Manliness in Plato's *Laches*

T. F. MORRIS *George Washington University*

ABSTRACT: Careful analysis of the details of the text allows us to refine Socrates' understanding of manliness. Laches submits without a fight to Socrates' objections to his definition of manliness as prudent perseverance. He does not appreciate that Socrates objections merely require that he make his definition more precise. Nicias refuses to consider objections to his understanding of manliness as avoiding actions that entail risk. The two sets of objections show that manliness entails first calculating that a risk is worth taking and then subsequently not rejecting that calculation without due consideration.

RÉSUMÉ : Une analyse méticuleuse du texte nous permet de préciser le concept du courage selon Socrate. Lachès se soumet sans riposter aux objections de Socrates à sa définition du courage comme une persévérance prudente. Il n'apprécie pas que les objections de Socrate lui demandent de préciser sa définition. Nicias refuse de considérer les objections à sa compréhension du courage selon laquelle il s'agit d'éviter des actes nécessitant de prendre des risques. Les deux groupes d'objections montrent que le courage requiert une évaluation des risques et demande, par la suite, de ne pas rejeter cette évaluation sans reflexion.

Plato has a peculiar way of writing. As Thomas Jefferson observes, he puts into Socrates' mouth "such paralogisms, such quibbles on words, and sophisms as a schoolboy would be ashamed of."[1] An intelligent freshman is quite capable of seeing many of the fallacies with which Plato's work is replete . . . and yet Plato's ideas are engaging. They obviously come from a first-rate mind. It seems as if he is purposely challenging us to put his ideas together into a coherent whole. This is particularly true of the superficially aporetic dialogues. Grote, writing in 1875, describes the natural way of responding to these dialogues:

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> Interpreters sift with microscopic accuracy the negative dialogues of Plato, in hopes of detecting the ultimate elements of that positive solution which he is supposed to have lodged therein, and which, when found, may be put together so as to clear up all the antecedent difficulties.[2]

That this is the proper way of approaching at least the *Laches* can be seen in the fact that Socrates actually agrees that manliness (*andreia*) entails perseverance (193e8-194a1), and also that it includes fighting with pleasures, pains, desires, and fears (191d6-e1). It must be that manliness entails persevering in one's fight with such things as pleasures, pains, desires, and fears.[3] (There is a similar understanding of manliness at *Gorgias* 507b.[4]) The difficulties that arise in the course of the dialogue will lead us to further refine this understanding.

1. The Task of Laches and Nicias

At 186c8-d5 Socrates implicitly is attacking Laches and Nicias: While he is sure that they would not have offered advice about how to make the sons of Lysimachus and Melesias as good as they can possibly be unless they were confident that they knew what they were talking about, they have just given conflicting advice. It is evident that at least one of them was either ignorant of his ignorance or was willing to offer advice about something of which he was not sure he had knowledge. Thus Laches and Nicias are put on the defensive.

Socrates proceeds to play a game with the two of them. According to Socrates, people who know should be able to support the claim that they know either by pointing to their teachers or, if they have learned it on their own, by pointing to those whom they have benefited (186e3-187a8) (omitting the possibility that they could have learned it on their own and that this is their first attempt to teach someone). Will Laches and Nicias be honest in their reply to Socrates, or will they dissemble in the hope of hanging on to the possibility of avoiding disgrace (as Stesilaus hangs on to his weapon in an effort to avoid disgrace at 183e2-184a7)? But Socrates then releases them from this specific requirement, and merely asks them to define the thing they are trying to teach, viz., virtue. He explains, "I believe this other way of inquiry leads to the same thing" (189e1-2). He is playing cat and mouse with them. Even as he lets them go, he threatens to capture them again—it will lead to the same thing. A. E. Taylor is mistaken in holding that Socrates is saying "We may, however, contrive to avoid the demand for direct evidence that there is an expert among us";[5] what Socrates is proposing does not qualify even as indirect evidence that there is an expert among them, for one cannot establish one's authority to teach merely by being able to define what one supposedly teaches. How, then, can Socrates' other way of inquiry lead to the same thing? It can do so only if Nicias and Laches are not, in fact, qualified to teach: If you do not have a necessary condition for something (if you are not able to define what you supposedly teach), then you cannot have a sufficient condition for that thing (you cannot have proof that you are qualified to teach). Thus, when Socrates says that it will

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amount to the same thing, he is really implying that he believes that they are not qualified to teach. He keeps the pressure on Laches as he observes, "If we had no idea at all what virtue actually is, we could not possibly consult with anyone as to how he might best acquire it" (190b8-c2),[6] and as he further observes, "And that which we know, I presume, we can also say what it is" (190c6).[7]

And then Socrates claims he will make his requirement even easier, "since [defining the whole of virtue] may well be too much for us" (190c9), i.e., since it may well be the case that you two cannot even define that about which you are giving advice. He will now merely require that they tell him what one part of virtue is (and thus defend their reputations).

We shall see that Laches' definitions of manliness move about between Aristotle's two extremes of cowardice and rashness: "[T]he man who flies from and fears everything and does not stand his ground against anything becomes a coward, and the man who fears nothing at all but goes to meet every danger becomes rash" (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1104a). He initially sees the courageous person as having a patient perseverance of soul. Socrates, by pointing out that the courageous person's perseverance must be prudent, pulls Laches' definition back from the extreme of rashness. But then he pushes him back away from the extreme of cowardice by pointing out that the manliness entailed by the action is directly proportional to its degree of risk (provided that there is at least some possibility of success).

Nicias's concern is merely to avoid being on the extreme on which Laches started out. He has no concern with avoiding cowardice. He is so concerned with avoiding rashness that he feels that manliness requires that one undertake only perfectly safe actions.

Laches' limitation will be not in his definition, but rather in his inability to be critically engaged with Socrates as Socrates presents him with considerations that would further refine his definition. He is not defensive enough. Nicias's limitation will be that he is too uncritical in his faithfulness to his original formulation. He is too defensive. Nonetheless, his effort to distinguish a rash action from a courageous action will help us further refine Laches' definition.

Why would Plato write in such a convoluted way? I believe that the answer can be found at *Meno* 85c10-d1: "But if Meno's slave were asked many times in many ways, you know he will have in the end as exact an understanding as anyone." More than one approach must be taken in order for a student to understand underlying ideas. Hence the limitation of the readers of the written word of *Phaedrus* 275a-b: "They will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when they are for the most part ignorant and hard to get along with, since they are not wise, but only appear wise." Written words are limited because they generally present us with only one way of approaching ideas, but Plato, by writing in a series of riddles, offers his readers the chance of getting beneath the surface and discovering for themselves the underlying structure of his thought.

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2. Laches' Definitions

Laches' first definition of manliness, "Staying at one's post and facing the enemy" (190e5-6), fails because it does not apply to instances of manliness in such circumstances as the retreat at Delium.[8] (Laches actually commended Socrates' behaviour in this retreat at 181b3-4.) While Socrates agrees that the behaviour Laches' definition describes is indeed manly, he asks for a more general definition (191a5).[9] Laches' second definition is much more general: a certain patient perseverance of soul (192b9). Socrates responds by indicating that his definition is now too general, observing that not just any patient perseverance would constitute manliness, for there is such a thing as imprudent patient perseverance, which is hurtful and works ill.[10] What is hurtful cannot be noble; manliness is noble; thus imprudent patient perseverance cannot be manliness (192c3-d9).

Therefore Socrates suggests that what Laches has in mind must be prudent perseverance (192d10-11). But he then proceeds to offer examples of prudent perseverance that he claims would not qualify as instances of manliness. "Prudent perseverance" is still too general. It seems as if he wants Laches—or, rather, us—to further refine the definition by qualifying the prudent perseverance that constitutes manliness.

Socrates' first example of prudent perseverance that does not qualify as an instance of manliness is that of people who persevere in spending money prudently, knowing that they will thereby gain more money. They are not, as such, manly (192e2-5). The point here does not have to do with the lack of pain in investing money prudently, for the next example of someone persevering in something prudently shows that, just as manliness is not equivalent to persevering in pleasant circumstances with the certainty of what the outcome will be, neither is it equivalent to persevering in unpleasant circumstances with such certainty: a doctor would not be being manly if he were to persevere in refusing to give his sick son food or drink in the knowledge that they would be bad for his son's medical condition (192e6-193a1).

Because Socrates prefaces the question about the spending of money by asking whether courage would be prudent in all matters, great or small (192e1-2), Santas, Friedländer, and Schmid claim that Socrates is insinuating that the gain motive is a small matter with nothing noble about it.[11] But Santas is mistaken about Socrates' next, parallel, example, when he sees the doctor's refusal to give in to the son's pleading as similarly a small matter, involving no real difficulty.[12] It is surely not easy to allow one's child to suffer. Woodruff points out in this regard that at 191d5 Socrates explicitly lists "disease" as one of the concerns with respect to which one can exercise manliness.[13] Hence disease cannot be dismissed as "a small matter." Nor is it clear that Socrates is dismissing the gain motive in the first example. The effect of the question about all matters great or small could be simply to repeat the concern of 192c3-4 that Laches needs to make his definition more specific; there might be some matters

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(perhaps great matters or perhaps small matters) in which prudent perseverance would not qualify as being courageous.

In both of these examples, the mere fact that the individual is certain about what course of action to follow is enough to preclude the possibility of courage. The individual's knowledge dictates what course is to be chosen; when one has knowledge of what is to be done, one simply does what the situation requires. If one wants to make money and one has the requisite knowledge, or if one wants to restore one's child to health and one has the requisite knowledge, one simply does what is required. It is when one has some uncertainty about what is to be done that one's mettle can come into play.[14] If, rather than having knowledge about what is to be done, the person who invested money or the doctor merely had *belief* about what course to follow, then there would be the opportunity to exercise manliness as he or she dealt with fears about what the future might hold or with the pain of allowing one's son to remain in distress. When there is no temptation to act otherwise, there is no opportunity to exercise manliness. (We shall eventually see that the moneymaker's and the doctor's mere knowledge of what the outcome will be is not sufficient to preclude the temptation to act otherwise, for one can still have doubts about the goodness of the foreseen result—e.g., perhaps it might be better for the doctor's son to die rather than to go through the suffering of being deprived of food and drink. Socrates will eventually argue that only the person who knows *both* what ends will be produced *and* whether or not the ends will be good would be carefully guarded [199d7-e1].)

Socrates' next counter-example is not an example of someone who knows what will happen, but of someone who merely knows what will *probably* happen: a man who perseveres in war "prudently calculating" that he has all the advantages on his side (193a3-6). Laches says that the more manly person would be the person on the other side who steadfastly perseveres despite his disadvantages.[15] The amount of courage required by a situation would indeed be directly proportional to the degree of uncertainty of a positive outcome one has when one calculates the probabilities before one. It would asymptotically approach zero as the possibility of a positive outcome approaches one, but when there is absolute certainty of success, there would be absolutely no opportunity for one's mettle to come into play. The element of uncertainty is essential.[16]

That initial calculation (whether it be more or less prudent) is also essential. Without an assessment that there is some possibility of a negative outcome, there would be no opportunity to exercise manliness.

Socrates now changes his terminology, observing that the man on the other side is less prudent than the man who calculated that he had all the advantages on his side. Initially Laches held the position that *imprudent* perseverance could not be courage, but he now sees an instance of the *more imprudent* perseverance as being the more courageous. When we think of an action as being absolutely imprudent, we cannot think of it as being courageous, but this would not be true of an action we consider to be merely less prudent than another.

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An action whose probability of success is lower might still qualify as somewhat prudent, if the possible benefit of a positive outcome could be great enough to justify undertaking the action.[17] Socrates is wrong in suggesting that Laches is contradicting himself when he sees the less prudent action as requiring more courage. Given that there is some possibility of success, the amount of courage required by a situation merely would be directly proportional to the degree of uncertainty of a positive outcome. (After a series of examples of *more* imprudent perseverance, Socrates will switch back to absolute imprudence when he concludes that "this base thing, imprudent perseverance" cannot be courage [193d6-9]. He seems to be sophistically trying to cover up the fact that he changed the subject when he switched from imprudent perseverance not being courageous to examples of merely *more* imprudent perseverance.)

Socrates' next counter-example is of someone who perseveres in a cavalry fight without knowledge of horsemanship, as opposed to someone who perseveres with such knowledge. When we try to imagine someone with no knowledge of horsemanship jumping on a horse and *courageously* fighting on, we think of this person as having at least some understanding of horsemanship. If, for example, he had no idea of how to turn the horse, then he would clearly be better off on the ground. As Socrates and Nicias will agree at 194d1-3, a man is necessarily bad in that at that of which he is unlearned.[18] If the rider had absolutely no knowledge of horsemanship then he would have absolutely no chance of success, and his action would be absolutely imprudent; his initial calculation should dictate staying off the horse. Thus Laches is mistaken in agreeing that such a person would necessarily be the more courageous (193b8): courageous actions cannot be imprudent (192d7-8).[19]

There is another problem with this particular example. It is quite different from the example of the soldier who prudently calculates that *all* considerations are in his favour (193a3-6). We know about only *one* consideration in this instance: who has the knowledge of horsemanship. The man with knowledge of horsemanship, say Nathan Bedford Forest at Shiloh, might actually have very little chance of success due to the number of his opponents, their physical strength, their positions, etc.[20] It is significant that Nicias had earlier recognized the importance of such considerations with respect to the knowledge of fighting in heavy armour: "Whoever possessed this accomplishment could come to no harm so long as he had but one to deal with, nor yet, perhaps if he had several" (182b2-3). Either we have a strange coincidence here, or Plato wants us to see that Nicias has supplied us with a general reason why Socrates' example does not work: if there were enough people on the side of the person with no knowledge of horsemanship, more courage could be required of the person with knowledge.

Thus Plato seems to be implying that only those who have some degree of knowledge of how to perform some activity can exercise courage in performing that activity, but, among the knowledgeable, there is no necessary correlation between knowledge of how to perform an activity and degree of courage required by a situation. Once it is established that someone has knowledge, the

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degree of courage required is determined by the degree of risk that person assesses in his or her initial calculation. The assessed degree of risk is only partially determined by the limitation of the person's knowledge of how to produce the desired result.

This is not a trivial result. At 182c5-7, Nicias claimed that anyone who knew the art of fighting in heavy armour would be bolder and more courageous in war. Similarly, at 190d2-6, Laches agreed that learning about fighting in heavy armour is generally supposed to promote courage. We are now in a position to see that both of these views are false. The knowledge changes the odds, decreasing the risk of a given situation.[21] The person with the knowledge of how to fight in heavy amour will make a different initial calculation than will the person without that knowledge. To outward appearances the one with more confidence would seem to be the more courageous, but he might actually be the less, for he may calculate that his knowledge makes the situation not so dangerous. Laches' observation that knowledge of fighting in heavy armour would make a coward rash (184b3-6) is similarly incorrect. The knowledgeable coward would venture more than he would without knowledge, for his knowledge lessens his risk. He might *seem* to other people to be rash, but—because cowards necessarily abstain from rash behaviour—he would not actually be rash.

Socrates' next example is that of someone who perseveres in slinging or in archery without knowledge (193b9-10). Laches agrees that such a person would be more courageous than someone with knowledge, no doubt because of the parallel with what has gone before. But slingers and archers are removed from those with whom they are fighting in such a way that their ignorance does not significantly affect their personal risk.[22] Thus degree of ignorance would not be a factor in determining the degree of manliness of such people.

In Socrates' final counter-example, instead of the ignorant person sending forth a projectile, the ignorant person sends forth himself, diving down into a well (193c2-5).[23] Just as the ignorant archer would not succeed in getting his arrow to go where he wanted it to go, neither would the ignorant diver succeed. If an arrow goes awry it is just a wasted arrow, but if someone who dives into a well goes awry, that person gets injured. Not only does his ignorance mean that he will have no real possibility of success, but it also means that he will almost surely suffer harm. Socrates has presented Laches with an example very similar to the most common example of foolish boldness—diving into unknown water. Once again Laches ignores how this case might be different from the previous cases and agrees that the ignorant diver would be more courageous than the knowledgeable diver.[24] But then he goes on to acknowledge that such people are *more* imprudent than people who know what they are doing (193c9-12), and Socrates claims that his answer is in contradiction with his previous claim that imprudent perseverance could not be courageous (193d1-8).[25] Thus Laches' understanding of "manliness" seems to have been reduced to absurdity. But there is, in fact, no contradiction, for Socrates drops Laches' adverb "more"; they had not concluded that merely *more* imprudent action could not be courageous.

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The transition from "more imprudent" to "imprudent" is facilitated by the fact that the example of ignorantly diving into a well, in addition to being more imprudent than the act of a knowledgeable person, is also absolutely imprudent. Socrates seems to be employing high-quality sophistry.

It seems clear that Laches has not been thinking deeply about the questions that Socrates has been asking him; he is merely giving Socrates the answers that he thinks Socrates is expecting. But that does not mean that the exercise has been pointless. Note that Socrates has *not* refuted Laches' definitions. Indeed, at 193e8-194a1 Socrates will agree that courage does entail perseverance.[26] Furthermore, Socrates would surely agree with Laches' qualification that this perseverance must not be imprudent: absolutely imprudent perseverance (such as is involved in ignorantly diving into a well) could not be courageous. Laches' limitation is not in his definition, but rather in his inability to follow Socrates as Socrates presents him with the following considerations to further refine the definition: (i) in order to qualify as courageous, one cannot know so much that there is no uncertainty about the outcome of one's action; but (ii) courageous behaviour requires enough technical knowledge to have a possibility of success; (iii) given that there is this basic minimum of knowledge and that there is not so much knowledge that a negative outcome is precluded, the degree of courage is not determined merely by the degree of knowledge; and (iv) given the basic minimum of knowledge, the degree of courage required is directly proportional to the assessed probability of a negative outcome.

3. Nicias's Definitions

Nicias's first definition is that courage is a kind of knowledge: knowledge of what is to be feared and of what is to be ventured on (194e11-195a1). He later equates this knowledge to knowledge of what is to be feared and what is not to be feared (197d7-9). The person who knows that an action is to be feared will not venture on that action, and the person who knows that an action is to be ventured upon (or is not to be feared) would not have a problem with undertaking the action. It is curious that he should associate courage with the lack of fear, but this is *Nicias's* definition and it was well known that the historical Nicias was averse to taking risks.

Nicias's definition would seem to have one of the problems that Laches' definition had. If one knows what is to be done, then one would just do it. Courage can enter in only when there is some doubt as to what course of action should be undertaken. This is not an issue for Nicias, for, as we shall see, if there is any possibility of failure, Nicias will see the action as being rash—the cowardly Nicias thinks that it is good to perform only those actions that do not involve risk. His concern is merely to differentiate courage from rashness, and he rejects as rash anything but perfectly safe actions.

Laches responds to Nicias's definition by saying: "It seems to be seers whom he calls the courageous" (195e1). Nicias ridicules this response, but it is not really so bad. It corresponds to the wisdom of Solon, who "made no account of

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present good, but bade men always wait and mark the end";[27] would it not be those who know the future who would determine whether a prospective state is truly to be feared or whether it merely appears to be something to be feared?[28] Nonetheless, Nicias is correct when he objects that knowledge of what will happen is not the same as knowledge of what is "better for a man to suffer or to avoid suffering" (196a2-3). Knowledge of what will happen does not in itself indicate what has value. One also needs the knowledge that the pilot in the Gorgias lacks when he is uncertain which of his passengers he has benefited and which he has harmed by not allowing them to be drowned (*Gorgias* 511e). For example, because death might be the greatest of all blessings (*Apology* 29a7-9), the knowledge that Solon's son would otherwise die would not be sufficient ground for sending him to a doctor. In addition to the knowledge of how to bring about such and such a result, one also needs to know what value to place on the result.[29]

Of these two types of knowledge—the knowledge of how to bring about a particular result and the knowledge of what result is valuable—the knowledge of what result is valuable would be the key knowledge: it, together with an assessment of the possibility of success, would determine whether or not one should go further and employ one's knowledge of how to bring about a certain result.[30] The extent of one's knowledge of how to bring about a certain result merely plays a role in assessing the possibility of success. There is a parallel here with the general situation of the dialogue. The superficial issue of the dialogue is what subjects should be taught to young men (178b5-180a5). If (1) they make the decision that it is good for a young man to learn some particular subject, then they would send their young men to the appropriate teacher, who would then (2) employ his technical knowledge as a means toward that end. (At 185d5-e6 Socrates explicitly distinguished between knowledge of individual arts and knowledge of what arts are good for a young person to follow.)

Nicias's response to Laches' claim that his definition is too restrictive is thus to make the definition even more restrictive. It would not be all seers whom he would call courageous, but only those seers who also know which ends are good to attain to.

However, Laches' original understanding that one would have to be a seer is actually too narrow for Nicias's definition. When a doctor deals with a condition that falls under the purview of his knowledge, he would be as good a predictor of the future as a seer: he would know what will happen. But then we have the problem that the discussion of Laches' definition would indicate that seers or knowledgeable practitioners would not qualify as being courageous, for where there is no risk there is no opportunity to exercise courage. Even though Nicias is not interested in resolving this problem, it is resolved with Nicias's present point: the people with knowledge of what will happen—be they seers or knowledgeable practitioners—might still not know what outcome will be good, and could thus still have fears about what will happen. As Socrates observes at 199d7-e1, only the one who knows all good things and all about their production

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would be carefully guarded (dropping the possibility of seers being carefully guarded). Only these people would have their knowledge deny them the opportunity of exercising courage.

Laches understands that Nicias is even excluding mere seers from the ranks of the courageous, and he observes that no one would seem to qualify as having the required knowledge, unless, perhaps, Nicias is referring to some god (196a5-7).[31] This corresponds to *Apology* 20e, where Socrates claims that knowledge of how to impart human and political virtue is superhuman. Both in the *Apology* and in the *Laches* he seems to hint that the sophists have such knowledge. At *Laches* 186c2-4 he implies that if he had the funds to pay the sophists he might have received such knowledge from them, they being "the only persons that professed to be able to make me a complete gentleman." But the *Apology* makes clear that he is not really serious about this possibility. He sets up two types of wisdom, human wisdom and superhuman wisdom, and says of the sophists, "[T]hese men might be wise in some superhuman wisdom" (*Apology* 20d8-e2). These *human beings* might have a wisdom greater than *a human being* can have. This is contradictory; Socrates gives with one hand and takes away with the other. He is really denying that the sophists have the knowledge of how to convey virtue.[32] As he eventually concludes, only the god is wise (*Apology* 23a5-6).

If Socrates had both Nicias's knowledge of what would be good for us in the future and also the knowledge of what will happen in the future, then he could enable people to perform well the task of choosing what ends they should be pursuing. He would then qualify as someone who has enough knowledge to offer advice about how one's sons should be trained. By his formulation of 190b3-5 ("Our two friends are inviting us to a consultation as to the way in which virtue may be joined to their sons' souls"), this would be equivalent to knowledge of how to join virtue to their souls. Thus, if knowledge of how to impart virtue is necessarily superhuman, then it must be the case that no one can have both types of knowledge. In the *Apology* Socrates indicates that he himself does not have the knowledge of what will be good in the future. For example, he does not know even whether or not it would be good for him to win at his trial (*Apology* 19a2-4). One might think that such things as death, exile, and disenfranchisement would necessarily be evils, but Socrates would not be so quick to rush to judgment (*Apology* 30a-d). As he claims in *Republic* at 613a4-7, it might be the case that "[W]hether the just person fall into poverty or disease or any other supposed evil, for him all these things will finally prove good, both in life and in death."

Here in the *Laches,* Socrates does not go so far as to agree with Laches that knowledge of what ends will be good is superhuman. He merely states that only a few people would have such knowledge (196e2-7). He instead raises a problem from the other end of the spectrum of the knowledgeable. No animals would have Nicias's knowledge of what ends would be good to attain to, which means that Nicias's definition precludes the possibility that animals could have

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courage (196d9-e9), contrary to what Laches says is generally believed (197a1-5). Nicias agrees that no animals would qualify as courageous. (If Socrates is right about only a few people having such knowledge, only a few people could qualify as being courageous as well.) He says that (thoughtless) animals cannot be courageous any more than can children who have no fear because they are thoughtless.[33]

Clearly there can be no question of courage when a child is unaware of danger (for example, when walking through a minefield); one must have at least some understanding of the possibility of incurring a bad result, if one is to act with courage. But, of course, children and animals *do* know fear; moreover, they can feel fear and not run away. At 191a5 Socrates agreed with Laches that *anyone* who stays at his post and fights the enemy (*polemios*) is courageous. This would have to include children. And it would seem to include animals as well—for example, a mother defending her young.[34] At *Republic* 402a1-4, Socrates recognizes that young children do not yet have reason, and at *Republic* 378a2-3 he calls such children "thoughtless," but this hardly means that Nicias is correct when he calls children thoughtless. Even if children and animals cannot engage in abstract thought, they must sometimes go through a process of weighing the pros and cons of undertaking an activity; they make some sort of assessment of their situation.[35] The goose that dares to take the bread from my fingers is concerned with such issues as how likely it is that I will try to harm her and how good the bread might be. The fact that she does not think abstractly as she does so is irrelevant. Thus Nicias's definition goes too far; in addition to not needing super-Socratic (superhuman) knowledge of what ends would be good to pursue in order to be courageous, one does not even need to employ abstract thought in one's assessment of one's situation—though he is certainly right in thinking that some thought is required (that completely thoughtless animals and children could not possibly be courageous).

As Nicias defends the claim that children and animals cannot exercise courage, he differentiates between two reasons for being without fear. As we have seen, the cowardly Nicias feels that a courageous person will feel no fear, because the action he is undertaking will involve no risk. But he now excludes some people who do not feel fear from the ranks of the courageous. If someone has no fear of the fearful because they are thoughtless, then they would not qualify as courageous: "In my opinion very few people are endowed with courage and forethought, while rashness, boldness, and fearlessness, with no forethought to guide it, are found in a great number of men, women, children, and animals" (197b2-4).

Courage does indeed entail *forethought*. As we saw in the discussion of Laches' definition, there must be some initial calculation in which one assesses that there is the possibility of a negative outcome, or there would be no opportunity to exercise courage. The man who ignorantly dives into a well (193c2-5) would be an example of thoughtless fearlessness. In his rashness, he does not make an initial assessment of the possibility of suffering a negative outcome; he just dives.

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But Nicias makes a mistake when he implies that this forethought must entail *knowledge* of what will be good or bad in the future. Socrates can be courageous at his trial even though he does not know whether it will be good for him or for the jury if he were to win (*Apology* 19a2-4). More generally, if one's initial calculation merely results in a *belief* about the result of one's action being good, then, when fear or pain or desire or pleasure arise, they can suggest other, competing, objects of desire, and one would have the opportunity to persevere in one's original belief.

In his effort to establish that merely feeling no fear is not sufficient to establish that one is courageous, Nicias sets up a dichotomy: fearless people endowed with manliness and forethought perform prudent actions, while bold, fearless people without forethought perform merely rash actions (197b2-c1). It is the prudent fearless acts that Nicias calls courageous (197c1). This response to the issue of children's and animals' having courage constitutes a big change for Nicias. The decisive factor in determining whether a fearless action would be courageous is no longer having knowledge of what will happen and of what ends will be good or bad; it is now merely having forethought—Nicias is no longer concerned with how enlightened that forethought might be. He has greatly lessened what is required for someone to act with courage. If you are not afraid and you exercise forethought, you are necessarily courageous. Indeed, because children and animals do sometimes employ forethought, they could thus be in the first of Nicias's two categories, after all.

Nicias's dichotomy is a false dichotomy; just because one feels no fear and exercises forethought, that does not imply that one's action is courageous. A coward can exercise forethought and feel no fear as he declines to undertake a risky venture. Nonetheless, Nicias's position has a certain similarity to the one that Socrates suggested to Laches at 192d10-11. There, courage was thought to be prudent perseverance; here, Nicias is saying that courage results in prudent action. But Nicias and Laches have two different understandings of what it takes to qualify as prudent: For Laches, forethought judged an action to be more or less prudent according to its likelihood of success (192e1-193c11); but for Nicias, in his concern to differentiate courage from rashness, a fearless action now qualifies as being prudent if one merely employs forethought before one undertakes it. The cowardly Nicias is taking for granted that, once an action is recognized as involving risk, one will not undertake it.

While Nicias has succeeded in giving us a necessary condition for courage—there must be forethought if one is to avoid merely being rash—he has not given a sufficient condition for courage (actions done with forethought can still be cowardly). Nicias still needs to distinguish the courageous from the merely unrash. The dialogue provides some hope that he eventually will do so, for he intends to seek advice from Damon (200b4-6), and we are told that Damon's forte is that of distinguishing between terms (197d3-5).

Socrates makes a mistake when he goes on to take "what is to be feared" as being equivalent to "what causes fear," and he defines fear as the expectation

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of bad things (198b5-9). ("Fear" is similarly defined at *Protagoras* 358d.) "What is to be feared" is not co-extensive with "what causes fear." In our ignorance of what will be good or bad, we sometimes expect good things to be bad. Good things—such as participating in a discussion in class—are not things to be feared, but they cause some people to expect bad things. And bad things—such as indulging in vice—are things to be feared, but they cause some people to expect good things. Unless one has the superhuman knowledge of what will be good or bad in the future, what causes one to expect a good or bad result is one's *belief* about the result. The reality of the result's goodness or badness can determine our expectation only when we have *knowledge* of it. Socrates' mistake thus implicitly raises the distinction between "belief" and "knowledge." We have seen that this is an important distinction for the definition of courage, because when one is absolutely certain about what is to be done there is no opportunity to exercise courage. Courage can arise only when one has some doubts about what will be good to do.

When the battle gets hot, one's belief about fighting the enemy can change. What one now thinks is to be feared (i.e., the action one now sees as being bad to perform), one did not think to be feared before (i.e., the action did not then seem bad to perform). Persevering in the original opinion (the opinion that was produced by one's initial calculation)—not changing it when things get hot—would seem to constitute courage. The fact that children and animals have expectations of evil is what allows them to be courageous even though they do not have knowledge of what will actually be evil, for that expectation of evil can cause them to change their belief about what is bad to do. And the same would be true for those adult human beings (either all or a few less than all) who do not have that knowledge.

But sometimes the prudent thing to do *is* to change one's opinion about what course of action to pursue. Perhaps one's initial assessment of one's situation was incorrect; say, for example, one suddenly realizes that one is walking in a minefield. Courage would not necessarily involve holding fast to one's original opinion about what should be done; there is nothing necessarily cowardly about changing one's mind. Retreating is not necessarily cowardice. Socrates retreated with the others in the panic-induced retreat at Delium. Once the course of the battle changed his situation, it might well have been foolish rashness for Socrates to adhere to his previous assessment of what was to be done.

What it is like when a coward deserts his initial assessment of what should be done is indicated at *Crito* 46d2-5: "Perhaps our view was right before the question of my death arose, whereas it has now been made clear that we were talking merely for the sake of argument and it was really mere play and nonsense." Now that death seems to be a real possibility, all of one's previous considerations can seem as if they were not really serious and are to be dismissed out of hand. Death now seems to be the thing that is really to be feared. Such a radical change of assessment is illustrated in Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*, where there is the following interchange:

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> Helena: You go so much backwards when you fight.
> Paroles: That's for advantage.
> Helena: So is running away when fear proposes the safety. (I, i, 200-203)

When the enemy comes into view there can be a temptation to reassess one's goals; fear can propose that safety is really the good thing that one should be pursuing. Cowards allow themselves to follow the object proposed by their present fear without stopping to see how their previous calculations apply. The courageous might change their minds about what they should do, but they will do so circumspectly. They will first exercise forethought. As Socrates says at *Republic* 381a3-4: "The bravest and most prudent spirit is least disturbed by external influence." Just as such people do not venture into an action without due consideration (without forethought), they do not quit an action without due consideration. They are not going to permit danger to cause them to dismiss their previous calculations as mere "play and nonsense."

The remainder of the dialogue's discussion of courage, as such, is an argument by Socrates, attempting to show that what Nicias has defined would be the whole of virtue (199d7-e1). He uses some examples to establish "that the same knowledge has comprehension of the same things, whether future, present, or past" (199b6-7). Hence Nicias's formulation "knowledge of what is to be feared and what may be ventured on" is criticized as being unnecessarily specific, for "what is to be feared" and "what may be ventured on" refer merely to the *future* goals for which one might strive (199b9-c1). The knowledge that such and such a state of affairs would be bad *in the future* would be the same as the knowledge that such and such a state of affairs is bad.

Socrates then describes Nicias's courageous man as "a man who knew all good things and all about bringing them about" (199d4-7). This might seem to be a misrepresentation, because they have been discussing the necessity of being able to know merely what *ends* will be good—not the necessity of knowing how to bring about those ends.[36] But Nicias's courageous man had both the knowledge of good ends *and also* the seer's knowledge of what will happen. Thus Socrates is making more precise Nicias's understanding of who can qualify as courageous: Nicias's courageous man is the man with *both* the knowledge of what will be good and also the knowledge of what future states will come about. (Socrates is replacing the seer as the one who knows what will happen in the future with the knowledgeable practitioner.)

Thus Socrates is showing that he was mistaken when he equated Nicias's understanding of courage with the whole of virtue. Because Nicias's knowledge of what makes a decision perfectly safe includes both knowledge of what will be good *and* knowledge of what will happen in the future, Nicias really does see it as pertaining to the future—mere knowledge of what is valuable would not be enough to allow one to avoid rash actions.

Recall that we saw in the discussion of Laches' definitions that, if one has so much knowledge of how to bring something about that one can be sure of

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the result of an action, then there is no opportunity to exercise manliness because there would seem to be no risk. But we now see that, because such a person might not know that the foreseen future state of affairs will be good, there is still an opportunity for him or her to be manly. Laches' objection that Nicias's definition implies that only seers could be manly was never really answered by Nicias—Nicias merely added a further qualification. Socrates is now saving Nicias from this particular objection by including other people who know what will happen in the future: people who have enough knowledge to bring about the desired future state of affairs. While Nicias is still thinking that only those actions that avoid risk are manly, at least now the people whose knowledge helps them avoid risk include knowledgeable practitioners of arts.

Socrates goes on to claim that only the person who knows all good things and all about their production would be carefully guarded (199d7-e1).[37] Only these people would qualify as being perfectly safe from the possibility of mistakenly venturing upon a course of action. "Being carefully guarded" might seem irrelevant here—for it precludes the possibility of exercising manliness—but it is relevant, because being safe from rash action is the extent of Nicias's concern. Socrates' claim is false, for Nicias's *seer* who also happens to know all good things would also know that an action entails no risk. Nonetheless, those of us who are not seers have two possible ways of being at risk: *either* we might be pursuing the wrong ends *or* we might be lacking in ability to bring about the ends we desire. For example, Laches' doctor, who resists his son's entreaties for food and drink, could be exercising manliness even though he knows how to bring about the result. He might know that a particular regimen will produce health in the boy, but he might realize that he does not know whether the boy's future state might not be good enough to justify continuing the boy's present agony. ("What is better among these things for a man to suffer or avoid suffering can surely be no more for a seer to decide than for anyone else in the world" [196a2-3].) If this possibility becomes so real to the doctor that he rejects his previous calculation out of hand and allows the boy to have food and drink, then he would be failing to exercise manliness.

Even though Nicias's definition fails to distinguish merely unrash actions from courageous actions, his concern to distinguish a rash action from a courageous action has shown us another source of fear. The fears, against which the courageous must persevere as they fight, are not merely Laches' fears that they will not accomplish their desired end, but also that their desired end might not be good to bring about. This latter concern would be the main one, for when cowards reject out of hand their previous reasoning, it is because they now feel that their new object of desire (e.g., the safety that their fear proposes) is what is really good. They feel that that safety is more important than those things they valued when they decided to participate in the battle in the first place.[38]

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4. Conclusion

The *Laches* positions manliness between rashness and cowardice. Both Nicias and Laches think that courage must be distinguished from acting without prudence, i.e., both see that rash actions are not courageous. Nicias, though, has no problem with the other extreme: he does not distinguish between unrash action and courageous action—indeed his concern is the coward's concern to avoid actions that involve any risk whatsoever.

Laches fails to see that there are two considerations that make an action risky. In addition to lacking enough knowledge to assure oneself of the outcome, one can also lack the knowledge of whether or not a particular outcome would be good. Laches sees that actions that do not inspire fear would not qualify as courageous, but he does not see that people with so much knowledge that they know what will happen can still be courageous, for they might still have doubts about the goodness of what they are trying to accomplish.

Socrates accepts the idea that manliness entails perseverance (193e8-194a1). He indicates that failing to persevere would be a failure of manliness [193e8-194a1], and that manliness includes fighting with fears (191d6-e1). Courageous people would persevere in their fight with fears. As the *Crito* indicates, cowards allow themselves to be dominated by their fears to such an extent that they reject out of hand those considerations that made them value their previous goals. There is nothing wrong with recalculating what one should do; if the chance of success becomes so small that it does not justify taking further risk, one should change one's plans accordingly. Cowardice lies in not being willing, as one changes one's plans, to think about the considerations which had been important before. These considerations would not be with regard to the chances of success (which have now changed), but rather with regard to what is to be valued. When cowards give in to their fear, they change their understanding of what is good to pursue. As the *Republic* observes, "Every soul pursues the good and for its sake does all that it does, with an intuition of its reality, but yet is baffled and unable to apprehend its nature adequately, or to attain to any stable belief about it" (505d11-e4). If we respond to fear by changing our understanding about what is to be valued without taking our previous calculations into consideration—if we reject our previous calculations out of hand—then we are being cowardly.

Laches and Nicias exemplify two types of failure to properly reassess one's project when one's situation changes. Laches didn't do a good enough job of defending his original understanding of justice as prudent perseverance. He was too ready to forsake what he had thought to be the case as Socrates presented him with considerations that would further refine his understanding. This corresponds to the coward's willingness to forsake his previous understandings. But that doesn't mean that the opposite extreme is good. Nicias is too loyal to his original understanding (for example, in his rejection of the possibility that animals can be courageous). Blind loyalty to what one had previously thought to be true is also less than noble; one needs to be responsive to that which calls into question one's previous understanding.

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The *Republic* similarly sees manliness as being faithful to what one has believed to be good, for, in addition to teaching the young people what they should value, it sees a need to teach them to adhere to what they have been taught:

> The young people should be convinced, and receive our laws like a dye as it were, so that their belief and faith might be fast coloured about both the things that are to be feared and all other things . . . so that their dyes might not be washed out by those lyes that have such terrible power to scour our faiths away, pleasure more potent than any detergent or abstergent to accomplish this, and pain and fear, and desire more sure than any lye. This power in the soul, then, this unfailing conservation of right and lawful belief about things to be and not to be feared is what I call and would assume to be manliness (429e7-430b5).[39]

But unless one's culture necessarily teaches absolute values, manliness would not be a matter of simply adhering to what one has been taught. Adults, as opposed to children and animals, need to think about what they should value (after all, the unexamined life is not worth living).

The manly are "all those who are not merely courageous against pain and fear, but doughty fighters against desires and pleasures, whether standing their ground or turning their back upon the foe" (191d6-e1). Are we going to be faithful to our previous calculations about what is to be feared, or are we going to reject them out of hand and accept as what really is good some new object of desire that is proposed by our current pains, fears, pleasures, or desires? Manly people do not lose perspective when they undergo the pains of torture, when they hear the enemy give forth the rebel yell, when someone other than their spouse strokes their thigh, or when a temptation seems to be attainable. They might decide to change their objective, but they think about it first. As they reassess their situations, they do not turn their backs on their previous calculations about what is and what is not to be valued.

Time plays a role in both the discussion with Nicias and the discussion with Laches. Nicias was concerned with the thoughts that occur *before* manly action, and Laches was concerned with persevering in an action over time. Nicias's forethought would amount to thinking about what one should pursue in a situation (and rejecting any goal the attaining of which entails an element of risk), and Laches' perseverance would involve holding fast to one's initial decision to venture upon an undertaking. Courage can manifest itself in the initial decision as well as in the subsequent fidelity to that decision. Should I try to stop a large man from attacking someone? The coward is not going to rise to the occasion in the first place; he, like Nicias, will reject that which entails risk. If it subsequently turns out that there are two attackers instead of one, and the individual who decided to intervene changes his or her mind, whether or not the individual is now being cowardly depends upon

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whether the individual sees this new development as calling for a re-evaluation of the original decision or whether the individual rejects that earlier decision out of hand. Thus manliness entails calculating that a risk is worth taking and then subsequently not rejecting that calculation without due consideration.

Notes

1 Spiegelberg, 126-127.
2 Grote, I, 291-2.
3 Dobbs sees that Plato is implying that courage really does have to do with perseverance (p. 38).
4 Nichols notes the parallel with *Gorgias* 507b (p. 274).
5 Taylor, 60.
6 Wolfsdorf is mistaken when he claims that Socrates is here assuming that "Laches and he know what excellence is" (p. 138). This claim is merely implied by a supposed ability to consult with someone as to how that person might best acquire virtue. At 200e2-201a2 Socrates denies that any of them have this ability.
7 Politis cites 194a7-8 in support of his claim that "Laches is keen to take up the argument about courage in a spirit of good-humoured competition" (p. 92): "A certain ambitious ardor has got hold of me at hearing what has been said . . ." But the second half of that sentence says, ". . . and I am truly vexed at finding myself unable to express offhand what I think" (194a8-b1). Laches is like Euthyphro in pretending that he knows but is not able to express what he knows (*Euthyphro* 11b6-7). (Note the further parallel: Euthyphro would not prosecute his father if he did not know what was pious to do (*Euthyphro* 4e4-6), but he cannot express his understanding of piety; and Laches would not give advice about how to join virtue to the young men's souls if he did not know about virtue, but he cannot express his understanding of virtue.)
8 Hobbs sees this (p. 95).
9 Umphrey (p. 15), Politis (pp. 93-4), and Griswold (p. 186) see this. Rabbas is mistaken in thinking that Socrates' problem with this definition is that it is presented as a paradigm and that Laches failed to supply the grounds for projecting this paradigm to other cases (p. 148). Socrates' explicit problem is that Laches has given a definition for merely courageous men-at-arms and not for other kinds of courage (191c7-d2); the definition is not presented as a paradigm for other cases. Cullyer is in contradiction with the fact that Socrates agrees with Laches when she claims that Socrates rejects Laches' definition because he "holds that *andreia* is a psychic disposition rather than a certain type of action" (p. 215).
10 Politis (pp. 93-4), Cormack, (p. 26), and Naas (p. 125) see that Laches' definition is now too wide (pp.93-4).
11 Santas, 443-4; Friedländer; Schmid.
12 Santas, Umphrey is in agreement with Santas in thinking that the point of the example of the doctor is that what the doctor perseveres against is not great or serious. He believes that desires and pains are not thought to be serious by Plato (p. 18). But Socrates explicitly says that manliness involves fighting with desires

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and pains (191d6-e1). Vlastos is incorrect when he claims that "because the goods such people can procure would count as anything but great" (meaning they do not have to do with *moral qualities*), these examples do not count as instances of courage (p. 113). This would rule out the possibility that a soldier merely trying to procure victory in battle could be courageous, contrary to what Socrates says at 191a5. Socrates thinks that anyone who stays at his post and fights the enemy is courageous; the person's particular reason for doing so is not of the essence. Irwin agrees with Vlastos, holding that these examples do not count as instances of courage because "questions about what is good or bad overall are not at stake (p. 47). Rabieh sees the difficulty for the father, but, as we shall see, she is wrong in thinking that the resultant health would necessarily be great (p. 58). (Disease can be good for us—see *Republic* 613a4-7.)

13 Woodruff, 102

14 Buford (p. 163), Taylor (p. 62), and Hoerber (p. 101) recognize that knowledge of what will happen precludes fear and thus precludes the exercise of courage-though the issue with the doctor would not be precluding *fear,* but rather be not allowing himself to be influenced by the *pain* of allowing his son to continue to be in distress.

15 Hobbs is incorrect in suggesting that this opponent might not be aware of the risks he is running (p. 93). *Steadfast* perseverance implies an awareness of the possibility of a negative outcome.

16 Rabbas sees that the point is that an element of risk is a necessary condition for the exercise of courage (p. 165). The fact that Laches thinks the knowledgeable fighter would be the less courageous speaks against Méron's suggestion that *andreia* has to do with strategic efficiency (p. 197), and Stokes's view that it means the sum of those qualities that make a good fighter (p. 48). If either of these views were correct, then, because knowledge makes one more efficient and also a better fighter, Laches would naturally think that the knowledgeable fighter would be the more courageous.

17 Dancy thinks that Socrates is implicitly denying this possibility (p. 88).

18 Hobbs observes, "It will often be the presence or absence of technical skill which makes the difference between some hope of success and no hope of success" (p. 94).

19 Thus Rosen and Horstmanshoff are mistaken in thinking that this example is essentially the same as the preceding example (p. 106).

20 Taylor is mistaken when he claims that the man with specialist knowledge is necessarily, "as he himself knows, taking little or no risk" (p. 62).

21 Goldberg (p. 235) and Avramenko (p. 217) recognize this.

22 Anderson observes, "Hoplites and peltasts by themselves could do nothing but endure the attack of cavalry and archers and slingers" (p. 115).

23 Sprague tells us that Professor W. B. Stanford has written to her with evidence that Plato might be referring to people who retrieve vessels dropped into wells after the "diver" has been lowered down on a rope or has climbed down (p. 36n). The parallel with sending forth an arrow speaks against this. In any case, doing that activity safely must have required expert knowledge, for both Laches (193c9-12) and Protagoras (*Protagoras* 350a-b) hold that to do it without knowledge is madness.

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24 Taylor (p. 62) and O'Brien (p. 306) both see this as exemplifying the same thing as all the other examples: that it is the less knowledgeable whom we more esteem. Neither renders the example exactly. O'Brien refers to a less skillful swimmer staying in the water, rather than to someone plunging into a well. Taylor refers to a plucky dive into deep (!) water. Santas claims, "But to dive into a well, with no skill at diving, in order to save a child's life, when there is no one else to do it is anything but foolishness" (p. 448). But the point is that it would be foolish if you really did not know enough to succeed—for example, if you did not know how to swim. Sprague holds that the purpose of the examples is "to show that our admiration of foolish perseverance is really an admiration of foolhardiness" (p. 34n). But at 193d1-2 Socrates and Laches agree that foolish perseverance is the opposite of admirable, that it is shameful. They do not admire it. The mistake in the argument lies in *Laches's* claim that a specific foolish action is admirable. Clearly the parallel with Socrates' previous questions has led Laches into thinking that is what he is supposed to answer. Rabieh sees that the ignorant well diver is foolish rather than courageous (p. 60).

25 O'Brien is mistaken in thinking that "imprudent" here is referring to inability to bring about the desired end rather than to making a bad decision to engage in the activity (p. 113). When Socrates says that, "persons of this sort are more imprudent in their risks and perseverances than those who do it with proper skill" (193c9-11), he is not saying the truism that those who do it without skill are more without skill (less able to bring about the desired end) than those with skill.

26 Bonitz (i, p. 218) and Devereux ("Courage and Wisdom in Plato's *Laches*," p. 136n; "The Unity of Virtue," p. 333) note this. Irwin's objection that *Nicias's* definition of manliness does not refer to perseverance (p. 302 n59) does not affect the fact that *Socrates* here endorses the idea of courage entailing perseverance.

27 Herodotus, I 34.

28 Avramenko is mistaken in thinking that Laches is asking for knowledge of what is better or worse "speaking ethically" (p. 226). The issue is explicitly what is better to suffer or to avoid suffering (196a2). I cannot make sense of Beversluis' claim that Laches' objection trivializes Nicias's definition by misinterpreting it (p. 128).

29 Hobbs is mistaken when she writes: "How can it not be better for someone to be victorious rather than defeated, healthy rather than sick, alive rather than dead? . . . The only possible explanation is if health, success and life in these cases could only be purchased at the expense of some value which is perceived as more important" (p. 100). It is not clear that death, for example, is bad: "For to fear death, gentlemen, is nothing else than to think one is wise when one is not; for it is thinking one knows what one does not know. For no one knows whether death be not even the greatest of blessings" (*Apology* 29a5-b1).

30 Schmid thinks that the knowledge of what ends would be good would be a ruling art in relation to other arts (p. 141). But, as we have been seeing, any ruling art must combine this knowledge with another type of knowledge—knowledge of the chances of a successful outcome—in order to determine what course of action should be taken.

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31 Naas does not justify his claim that Laches is here exhibiting misologist tendencies beyond saying that "he criticizes Nicias for precisely those things for which Socrates himself might be criticized" (pp. 126-7).

32 Kierkegaard sees that Socrates is speaking of the wisdom of the sophists in a skeptical tone (p. 126). Guthrie sees that Socrates is denying that the sophists have the knowledge of how to teach virtue (p. 88). Penner thinks that the parallel with divinely inspired poets, exegetes, etc., in other Platonic passages shows that, when Socrates speaks of superhuman wisdom of the sophists, he is saying that the sophists are divinely inspired (p. 138). But if they were divinely inspired, then the point would be that they do not have any wisdom, just as the divinely inspired poets are said not have wisdom at *Apology* 22b8-c2. Vlastos claims that Socrates is referring to the natural philosophers as well as to the sophists when he says "those men of whom I was just speaking" (20d9-e1) (p. 62n). (McPherran [*The Religion of Socrates*, p. 73n, and "Socratic Piety in the *Euthyphro*," p. 239n] also holds this view. Bruell thinks that Socrates is referring *only* to the natural philosophers [p. 145].) But Socrates has not, in fact, referred to any natural philosophers. He has merely said of natural *philosophy*: "I say this not to cast dishonor upon such knowledge, if anyone is wise about such matters" (19c5-7).

33 Avramenko is mistaken in thinking that Nicias's definition implies that animals can be courageous (p. 227).

34 Thus Taylor is mistaken in thinking that Nicias has satisfactorily answered Laches' objection (p. 63). Taylor defends his claim by saying, "[T]he *vox propria* for 'brave' is *andreos*, 'manly,' and to call a brute 'manly' is felt to be at least a straining of language" (p. 63n). But this is in contradiction with 197a1-5, where Laches says that all admit that animals such as lions, stags, bulls, and monkeys are courageous. We must not mistake etymology for current use, gentlemen. (Stern makes a similar mistake [p. 56].)

35 Rabieh contradicts herself when she writes, "[Children] do not use forethought; they tend not to think very much about the ends they pursue" (p. 79). To the extent that they think about what ends to pursue they exercise forethought.

36 Stokes thinks that this "seems a clear case of proceeding illegitimately from 'knowledge that' to 'knowledge how' " (p. 107).

37 Rosen and Horstmanshoff think Socrates is endorsing Nicias's position: "[O]ne needs a full and genuine understanding of how events will turn out in order to act prudently and courageously" (pp. 109-110). Devereux makes the same mistake ("The Unity of Virtue," p. 329). Nicias is clearly wrong in thinking that only those actions whose results are perfectly assured are courageous.

38 In "The Argument in the *Protagoras* that No One Does What He Believes to Be Bad," I argue that at *Protagoras* 351b-358d, Plato establishes that when we are overcome by some temptation we have switched opinions and think of that which the temptation promises us as being the truly good thing.

39 Hobbs notes the parallel between the *Laches* and this passage in the *Republic* (p. 375).

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