</sup>

In the composition of histories, medical treatises, and philosophical pamphlets, oral performance may not seem to be a factor, especially not in today's world of silent readers. A historian's prose, which often takes the form of speeches, dialogue, or implied discourse, presents for the most part narrative and analysis in extended sections, not obvious matter for animated recitation. But to the ancients it was self-evident that Herodotus

<sup>3</sup> Aeschines 1. 25 implies that orators addressing the assembly should keep their hands to themselves. Unfortunately he invokes a phantom to illustrate his point. He describes a statue of Solon standing in the Agora on Salamis as having been fashioned after the living Solon. This misstep opens him up to ridicule from Demosthenes in due course (19.251), and a lesson to be drawn from the exchange is that by the fourth century, orators were not constrained to keep their right hand under their cloak. See, e.g., Zanker 1995: 45–50.

read his histories aloud,<sup>4</sup> and Thucydides makes it clear from the start that he wrote his history expecting it to be read aloud. When Herodotus and Thucydides allude to posterity as consulting their work, whether that posterity be near or far, they are thinking of an audience, that is to say, of listeners, not people reading silently to themselves. As for philosophy, a rhapsode, Cleomenes, recited the *Purifications* of Empedocles at Olympia.<sup>5</sup> And generally, Hippias of Elis, also at Olympia, would recite *inter alia* prose treatises on science and ethics.<sup>6</sup> We can accordingly read an Archaic or Classical Greek text as one that both author and readers read aloud. As a natural consequence of doing so, because they acted out their speech in daily life, they acted out the texts they read as well.

Silent reading can be assumed in areas of casual or informal correspondence, or in administrative and legal communications. Public notices, such as posted laws and marching orders, or private documents, such as letters, contracts, and wills, could be read in silence and their contents absorbed by single readers who wanted information and did not need to read aloud or perform. The sight of written letters surely did not at a glance prompt a Greek to start reciting the text out loud.<sup>7</sup>

A few ancient authorities treated rhetorical delivery (ὑπόκρισις) as a phenomenon worthy of study in itself, but not before Demosthenes had given to delivery first, second, and third place of importance in oratory.<sup>8</sup> Theophrastus, it can be supposed, included performance in his *περὶ ὑποκρίσεως*.<sup>9</sup> Cicero notes the effectiveness of delivery in his *de Oratore* (213–30) and his *Orator* (54–60). A Latin author sometimes identified in modern scholarship as Cornificius, writing in the second decade of the first century B.C.E., wrote briefly on delivery, the Latin word for which, *pronuntiatio*, includes quality of voice and movement of the body (*corporis motum*, a translation of κίνησις τοῦ σώματος). He says, “Therefore because no one has written carefully on this subject—all have thought it scarcely possible for voice, mien, and gesture to be lucidly described as appertaining to our sense experience—and because the mastery of delivery is a very important requisite for speaking, the whole subject, as I believe, deserves serious consideration.” He is using earlier Greek writers, possibly Theophrastus’s *περὶ ὑποκρίσεως*.<sup>10</sup> Quintilian, who in *Institutiones Oratoriae* 11.3.1–123 describes gesture and stance in oratory, includes a closely detailed survey of meaningful positions of the fingers. And Gaius Iulius

<sup>4</sup> Jacoby 1913: 242; cf. (B) Pritchett 1975: xxviii–xxix, note 4.

<sup>5</sup> Diogenes Laertius 8.63.

<sup>6</sup> Hippias, D-K 86 A1–11.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Knox 1968: 421–35, and Thomas 1989: 16–31.

<sup>8</sup> Quintilian 11.3.5–6. Note Aristotle *Rhetoric* 2.8.

<sup>9</sup> Fortenbaugh 1985: 269–88.

<sup>10</sup> See (A) Caplan 1954: 190–91.



Victor, who wrote an *Ars Rhetorica* in the fourth century C.E., lists in detail some of the things hands can say by themselves (442), e.g., demands, promises, dismissals, threats, fears, questions, etc. etc. None of the ancients, however, contemplated in detail the whole variegated range of nonverbal expressions current in their own lifetimes and observable in official, ceremonial, and everyday private life.

As rules concerning effective delivery in rhetoric evolved, they included proprieties, with the result that some gestures and motions were approved and others discouraged. Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 28.3) regarded Cleon's behavior on the bema as abusive, for he had shouted and used insult and belted up his himation while addressing the assembly. Cleophon likewise merited censure for appearing before the assembly in armour (*Ath. Pol.* 34). Later, Hermippus described Theophrastus as not eschewing any motion or gesture while discoursing at the School. Once, in order to imitate a glutton, he stuck out his tongue and licked his lips (Athenaios 1.21a). The point of that detail may be that Theophrastus was acting boldly. The author of *ad Herennium* (3.15.26) cautions: "The facial expression should show modesty and animation, and the gestures should not be conspicuous for either elegance or grossness, lest we give the impression that we are either actors or day-laborers."<sup>11</sup>

John Bulwer's detailed studies of 1644 merit notice here (See Figure 20). His two studies, *Cheirologia* and *Cheironomia*, include contemporary drawings of hands in communicating displays. The drawings are meant to illustrate contemporary rhetorical practice, but Bulwer draws on Greek and Roman literature throughout his studies, and some of the displays coincide nicely with ancient descriptions of Greek and Roman usages. Austin 1806 likewise cites a number of relevant Greek and Latin texts in his attempt to develop a notation of rhetorical gestures.

It has now been a little over one hundred years since the compendious study of Carl Sittl (1890) appeared, his *Die Gebärden der Griechen und Römer*. The thoroughness and range of his documentation maintain that work as a rich source of information still today, for nothing of comparable scope has been attempted since. All subsequent studies of gesture in antiquity treat particular aspects of nonverbal communication. The monograph of Gerhard Neumann (1965), for instance, *Gesten und Gebärden in der griechischen Kunst*, focuses on a limited repertoire of gestures found mostly in Attic black- and red-figure vase paintings. Andreas Katsouris's monograph (1990), Ῥητορικὴ Ἑπόκεισις, addresses questions of rhetorical delivery, and the studies of Barasch (1976), Bérard (1918), Eitrem (1983), Jucker (1956), Lesky (1969), and others listed in the Bibliography reveal in their titles the aims of their studies. McNiven 1982 catalogues

<sup>11</sup> (A) Caplan 1954.

gestures pictured on Attic black- and red-figure vases. Donald Lateiner (1995) now presents a full and varied range of nonverbal modes of communication as Homer refers to them in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Jones and Morey 1931 discuss gestures repeatedly throughout their two-volume publication of illuminated manuscripts of Terence. They do not, however, consider any of the pictured gestures as relevant to a time earlier than Quintilian, although one at least, Figure 19, seems to be as old as the late sixth century B.C.E. bilingual amphora depicted in Figure 17.

To persuade students to keep in their mind's eye a reader or performer who is reading aloud, the present study begins with a summary chapter reviewing sources of information about gestures in antiquity. One source comprises circumstantial references to gesture and posture in literature, that is to say, descriptions of what a character is doing with his or her body while speaking. A second important source is sculpture and painting, especially when—as all too rarely happens—a label or a bit of dialogue is included in the painting. A third source comprises certain gestures used by people in Greece and around the Mediterranean today. This last may at first glance seem to lack authority, but as I hope to show, some such gestures resemble those noted in ancient literature and art closely enough to serve as heuristic devices, i.e., templates by whose application missing elements of antiquity's body language can be inferred.

In Chapter 2, interpretation of gestures in a few well-known scenes on Attic red-figure vases introduces a few attendant problems. The scenes themselves should at the same time give readers a sense of how men and women expressed themselves with their hands and bodies while speaking.

In Chapter 3, the literary examples begin with Homer. The role of the rhapsode is considered, and in particular his responsibility for filling in the poet's deliberate ellipses. Among such ellipses, there are the "incomplete" conditional sentence and the rhetorical tactic, aposiopesis. With these examples, I include selections from philological commentaries, impressive in volume and density, and for the eminence of their composers; they show how hard it is to explain certain ellipses on the basis of grammar alone.

In Chapter 4, some fragments of Archilochus's poems preserve evocative words or phrases whose articulation seems to need an attendant gesture. Two "incomplete" conditional sentences in Pindar's epinician odes conclude this brief chapter. I do not attempt an appreciation of the language of dance because the topic is beyond my competence. I leave it to others to study the sorts of things that dancing can say when combined with the words of various Archaic songs.

In Chapter 5, on tragic drama, there is no question about the end for which the plays were written: they were to be spoken, sung, danced, and acted out. Even so, for many years the study of tragedy has lacked systematic considerations of physical action. More recently, leading Hellenists have

shown increasing consciousness of the action on the stage,<sup>12</sup> but commentators are still slow to use gesture as a way of undoing certain knots grammar does not untie.

Chapter 6 is concerned with Aristophanes. The nonverbal communication of comedy could not have been exactly the same as that of tragedy, but no matter how exuberant and wild, it was always within the boundaries of intelligible communication. In Aristophanes, quotations used as parody, demonstratives, and the ramifications of a synergistic curse are considered in connection with the presentation of comedy.

Chapter 7 on orators follows. In oratory, as in epic and drama, the words were written to be spoken and acted out, and so it is not surprising to meet ellipses in the written text where an author has anticipated a gesture. He may have been gesticulating in imagination as he composed, whether the speech was to be delivered by himself or by another, whether or not it had already been delivered.

The examples from orators that precede Chapter 8, on historians, suggest that Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon likewise saw the figures of their histories moving heads and hands and bodies as they spoke. It is principally but not exclusively where these historians are representing or implying speech that such examples present themselves. Instances from each of these authors are included.

Next, in Chapter 9, I examine some passages from Platonic dialogues. Socrates' demonstration in the *Meno* requires him to illustrate his demonstrative adjectives. Once this picture is established, it is easier to picture nods and other expressive body movements in, e.g., *Apology*, *Crito*, *Symposium*, and *Republic*, where deliberate ellipses in syntax may emulate the speech patterns of an actual person, one who was in Plato's mind as he composed. A final chapter offers some summaries and conclusions.

For the present study, I present examples collected over the space of a decade or so, but I have not made a systematic survey of all Archaic and Classical Greek literature, nor can I promise that examples of a given phenomenon represent an exhaustive search of any single author. The selection may, as a result, have a haphazard look in some areas, but the cumulative effect could nevertheless prompt readers and editors of the great ancient Greek texts to try while they read to imagine living, breathing presences whose words their authors saw being delivered with expressive movements of heads, eyes, hands, and torsoes. It can be an illuminating exercise.

I approach these texts as a student of Greek and so I do not represent myself as controlling the anthropological literature. While I have cited a few

<sup>12</sup> For example, Bieber, Taplin, Kaimio, Mastronarde. Cf. Kaimio 1988: 6.

authorities in the bibliography, namely Argyle, Birdwhistell, and Morris, in whose studies I have browsed, I do not adopt their vocabulary. What I call *gestures* are often what advanced students of nonverbal communication would call “emblems” or “regulators,” but for the modest aims of this study, the general term *gestures* seems to suffice. Among Hellenists, Bieber, Dover, Taplin, Kaimio, and Mastronarde direct modern readers effectively to action on the stage. They try to see what was actually happening as the actors pronounced the words we have in our texts.

It is my hope that students of literature generally, and of oral tradition and performance, and of course in the case of Plato, of philosophy, will find matter for reflection in this old but often neglected way of reading texts. I have addressed myself to particular passages but I have by no means identified all the possible places where a heightened consciousness of nonverbal communication can enrich our understanding of the written words.

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