

The Role of Estimation in Caesar's Gallic Narratives

In Roman war literature, the cognitive process behind wartime decision making is often as important as the consequences. In Caesar's Gallic commentaries, he utilizes a multitude of phrases and verbs which communicate a form of estimation or guesswork to provide character analysis for individuals on both sides of the war. Caesar, Roman commanders, and their Gallic counterparts all engage in supposition as a form of larger strategy or spur of the moment decision-making. When discussing the thought process and decision making of Gallic commanders, verbs and phrases of estimation are much more likely to be employed with pejorative commentary. When describing the Roman tactical thought process, the presence of "head verbs" of concrete knowledge appear to be much less important, as the pejorative tone is notably absent. In order to make these comparisons, the concept of concrete knowledge must be defined. Examples of what would most accurately be "concrete" head verbs are *intellego*, *scio*, *audio*, *video*, and *cogito*. The corporeal usage of *sentio* as a tactile innate sense could also be used here, but not its usage to convey felt emotion. These verbs convey stimuli which can typically be agreed upon outside of subjective perception. However, it is not these verbs alone that qualify concrete cognition. If there is some form of clause denoting factual cause, as could be done with a *quod clause*, *ablative of means*, or *propter clause*, it indicates a greater deal of concrete basis for an opinion. When an opinative phrase is given without any shade of supporting clause, it can be reduced to non-concrete forms of thought, such as *existimo*, *puto*, *opinor*, *arbitror*, and other verbs and phrases that personalize the experience of reality. Even when Caesar ascribes less concrete forms of thought to Roman leaders, it is done so to laud individual intellectual capacity or to communicate a cautionary tale. By analyzing instances of

this tendency alongside scholarship on Caesar's literary rhetoric (Lendon, 1999; Riggsby, nd.) and cultural understandings of wartime strategy (Mattern, 1999; Lendon, 2005; Phang, 2008; Travilian, 2013; Różycki, 2021; Rawlings, 2023), it can be shown that Caesar is either explicitly or implicitly choosing these words to reinforce concepts of Roman supremacy. This paper will argue that Caesar chooses his vocabulary carefully in order to characterize the Gallic mind as intellectually inferior, though admittedly filled with a degree of innate courage that can resemble *virtus*. If accepted, this paper could stand to contribute to the understanding of implicit polemic in war literature as well as cultural perceptions of Gaul at the time of conquest.

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