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The Unity of the Virtues in Plato's *Protagoras* and *Laches*

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Perhaps the most striking of the Socratic paradoxes is the claim that being a good person is strictly a matter of the intellect. As Aristotle remarks, Socrates seems to take no account of *character* in his conception of virtue.[1] In Plato's early dialogues, Socrates argues that a certain type of knowledge ("knowledge of good and evil") is sufficient for being a just, courageous, and temperate person, and for behaving in the way such a person would behave. But this claim does not capture what is most paradoxical about his view of the relationship between virtue and knowledge. Even the sober-minded Aristotle held that a certain type of knowledge—*phronêsis* or "practical wisdom"—is sufficient for virtue. But being a good person is not simply a matter of having a certain kind of knowledge for Aristotle, since he also believed that one could not be practically wise without having a good character. Socrates made the further claim that "all the virtues are knowledge"; that is, he held that each of the virtues is definable simply in terms of knowledge, either a single type of knowledge or several types corresponding to the several virtues.[2] It is this stronger view that people have in mind when they speak of Socrates' "intellectualism"; there is no need to tame unruly passions—knowledge of the good ensures that one will have the right aims and intentions, and will act accordingly.

In the *Protagoras*, Plato has Socrates argue not only that "all the virtues are knowledge," but also that they somehow form a unity. Exactly what sort of unity Socrates has in mind is a matter of controversy. According to one interpretation, Socrates regards the different virtues as distinct parts of a whole—distinct in the sense that each has its own separate definition.[3] The thesis that "the virtues are knowledge" is understood as the claim that each virtue

[1] *Magna Moralia* 1182a19–23.

[2] See *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 1144b28–30.

[3] See G. Vlastos, "The Unity of the Virtues in the *Protagoras*," in *Platonic Studies* (*PS*), 2d ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 221–69 (originally published in the *Review of Metaphysics* 25 (1972): 415–58).

is identical with a particular form of knowledge; for example, courage = knowledge of P, temperance = knowledge of Q, and so forth. The virtues form a unity, according to this view, in that the possession of any one of them guarantees possession of all the rest: unity is understood as *inseparability*.

Most recent commentators have a different understanding of Socrates' position in the *Protagoras*.[4] They believe that Socrates rejects the view that the virtues are distinct parts of a whole, and that he holds, rather, that the names of the different virtues all refer to a single entity or quality, a particular form of knowledge that might be called "knowledge of good and evil." According to this view, there is only one definition corresponding to the different names of the virtues; for example, courage = knowledge of good and evil, temperance = knowledge of good and evil, and so forth. The unity of the virtues is thus understood as *identity*.

Not surprisingly, there are passages in the *Protagoras* that provide prima facie evidence for each of these interpretations. Although I believe a stronger case can be made for the identity interpretation, my concern in this essay is not to defend a particular interpretation of Socrates' position in the *Protagoras*. Supporters of both interpretations claim that the view of the unity of the virtues maintained in the *Protagoras* is found in other early dialogues as well. Hence they speak of *the* theory of virtue of the early dialogues. It is this claim that I want to call into question.

Gregory Vlastos has pointed out that in both the *Laches* and the *Meno* Socrates speaks of the virtues as parts of a whole, thus endorsing the view that the virtues have distinct essences and definitions. Defenders of the identity interpretation have tried to show

[4]The so-called "identity" interpretation was first rigorously defended by T. Penner in his paper "The Unity of Virtue," *Philosophical Review* 82 (1973): 35–68. It has since become the standard view; cf., for example, C. C. W. Taylor, *Plato's Protagoras* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 103ff.; T. Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory* (*PMT*) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 86–90; M. Ferejohn, "The Unity of Virtue and the Objects of Socratic Inquiry," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* (1982): 1–21, and "Socratic Virtue as the Parts of Itself," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1983–84): 377–88; M. Schofield, "Ariston of Chios and the Unity of Virtue," *Ancient Philosophy* (1984): 83–95. (The second printing of Vlastos's *PS*, cited above, contains a number of detailed responses to Irwin's and Taylor's objections; see 410–45.)

that this endorsement should not be taken at face value. I will argue that none of these attempts is convincing. Thus, if the identity interpretation is a correct account of the *Protagoras*, there is an inconsistency between Socrates' position in this dialogue and the view he endorses in the *Laches* and *Meno*. I will try to show furthermore that the particular conception of the unity of the virtues suggested in the *Laches* is inconsistent with *both* of the prevailing interpretations of Socrates' position in the *Protagoras*. For according to Vlastos, wisdom is regarded in the *Protagoras* as one of the parts of virtue, along with courage, temperance, justice, and piety. In the *Laches* on the other hand, although Socrates speaks of the different virtues as parts of a whole, we shall see that there is one important exception: the other virtues are united *through* wisdom, and wisdom is regarded not as a part but as the whole of virtue.

Those who have discussed the unity of the virtues in the early dialogues have focused most of their attention on the *Protagoras*, and have not appreciated the complexity of the view suggested in the *Laches*. My discussion will be concerned primarily with the *Laches*, and with showing how its view of the unity thesis differs from that of the *Protagoras*. Towards the end of the paper I will take up the question, What might account for the discrepancy between the two dialogues? I will suggest that in the *Laches* Plato is offering a modified version of the Socratic view, a version designed to clarify and strengthen the overall Socratic position. The view in the *Laches* is still "intellectualist" insofar as it takes knowledge of the good to be a sufficient condition of virtuous behavior. But it no longer includes the claim that the virtues should be defined simply in terms of knowledge. Thus, Plato's attempt to strengthen the Socratic view actually led him (whether or not he realized it) to take the first step on the path towards his own *non*-intellectualist conception of virtue.

1.

Let me begin with a brief look at the *Protagoras*. Socrates opens the discussion of the unity of the virtues by offering Protagoras a choice between two ways of understanding how the virtues are one.

> Will you then explain precisely whether (1) virtue is one thing, and justice and temperance and piety are parts of it, or whether (2) all of these that I've just mentioned are different names of one and the same thing. (329c6–d1)

Protagoras opts for the first option, that the virtues are parts of a whole. Proponents of the identity interpretation believe that the second option, (2), expresses Socrates' view, and that it amounts to the claim that the virtues are identical with each other. Vlastos, on the other side, agrees that (2) implies the identity of the virtues, but contends that it cannot express Socrates' view since it is "standard Socratic doctrine" that the different virtues are distinct parts of a whole (*PS*, 225; cf. 418–23). He concludes that Socrates would endorse Protagoras's choice of (1).

Vlastos thinks that (2) is too strong to express Socrates' view of the unity of the virtues. Later in the dialogue we find a statement that is similar to (2), and this statement, he believes, *does* capture Socrates' view.

> And now, with regard to my original question, I should like you to remind me again from the beginning of what we said, and also to examine some further points together with me. The question, I think, was this: whether (2*) 'wisdom', 'temperance', 'courage', 'justice' and 'piety'—these being five names—apply to one thing, or (1*) does there correspond to each of these names some separate thing or entity with its own particular power, unlike any of the others? (349a–b)

(1*) is clearly meant to summarize the view favored by Protagoras earlier in the dialogue. Vlastos says that (2*) expresses Socrates' view, and in spite of its similarity to (2) it affirms something quite different. Even though (2*) seems to be making the same claim as (2), it is possible to construe it as the claim that each of the names of the virtues can be applied *predicatively* to any one of the virtues: that is, we can say that "justice is pious and brave" or that "temperance is wise and just," etc. (These statements should be understood as what Vlastos calls "Pauline predications"—more on these in a moment.) And if (2*) is understood in this second way, it would not commit Socrates to the identity thesis expressed by (2).

Let us grant that it is possible to understand (2*) in the way suggested by Vlastos.[5] Nevertheless, a look at the context of (2*) makes it clear that his proposal cannot be right. The beginning of the passage quoted indicates that Socrates is here recapitulating the

[5]For objections to Vlastos's claim, see Irwin, *PMT*, 305–6; Vlastos's responses are in *PS*, 430, 445.

original question posed at 329c–d; and in the sentence immediately following the passage quoted, Socrates says:

> Now you said that they are not names applying to one thing, but each is the name of a separate thing. (349b6–c1)

In other words, (2*) is *taken by Socrates* to be the view that was rejected by Protagoras at 329c–d; and that view was of course (2). The context thus indicates that Socrates understands (2*) to be making the same claim as (2). So if we assume, with Vlastos, that Socrates puts forward (2*) as his own view, we must conclude that he is here committing himself to the identity thesis expressed by (2).[6]

Another problem with Vlastos's interpretation has to do with his use of the notion of "Pauline predication." This notion provides the basis for his claim that what Socrates means by the unity (and similarity) of the virtues amounts to no more than the claim that they are "biconditionally related"—that is, possession of any one entails possession of all the rest. Pauline predications may be illustrated by such statements as 'justice is just' or 'justice is pious' (these statements are used by Socrates in his argument for the similarity of justice and piety at 330a–331b). On a Pauline reading, these statements should be understood as asserting that justice is such that *its instances* are just and pious (by analogy with St. Paul's 'Charity is longsuffering and kind'). Taking this a step further, if the Pauline predications 'justice is pious' and 'piety is just' are both true, this may be expressed in the Pauline way as 'justice *is* piety' or 'justice and piety are *one*' (*PS*, 256–57). Understood in this way, the

[6]See Irwin, *PMT*, 305–6, for a similar point. Both Vlastos and his opponents assume (reasonably) that Socrates commits himself to (2*); they disagree about what that commitment implies. However, one might argue that although Socrates clearly commits himself to the inseparability of the virtues, it is not as clear that he commits himself either to (1) or to (2). His chief aim in 329c ff. is of course to clarify Protagoras's view of the interrelations among the virtues; and it might be maintained that he is uncertain about the choice between (1) and (2), and for this reason does not explicitly commit himself one way or the other. Whether or not such a view is correct would be of no consequence to the claims I am making. I will return to the question of Socrates' "commitments" in the *Protagoras* towards the end of the paper.

statements do not imply that the virtues are identical with each other, but only that all just individuals are pious and vice versa—that is, the biconditionality relation.

There is good reason for thinking that Socrates did *not* understand the above statements as Pauline predications. On a Pauline reading, as we have just noted, if justice is pious and piety is just, it follows immediately that justice *is* piety (or that justice and piety are *one*). However, after Socrates gains Protagoras's agreement that justice is pious and piety is just, he does not infer that justice *is* piety (or that they are *one*). He infers only that they are similar; and at the conclusion of his argument for the unity of temperance and wisdom, he says that these two virtues seem to be "one," while it was shown earlier that justice and piety are "*almost* the same" (333b4–6). If Socrates were taking these statements as Pauline predications, there would be no reason for him to distinguish the conclusions of the two arguments in the way he does (and no reason to stop short of the inference that justice *is* piety).[7]

I am not suggesting that statements of the form 'justice is pious (or just)' should never be understood as Pauline predications in Plato. We must decide in each case by looking at the context. When we examine the context in which we find these and similar statements in the *Protagoras*, we find clear indications, I think, that they are not meant to be understood as Pauline predications. But perhaps the more important point is that, according to Vlastos, Socrates offers (2*) as a statement of his own view (in 349a–b), and the context indicates that he understands (2*) to be equivalent to (2), which, as Vlastos sees, commits him to the identity view.[8]

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[7]Vlastos points out (*PS*, 431) that it is a problem for his opponents' view that Socrates does not argue for the conclusion that justice *is* piety; it is equally a problem for his own interpretation. Taylor suggests a plausible way for the identity interpretation to deal with the problem (*Plato's Protagoras*, 115–16, 120).

[8]Vlastos claims that Socrates "opts for" the parts-of-gold analogy—that is, for the view that the virtues are parts of a whole analogous to the parts of a piece of gold (*PS*, 225; cf. 428–29); and since regarding the virtues as parts of a whole is incompatible with (2), Socrates in effect commits himself to (1) rather than (2). However, the text at 329c–e does not support Vlastos's claim: Socrates says nothing that indicates that he endorses the parts-of-gold analogy. And since, as we have seen, he commits himself (on Vlastos's view) to (2*), and thereby to (2), it seems very unlikely that he would

2.

As I mentioned earlier, Vlastos argues that it is a standard doctrine of the early dialogues that the different virtues are distinct parts of a whole. We have seen reasons to doubt whether this is Socrates' view in the *Protagoras*, but I believe Vlastos is right about two other early dialogues, the *Laches* and *Meno* (*PS*, 418–23). Since Vlastos's argument is thorough and detailed, especially with regard to the *Meno*, I shall be brief and focus on the *Laches*. As the discussion of the nature of courage is about to begin, Socrates offers the following suggestions as to how he and Laches should conduct the investigation:

> *S.* So, since we know what it [virtue] is, we could also, presumably, say what it is, couldn't we?
> *L.* Of course.
> *S.* Well, in that case, my good friend, let's not look at virtue as a whole straight away—that might be a rather lengthy undertaking. Let's examine a part of it first of all, and see whether we're in a position to know about that. We'll probably find this makes our inquiry easier.
> *L.* By all means, Socrates.
> *S.* So which part of virtue are we to choose? Clearly, I think, the one to which the subject of military training pertains—and that, I imagine, is generally supposed to be courage. Isn't that so?
> *L.* Yes, it certainly is. (190c–d)[9]

Later in the dialogue, Socrates reminds Nicias of this preliminary exchange and secures his agreement that courage is a part of virtue, and that there are other parts as well, such as temperance and

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accept the parts-of-gold analogy, which is incompatible with (2). Ferejohn suggests ("Socratic Virtue as the Parts of Itself") that Socrates might have *thought* that (2) was compatible with virtue having parts, but he admits that the most plausible view of what Socrates meant by 'parts of virtue' is incompatible with (2).

[9]The relevant passages in the *Meno* are 78d–79e and 73e–74d. Irwin claims that Socrates does not endorse the view that the virtues are distinct parts of a whole in 78d–79e: rather, "he simply allows Meno this view," in order to refute him (*PMT*, 304–5). To say that Socrates "allows" Meno this view suggests that it is Meno who first introduces it. But it is clearly Socrates who introduces the view at 78d–e (cf. 73e–74d), and there are no indications in the surrounding context that he has any reservations about speaking of the "parts" of virtue. Cf. Vlastos, *PS*, 418–21.

justice (198a). He then proceeds to argue that according to Nicias's definition of courage ("knowledge of what is to be feared and dared"), it is identical with knowledge of good and evil; and since it is agreed that knowledge of good and evil is the "whole of virtue," courage turns out to be indistinguishable from the whole of virtue. But since this conflicts with the initial premise that courage is only a part of virtue, Socrates concludes that the definition offered by Nicias cannot be right ("Thus we have not discovered, Nicias, what courage really is" (199e11)).

It might be objected that strictly speaking, the text is neutral with regard to the claims (i) that Socrates rejects the definition offered by Nicias, and (ii) that he rejects the premise that courage is a proper part of virtue. However, if the text were indeed neutral, one might expect Socrates to conclude his argument in something like the following way: "The upshot, Nicias, is that we must either give up the definition of courage that you put forward, or we must give up our initial assumption that courage is a part, and not the whole, of virtue." The actual wording of his conclusion clearly favors (i) over (ii).[10] It is also important to note that at 198a–b Socrates says that *he* calls courage, temperance, and justice parts of virtue, and then says that he and Nicias *agree* on these points—that is, that courage, etc. are parts of virtue. These statements clearly constitute a commitment on his part to the claim that courage is a part of virtue; furthermore, there are no indications in other parts of the dialogue that Socrates has any reservations about this claim. On the other hand, he says nothing at all that could be construed as lending support to the definition offered by Nicias. It cannot, then, be plausibly maintained that the text is neutral vis-à-vis (i) and (ii); Socrates argues against Nicias's definition, and considers it unsatisfactory because it conflicts with the premise that courage is a part of virtue.[11] Vlastos is therefore right about this much at

[10]See my "Courage and Wisdom in Plato's *Laches*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 15 (1977): 138–39; cf. Vlastos, *PS*, 267, 423 n. 9.

[11]We should also note that Socrates' argument assumes that if something is a part of virtue, it must have its own distinct definition—if the definition of courage were the same as that of the whole of virtue, it could not be considered a part of virtue. This seems to undercut Paul Woodruff's suggestion that the virtues, though distinct parts, have the same definiens; see

least: in the *Laches* (and the *Meno*) the virtues of courage, justice, temperance, etc. are viewed as definitionally distinct parts of a whole.

3.

Not all the virtues, however, are regarded as parts in the *Laches*. In the final argument of the dialogue, Socrates attempts to show that if Nicias's definition is accepted, courage turns out to be identical with knowledge of good and evil, and thus with the "whole of virtue" (199b–e). As commentators have noted, Socrates seems to use 'knowledge of good and evil' as an alternative designation of wisdom.[12] If this is true, it turns out that one of the virtues, wisdom, is actually the whole of virtue; and, interestingly enough, when we look at Socrates' list of the parts of virtue, we find that wisdom is not mentioned.[13]

According to Vlastos's account of the unity thesis, each of the virtues is biconditionally related to all the others. All of the virtues, including wisdom, have the same status in relation to the unity thesis. But the *Laches* gives us a somewhat different picture: someone who is courageous will also be temperate, because courage requires wisdom, and if one has wisdom (or knowledge of good and evil) one cannot fail to be temperate (192c–d, 199e). Each of the other virtues directly entails wisdom, and since possession of wisdom guarantees possession of all the other virtues, it is through wisdom that the other virtues entail each other. Wisdom is thus the key to understanding the unity of the virtues. This is surely one of the reasons it is not treated as a mere part of virtue, on a par with the others.

"Socrates on the Parts of Virtue," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, suppl. vol. 2 (1976): 101–16.

[12]In the *Meno* (87d–89a) Socrates argues that wisdom is the sole guarantor of beneficial results—all other so-called goods can be harmful if not used wisely; in the *Charmides* he makes the same claim about knowledge of good and evil (174a–175a). There are also indications in the *Laches* that Socrates equates wisdom with knowledge of good and evil: cf. my "Courage and Wisdom," 135–36.

[13]See *Laches* 198a; cf. *Meno* 78d–79a. In both dialogues, to ask "What is virtue?" is tantamount to asking "What is the whole of virtue?"; so perhaps rather than saying that "wisdom is *one of* the virtues," or "*a* virtue," we should say that "wisdom is virtue" (cf. *Meno* 89a).

If wisdom is the whole of virtue, and the other virtues are parts of this whole, it would follow that wisdom must somehow contain the other virtues. One possible model for understanding containment here would be the way in which a genus contains the species falling under it. Just as, for example, mathematics has various species or "branches" falling under it, so wisdom (or knowledge of good and evil) might have species or subdivisions under it. Thus, courage would be knowledge of X, justice knowledge of Y, and these would be subdivisions or species of knowledge of good and evil.[14] According to this hypothesis, the virtues are different from each other insofar as they are distinct forms of knowledge. Let us now test this hypothesis.

Towards the end of the *Protagoras* Socrates argues that courage consists in "knowledge of what is to be feared and dared" (359a–360d). However, in the *Laches* Nicias offers this very formula as a definition of courage and, as we have seen, Socrates attempts to refute it, arguing that such knowledge is identical with knowledge of good and evil. The knowledge that was initially thought to be distinctive of courage (and treated as such in the *Protagoras*) turns out to be indistinguishable from wisdom, a type of knowledge required by each of the other virtues. Penner and others have plausibly suggested that Socrates thought similar arguments would show that the kind of knowledge involved in temperance, justice, etc. is in each case identical with knowledge of good and evil.

The *Laches*, in treating courage as a part of virtue, *demands* a distinctive definition of this virtue, a definition that indicates how it differs from wisdom and the other virtues. The final argument of the dialogue also clearly suggests that the distinctive aspect of courage is not to be found in the knowledge a courageous person must possess. We should therefore consider whether there are indications in the *Laches* of some *other* factor essential to courage, apart from the knowledge involved.

A number of commentators have argued that there are clear suggestions in Socrates' discussion with Laches (190d–194b) that

[14]Ferejohn suggests that Socrates conceives of the parts of virtue in this way in "Socratic Virtue as the Parts of Itself" (385); cf. Vlastos, *PS*, 233. It should perhaps be pointed out that according to this suggestion, the relationship between knowledge of good and evil and the other virtues is a *special case* of the genus-species relation—namely, one in which the instantiation of the genus implies the coinstantiation of all the species.

the quality of endurance (*καρτερία*) should be included in a definition of courage.[15] Without going into detail, let us note a few of the reasons why this view is plausible. In his response to Laches' proposal that courage is the same thing as endurance, Socrates points out that some instances of endurance are admirable while others are the opposite; all instances of courage, on the other hand, are admirable. Now Socrates could have inferred from these admissions that since courage and endurance are not coextensive, courage cannot be the same thing as endurance;[16] Laches would then have had to come up with a new definition. Instead, he suggests that since wise endurance is admirable whereas foolish endurance is the opposite, perhaps Laches really thinks that courage is *wise* endurance (192d). We have every reason to think, at this point in the discussion, that Socrates approves of the inclusion of endurance in an account of courage. The next task is to consider "in what things" the courageous man is wise—that is, with what sorts of things his wisdom is concerned (192e).

Laches confesses that he is inexperienced in philosophical discussions (194a), and finds himself unable to specify the kind of wisdom involved in courage. After being confronted with a series of rather tricky examples, he ends up saying that in some situations foolish endurance actually seems more courageous than wise endurance (193c). Socrates sums up the resultant predicament in the following exchange:

> *S.* Didn't it appear to us before that foolish endurance is base and harmful?
> *L.* Indeed.
> *S.* And we agreed that courage is something admirable?
> *L.* Yes.
> *S.* But now, on the contrary, we are saying that this base thing, foolish endurance, is courage.
> *L.* It seems so.

[15]See H. Bonitz, "Zur Erklärung Platonischer Dialoge," *Hermes* 5 (1871): 429–42; M. J. O'Brien, "The Unity of the *Laches*," *Yale Classical Studies* 18 (1963): 133–47; G. Santas, "Socrates at Work on Virtue and Knowledge in Plato's *Laches*," *Review of Metaphysics* 22 (1969): 433–60 (reprinted in *The Philosophy of Socrates*, ed. G. Vlastos (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1971), 177–208); C. Gould, "Socratic Intellectualism and the Problem of Courage: An Interpretation of Plato's *Laches*," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 4 (1987): 265–79.

[16]For an argument along these lines, see *Charmides* 160e–161b.

> *S.* Does it seem to you that we are speaking correctly?
> *L.* Certainly not, Socrates. (193d)

Socrates does not say, for example, "Does it seem to you that our definition (*λόγος*) of courage is correct?"[17] Somewhere along the way a mistake has been made, but nothing Socrates says implies that it was a mistake to include endurance in the definition.[18] In fact, his final comments to Laches point in the opposite direction.

> So, if you don't mind, let's be steadfast in our search and show some endurance, lest courage herself should mock us for not courageously searching for her, when this very endurance might turn out to be courage after all.

This is surely a strange thing to say for someone who believes that endurance has no part in a definition of courage.

Of course, these remarks and the other details cited are not conclusive evidence that Socrates thinks endurance is an essential component of courage. But they give strong support to such a view, especially when we consider, first, that the argument demands an account of courage that distinguishes it from the other virtues, and second, that Socrates' refutation of Nicias suggests that what is distinctive about this virtue is not the knowledge possessed by the courageous person. If the knowledge essential to courage turns out to be knowledge of good and evil, and this knowledge is essential to

[17]It is interesting to note the contrast in the way Socrates concludes his refutation of Nicias: "We have therefore not discovered, Nicias, what courage is" (199e).

[18]Where is the mistake? It has often been pointed out that Socrates' examples at 192e–193c rely on a very limited conception of knowledge, most of them involving some form of technical skill. Later on in the discussion, a distinction is made between such skill-type knowledge and a more fundamental knowledge of values that is characteristic of courage (195a–196a). Given this distinction, it seems plausible to suppose that Socrates deliberately limits the type of knowledge involved in the examples in 192e–193c; his aim would then be to show by contrast that the knowledge essential to courage is quite different from skill in performing dangerous acts. Laches' mistake is in agreeing that an unskilled person who performs a dangerous act is thereby foolish. For interpretations along these lines, see the articles by Bonitz, O'Brien, and Santas cited in note 15.

the other virtues as well, we need some other factor apart from knowledge to differentiate courage. Given that Socrates does nothing to disabuse Laches of his belief that endurance is essential to courage—indeed, one might argue that he actually endorses the belief—the conclusion seems obvious: endurance should be included in the definition of courage. And, in general, the other virtues (aside from wisdom) would be distinguished from each other, not insofar as each is identical with a different form of knowledge (Vlastos's view), but rather in that each is characterized by some distinctive aspect apart from the knowledge or wisdom involved.

We began this section by noting that although Socrates (in the *Laches*) maintains that courage, temperance, and the other virtues are definitionally distinct parts of a whole, he does not hold that all the virtues are parts; he characterizes wisdom, or "knowledge of good and evil," as the whole of virtue. Since a whole *contains* its parts, we considered the possibility that wisdom contains the other virtues in the way that a genus contains its species. This would mean that the other virtues are species of knowledge of good and evil, and that what differentiates them from each other is the fact that they are distinct types of knowledge. However, we found that this view does not accord with the argument of the *Laches*. Socrates does hold that a certain kind of knowledge is essential to courage, but this knowledge is not a species of knowledge of good and evil—it is knowledge of good and evil itself. What distinguishes courage from the other virtues is the quality of endurance, an aspect or factor distinct from knowledge. Thus, wisdom is not related to the other virtues as a genus to its species.

We are still left with the question, In what sense does wisdom "contain" the other virtues? Perhaps the best answer is to be found in the passage in which Socrates characterizes knowledge of good and evil as the whole of virtue (199d–e). He points out that a person possessing such knowledge would "not be lacking" in temperance, justice, or any other part of virtue. In other words, wisdom is the whole of virtue insofar as its possession guarantees possession of the other virtues. It is true that possession of any one of the virtues guarantees possession of all the rest, but only in the case of wisdom is there an *immediate* link to all the other virtues; for example, a courageous person is just because courage requires wis-

dom and possession of wisdom guarantees possession of justice.[19] In other words, the reciprocal links between the other virtues are mediated by wisdom. Furthermore, only wisdom is manifested by all virtuous actions. Some courageous actions might be just, but not all need be. But all just, courageous, temperate, etc. actions will be *wise* insofar as they are based on knowledge of good and evil. So there are at least two ways in which wisdom might be said to "contain" the other virtues: (i) it contains in the sense that if one has it one has the other virtues as well, and (ii) it contains in that it is exemplified in all virtuous actions.

4.

I have argued that both endurance and knowledge of good and evil are essential for courage, according to the argument of the *Laches*. It would seem to follow that the knowledge by itself is not a sufficient condition for courage. However, in the final argument Socrates clearly asserts that knowledge of good and evil *is* sufficient for all the virtues. So it appears that our suggestion that endurance is essential to courage cannot stand: the idea that a noncognitive factor like endurance is necessary for courage runs counter to the strong intellectualist thesis that knowledge of good and evil is sufficient by itself for the virtues.[20]

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[19]One might wonder why courage requires wisdom (=knowledge of good and evil) rather than some more specific type of knowledge, which would not be enough by itself to guarantee the possession of justice. As I pointed out earlier (sec. 3, para. 4), what seems to be the best candidate for a kind of knowledge specific to courage is knowledge of what is and is not to be feared, and Socrates argues that this is indistinguishable from knowledge of good and evil. The view suggested by Nicias (195b–196b)—and apparently endorsed by Socrates—is that a courageous person must know when a risk is worth taking or when it is worthwhile enduring, and this presupposes a deep understanding of what is of value in human life—that is, knowledge of good and evil.

[20]Gould points out ("Socratic Intellectualism," 277–78) that 199d–e poses a serious difficulty for the view that courage is regarded in the *Laches* as being made up of both an intellectual component ("knowledge of good and evil") and an independent quality of temperament ("endurance" or *καρτερία*)—a view I defended in an earlier article on the *Laches* (cited above, n. 10). I agree with her about the difficulty posed by 199d–e, and

However, one might think of endurance as a quality one could not fail to possess if one had knowledge of good and evil. If endurance were a necessary concomitant of knowledge of good and evil, then there would not necessarily be any conflict between the sufficiency of knowledge thesis and the claim that endurance is an essential and distinctive characteristic of courage. I believe a good case can be made that Socrates held precisely this view of the relationship between endurance and knowledge of good and evil. It will be useful to begin by drawing a contrast between his view and the views of Plato and Aristotle.

Both Plato and Aristotle hold that a virtuous person is one whose emotions and appetites have been trained to the point where they are amenable to the control of reason. Aristotle distinguishes between the state of full-fledged virtue and a condition he calls "continence" or "self-control" (*ἐγκράτεια*).[21] The self-controlled person behaves in the right way and has the right motivation, but his emotions and appetites are not "cooperative" and he must often struggle to do the virtuous act. The virtuous person, on the other hand, is something like a Kantian "holy will": his practical reason meets with no strong opposition from inclination. In the *Republic* we find a similar view of the virtuous character. The virtues are seen as dispositions resulting from an extensive process of molding and training the appetitive and spirited parts of the soul, a process that begins in early childhood. The goal is a condition of harmonious cooperation between these parts of the soul and the rational part, whose function is to deliberate and decide how one ought to act.

The early dialogues show no signs of the view that a virtuous person's appetites and emotions must be tamed and channeled in the right direction. In a way, this is exactly what we would expect, given Socrates' intellectualism. In the terminology of the *Republic*, he would contend that it doesn't matter how things stand with the spirited and appetitive parts of the soul; as long as the individual's

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I accept her suggestion that endurance is guaranteed by knowledge of good and evil (I do not, however, agree with her way of understanding *καρτερία*; cf. 274–77).

[21] See *Nicomachean Ethics* VII, 8–10.

rational part has the requisite knowledge, he will be a virtuous person and will behave in the appropriate manner. A similar point is made at the beginning of Aristotle's *Magna Moralia.*

> After him [Pythagoras] came Socrates, who spoke better and further about this subject, but even he was not successful. For he made the virtues sciences (ἐπιστήμας), but this is impossible. For all the sciences involve reason, and reason is found in the thinking [or "rational"—διανοητικῷ] part of the soul. So, according to him, all the virtues are to be found in the rational (λογιστικῷ) part of the soul. The result is that in making the virtues sciences he does away with the irrational part of the soul, and thereby also does away with both passion and moral character (ἦθος); so that he has not been successful in this respect in his treatment of the virtues. (1182a15–23)

In fact, Socrates tends to view the virtuous person as one who is typically victorious over strong passions.[22] In the *Laches*, for instance, he describes the courageous man as one who is "mighty in battle" against pain and fear, desire and pleasure (191d–e); and in the *Protagoras* he speaks of knowledge of good and evil as something strong and masterful, capable of overcoming and ruling such opposing forces as fear, anger, pleasure, pain, and carnal passion (352b–c). The protagonists in this internal struggle are not parts of the soul, but knowledge on the one side, and desires, fears, etc. on the other.

Socratic virtue seems closer to Aristotelian self-control (ἐγκράτεια) than to Aristotelian virtue. Aristotle seems to make this point himself in an interesting passage in the *Eudemian Ethics.*

> Now that we have determined these things, we must say whether virtue makes *choice* (προαίρεσις) free from error and the end right, so

[22]It might be thought that the passage just quoted from the *Magna Moralia* implies that Socrates did not recognize nonrational desires that are overcome by knowledge; in saying that Socrates "did away with the irrational part of the soul," Aristotle seems to imply that knowledge encounters no opposition from (nonrational) appetites. But surely Aristotle does not mean that according to the Socratic view, virtuous people simply *lack* an irrational part of the soul. I take him to mean that Socrates did away with, or ignored, the irrational part of the soul *in his account of the ethical virtues*, that is, that he was mistaken in thinking that the irrational part of the soul has nothing to do with ethical virtue.

> that one chooses with a view to the thing that one should, *or* whether, as it seems to some, it makes reason (*λόγος*) right. But *that* state is continence (*ἐγκράτεια*), for continence preserves ["does not corrupt"] reason. But virtue differs from continence; we must speak about both these states later, since for those who think that virtue makes *reason* correct, this is the reason why they think so. For continence is of the same sort [as virtue], and it is among the things that are commended. (1227b12–19)

As Michael Woods suggests in his *Commentary*,[23] the passage draws a contrast between the following two views:

(i) Virtue makes our *choice* right, and this is a matter of our grasping and *desiring* the right end.

(ii) Virtue makes *reason* correct: it enables us both to grasp the right end and to see how to achieve the end (but does not change our "inclinations").

Aristotle accepts (i) and argues against (ii). His objection to (ii) is that it collapses the distinction between virtue and self-control or continence (*ἐγκράτεια*)—the "reason why they think" that virtue makes reason (rather than choice) correct is that they do not see the difference between virtue and continence. It is commonly believed that Aristotle has Socrates in mind as one of those "who think this way," and that he takes (ii) to express the Socratic view.[24] If so, the

[23] *Aristotle's Eudemian Ethics, Books I, II, and VII*, trans. and commentary by Michael Woods (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 163–66.

[24] Cf. F. Dirlmeier, *Aristoteles, Eudemische Ethik* (Berlin: 1962), 303, on 1227b14; *Aristote, Ethique à Eudème*, trans. with notes by V. Décarie (Paris: J. Vrin, 1978), 116 n. 163; Kapp, *Der Verhältnis der eudemischen zur nikomachischen Ethik* (Diss. Freiburg, Br. 1912), 12–16; R. A. Gauthier and J. Y. Jolif, *Aristote, L'Ethique á Nicomaque* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), II, 2, p. 577. One reason for thinking that Aristotle is referring to Socrates is that he is the only philosopher we know of whose conception of virtue seems to fit. (It clearly cannot be said that *Plato* conceives of virtue in such a way that it turns out to be the same thing as continence; cf. *Magna Moralia* 1182a23–26.) It is also worth noting that (a) the view Aristotle has in mind holds that "virtue makes the *logos* right and free of error," and (b) in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1144b28–30 he says that Socrates thought the virtues were *logous*, whereas *he* claims that they are *meta logou*. Again, this contrast—using the term *logos* to characterize Socrates' view—suggests that

passage shows that Aristotle regarded Socratic virtue as a kind of self-control or continence;[25] reason (or reason informed by knowledge) guarantees virtuous conduct, not by silencing or redirecting unruly desires, but by *overpowering* them.[26]

Socrates ignored the importance of the appetitive part of the soul in his account of the virtues.

[25]It is interesting to note that Xenophon's Socrates attaches great importance to self-control (*engkrateia*), calling it at one point the "foundation" (κρηπίς) of virtue (*Memorabilia* I, 5, 4;cf. II, 1 and IV, 5). In Xenophon, however, *engkrateia* is a quality acquired through training and habituation, and thus seems at odds with a strictly intellectualist conception of virtue.

[26]It might be thought that the comparison of knowledge of good and evil with an art of measurement in the *Protagoras* (356d) tells against the way I am understanding the power of knowledge: given that the art of measurement enables us to avoid being taken in by the misleading appearances of goods and evils (owing to their nearness or remoteness in time), it might seem that knowledge, as it were, *disarms* its opponents prior to battle, thus eliminating any real need for struggle. But Socrates does not claim that the art of measurement changes, for example, the way pain and fear appear to us when they are near at hand: knowing how to measure the true height of a pyramid at a distance does not change the way it appears to us. Knowledge provides the means to overcome (even) a powerful opponent, not a way of eliminating struggle.

Vlastos has a different understanding of the power of knowledge. He argues that the "motive force" of virtuous conduct is always *desire* for the good, and knowledge of the good is what gives direction to this force; "the power of knowledge is its ability to inform, not to engender" the desire for the good (*PS*, 428; for the view that Socratic knowledge *engenders* desire for the good, see John M. Cooper, "Some Remarks on Aristotle's Moral Psychology," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 27 (suppl.) (1988): 29–30). He also claims that Socrates holds that all men desire the good, "and desire nothing else, except as a means to the good or as a part of it" (416; cf. Irwin, *PMT*, 78–80). This would seem to imply that someone who *knows* the good would not have any desires in conflict with his desire for that good. However, Socrates' description of the way knowledge ensures virtuous action clearly implies that the agent (at least sometimes) has desires pulling in other directions (see *Protagoras* 352b–c; cf. *Laches* 191d–e). Moreover, it would seem very odd to describe knowledge as something "strong" or powerful (352b4) if it does not engender or provide any "motive force." (My contention that Socrates regards knowledge of good and evil as a motive force should not be taken as an endorsement of Penner's view that in asking "What is virtue?" Socrates is seeking a psychological cause of virtuous conduct and *not* an essence or universal ("The Unity of Virtue," 56–57). I agree with Vlastos and Ferejohn that Socrates' question should be understood as seeking both (i) an essence or universal, and (ii) an explanation of virtuous conduct; see Vlastos, *PS*, 411–16, and Fere-

The Socratically virtuous person is one who can *hold out* against strong forces in a struggle to act as knowledge bids. Such a person has endurance, or what we might call "will power"; but this power does not derive from the will, but solely from one's knowledge of the good.[27] For Socrates, the power of knowledge of good and evil manifests itself as a kind of endurance; the capacity to endure "comes with" the knowledge.

We noticed earlier that there are clear suggestions in the *Laches* that the quality of endurance is characteristic of courage and should be included in its definition. But this view seemed to conflict with Socrates' claim near the end of the dialogue that knowledge of good and evil is sufficient by itself for courageous behavior: if this knowledge is sufficient, then whether or not one has endurance seems irrelevant. However, once we see the particular way in which Socrates understands the power of knowledge (i.e., as a force that can overpower resistant passions), we can see that endurance is a necessary concomitant of knowledge of good and evil. This knowledge is sufficient for virtuous behavior by indicating how one ought to act, and at the same time enabling one to *endure* in the face of conflicting appetites and emotions. Thus, we can grant that knowledge of good and evil is sufficient by itself for courageous behavior, and still maintain that endurance is an essential distinguishing feature of courage and should be included in its definition; if the definition mentions only the kind of knowledge involved, we end up with the dilemma Socrates poses at the end of the dialogue: courage becomes indistinguishable from the whole of virtue, that is, wisdom.

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john, "The Unity of Virtue and the Objects of Socratic Inquiry," cited above, n. 4.)

[27]Aristotelian self-control differs from Socratic virtue in this respect. There seems to be no intellectual or cognitive difference, for Aristotle, between the self-controlled and the weak-willed (*akratês*) person; they both have a grasp of the right end, and are able to figure out effective means of achieving the end. Hence what enables the self-controlled person to avoid giving in to passion—what enables him to *endure*—is an aspect of temperament rather than intellect. (There is a difficulty here for Aristotle: on the one hand, he argues that practical wisdom depends on moral virtue since virtue is needed for a grasp of the end (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1144a20–b1); but both the self-controlled and the weak-willed person apparently have a grasp of the end even though they are not virtuous (1145a15–b2).)

5.

We have seen that Vlastos's claim that the virtues are regarded as distinct parts of a whole in the *Laches* has solid textual support. But his view of how the virtues differ from each other in *definition* does not square with the final argument of the dialogue. Socrates there suggests that the knowledge essential to courage is indistinguishable from wisdom, that is, knowledge of good and evil. What sets courage apart from the other virtues is not the particular type of knowledge involved (Vlastos's view), but the quality of endurance. Endurance is an aspect of knowledge of good and evil in that it is the way in which this knowledge manifests itself in the face of conflicting appetites and emotions. Courage can therefore be seen as a *part* of wisdom—it is wisdom insofar as it manifests itself in endurance. Applying the pattern suggested in the *Laches* to the other virtues, each of them (except wisdom itself) will be parts of wisdom in that each will involve some particular quality or aspect of knowledge of good and evil that is reflected in behavior characteristic of the virtue.

But is it plausible to suppose that Socrates holds that courage is coextensive with wise endurance in the face of conflicting appetites and emotions?[28] If we accept the parallel between Socratic virtue and Aristotelian self-control, wouldn't it turn out that practically all virtuous actions are instances of courage? It must be granted, on *any* interpretation of the *Laches*, that Socrates has an extremely broad view of the range of courageous behavior. He points out to Laches—an Athenian general—that courage is demonstrated not only on the field of battle, but also in political life and in dealing with poverty; one can be courageous not only in overcoming fear, but also in putting up with pain and even in withstanding the blandishments of pleasure (191d–e, 192b). If we may take Aristotle as a reliable guide to traditional Greek views about the range of courageous behavior,[29] it is clear that Socrates is calling for a drastic redrawing of boundaries: traditional views are too narrow in regard to both the kinds of individuals who may be considered courageous and the kind of conduct that should be called brave.[30]

[28]See *Laches* 192e for some possible qualifications to this general claim.
[29]See *Nicomachean Ethics* III, 6.
[30]Cf. Vlastos, *PS*, 411 n. 3.

However, we need not suppose that the Socratic view, as I have interpreted it, entails that *all* virtuous actions are instances of courage. There may be, for instance, many just or pious actions that do not involve struggle or the need to overcome conflicting appetites or emotions. On the other hand, when a person shows endurance in performing such actions, he will at the same time be acting courageously. Although the Socratic view is at odds with the traditional Greek (and Aristotelian) conception of courage, it seems eminently plausible. Surely it is *not* plausible to hold that adult males from a certain social and economic class have privileged access to this virtue.

One might object that Socrates goes too far in his revisionist project. If courage can be manifested even in overcoming appetites for pleasure, one wonders if there is any room left for temperance.[31] It is not just that instances of temperance will always be instances of courage. If temperance is viewed as self-control with respect to certain kinds of pleasures and appetites, there will be no distinction between the *ways* in which an action is courageous or temperate. 'Temperance' will simply be a name for courage shown in certain kinds of situations. But this objection overlooks the fact that the Greek term *sôphrosunê* (*σωφροσύνη*) has a much broader range of application than 'temperance'. *'Sôphrosunê'* can be used not only for self-control with respect to passions and appetites, but also for qualities of intellect such as prudence, discretion, and self-knowledge in the sense of a proper awareness of one's limitations.[32] It is striking that in the *Charmides*, an early dialogue devoted to *sôphrosunê*, the discussion focuses exclusively on the more intellectual side of this virtue. The same is true of Socrates' treat-

[31]Cf. Santas, "Socrates at Work," 187, and Gould, "Socratic Intellectualism," 267.

[32]In the *Republic* (at 389d) Socrates says that ". . . *for most people, sôphrosunê* involves obedience to rulers and exercising rule over the bodily appetites and pleasures of food, drink, and sex" (cf. *Phaedo* 68c). Apparently those who stressed the intellectualist side of *sôphrosunê* were in a minority. In the *Laws* (at 710a–b), Plato expresses a preference for this more common view of *sôphrosunê* over the more "high-flown" intellectualist (Socratic?) conception that seeks to assimilate it to *phronêsis*. In the *Gorgias* we find the first indications of a conception of *sôphrosunê* as a certain order among the parts of the soul; cf. 506e–507a. (At 493a there is a reference to that [part] of the soul "in which there are appetites.")

ment of *sôphrosunê* in the *Protagoras* (332a–333b). On the one hand, Socrates seems to limit the range of *sôphrosunê* by focusing exclusively on its intellectual side, and on the other, he expands the range of courage by allowing it to take over the space traditionally occupied by the nonintellectual side of *sôphrosunê*. If this is true, Socrates' revisionist project does after all leave room for a distinction between courage and *sôphrosunê*.

6.

We have seen that all the virtues except wisdom are regarded as distinct parts of a whole in the *Laches*. Wisdom itself, however, is described as the whole of virtue. I suggested that Socrates' reason for thinking of wisdom as a whole (with the other virtues as its parts) is twofold: (i) wisdom *directly* entails the other virtues and is the key to their unity; (ii) only wisdom is exemplified in all virtuous activity. What distinguishes the parts of virtue from each other is not that they are diverse forms or species of wisdom. The knowledge essential to each of the other virtues is knowledge of good and evil, and what differentiates them is some additional distinctive factor or quality (e.g., endurance in the case of courage).

This rather complex view of the unity of the virtues *in wisdom* has no parallel in the *Protagoras*. We have seen that if 349b–d is taken as definitive evidence of Socrates' position, the option he seems to endorse commits him to the identity thesis. Even if we were to agree with Vlastos's biconditional interpretation, the position in the *Protagoras* would still be quite different from that of the *Laches*; for according to Socrates' formulation of the option that virtue is a whole made up of parts, wisdom is considered to be one of the five parts—there is no suggestion in the *Protagoras* that wisdom is the whole of virtue.[33] So it appears that both the biconditional and the identity interpretations of Socrates' position in the *Protagoras* are incompatible with the view he adopts in the *Laches*.

Earlier I argued that Vlastos's contention that Socrates regards the virtues as distinct parts of a whole is well founded in the case of the *Laches* and *Meno*, but not in the case of the *Protagoras*; the weight of evidence in this dialogue tells in favor of the identity

[33]See, for example, 349b and 359a.

interpretation.[34] However, there are a couple of passages that are difficult to square with the identity view. For instance, towards the end of the dialogue, Socrates constructs an argument leading to the conclusion that courage is knowledge of what is "to be feared and dared" (359b–360d). The context makes it clear that this is meant to be an account of what courage is, that is, a definition.[35] The reference to "fear" (and to "daring") indicates that this is intended to be an account of courage and not, for example, of justice. So, inasmuch as this argument suggests that courage is definitionally distinct from the other virtues, it runs counter to the view that the virtues are identical in definition.

Defenders of the identity interpretation might counter by suggesting that, as the final argument of the *Laches* indicates, Socrates regards knowledge of what is to be feared and dared as identical with knowledge of good and evil; and this latter description may serve as a definition or account of *any* of the virtues.[36] But if this is true, Socrates' argumentative strategy towards the end of the *Protagoras* seems strikingly inept. At 358b–c it is agreed that only if one has knowledge of good and evil (knowledge of "the art of measurement") will one be able to make the correct choice of actions and not be diverted by pleasure, pain, etc. from acting as one ought. In particular, one will know which risks are worth taking and which would be foolish, and one will not be swayed by fear or pain to act otherwise than as knowledge bids; and since it is through knowledge of good and evil that one is courageous, courage will be none other than this knowledge. If Socrates' aim in the *Protagoras* were to defend the identity view, it is difficult to see why he would not avail himself of this simple and straightforward argument equating courage with knowledge of good and evil. His apparent endorsement of an account of courage that distinguishes

[34]In addition to 349a–b (discussed above, sec. 1), we might point to the conclusion of the argument for the unity of temperance and wisdom: "Are not temperance and wisdom, then, *one*; and earlier it seemed to us that justice and piety were almost the *same*" (333b4–6). The implication is that while justice and piety were seen to be almost the same, temperance and wisdom *are* one and the same. See also 350c4–5: "and according to this argument courage would be wisdom."

[35]See Vlastos, *PS*, 434–35.

[36]Cf. Penner, "The Unity of Virtue," 65–66; also Irwin, *PMT*, 86–90, and Taylor, *Plato's Protagoras*, 106–8.

it from other virtues is at odds with a firm commitment to the identity view.

The *Protagoras* thus gives us "mixed signals" regarding Socrates' unity thesis; a number of his claims and arguments point to the strong version according to which the virtues are identical with each other, but in a couple of places he appears to endorse the weaker view that the virtues are definitionally distinct parts of a whole. Interestingly enough, we find the same ambivalence in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. In some passages Socrates is reported to hold that the virtues are identical, but in others one gets the clear impression that he thought they had distinct definitions.[37] In the *Laches*, on the other hand, there are no mixed signals: the virtues are conceived as definitionally distinct parts of a whole, united by knowledge of good and evil.

One naturally wonders what might account for this important discrepancy between the *Laches* and the *Protagoras*, both of which are early dialogues. Let me put forward a speculative hypothesis. Let us suppose that in the *Protagoras*, Plato sets himself the task of bringing together the various claims and arguments of the historical Socrates concerning the interrelations among the virtues; these assertions and arguments do not combine to form an internally consistent position for the simple reason that Socrates *did not have* a systematic, coherent doctrine of the unity of virtue. There were unresolved tensions in his views, and these are preserved in Plato's portrayal of the debate between Socrates and Protagoras. In the *Laches*, Plato resolves these tensions and articulates a more coherent doctrine; on the one hand, he drops the claim that the virtues are identical, and on the other, he develops and refines the idea that the virtues are parts of a whole and that wisdom is the key to their unity. The modified position is still strongly intellectualist, holding—as Socrates did—that a certain kind of knowledge is necessary and sufficient for virtuous conduct.[38]

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[37]We find, on the one hand, statements like the following: "Socrates made no distinction between temperance and wisdom; . . . He also said that justice and every other virtue is wisdom" (III, 9, 4–5); but in passages discussing individual virtues Socrates seems to treat them as if they had distinct definitions (cf. IV, 4, 7–18; IV, 6, 4–6; IV, 6, 10–11).

[38]We noticed above that even though Socrates could have argued directly for the conclusion that courage = knowledge of good and evil, he

The suggested explanation cannot help but be mere speculation: since Plato is our main source of data for the views of the historical Socrates, there is no way of testing the hypothesis that the *Protagoras* gives us an unexpurgated account of Socrates' views concerning the unity of the virtues, preserving all the ambiguities and unresolved tensions in those views. However, the foregoing discussion has shown, I believe, that there is an undeniable conflict between the *Protagoras* and the *Laches* on the unity of virtue. Even if we follow the current orthodoxy and maintain that Socrates *consistently* argues for unity as identity in the *Protagoras*, the position he adopts in the *Laches* is clearly opposed to this. I would therefore submit that all attempts to make out a unified and consistent doctrine of the unity of the virtues in the early dialogues are exercises in futility.[39]

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argues instead for a definition ("knowledge of what is to be feared and dared") that seems to differentiate courage from other virtues. In view of the fact that the *Laches* contains an argument equating knowledge of good and evil with knowledge of what is to be feared and dared, one wonders why Socrates does not at least offer a similar argument in the *Protagoras*. There are clear indications that both Xenophon and Aristotle regarded the formula "knowledge of what is to be feared and dared" as a Socratic definition of courage; see *Memorabilia*, IV, 6, 10–11, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1116b3 ff., *Eudemian Ethics* 1230a7–10, and especially 1229a14–16. But we do not find in Xenophon or Aristotle any evidence that Socrates equated this knowledge with knowledge of good and evil. These facts might lend some support to our hypothesis that in the *Protagoras* Plato tries to stay close to the views of the historical Socrates as he understood and remembered them, while in the *Laches* he is modifying those views. One of the modifications, it seems, is a revision of the Socratic definition of courage: instead of "knowledge of what is to be feared and dared," it will be something like "knowledge of good and evil *qua* possessing the power of endurance." (Vlastos agrees that in the *Laches* Socrates rejects the definition of courage that he argues for in the *Protagoras*; see *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 50 n. 20. However, it is not clear whether he thinks this reflects a change in the conception of how the virtues form a unity.) For another example of (implicit) criticism of Socratic views in the *Laches*, see my "Courage and Wisdom," 136–37.

[39]I am grateful to George Klosko, Gregory Vlastos, and the anonymous readers of this journal for very helpful criticisms of earlier drafts of this essay. Gregory Vlastos's warm encouragement through the years meant a great deal to me—without it, this essay would not have been written.