Fathers, Sons, and the Dorian Mode in the *Laches*

IAN CRYSTAL *Louisiana State University*

ABSTRACT : This paper explores two interconnected themes that reoccur throughout the Laches: *reworking the role of the father and the harmony of one's words with their actions, the Dorian mode. These two themes, in addition to the discussion of courage, will turn out to be directly relevant to the nurturing of the souls of the sons. The question then arises whether any of the interlocutors present are adequate father figures who might be able to nurture the souls of the boys in a manner that is adequate. Judging by the conclusion of the dialogue, the only possible candidate is Socrates.*

RÉSUMÉ : Deux thématiques liées du Lachès *sont l'objet de la communication : le redressage du rôle du père et le mode dorien, c'est-à-dire, l'harmonie des mots avec les actions. Ces deux thématiques, ainsi que la discussion de courage, se révéleront directement pertinentes à la nourriture des âmes des fils. La question se pose alors de savoir si, parmi les interlocuteurs présents, existe-t-il des figures du père adéquates qui pourraient être capables de nourrir les âmes des garçons d'une manière suffisante. A en juger par la conclusion du dialogue, le seul candidat possible est Socrates.*

The standard reading of the *Laches* regards it as an early Socratic dialogue that attempts, albeit unsuccessfully, to offer a definition or account of courage or manliness (*andreia*).[1] No doubt, the discussion of courage and virtue is central to understanding the dialogue. Almost half of the dialogue is devoted to this topic (190d7–199e12). That said, however, the remainder of the dialogue, some fourteen pages (178a1–190d6, 199e13–201c6), is not.[2] In this paper, I shall argue that two distinct but interconnected themes, in addition to courage, are also crucial to understanding the dialogue as a whole. The first theme is that

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of fathers and sons, a theme that recurs throughout the first part of the dialogue.[3] The second pertains to what Laches refers to as the Dorian mode, namely the harmonization of one's words and deeds (188d5–6). Neither of these themes has for the most part been properly appreciated in relation to the dialogue as a whole or in relation to one another. The manner in which these two themes relate to one another is that the fulfillment of the Dorian mode will serve as a necessary condition for the father figure, enabling him to be in a position to fulfill his role in relation to the son. Consequently, these two themes taken together will shed light on such questions as to who is best able to instruct in the care of the souls of the young men in question, be it Socrates or someone else, and what constitutes the appropriate means for doing so.

The Dramatic Setting

The dramatic setting immediately ties into the theme of fathers and sons in that we quickly learn the purpose of this meeting, namely how best to better the sons in question. One aspect that makes the setting structurally unique is the length of its introduction, which is not philosophical in nature prior to the dialogue's elenctic discussion of courage.[4] Lysimachus's opening speech in particular is indicative of this non-philosophical beginning. He outlines why he and his close friend Melesias requested to meet with the generals, Laches and Nicias. They are hoping to get some advice about how best to nurture their sons (179a8–b6). It could be said that their concern is, at best, only implicitly philosophical in that the nurturing does pertain to the well-being of their sons' souls. At the outset of the dialogue, it is not even clear whether Socrates is present.[5] This is made evident only when Laches points him out to Lysimachus (180c1). And Socrates does not utter a word until three pages in, at 181d1, and does not give the discussion its philosophical impetus and focus until 184d5.

A consequence of Socrates' initial absence is that the other interlocutors are at sea as to how to achieve the end that Lysimachus outlined at the beginning, namely to take the best care of their sons ("Thus we are resolved to take the best care of them," 179a4–5).[6] Consequently, it is unclear how "fighting in armour" (179e1–2) would better the souls of the youths. More to the point, a discussion of the youths' souls does not even become an explicit concern until Socrates takes over and gives the dialogue its proper focus:

> Are not our friends, Laches, now inviting us to consider the manner in which virtue may be imparted to their sons for the improvement of their souls? (190b3–5)

The manner in which Lysimachus decides upon fighting in armour as a way of bettering the boys is, at best, arbitrary. We are simply told that some unidentified person suggested it to Lysimachus as a possible subject that could improve the youths (179e1–2), leaving it completely unclear as to what relation this individual has to the youths or what qualifies him to make such a suggestion.

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Thus the dramatic setting is such that Lysimachus and Melesias are portrayed as being in the dark with respect to the nurturing of their sons' souls.

This sort of introduction is markedly different from, say, other early dialogues such as the *Euthyphro*, *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Gorgias*, and *Protagoras*, where Socrates' presence is immediately felt through either his philosophical enquiry or his narration of events.[7] In our dialogue, his presence emerges only when Laches and Nicias introduce him to Lysimachus and explain why it is appropriate that Socrates be a part of the discussion (180c1–d3, 181a7–b4). If anything, the character who frames the dialogue is Lysimachus. He is the one who sets out why he has called this meeting and what he and Melesias hope to gain from it (178a1–180a5). And, at the conclusion of the dialogue, it is only Lysimachus and presumably Melesias, and not Laches and Nicias, who will be meeting with Socrates the next day to pursue the question of who should educate their sons further ("I like what you say, Socrates, and the fact that I am the oldest makes me most eager to go to school with the youths" [201b6–8]).[8] One could read this somewhat unique introduction as a way of emphasizing the traditional sort of perspective from which Lysimachus and Melesias view matters. They are not philosophical in nature but they do see the need to fulfill their roles as fathers and produce the best possible sons.

Fathers and Sons

In order to appreciate the full force of Lysimachus's opening speech and the subsequent exchanges prior to the elenctic discussion of courage and virtue at 190d7ff., it is necessary to take the dramatic date of the dialogue into consideration. We know from Laches' reference to Socrates' bravery at the battle of Delium (181b1)[9] and from the date of Laches' death that the dialogue occurs somewhere between 424 B.C. and 418 B.C.[10] This is significant because at that time in Athenian cultural development there was a debate taking place between the proponents of the traditional view about education and virtue and the sophistic movement with its response to such a view, about how best to educate the Athenian youth.[11] The issues at the core of this fifth-century debate called into question the role of the father in the life of his son's education.[12] The relevance of this socio-cultural background will become readily apparent through Lysimachus's remarks and the manner in which he relates to his interlocutors, as well as through the nature of Socrates' introduction.

Before turning to what Lysimachus has to say, however, a few points about this traditional perspective will shed light on and tie together the themes of fathers and sons and words and deeds. Within the Homeric tradition, the hero who seeks glory and honour is expected to be both a "doer of great deeds" and a "speaker of great words" (*Iliad* 9.442–3). The theme of words and deeds is emphasized in the *Laches* in terms of achieving success within both the domain of "words" (*logoi*) and that of "deeds" (*erga*), thereby occupying a position capable of bringing about their harmony (188d5–6). However, in

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the context of the *Laches*, the theme of harmonizing one's words and deeds will consist of one's words, i.e., arguments, being able to ground one's deeds. Or at least that is how Socrates understands it (193d11–e4, quoted below).[13] The emphasis on such an interconnection was not stressed within the traditional context. According to the latter perspective, the ability to utter great words and perform great deeds was, in part, guaranteed by aristocratic bloodlines passed on from father to son; several instances in Homer emphasize this point.[14] On the traditional view, one's father plays a crucial role in the life of the son and the latter's ability to achieve great words and deeds. In the context of the *Laches*, however, this theme of words and deeds will relate to the theme of fathers and sons in that the harmonization of one's words and deeds serves as a necessary condition for the father figure to fulfill his role in relation to his son.

Lysimachus's introductory remarks in many ways betray this traditional socio-cultural background.[15] He and Melesias, judging by their fathers' accomplishments, come from a well-established aristocratic background.[16] Their fathers, Aristides and Thucydides, were two well-known fifth-century statesmen and military men.[17] Lysimachus tells us the following about them:

> … each of us has a great many fine things to say to the young men about his father, things they achieved both in war and peace in their management of allies and of the city here. (179c2–5)

They achieved glory and honour not just in times of war but in times of peace as well, implying that they too were men of both great deeds and great words, in the managing of allies and their city. By contrast, Lysimachus and Melesias are discontent and ashamed at how little they have achieved in their lives. It is noteworthy how Lysimachus expresses his displeasure at this fact. Keeping in line with the traditional aristocratic norms, Lysimachus speaks of his dissatisfaction in terms of shame (179c6). Consequently, both he and Melesias want their sons to achieve great things as their own fathers did and not, like themselves, to be bereft of glory (179d4). This desire on their part reflects the traditional culture of shame.[18] It is worth pointing out that there is an implicit criticism here of the traditional view of greatness being passed from father to son. According to this account, Melesias and Lysimachus should also be doers of great words and deeds, given who their fathers were. Yet, as they readily admit, they have accomplished neither.

It is not merely Lysimachus and Melesias's desire for the youths to achieve great deeds and words that sets the stage for the dialogue. The manner in which Lysimachus relates to Laches and Nicias is indicative of the other aforementioned theme that Plato appears to be emphasizing: They did not approach the two generals simply because of their military and political achievements, but also because of their roles as dutiful fathers:

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> Since we knew that both of you had sons too, we thought that you, if anyone, would have been concerned about the sort of training that would make the best men of them. And if by any chance you have not turned your attention to this kind of thing very often, let us remind you that you ought not to neglect it, and let us invite you to care for our sons along with us. (179a8–b6)

To a certain extent Laches and Nicias remind us of Lysimachus's and Melesias's fathers in that they too are well-known public figures.[19] Presumably, from their perspective Laches and Nicias have also achieved great deeds and words. However, they also assume that neither of them has neglected their paternal obligations (179a8–b2). This emphasis on the role of one's father will reoccur with the introduction of Socrates (180d4–181a2).

Lysimachus is clear from the outset that he is not interested in how he and Melesias might appear in searching out the best form of instruction for their sons (178a4–b3). In other words, his concern for the boys' well-being is genuine. He emphasizes this point with his mention of how important it is to be frank (*parrêsiazesthai*), regardless of how he and Melesias might appear in this process:

> But we think it especially right to be frank with you. Now there are some people who make fun of frankness and if anyone asks their advice, they do not say what they think but they make a shot at what the other man would like to hear and say, something different from their own opinion. (178a4–b3, also *cf.* 179c1–2)

This should be contrasted with Nicias's initial account of the art of "fighting in arms," where he speaks of how one of the benefits of such a pursuit is that it gives one a fine appearance (182c7–d5). What one could take from Nicias's recognition of the importance of how things appear and the manipulation of those appearances is that Nicias sees himself as part of the new intellectual movement that the sophists have initiated. For he clearly is associated with the sophist Damon, who in turn is associated with the sophist Prodicus (197d1–5).[20] Thus by having Lysimachus emphasize the importance of being "frank," Plato might be dramatically highlighting how far removed from the sophistic intellectual movement Lysimachus is and, consequently, further reinforcing the view that he is approaching the matter of the youths from a more traditional perspective.[21]

Lysimachus's genuine concern is further reflected by the fact that he will be one of those who will return the next day to carry on the discussion as to how best to educate or care for the souls of the youths.[22] Lysimachus casts this concern for the boys in terms of care and nurture (*epimeleia* and *therapeia*). This is important because it immediately links or connects the goal of the elderly fathers to the younger Socrates and his mission. In the *Apology*, Socrates defends his actions as part of his task of looking out or caring for (*epimeleisthai*) the well-being of Athens and her citizens, including its youths:

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> … but I went to each of you privately and gave to him what I say is the greatest benefit, attempting to persuade each one not to care for any of his belongings before caring for himself, so that he should be as good and wise as possible, not to care for the things belonging to the city before the city itself, and to care for other things in the same way—(36c3–d1)

The youths in the *Laches* would already be familiar with this aspect of Socrates because they, unlike their fathers, are already acquainted with Socrates (181a3). As Lysimachus remarks, the youths in question have been "going on" to their fathers about Socrates ("Tell me, boys, is this the Socrates you spoke of on those occasions?" [181a1–2]). Thus, the boys are at least somewhat familiar with Socrates and the type of philosophical discourse in which he engages. Lysimachus, by contrast, has a very different more traditional relation to him from that of the youths (180c1–d3). He does not know Socrates as one who is involved in any sort of philosophical enterprise or as someone who is concerned with the care of the souls of his fellow Athenians, something which Laches and Nicias stress (180c1–d3), but rather relates to Socrates as a fellow demesman and through the acquaintance he already has with Socrates' father, Sophroniscus (180d4–181a1). Unlike the youths, Lysimachus has no relation to or understanding of the philosophical Socrates. His acquaintance is along traditional familial lines.[23] Lysimachus maintains that it is Socrates' duty to help them search out a suitable form of study for the boys in light of their connection of deme and, more importantly, Lysimachus's friendship with Socrates' father ("For I happened to be friends with your father" [180e1–2]). In relating to Socrates from such a perspective, Lysimachus recognizes in him and stresses something which he and Melesias have failed to achieve, namely to be sons who have upheld the good reputations of their fathers ("I am delighted to hear, Socrates, that you uphold the name of your father" [181a4–5]).[24]

Just as they were by the two youths, Socrates' educational credentials also are validated by Laches and Nicias. Laches tells the gentlemen that Socrates is always spending his time around Athenian youth who are engaged in study and noble pursuits (180c2–4). Moreover, at the conclusion of the dialogue, Laches goes so far as to remark that if his children were old enough, he would like Socrates to educate them (200c4–5). Nicias tells how Socrates recommended a teacher of music, Damon, for his son (180c9–d3), and later on he will praise Socrates' ability to direct discussions in an admirable manner (187e6–188c3).[25] In addition to his intellectual credentials, Laches also goes out of his way when introducing Socrates to the elderly gentlemen to highlight his deeds in battle. Thus with the initial introduction of Socrates, we have a foreshadowing of the distinction between words and deeds and their harmony, which Laches will emphasize when he speaks of Socrates' manliness and touches upon the Dorian mode in connection with his critique of this new art of "fighting in arms" (188d6).[26] This theme, as has already been noted

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by some, is crucial to this dialogue.[27] It will be the measure by which to judge the various characters in the dialogue and will relate directly, as already noted, to the theme of fathers in the lives of their sons and the nurturing of their souls. Lysimachus and Melesias, for instance, are lacking in both categories. They have accomplished nothing to speak of in either the military or political domains that might serve as examples for their sons to emulate (which, in contrast to the achievements of their own fathers, is a source of shame) and, as a result, they do not have any idea of how best to educate their sons. That is, at present they are unable to fulfill their duties as fathers. Consequently, their sons lack father figures who could better their souls. Socrates, on the other hand, given the way in which he is introduced, looks like someone who might be able to unify both words and deeds: he has distinguished himself in defending the city and has shown himself to be engaged in attending to souls of the young, through discussions about excellence pertaining to the soul. The question is whether he is sufficient as a councilor of the souls of the young. If so, then he might qualify as an adequate father figure for the young men.[28] Such a figure, given his deeds, would serve as an example for the youths to emulate and, in light of his philosophical acuity, be able to ground such actions in argument which the youths could presumably understand. As to where Laches and Nicias stand in relation to the accomplishment of words and deeds and the achieving of the Dorian mode, that will become more apparent with their positions on "fighting in arms" and their accounts of courage.

With the introductions in place, Lysimachus returns the conversation to the original query, whether "fighting in arms" is an appropriate means to better the souls of the youths, thereby enabling them to fulfill, at least in part, their duties as fathers (181b5–c9). Socrates, while willing to contribute, feels it to be appropriate first to hear the views of his elders, Nicias and Laches, which, on the face of it, could be read as his regard for the traditional norms (181d1–7).[29] What emerges with their accounts of "fighting in arms" are their differences in perspective. Nicias thinks "fighting in arms" is a good form of education because it teaches one about the science of warfare, as well as enables one to have a fine appearance (181d8–182d5). In other words, he sees himself as approaching the subject from a theoretical perspective. Laches, by contrast, does not regard this art of "fighting in arms" as a legitimate one. He maintains that if it were, then Sparta would have embraced it or, at the very least, the teachers of this art would have gone there in an attempt to teach it to them (182d6–183c1). In addition, Laches' own personal experience is that those who do fight in this manner come off looking rather foolish (183c1–184c8). Thus, Laches reflects on the particular deeds he himself has witnessed. The difference in perspective that the speeches reveal is that Nicias falls on the side of theory, that is, words, and Laches on the side of deeds.[30] This, however, is not meant to imply that either of them is limited to either of the two categories but rather merely that is where their emphases lie. At this point, Lysimachus asks Socrates to cast the

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deciding vote as to whether the study of "fighting in arms" should be taken up by the sons in question (184c9–d4). And it is here that Socrates begins to take over and give the discussion its philosophical impetus. Lysimachus clearly has no idea how to go about deciding what is best for the boys and thus is willing to risk the decision to a somewhat arbitrary vote, a point for which Socrates rebukes him (184d5–6).

At this point, Socrates replaces the biological fathers of the boys in terms of investigating what is best for their souls' well being.[31] Lysimachus and Melesias simply are not in a position to do so. He quickly changes the topic of the discussion to that of the expert and emphasizes the importance of this with respect to the boys' well-being:

> So in the present case it is also necessary to investigate first whether any one of us is an expert or not concerning the subject we are debating. And if one of us is we should listen to him even if he is only one, and disregard the others. But if no one of us is an expert then we must look for someone who is. Or do you and Lysimachus suppose that the subject in question is some small thing and not the greatest of all your possessions? For the question is, I suppose, of whether your sons turn out to be worthwhile persons or the opposite and the entire household of the father will be managed in accordance with the way the sons turn out. (184e11–185a7)

Socrates, while acknowledging the importance of the father-son relationship and the consequences for the father and his household should the son turn out poorly, stresses the need for an expert; that is, someone with the appropriate sort of knowledge. Otherwise the consequences just mentioned would occur because the souls of the young would be poorly nurtured. The only way to prevent such an outcome is to find an expert who can properly guide the youths. The question then becomes: An expert in what? What sort of knowledge is required? Here Socrates moves the discussion forward by distinguishing between the means and the end (185d5–7), the end in this context being the care of the souls of the young men (185e1–2). Thus, for Socrates, it is now a question of finding out who is an expert in caring for souls; someone who is properly able to nurture and educate these young men:

> We must examine whether any one of us is an expert in the care of the soul and is able to care for it well, and has good teachers. (185e4–6)

Unlike the concerns of Socrates, the "goods" which the biological fathers were concerned with for their sons were the traditional ones pertaining to bestowing prestige and reputation upon both one's family and one's household, within the community and for oneself. But Socrates has now redirected the focus away from such external goods to the internal well-being of the soul.[32] The well-being of the household and the family name, as just witnessed from the quote above (184e11–185a7), depends upon the latter. That Socrates has

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replaced the fathers is to be expected given their shortcomings. The very selection of "fighting in arms" as the pursuit which the boys might follow was, as mentioned earlier, somewhat haphazard, given that it was the result of an anonymous recommendation without any justification on the part of Lysimachus as to why it would be a noble pursuit for the young men or how it might better them (179e1–2).

Socrates has now taken over their role but he also has changed that role. He is a different type of father figure, a figure who is concerned with the nurturing of their souls.[33] This is an image of Socrates that we find elsewhere in Plato:

> For it does not seem human to have neglected all of my affairs and to have tolerated their neglect for so many years while always attending to your interests. I went around to each of you privately like a father or older brother persuading you to care for excellence.[34] (*Apology*, 31b1–5)

Again, this theme of the father figure is tied in with our other theme, the harmonization of words and deeds. That is, an argument grounding one's deeds is now required. The connection between the two, as noted earlier, is as follows: the harmonization of words and deeds serves as a necessary condition for the fulfillment of the role of the father. The father figure in question must be able to account for his deeds through argument. Lysimachus makes it clear that he is happy with Socrates' replacing him and Melesias because he is well aware that he lacks the ability to conduct the discussion himself (189c3–d1):[35]

> … so take my place and find out on behalf of the young men what we need to learn from these people, and then, by talking to the young men, join us in giving them advice. Because, on account of my age, I very often forget what questions I was going to ask, and I forget the answers as well. Then, if fresh arguments start up in the middle, my memory is not exactly good. (189c4–d1)

This subversion of the traditional role of the father is dramatized not simply by Socrates' taking control of the discussion but also through the emphasis on him being the youngest of all the adults who are present (189b7, *cf.* 181d3–4).[36]

What is interesting about this paternal imagery is that Socrates understands his relation to the city and its laws in a somewhat similar fashion, albeit in this context, the *Crito*, he is the son and not the father figure. There, he portrays the laws of the city as his true parents (50e3–4) and in his imaginary conversation with them, they tell him that they are more important than his biological parents: "But would it not be much more wrong to harm your fatherland than your mother or father?" (51c2–3). The laws, according to the account, claim ultimate responsibility for his upbringing (50d2 and 50d5–e1). Keeping to this familial image, they tell Socrates that they are brothers of the laws in Hades (54c8), thereby giving themselves a divine foundation. Socrates' relation to the

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city and its divine foundation, namely its laws, cannot be divorced from what he sees as his own divine mission, namely doing what the god bids him to do (*Apology*, 30a5); that is, going around the city and getting people to care about their souls and about the city itself (*Apology*, 36c3–d1).[37] Such a portrayal of Socrates ties in nicely with his loyalty to both the laws of Athens and to its citizens. For one of the points that is emphasized in the *Crito* is that Socrates hardly ever leaves Athens (53a2–3). Moreover, just as a father has a proprietary duty to his own son, Socrates, given that he views himself as the offspring (*ekgonos*) of the laws, in rearing the souls of the young Athenians sees himself as carrying out and fulfilling his familial duties, both as a good son carrying out his duties to his fatherland and as a father figure in getting his fellow citizens to care for themselves.

This is exactly the task, as Socrates understands it, which Lysimachus and Melesias have asked him and the generals to undertake on behalf of the young men:

> Therefore, Laches, aren't these men calling upon us to advise how excellence might be added to the souls of their sons and make them better? (190b3–5)

At this point Socrates advises that they explore courage or manliness (*andreia*), as opposed to virtue as a whole (190c8–d1). There are several possible explanations as to why Socrates might make such a move. One possibility is that none of those present are capable of providing such a comprehensive account of virtue in its entirety. Of all the five adults present, the only possible candidate who might be able to tackle the question of virtue in its entirety would be Socrates. Judging by his final refutation of Nicias's definition (199c3–199e4), in which Nicias's account of courage spills over into virtue as whole, Socrates at least has some sense of what an account of the entirety of virtue might entail. Another possibility in favour of courage being chosen as the most appropriate topic for discussion is simply that it follows most naturally from the original discussion of "fighting in arms." Finally, one could argue that the reason for this particular virtue being chosen is due to those who are present. Presumably, if anyone is a likely candidate to be able to give an account of courage, it would be our generals.

The above reasons, however, are not the only ones for choosing courage. The selection of this virtue, I would argue, in part is connected with the prominence of two themes: fathers and sons, and words and deeds. Courage is the virtue that, if any, is most intimately connected with being a man (*anêr*) of the right sort, and therefore the virtue that would be most appropriate for a father, *qua* father, to instill in his son.[38] As already noted above, when one of the characters is spoken of as having performed great or courageous deeds, it is usually in some way connected to one's father or is about one's father. When, for example, Lysimachus speaks of how Socrates has upheld the name of his father, in part this is due to what Laches had said about Socrates' courageous behaviour in the battle of Delium and how he kept up his father's reputation:

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> … I have seen him elsewhere not only keeping up his father's reputation but that of his fatherland. He marched with me in the retreat from Delium, and I can tell you that if the rest had been willing to behave in the same manner, our city would have been safe and we would not then have suffered a disaster of that kind. (181a7–b4)

Moreover, when Lysimachus speaks of his own father's glory, that glory in part is constituted by his father's great deeds in battle (179c4). Thus fatherhood and the virtue in question are intimately related.

Words and Deeds and the Dorian Mode

In addition to its connection with the theme of fatherhood, the virtue courage is also intimately connected to the theme of words and deeds**,** and their harmonization. Someone who has this virtue will be able to perform great deeds not only in battle but also in peace, as was the case with Lysimachus's and Melesias's fathers. In their case, they presumably were able to give fine speeches defending their public positions.[39] However, the model now is different in that their fathers were not philosophers who were attempting to give a scientific account of the soul's proper activity, as is Socrates.[40] In the present context, a doer of great deeds and words will consist both in brave actions — say, on the field of battle — and in the ability to give a proper philosophical account of the virtue in question that explains such actions**,** as well as being able to withstand Socrates' method of cross-examination.[41] If any of our three interlocutors were able to deliver on both of these fronts and bring them into harmony, in other words to fulfill the Dorian mode, then he would qualify as a candidate who could take charge of and nurture the youths. We would have a new sort of father figure in place to look after their souls.

Laches is the first to attempt such an account of courage (190e4–194b4). The initial problem with his account is that it is too specific, namely "remaining at one's post and engaging the enemy" (190e5–6).[42] It picks out courage only within certain contexts, presumably those with which Laches is familiar. As was the case with his account of "fighting in arms," the emphasis is on particular deeds. Consequently, Socrates asks Laches to give a more universal account, an account that includes courage in times not simply of war but of peace as well (191e9–11). Socrates offers us an instance of the sort of thing he has in mind with his definition of "swiftness," a definition that can account for all the instances of it (192a10–b3).[43] Consequently, Laches defines courage as "a sort of endurance of the soul" (192b9). However, this account is short-lived because it turns out, according to Laches and Socrates, that courage along these lines more resembles foolish rather than wise endurance (193d6–7). Given that foolish endurance is, according to the argument, a disgraceful thing (193d6), it is an unacceptable candidate for courage. At this point Socrates notes how both he and Laches have thus far fallen short of the Dorian mode which Laches touched upon earlier (188d5–6). Their words at present are not in harmony with their deeds; they

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have up until now been unable to offer a proper, that is, philosophical, account of courage:

> Then I don't suppose, Laches, that according to your statement you and I are tuned to the Dorian mode, because our deeds are not harmonizing with our words. In deeds I think anyone would say that we partook of courage, but in words I don't suppose he would, if he were to listen to our present discussion. (193d11–e4)

Laches now agrees to endure the argument and continue the search for courage (194a6–b4). What is interesting about his response, however, is that, although he is unable to give an account of what courage is, he still believes that he knows what it is:

> I am not ready to give up, Socrates, although I am not really accustomed to arguments of this kind. But an absolute desire for victory has seized me with respect to our conversation, and I am really getting annoyed at being unable to express what I think in this fashion. I still think I know what courage is, but I can't understand how it has escaped me just now so that I can't pin it down in words and say what it is. (194a6–b4)

This closing remark of Laches is telling in several ways. It reveals, for example, that Laches is not at home in the realm of words, at least when framed within philosophical arguments. He is more accustomed to the realm of deeds, as both his account of "fighting in armour" and his initial definition indicated. In the case of the latter, it could be argued that his definition is too specific because he is basing it solely upon his own military experience. He does not understand the sort of definition that Socrates is after, or at best is unable to articulate it. As the argument forces him to expand it, he comes undone. Unlike Nicias, who is accustomed to Socrates and his type of discussions (187e6–188c3), Laches is somewhat out of place within this newly defined, that is, philosophical, context of words. Consequently, he is unable to fulfill the Dorian mode. His words and deeds are not in harmony with one another because he cannot set out arguments that account for and ground his deeds. Again, another telling aspect of Laches' closing remark is that he still maintains that he knows what courage is, despite being unable to give an account of it. What this reveals is that he does not properly appreciate that if one cannot give an account of something, then he cannot be said to have knowledge of it, a point which Socrates touched upon earlier ("And what we know, we must, I suppose, be able to state" [190c6]). That is, Laches does not understand how the realm of words or proper philosophical arguments operate. Moreover, Laches, as will also be the case with Nicias, does not properly appreciate the manner in which he is lacking; hence his belief that he still knows what courage is. This lack of self-realization goes some way to explaining why he will not be returning the next day to partake in the education of the youths. Because he has not satisfied

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the Dorian mode, he does not qualify as an adequate father figure who would be able to take over the nurturing of the youths' souls.

Socrates next turns to Nicias for an account of courage (194c2–6). Nicias's definition of courage reflects where his emphasis lies; namely, with words. His definition initially appears to be like that of a specific science or type of scientific knowledge: "What I say, Laches, is that it is the knowledge of the fearful and the hopeful in war and in every other situation" (194e11–195a1). In his cross-examination, Laches accuses Nicias of what amounts to sophistry or adorning himself with empty words (196b7) because Nicias refuses to accept that the doctor or seer could rightly be called courageous, despite their having specific sorts of knowledge that in some way pertain to fear and hope (196a4–b7).[44] Socrates now takes over the discussion and forces Nicias to explain the sort of knowledge that he has in mind. The first thing Socrates makes Nicias do is distinguish rashness from courage (197a6–c1). Laches attacks Nicias for the manner in which he distinguishes them because it undermines the traditional view that such creatures as lions are courageous (197c2–4). Nicias, however, is not concerned with such traditional views about courage. He sees himself as part of the new sophistic enlightenment.[45] As Socrates points out to Laches, Nicias has acquired this new-found wisdom from the sophist Damon, who in turn spends much of his time with the sophist Prodicus, a sophist who appropriately enough was famous for his mastery of language and verbal distinctions (197d1–5). Socrates now proceeds to show that Nicias does not understand the nature of what a scientific account entails. For Nicias's account of courage pertains only to future events, namely things of which to be fearful and things for which to hope. However, scientific knowledge, as Socrates points out, pertains to things within its domain at all times:

> I will explain. It seems to me and my friend here that of the various things with which knowledge is concerned, there is not one kind of knowledge by which we know how things have happened in the past, and another by which we know how they are happening at the present time, and still another by which we know how what has not yet happened might best come to be in the future, but that the knowledge is the same in each case. For instance, in the case of health, there is no other art related to the past, the present, and the future except that of medicine, which, although it is a single art, surveys what is, what was, and what is likely to be in the future. (198d1–e1)

Thus Nicias is forced to accept that his present account of courage at best has covered only a third of what a scientific account of courage must cover (199c3–4). Consequently, Nicias must revise his definition so that it would be knowledge of all goods and evils and not simply of those that are to be hoped for and feared (199c4–d2). As Socrates is quick to point out, a man with this sort of knowledge not just would be courageous, but would embrace the whole of virtue (199d4–e1). The type of scientific knowledge that Nicias is now talking about is no longer unique to courage but rather pertains to the entirety of virtue:

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"Then the thing you are now talking about, Nicias, would not be a part of virtue but rather the entirety of virtue" (199e3–4). Consequently, Nicias's account of courage comes undone. In terms of words and deeds and their harmonization, Nicias too fails to achieve the Dorian mode. He too is not competent within the domain of words, which is a necessary condition if one is to realize the Dorian mode. Nicias does not understand what a scientific or philosophical account of courage should look like. And, like Laches, he does not fully recognize how he is lacking. For he informs us that he will go back to Damon and his company and correct the account, assuming that not any of the points have been covered sufficiently (200b3–6). Accordingly, Nicias also will not be joining Lysimachus and Socrates the next day to pursue the nurturing of the youths' souls.

Both Laches and Nicias have fallen short within the realm of words. As for how they fared in the realm of deeds, one could argue that they did not do particularly well within that context, either. Alcibiades, for instance, tells us in the *Symposium* that Laches was not nearly as collected as Socrates at the battle of Delium.[46] As for Nicias, if anything, his performance within the realm of deeds is worse than those of both Socrates and Laches, given his disastrous military decisions on the Sicilian expedition.[47] Thus, one could argue that because they fail within both domains, achieving the Dorian mode is not a possibility for them.

As for Socrates, it certainly seems that he comes closest of the three to achieving the Dorian mode. As already cited, Laches and Alcibiades speak very highly of his brave deeds on the battlefield.[48] In terms of words, one could argue that he does the best in this domain as well. Although he himself does not offer an account of courage, he does at least recognize the manner in which he is lacking (200e5). Moreover, he comes closest to grasping what a satisfactory account of courage would look like, if it were to succeed as a scientific or philosophical account.

The question remains, however, whether this is a sufficient attainment of the Dorian mode for him to be an adequate replacement for Lysimachus and Melesias as a father figure and to properly be able to nurture the youths' souls. Given that the dialogue concludes with Socrates and Lysimachus's agreeing to meet on the following day to carry on their discussion (201c-4–5), on the face of it one could argue that he will be. Or at the very least, the possibility remains open. In addition, that Socrates cites the *Odyssey* in his closing remarks, quoting a passage from Book XVII in which Telemachus refers to his disguised father Odysseus (201b1–3), might also be interpreted as a positive sign.[49] For the relationship between Odysseus and Telemachus was a successful father-son relationship in terms of the father's passing on the relevant virtues to the son, and the latter's living up to and maintaining the family's noble name.

That said, in other dialogues where Socrates mentions the boys in question, he tells us that as long as they were in his company they were fine but when they were away from him they fell into bad ways.[50] Presumably, if Socrates were an adequate father figure, whatever he taught the youths should have been

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something that would have enabled them to flourish independently. Thus, one could infer that Socrates has not sufficiently harmonized his words with his deeds because he was unable to instill in the youths the right sort of dispositions through an account as to how one should conduct oneself.[51] Consequently, they turned out poorly and Socrates fell short of fulfilling his role as this new type of father figure who could adequately nurture the souls of the youths. So despite the fact that the youths certainly express their approval of Socrates and his method of discussion (180e5–181a2), it does not seem to have resulted in their living virtuous lives that would have brought prestige to their families and household names.[52] Although Socrates might be the most capable of those present to meet the Dorian mode and, consequently, fulfill the role of the father figure, he himself recognizes his limitations because he acknowledges that he too must go back to school, along with Lysimachus, Melesias, and the youths (201a2–b5). Thus, one can infer that it is somewhat questionable whether Socrates will be successful in this role. But this conclusion should come as no surprise, given that in the *Apology*, while Socrates recognizes he is the wisest of his fellow Athenians, he also recognizes that he himself has no first-order knowledge (21b1–23b10). One can, therefore, read the *Laches* as an elaboration of both his superiority and his limitations. Socrates can make us aware that we are orphans, but he is in no position to offer us a home.

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Notes

1 *Cf.* C. Emlyn-Jones, "Dramatic Structure and Cultural Context in Plato's *Laches*," *Classical Quarterly* 49 (1999): 128. For a discussion of how best to translate the term *andreia* see M. C. Stokes, *Plato's Socratic Conversations: Drama and Dialectic in Three Dialogues* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 45–8 and A. Hobbs, *Plato and the Hero: Courage, Manliness and the Impersonal Good* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 85–110.

2 *Cf.* Ø. Rabbås, "Definitions and Paradigms: Laches' First Definition," *Phronesis* LXIX/2 (2004): 166 and C. Emlyn-Jones, *op. cit.*, 123–4.

3 Emlyn-Jones touches upon this theme in passing, see C. Emlyn-Jones, *op. cit.*, 130. Also cf. Ø. Rabbås, *op. cit.*, 166–67.

4 *Cf. Hippias Major*, which also has a somewhat lengthy non-philosophical introduction (281a1–286c3). There, however, it is Socrates who is framing the discussion, whereas here it is Lysimachus, one of the fathers of the boys in question; a character who is of an older generation than that of Socrates and lacking in philosophical acumen.

5 *Cf.* C. Emlyn-Jones, *op. cit.*, 124.

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6 Lysimachus's terminology for "taking care of" (*epimelêthênai*) the youths echoes that of Socrates in the *Apology* when he speaks of getting the Athenians to attend to (*epimeleisthai*) their souls. Quoted below, *Apology* 36c3–d1. Translations of the *Laches* are based upon Plato, *Laches and Charmides*, trans. with introduction and notes by R. K. Sprague (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1992).

7 *Cf.* C. Emlyn-Jones, *op. cit.*, 124–5. Also *cf.* C. Emlyn-Jones, *Plato's Laches*, edited with introduction and commentary (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 1996), 63–4; R. K. Sprague, *op. cit.,* 3; and C. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996),151.

8 For the significance of Lysimachus and Melesias's returning the next day with Socrates to carry on the inquiry further, see n. 22.

9 At *Symposium* 220e7ff., Alcibiades speaks of Socrates' bravery at the battle of Delium as well. What is significant about Alcibiades' account in the present context is his comparison of Socrates with Laches. There we are told that in the heat of the retreat, Socrates remained much more collected than did Laches ("To begin, he was by far more sensible than Laches" [221a7–b1]). Thus, at least on the face of it, it would seem that Socrates is better able to perform brave deeds. This touches on the issue of whether any of those present are able to achieve the so-called Dorian mode, including Socrates. Also cf. *Apology* 28e3. For a discussion of the scope of Socrates' military career, see M. Anderson, "Socrates as Hoplite," *Ancient Philosophy* 25, no. 2 (2005), 277–81, 283–4.

10 For further discussion of the dramatic date of the *Laches*, see R. G. Hoerber, "Plato's *Laches*," *Classical Philology* 63, no. 2 (1968): 96; C. Kahn, *op. cit.*, 154; G. Santos, "Socrates at Work on Virtue and Knowledge in Plato's *Laches*," in *The Philosophy of Socrates*, ed. G. Vlastos (New York: Anchor Books, 1971), 178; W. K. C. Guthrie, *History of Ancient Greek Philosophy*, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 125–6; and W. T. Schmid, *On Manly Courage: A Study of Plato's Laches* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 1–3.

11 See T. O. Buford, "Plato on the Educational Consultant: An Interpretation of the *Laches*," *Idealistic Studies* 7 (1977), 155. Buford sums up the fifth-century debate as follows: "Plato was well aware of the conflict between the education offered by the sophists and the traditional education offered by the older Athenian aristocrats. While the conservative aristocrats believed *aretê* (virtue) was a matter of natural talent or gift and thus in a sense could not be taught, the sophists believed *aretê* could be instilled in young men by teaching." Accordingly, the fifth-century sophist Antiphon attacks those who take the view that excellence is passed down from aristocratic father to son (Diels-Kranz Fr. 87/44B, cols. 1–2., 266ff.). He thinks the education that the sophists offer is sufficient to enable one to have a prominent role in the life of the polis (Diels-Kranz Fr. 87/60). Also *cf.* the opening of the *Meno*, where the question of the acquisition of virtue is explicitly raised. The possibilities canvassed there are through teaching and practice and by nature (70a1–3).

12 Perhaps, the most obvious and relevant example of this debate can be found in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, which appeared shortly before the dramatic setting of the

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Laches. There we find Strepsiades abandoning the traditional education for his son, Pheidippides, in favour of sophistry and Socrates, who is portrayed as the head of their school, "The Thinkery" (ll. 112–18). In *Clouds*, the result of this sort of education is that the traditional values and customs and the roles of the father and son are undermined and the play concludes with Pheidippides, who by that time has received his sophistic education, punishing his father Strepsiades (ll. 1321–1422). In Plato's *Euthyphro,* one also finds the theme of tension between a father and his son with Euthyphro's prosecution of his father (4b7–e2). In that dialogue, as McPherran nicely sets out, we find Euthyphro contravening the traditional morality. See Mark L. McPherran, "Justice and Pollution in the *Euthyphro*," in *Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito: Critical Essays*, ed. Rachana Kamtekar (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 6. As McPherran goes on to show, the dialogue's dramatic portrayal of Socrates and Euthyphro is such that the elder Socrates is paired with Euthyphro's father and the young Euthyphro is associated with a young Meletus. See Mark L. McPherran, *op. cit.*, 7, 16, n. 20, 19, n. 31. For additional support that Socrates endorsed the authority of the father figure, see *Crito* (50e2–51a2) and Mark L. McPherran, *op. cit.*, 13, n. 5. I would like to thank one of the referees for the *Euthyphro* reference.

13 It should be noted that when Laches first introduces the Dorian mode (188d2–6), he does not understand it in the manner that Socrates does. What Laches initially understands by this mode is one's actions living up to the quality of words one speaks. Through his discourse with Socrates he comes to see what Socrates means by this mode, namely being able to give a proper account of the virtue in question. I would like to thank one of the referees for this point.

14 The episode with Thersites at *Iliad* 2.246–50 is clear evidence of the significant role one's birthright held in the Homeric world. Regardless of the quality of his speech, given Thersites does not come from the right bloodline, Odysseus feels justified in attacking him. Moreover, when Phoenix and Odysseus approach Achilles to return to the fighting, one of the points they emphasize is that Achilles should heed the advice that his father, Peleus, gave to him upon his departure for Troy (*Iliad* 9.254–48). But perhaps the most famous Homeric episode that expresses the idea of excellence being passed from father to son can be found in the twenty-first book of the *Odyssey*, with the stringing of the bow. There we see it is only Odysseus and his son Telemachus, not the suitors, who have the ability to string Odysseus's bow (*Odyssey* 21.128–9). This traditional view of the role served by fathers in relation to their sons is not limited to Homer. It also has a prominent role in the writings of the sixth-century poet Pindar. To take but one example in *Pyth*. 8.44–5, we read: "By nature this noble temper shines out from fathers to sons." The sort of fathers and sons Pindar had in mind were those of aristocratic bloodlines; see *Nem*. 3.40ff. and *Olym*. 2.85–88.

15 *Cf.* P. J. Rhodes, "Political Activity in Classical Athens," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 106 (1986), 135.

16 *Cf.* T.O. Buford, *op. cit.*, 155.

17 *Cf.* C. Kahn, *op. cit.*, 151; W. T. Schmid, *op. cit.*, 3–6; and Ø. Rabbås, *op. cit*., 166–7.

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18 Plato's choice of terminology clearly recalls the Homeric tradition against which this discussion is drawn. The term *akleeis* is the "*a*" privative form of *kleos*, the latter being standard Homeric terminology employed by individuals when referring to reputation and glory. It is also a term that Pindar, a strong proponent of this traditional Homeric aristocratic view, employs on several occasions to emphasize the same theme. See *Olym*. 1.23.93, 7.53, 8.10, 9.101, 10.21.95; *Pyth*. 1.66, 3.111, 4.125.174, 5.73; *Nem*. 7.63, 8.36, 9.39; *Isthm*. 5.8, 6.25, 7.29; and *Frg*. *Paian*. 52gA.7. Also *cf*. Theognis, the sixth-century poet, in *Elegiae* Book I, ll. 245. 867. Herodotus, likewise, remarks at the outset of his *Histories* that the purpose of his enquiry is to ensure that the glorious and wondrous deeds of men are not forgotten (*Proem*). *Cf*. E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), 29.

19 *Cf*. M.C. Stokes, *op. cit.*, 38–9 and W. T. Schmid, *op. cit.*, 4–6.

20 *Cf*. C. Emlyn-Jones, *op. cit.*, 127. Emlyn-Jones notes that even the language used by Nicias echoes that of the sophists.

21 Lysimachus is not alone in his belief that to speak frankly (*parrêsiazesthai*) is important. Socrates in the *Gorgias* has this to say about the matter: "For I understand that he who is about to examine a soul sufficiently concerning whether it lives rightly or not must have three things, all of which you have: knowledge, good will, and frankness" (486e6–487a3). Interestingly, Socrates then goes on to accuse Gorgias the sophist and his associate Polus of not speaking frankly with him: "With respect to these two strangers, Gorgias and Polus, both are wise and like me, but are more lacking in frankness and more ashamed than is necessary" (487a7–b2).

22 *Cf*. C. Emlyn-Jones, *op. cit.*, 125–6. I disagree with Emlyn-Jones's portrayal of Lysimachus as simply an inept intellectually lacking figure. Accordingly, Emlyn-Jones remarks: "One wonders what on earth Socrates and Lysimachus would have to say to each other the next day!" (p. 126). There can be little doubt that Lysimachus lacks the philosophical acuity to engage properly in a dialectical discussion with Socrates, a point that will be reinforced with the actual introduction of Socrates, but nonetheless it is Lysimachus who is to carry on the discussion the next day with Socrates about the youths' education. One could argue that the reason for this is that at least Lysimachus knows that he is lacking and has no knowledge of how to educate the youths but is willing, regardless of whether he is able or not, to try to learn in these matters. As already quoted, Lysimachus remarks that he is most eager "to go to school with the youths" (205b7–8). In short, if one takes Lysimachus in the manner that Emlyn-Jones does**,** it makes little sense for Plato to portray him as coming back the next day. By contrast, Laches and Nicias, even after being refuted by Socrates, still have trouble accepting that they do not know what courage is. In the case of Laches, he says as much at 194b1–2. Likewise, Nicias tells his fellow interlocutors that if any point in the discussion has not been covered adequately, he will go over and correct it with the help of Damon (200b2–c1). Laches and Nicias simply do not appreciate the extent to which they are lacking. Consequently, neither of them is properly equipped to nurture the souls of the youths in question and, as a result, there is no need for them to return the next day. Emlyn-Jones's comparison

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of Lysimachus with Cephalus in *Republic* Book I is helpful. They both set the discussion in motion and serve as minor participants from an older generation. However, Lysimachus, unlike Cephalus, is not set in his ways but is willing to learn and is open to suggestions about how to improve the condition of the youths. Cepahlus, it must be remembered, is portrayed as being unable to partake in any sort of philosophical discourse. He offers his definition of what justice is, then is quickly refuted by Socrates, and immediately goes off, appropriately enough, to sacrifice to the gods, passing the argument on to his son Polemarchus (329a1–331d5). He does not in any way attempt to defend his position. And there is no reference whatsoever to Cephalus's ever returning to partake in the philosophical discussion in the *Republic*. See C. Emlyn-Jones, *op. cit.*, 125. For a different view about Cephalus's significance as a father figure, see Myles Burnyeat, "Fathers and Sons in Plato's *Republic* and *Philebus*," *Classical Quarterly* 54 (2004): 82–4. Burnyeat takes the view that in Cephalus one has the unification of both the biological and dialectical roles. As a consequence, Burnyeat maintains, Polemarchus turned out the way he did, i.e., converted to philosophy (*Phaedrus* 257b3–4). I would be inclined to say that it is Socrates who fulfills this dialectical role, given that he is the one, and not Cephalus, who engages in philosophical discourse with Polemarchus in Book I. Thus, if anyone is responsible for Polemarchus's philosophical conversion, it would be Socrates, not Cephalus. See n. 33.

23 This traditional relationship to Socrates is further emphasized by Lysimachus's subsequent remarks, when he tells Socrates that he should have come to see him before, given the close association between their families (181c1–6). All of this highlights the traditional perspective from which both Lysimachus and Melesias view things.

24 *Cf.* B. Strauss, *Fathers and Sons in Athens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 79.

25 It should be noted that at the conclusion of the dialogue Nicias too goes so far as to say that he would gladly have Socrates take care of his own son Niceratus's education (200c8–d2).

26 This is not the only instance of associating the musical modes with that of character. In the *Republic*, Socrates speaks of how, when the modes of music are altered, so too are the laws of the city (425c5–6).

27 *Cf.* R. G. Hoerber, *op. cit.*, 95–105 and M. J. O'Brien, "The Unity of the *Laches*," *Yale Classical Studies* 18 (1963), 133–47.

28 For references to Socrates as a father figure, see *Apology* quote below 31b1–5 and n. 34.

29 See n. 12.

30 *Cf.* Emlyn-Jones, *op. cit.*, 127.

31 *Cf.* M. C. Stokes, *op. cit.*, 65.

32 *Cf.* A. Hobbs, *op. cit.*, 84. For a similar emphasis of the importance of internal goods such as the well being of the soul as opposed to external goods, see *Apology* 36c3–d1, quoted above.

33 Similarly, in *Republic* Book I we see Socrates taking over the discussion with Polemarchus when the latter's biological father, Cephalus, goes off to sacrifice to the

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gods after offering his definition of justice, showing no inclination to remain to defend it and engage in a philosophical discussion. This again could be taken as indicative of the traditional father figure's being unable to educate his son properly, and of Socrates supplanting him in that very role. See n. 22.

34 This is not the only instance where Socrates is described as father figure. In the *Symposium*, Alcibiades says of Socrates that when they had spent the night together, it was as if he were with his father or elder brother (219c7–d2).

35 In this sense one could argue that he distinguishes himself from Cephalus, who is quite content to offer his definition then go off to sacrifice to the gods. He is completely unscathed by Socrates' refutation and the subsequent argument. Lysimachus is at least aware that he is himself lacking.

36 *Cf.* B. Strauss, *op. cit*, 207–8.

37 It should be noted that in the context of the *Apology*, one could argue that Socrates' words and deeds coincide nicely with one another in that his mission on behalf of the god, Apollo, is to engage his fellow Athenians and attempt to get them to better themselves through philosophical discourse (28e4–29a4) — so much so that, in the end, this mission gets him killed. I would like to thank one of my referees for this point.

38 See n. 14.

39 The *Laches* is not the only Platonic dialogue in which one finds manliness or courage connected with speaking well. In the *Gorgias*, Callicles expresses that exact sentiment: "When someone hears a man speaking inarticulately or sees him playing like a child, he appears both unmanly and worthy of a flogging" (485b7–c2). In the *Meno*, Socrates links manliness or courage with intellectual enquiry (81d3–4 and 86b7–c1). On being manly or courageous in both times of war and peace, *cf.* Myles Burnyeat, *op. cit.*, 82.

40 It should be noted that courage perhaps also is chosen because that traditional virtue will now be Socratically reworked. It will be a matter of courage to face the potential shame of the elenctic encounter and to use that method; now words and deeds will very much cohere. I must thank one of my referees for this point.

41 See n. 39.

42 *Cf.* Ø. Rabbås, *op.cit.*, 145–148. Rabbås takes the view that the proper reading of this initial definition is that of a paradigm case of courage, regarding the universal/particular distinction as unhelpful. Rabbås also stresses, rightly I think, the traditional nature of Laches' definition, citing parallels between it and Pericles' funeral oration. See Ø. Rabbås, *op.cit.*, 158–59.

43 *Cf.* Ø. Rabbås, *op.cit.*, 153–4.

44 It is worth noting that Laches, by attacking Nicias in the manner that he does, appears to be somewhat disdainful of the sophistic movement which in part is revealing of how he is approaching the matter in question, namely from a perspective closer to that of Lysimachus's older, more traditional one. Laches accuses Nicias of twisting the arguments so as not to appear foolish: "It is not clear to me from this, Socrates, what he is trying to say. Because he does not select either the seer or the doctor or anyone else as the man he calls courageous, unless some god is the person

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he means. Nicias appears to me unwilling to make a gentlemanly admission that he is talking nonsense, but he twists this way and that in an attempt to cover up his difficulty. Even you and I could have executed a similar twist just now if we had wanted to avoid the appearance of contradicting ourselves. If we were making speeches in a court of law, there might be some point in doing this, but as things are, why should anyone adorn himself senselessly with empty words in a gathering like this?"(196a4–b7). And a bit further on, he actually goes so far as to accuse Nicias of being a sophist: "Well, Socrates, it is certainly more fitting for a sophist to make such clever distinctions than for a man the city thinks worthy to be its leader" (197d6–8). That Laches is viewing matters from a perspective more traditional than that of Nicias should come as no surprise. For when Laches initially introduced the Dorian mode (at 188d5ff.), he contrasted it with those speakers whose deeds were not in harmony with their words, remarking how much he hated to listen to them: "But the man who acts in the opposite way distresses me, and the better he speaks, the worse I feel, so that his discourse makes me look like a discussion-hater" (188e2–4). One could read that remark as an allusion to the sophists and those who are trained in rhetoric alone.

45 Rabbås, I think wrongly, aligns Nicias with proponents of the traditional views on courage. Such a reading would undermine the way in which Socrates, not to mention Laches, portrays him**,** especially given with whom he associates. See Ø. Rabbås, *op.cit.*, 168.

46 See n. 9.

47 Obviously, given his definition, the irony of the nature of Nicias's final military fate as involving such things as fear, hope, and prognostication would not be lost on Plato's readers. See Thucydides, Books VI and VII.

48 Socrates in the *Apology*, when talking about the nature of his brave actions and his attitude toward death, goes so far as to compare himself to Achilles (28b3–29b9). I would like to thank one of my referees for this reference.

49 *Odyssey* XVII, l. 347.

50 In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates tells Theaetetus that Aristides, the son of Lysimachus, lost his way when he stopped keeping company with Socrates. And he was not the only one to whom this happened (150d8–151a5). Also *cf. Theages* 129e1–130e4, where Socrates makes the same point about Aristides and Thucydides. Another obvious (and perhaps the most famous) example of a young man who spent time with Socrates but who, ultimately, did not fare too well, was Alcibiades, cf. *Symposium* 212d3–223a9, *Protagoras* 309a1–c4, and Thucydides V–VIII.

51 Toward the end of the *Meno*, there is interesting discussion about fathers and their sons and how the latter turned out poorly, despite the fact that their fathers were great men (92d7–95c4). In the context of that discussion, it is argued that the reason the fathers in question were unable to pass on virtue (*aretê*) to their sons and make them better men is because it is not something that can be taught. In other words, it is not knowledge: "So it is not by some kind of wisdom, or by being wise, that such men lead their cities, those such as Themistocles and those mentioned by Anytus just now? That is the reason why they cannot make others be like themselves,

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because it is not knowledge which makes them what they are" (99b5–9). If it were knowledge, then presumably it could be taught and passed on from father to son. The dialogue concludes by stating that these great men are great not in virtue of having some sort of knowledge but rather by being divinely inspired: "We should be right to call divine also those soothsayers and prophets whom we just mentioned, and all the poets, and we should call no less divine and inspired those public men who are no less under the god's influence and possession, as their speeches lead to success in many important matters, though they have no knowledge of what they are saying" (99c11–d5). That said, in the context of the *Laches* Socrates is treating the Dorian mode as if it were attainable and, as a result, a father figure could better the sons in question because he would be able to offer an intelligible account of the relevant matters at hand. In the case of the *Meno*, at least as far as excellence is concerned, it is beyond the reach of the father to be able to teach and pass it on to the son. I would like to thank one of my referees for this *Meno* reference.

52 See n. 50. On an analogous point, one could make the same claim against Socrates as Theaetetus's teacher, as some have done. See A. A. Long, "Plato's Apologies and Socrates in the *Theaetetus*," in *Method in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. J. Gentzler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 113–36. As Long nicely brings out, in the dramatic sequel to the *Theaetetus*, the *Sophist*, Socrates is no longer leading the conversation. However, in Socrates' defence as an adequate father figure, if one accepts that Socrates replaces Cephalus as a father figure and fulfills the dialectical or philosophical role, then one could argue that he was successful in that role with Polemarchus. For in the *Phaedrus* we read: " … convert him (*sc*. Lysias) to philosophy like his brother Polemarchus so that his lover here may no longer play both sides as he presently does, but simply devote his life to Love through philosophical discussions" (257b3–6). In this instance, at least, it appears that Socrates did assist in Polemarchus's leading a good life. See nn. 22, 33.

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