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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

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THE UNITY OF VIRTUE REVISITED: A RESOLUTION TO A SOCRATIC ENIGMA

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY

By
BARRY F. VAUGHAN
Norman, Oklahoma
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THE UNITY OF VIRTUE REVISITED: A RESOLUTION TO A SOCRATIC ENIGMA

A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

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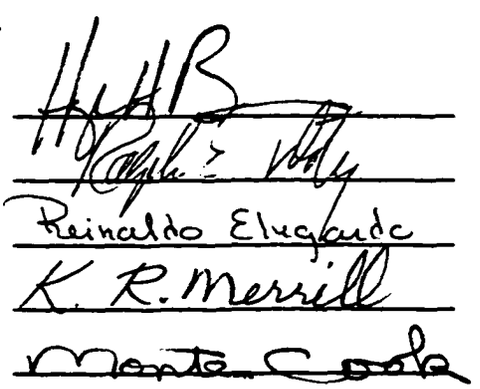

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ABSTRACT

Socrates' assertions about the relationship between the cardinal virtues of justice, temperance, piety, courage, and wisdom have long been a source of controversy among scholars. While it is generally held that his position can be described as suggesting a unity among the virtues, the precise nature of this unity is debated. In this dissertation I argue that throughout the early dialogues Socrates is committed to the position that the various virtue terms are merely different names for virtue proper. I further argue that according to this view Socrates is committed to a position which entails that the virtue terms are synonymous with one another. I develop my argument by responding to four major alternative interpretations of Socrates' doctrine of virtue.

ABBREVIATIONS

Authors and Works:

Aristotle:

Cat.	Categories
E.N.	Nicomachean Ethics
Met.	Metaphysics
Po. An.	Posterior Analytics
Pol.	Politics
Rhet.	Rhetoric
Soph. El.	De Sophisticis Elenchis
Top.	Topics

Plato:

Ap.	Apology
Charm.	Charmides
Cr.	Crito
Crat.	Cratylus
Eu.	Euthyphro
Eud.	Euthydemus
Gorg.	Gorgias
H. Ma.	Hippias Major
H. Mi.	Hippias Minor
I.	Ion
La.	Laches
Ly.	Lysis
M.	Meno
Parm.	Parmenides
Phdo.	Phaedo
Phdr.	Phaedrus
Phil.	Philebus
Prot.	Protagoras
Rep.	Republic
Soph.	Sophist
Sym.	Symposium
Tht.	Theaetetus
Tim.	Timaeus

Xenophon:

Apol.	Apology
Hell.	Hellenica
Mem.	Memorabilia
Symp.	Symposium

Exegetical Abbreviations:

UVD	Unity of Virtue Doctrine
PVD	Parts of Virtue Doctrine
BT	Biconditionality Thesis
IT	Identity Thesis
ST	Similarity Thesis
UT	Unity Thesis[1]

[1] The Unity Thesis and the Identity Thesis refer to the same basic view: that the virtue terms all refer to the same entity. Gregory Vlastos coins the term 'Identity Thesis' to designate this interpretation of the *UVD* while Terry Penner prefers to use 'Unity Thesis'.

Chapter I

Introduction

Alfred North Whitehead once asserted that the Western tradition of philosophy is little more than a footnote to Plato.[1] While this is undoubtedly an exaggeration, it captures the importance of the works of Plato in the canon of philosophy. And if Plato is central to the history of philosophy generally, Socrates is central to Plato's philosophy. Although it is certainly not the case that Platonism is merely a footnote to Socrates, it is hard to imagine Plato without the influence of his mentor, the Athenian gadfly. So what was it about the snub-nosed, bug-eyed common citizen of Athens that motivated the aristocrat Plato to devote himself to the pursuit of wisdom rather than a military or political career more suited to his birth? Plato undoubtedly struggled with this question himself after Socrates' death. I believe this is a significant part of the motivation behind Plato's authorship of the Apology and undoubtedly many of what we call the early or 'Socratic' dialogues. The doctrines we find in these early works of Plato reveal a complex if not paradoxical set of views and these views continue to be of philosophical interest today. One of these enigmas,[2] the so-called 'Unity of Virtue Doctrine', is the subject of this dissertation.

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[1] "The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato." A. N. Whitehead, Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology, (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 53. Bertrand Russell expresses a similar admiration for Plato in A History of Western Philosophy, (New York: Book-Of-The-Month-Club, 1995), 104.

[2] I use the term 'enigma' here, as in the title, intentionally. The English term is the transliteration of the Greek αἴνιγμα which is best translated as 'mysterious saying' or 'riddle'. Socrates himself uses a cognate of this term (i.e., αἰνίττεται) to relate the story of

A. Socrates and the Early Dialogues

Before I delve into the enigma that is the focus of this work there are some preliminary questions which must be addressed. First, so far as we know, Socrates did not write philosophy. There are no works attributed to him surviving today. Further, there are no reliable ancient witnesses to philosophical writings by Socrates, so it is probably safe to assert that there were none. Thus, we are dependent upon secondhand sources for our knowledge of his thought. Thankfully, there are some very good sources about Socrates which do survive. He appears as a leading character in at least one of the surviving plays of Aristophanes, an Athenian playwright and contemporary of Socrates.[3] Xenophon, another contemporary of Socrates, also leaves us a record of his existence—a potentially rich source of information about his life and thought. Additionally, Socrates is occasionally mentioned by Aristotle, however, they were not contemporaries and his knowledge of Socrates is second-hand. But by far the richest source of information about Socrates comes to us from Plato, his younger contemporary and devoted follower. [4]

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the Delphic Oracle's assertion that "no one is wiser than [Socrates]" (Ap. 21b). 'Puzzle' is another acceptable alternative although it suggests that an unrecognized solution is likely, while 'enigma' leaves open the possibility that no clear solution exists. Since the debate over the Unity of Virtue Doctrine has been so protracted, it is perhaps wise not to assume too quickly that there *must* be a clear solution.

[3] The play Socrates appears in is *The Clouds*, one of Aristophanes' early plays, c. 423 BCE. Moses Hadas, ed. The Complete Plays of Aristophanes, (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 101-141.

[4] In the following sections I lay out some of the classical arguments given by commentators who have already addressed the problem of the historical Socrates in some detail. It is not my intention to provide new or substantially original arguments to justify my position on the historical Socrates; that would require a research project quite independent from the one at hand. Rather, I merely intend to clarify the working assumptions underlying

A.1 The Problem of the Historical Socrates[5]

One serious problem facing anyone interested in the reconstruction of Socratic philosophy is that the ancient sources do not yield a unified picture of the historical Socrates. In fact, some of these sources seem to contradict each other. In Aristophanes' *The Clouds* Socrates is a distracted nature philosopher and atheist who teaches sophistic skills for money; he is interested in esoteric metaphysical concerns and meteorology.[6] Xenophon's Socrates is more like a retired gentleman than a philosopher. He never tires of handing out religious, moral and practical advice to his friends.[7] Aristotle refers to Socrates passingly to highlight ethical views or philosophical methodology that he usually goes on to argue are either incomplete or incorrect.[8] However, most of the references we find in Aristotle are so brief and seem to parallel Plato's dialogues that they offer little independent

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my research. I should point out that my view has been significantly shaped by the work of Gregory Vlastos in Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher (New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 45-131. For a more complete discussion of the debate over the historical Socrates see the works cited below in notes 10, 13, 14, 23, 26, 28, and 30.

[5] This is normally referred to simply as 'The Problem of Socrates' but for reasons that will become clear below, I will break with this tradition.

[6] It is no accident that Plato takes direct aim at Aristophanes' portrait of Socrates. It is clear that he thinks the caricature of Socrates in *The Clouds* is in large part responsible for his mentor's demise (Ap. 18a-e).

[7] This attitude can be seen in Xenophon's Estate-Manager (Οἰκονόμικος). Xenophon, Conversations of Socrates, ed. Robin Waterfield, (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 289-359. What troubles me about Socrates' attitude in Xenophon is that it seems inconsistent with the philosophically cautious Socrates we find in the early dialogues of Plato.

[8] The references to Socrates in Aristotle are numerous, but their content scant; for a few examples, see On Sophistical Refutations 183b, Posterior Analytics 2:13, Metaphysics 1:6, 13:4; Nicomachean Ethics 3:8, 4:7, 6:13, 7:2-3.

information about the historical character.[9] Plato's 'Socrates' differs from both Xenophon's and Aristophanes', though more radically from the latter. So the first problem we must face is, which is the real Socrates? Which of our ancient sources gives us the most accurate picture of the historical Socrates?

A.1.a Aristophanes on Socrates

I am inclined to discount the Aristophanic 'Socrates' on literary as well as philosophical grounds. First, none of the characters we find in the comedies of Aristophanes are realistic characters. They are, as we should expect, caricatures, and Socrates is no exception.[10] Even the playwright Euripides, who appears in *Thesmophoriazuase* and *The Frogs*—and who gets far better treatment at the hands of Aristophanes than Socrates—would not be mistaken for a realistic character. The comedic form of Greek drama demanded recognizable, but exaggerated characters. But this is not peculiar to Aristophanic comedy; the characters of Greek tragedy were generally, so far as we know, larger than life as well.[11] Second, Aristophanes' 'Socrates' bears scant resemblance to the character we find in Xenophon or Plato. In fact, the Aristophanic 'Socrates' is so *unlike* the character we meet in Xenophon and Plato it is difficult to imagine they are based on one and the same historical

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[9] However, Aristotle does, from time to time, draw a distinction between the doctrines of Socrates and Plato which will be useful information as we shall see below.

[10] For a concise discussion of dramatic figures and their role in popular morality, see K.J. Dover, Greek Popular Morality In the Time of Plato and Aristotle, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1994), 14-23.

[11] One only has to consider the willful 'Antigone' or the curious 'Oedipus' to recognize this pattern in Greek drama. Often the protagonist is not even fully human, being a super-human hero or god like Aeschylus' 'Prometheus' or 'Agamemnon'.

person.[12] Finally, Aristophanes never claims to give us an accurate portrait of the historical Socrates; it simply was not his goal to defend Socrates or his views. Thus, since Aristophanes was a playwright and not really interested in drawing realistic portraits of particular historical figures, we should not take his 'Socrates' too seriously nor be troubled by the fact that he is inconsistent with the character we find in other sources.[13]

A.1.b Plato vs. Xenophon on Socrates

When comparing Xenophon and Plato, it is much harder to decide who gives us a more accurate picture of Socrates. Both seem to be motivated, at least in part, by a desire to vindicate Socrates to the Athenians who put him to death, if not to posterity as well. Both authors claim to have been well acquainted with—if not intimates of—Socrates. Both wrote accounts of his trial (although Xenophon was not actually present at the proceedings)[14] as

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[12] It seems to me that the character we find in Aristophanes is more a caricature of philosophical sophism in general, rather than of Socrates in particular. Socrates would have been an easily identifiable person because of his high public profile and thus a good choice for Aristophanes' purpose. However, the fact that Plato takes such pains in the Apology to distance the "real" Socrates from the Aristophanic character, together with the fact that we do not find Aristophanes' view of Socrates shared by other ancient sources is good reason to be doubtful of the authenticity of the character we find there.

[13] Some might argue that my dismissal of Aristophanes is to too quick. After all, if he gives us a caricature of Socrates, must it not be the case that there is some significant resemblance between his 'Socrates' and the historical figure? While I feel the weight of this argument, it need not tell against my project. There is nothing in the Aristophanic 'Socrates' which impacts on the Unity of Virtue debate which is my focus. For more detail on the Aristophanic 'Socrates' see Kenneth Dover, "Socrates in the *Clouds*," in The Philosophy of Socrates: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Gregory Vlastos, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), 50-77; Martha Nussbaum, "Aristophanes and Socrates on Learning Practical Wisdom," Yale Classical Studies, 26 (1980): 43-97; also Paul A. Vander Waerdt, "Socrates in the Clouds," in The Socratic Movement, ed. Paul A. Vander Waerdt, (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1998), 48-86.

[14] Xenophon's apology is reportedly the eyewitness account of Hermogenes and Apollodorus who were also counted among Socrates' circle of friends. Xenophon, Socrates' Defense, trans., Robin Waterfield, (New York: Penguin Books, 1990).

well as dramatic dialogues which feature him as a main character. Plato's Socrates is clearly brighter than Xenophon's, but that is no real indication of which is closer to the historical Socrates; Plato was the literary and philosophical genius that Xenophon was not. Also, Plato's Socratic dialogues are more numerous than Xenophon's; Plato leaves us twenty-one dialogues in which Socrates plays a significant role compared to only four from Xenophon.[15]

The most significant distinctions between the 'Socrates' we find in Plato and Xenophon are doctrinal. First, Plato has Socrates assert, quite contrary to traditional Greek morality, that we ought never seek revenge for a harm committed (Cr., 49b). Xenophon, on the other hand, has Socrates defend revenge and harming one's enemies as virtuous.[16] Thus, Xenophon's Socrates defends a traditional Greek notion of moral and social obligation while Plato's character explores a radical alternative.[17]

Second, in both Plato and Xenophon, Socrates defends an intellectualist view of virtue and thus denies moral incontinence (ἀκρασία or, weakness of will). However, they disagree on the consequences of this view. For example, Xenophon has Socrates assert that courage is a natural capacity which is enhanced by training and exercise (i.e., knowledge),[18] while for Plato's

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[15] The Platonic dialogues in which Socrates has a significant role are (in alphabetical order) the Apology, Charmides, Cratylus, Crito, Euthydemus, Euthyphro, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Lysis, Meno, Parmenides, Phaedo, Phaedrus, Philebus, Protagoras, Republic, Symposium, and Theaetetus. Xenophon's four dialogues featuring Socrates are the Apology, Economist, Memorabilia, and Symposium.

[16] Xenophon, Memorabilia, trans. Hugh Trednnik, revised and edited by Robin Waterfield, (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 105 (2.1.19), 107 (2.1.28), 115 (2.3.14), 183, (4.2.16), 204 (4.5.10).

[17] For more on the Greek popular notion that it is virtuous to harm your enemies see Dover, Greek Popular Morality, 180-195.

[18] Xenophon, Mem., 160-69 (3.9).

Socrates, courage just *is* knowledge.[19] There also seems to be a difference in motive for the two characters: "Xenophon attributes to Socrates the Aristotelian response . . . that the virtuous man naturally desires good."[20] For Plato's Socrates, knowledge alone is a sufficient motivation for virtuous action. Thus, he is not required to speculate further or make pronouncements on human nature. So while both authors agree on Socratic intellectualism and a denial of *akrasia*, they disagree on the particulars of this doctrine.

Third, Plato's and Xenophon's 'Socrates' demonstrate quite different dispositions in relation to their knowledge. One of the most striking claims of Plato's Socrates is that he has "no claim to wisdom great or small" (Ap., 21b).[21] Indeed, throughout the earliest dialogues of Plato we find numerous denials of knowledge by Socrates.[22] The consequence of this is that if Socrates is serious, he is not in a position to teach anyone anything. Teaching

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[19] Plato, Protagoras, 360d, Laches 199d. Unless otherwise indicated all translations are from Plato: The Collected Dialogues, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1961).

[20] Robin Waterfield, Xenophon: Conversations of Socrates, "Introduction," 15. Waterfield's assertion is clearly supported by Xenophon's text. For example Xenonphon has Socrates, during a conversation about the nature of courage, assert, "I think that every natural disposition can be developed in the direction of fortitude by instruction and application" (Mem. 3.9.5). When contrated with Plato's Socrates in the Laches it is clear that we have distinct views about the acquisition of the courage. It is not at all clear that Plato's Socrates thinks courage is a "natural disposition" or that one needs practice at being courageous. In fact, in the case of the latter it seems that one need no more than a certain kind of knowledge to be courageous (La. 199d, e).

[21] I should point out that we find a similar distinction internal to the Platonic corpus as well. This is discussed in more detail in § A.2 below.

[22] One of the defining characteristics of the early dialogues of Plato (which I will discuss in more detail below) is that Socrates' denial of knowledge is ubiquitous. For example, see Apology 20c, 21d, 23b; Euthyphro 5a, 15c, 15e-16a, Charmides 165b, 166c; Lysis 212a, 223b; Laches 186b, 186d, 200e; Hippias Minor 376c; Hippias Major 286c, 304d; Meno 71a, 80d; and Republic I:337e.

presupposes superior knowledge on the part of the teacher. If Socrates has no knowledge, he is not in a position to be a teacher; but if he teaches others, he must have some knowledge to pass on. From a literary perspective, the point Plato seems to be making is that Socrates cannot be guilty of teaching the youth of Athens corrupt doctrines if he himself does not believe he knows anything significant. Xenophon, on the other hand, puts a great deal of confidence in the mouth of Socrates, emphasizing the point that he taught only moral doctrines.[23] As with morality, on the subject of religion his 'Socrates' reveals great confidence in defending popular conventions.[24] Again in stark contrast to Plato, Xenophon says "it is obvious . . . that Socrates used to reveal his opinions candidly to his companions."[25]

Finally, Xenophon asserts that Socrates deliberately scuttled his own defense because he wanted to die: "he had already decided that for him death was preferable to life."[26] In fact, Xenophon goes so far as to have Socrates claim that he believed his death was divinely ordained.[27] This is his explanation for Socrates' "arrogant" tone toward the jury at his trial. We get no indication from Plato, however, that Socrates intentionally scuttled his defense. His Apology shows Socrates giving serious arguments against the

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[23] See Donald R. Morrison's excellent essay, "Xenophon's Socrates as Teacher," in The Socratic Movement, 181-208.

[24] Xenophon, Mem., 89-93 (1.4), 191-195 (4.3).

[25] Ibid., 211 (4.7).

[26] Xenophon, Apology, 41. However, as Vlastos points out, it takes quite a stretch of the imagination to suppose that Socrates, after having committed his life to the rational pursuit of morality for himself and others, would suddenly stoop to emotional rhetoric in order to cause his own death so as to avoid the pains of old age. Vlastos, Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher, 291-293. As indicated above, I am in essential agreement with Vlastos' approach to the problem of the historical Socrates.

[27] Ibid., 42.

official indictment of corrupting the youth and introducing new deities, as well as explaining the popular prejudice against philosophers in general and himself in particular.[28] It is not until after the jury has already found Socrates guilty that he adopts a strong sarcastic tone suggesting that the punishment most befitting him would be life-time maintenance at the *Prytaneum* (Ap. 37a).

For all their similarities, it is troubling that there are such significant dissimilarities between the characters we find in Plato and in Xenophon. Unfortunately, there is little in either account which gives us unquestionable warrant to suppose one is a more accurate portrait of the historical Socrates than the other. Both authors have independent agendas that motivate their authorship of Socratic dialogues. In terms of content and style, Plato is clearly a superior philosopher and dramatist to Xenophon, but that tells us nothing about the real Socrates. It is the case that Aristotle tends to confirm the Platonic version of Socrates, but this might be deemed irrelevant since he was

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[28] Plato initially draws a distinction between these causes of Socrates' trial at Apology 18a*ff*. The informal indictment, and the more difficult to defeat, comes from Aristophanes: 1) Socrates is wicked in that he is a nature philosopher (and by implication an atheist), 2) he intentionally uses fallacious reasoning to win arguments, and 3) he teaches his sophistic skills to the youth of Athens. The formal indictment is brought by Meletus, Anytus, and Lycon and is essentially two-fold: 1) Socrates corrupts the youth of Athens with false doctrines, and 2) Socrates introduces new deities (Ap. 24b). Socrates attacks the formal charges directly by showing that the indictment does not apply to him and that the prosecution (in the person of Meletus) does not believe the indictment applies to Socrates (Ap. 25c-26a, 26b-27e). The informal charges are disarmed by demonstrating first of all that Socrates, unlike his namesake in *The Clouds*, is not interested in Natural Philosophy (Ap. 19d). Nor is it the case that he takes fees for teaching anyone anything since he specifically claims not to have knowledge of the fine and good (Ap. 19e). There is thus no indication in Plato that Socrates did not give full effort to his defense, nor that he knew prior to the trial what the outcome would be, although he does admit that he is not surprised at the outcome (Ap. 35e). For an excellent discussion of the formal indictment, see Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith, "The Formal Charges Against Socrates," in Benson, Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates (New York: Oxford Press, 1992), 14-34.

Plato's student and may very well have learned everything he knew about Socrates from the Platonic dialogues.[29]

From a philosophical point of view, one way to deal with the problem of the historical Socrates is simply to set it aside. Without further evidence, it is impossible to be *certain* who provides a more accurate picture of Socrates and his thought. Such a conclusion, however, in no way prevents us from pursuing a reconstruction of Socratic philosophy. Since Plato has provided us with such a philosophically interesting character, we can take 'Socrates' to refer to the person we find in his dialogues, and temporarily suspend the question of historical authenticity. Thus, when I refer to 'Socrates' I mean the character we find in the dialogues of Plato regardless of whether or not this character is an accurate representation of the historical Socrates.[30]

There is a further interpretive problem which arises when we focus solely on the Platonic 'Socrates', however: can we clearly distinguish Socratic

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[29] As suggested by Waterfield, 18.

[30] In all fairness, I should state that I am inclined to accept the Platonic 'Socrates' as most closely representing the historical figure. I am so inclined for two reasons: first, there is a good deal of weight in the philosophical tradition which has held that Plato's Socrates is the historical Socrates. But more importantly, it is hard to figure out why the Athenians would want to execute Xenophon's Socrates, while it is easy to see why they would want to get rid of Plato's. As a staunch defender of the traditional morality and religion, the only motive the prosecution could have had against Xenophon's character is intellectual jealousy, which hardly seems sufficient. Plato's Socrates, on the other hand, was a genuine public nuisance to the democratic leadership attempting to reestablish themselves after their defeat at the hands of Sparta and the rule of the Thirty Tyrants. Plato gives us a sufficient, though still unjust, motive for Socrates' condemnation and execution. The best arguments both for and against the historical authenticity of Plato's Socrates are offered by Gregory Vlastos and Charles Kahn respectively. Vlastos gives a compelling argument for the Platonic Socrates' authenticity in Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1991), 81-106; for an overview of his position see Vlastos, "The Paradox of Socrates" in The Philosophy of Socrates: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Gregory Vlastos (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971. Without actually denying the authenticity of Plato's Socrates, Charles Kahn strongly warns against reading too much history into Plato: Kahn, "Did Plato Write Socratic Dialogues?" in Benson, 35-52.

from Platonic philosophy? That is, once we focus exclusively on the Platonic corpus, why should we think the doctrines we find in the early dialogues are anything other than the youthful doctrines of Plato? In the following section I address this problem.

A.2 The Problem of the Platonic Socrates

Thus far I have argued that when engaged in the reconstruction of Socratic philosophy we can legitimately set aside worries about whether or not Plato's 'Socrates' is historically authentic since the philosophically interesting 'Socrates' is Plato's 'Socrates'. Thus, we need not be disturbed if there is not precise agreement among the ancient sources on what Socrates believed. However, when we closely examine Plato's 'Socrates' it becomes evident that there are distinctive styles and doctrines in various dialogues. For example, in some dialogues Socrates is interested exclusively in the question "how ought we to live?" and issues related to moral philosophy. In other dialogues, Socrates' moral preoccupation is overtaken by the more speculative philosophical concerns of epistemology and metaphysics. And where the emphasis shifts from one set of topics to another, there are corresponding changes in philosophical methodology as well as Socrates' personality. Thus, many commentators conclude "there appears to be more than one Socrates in the dialogues of Plato."[31] This has led scholars to divide Plato's dialogues into distinct categories corresponding to the different doctrines and literary styles we discover, and these are generally believed to correspond to his overall intellectual development. So what specifically are

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[31] Hugh Benson, Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates (New York: Oxford, 1992), 4.

the divergent elements that demarcate the stages of Plato's intellectual development, and what do they tell us about Socratic as opposed to Platonic philosophy?[32]

A.2.a Differences in Plato's Texts

I would argue there are three significant touchstones which mark the distinction between the different stages of Plato's thought: 1) doctrinal focus, 2) Socrates' attitude, and 3) methodology. In those works which have come to

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[32] To give a complete list of the differences we find among the individual works in the Platonic corpus would occupy a study all its own. In the interest of time and space, therefore, I will note here only those I think most important. I should note, however that I am focusing primarily on what Guthrie calls "philosophical content" and for the most part avoiding literary criticism and stylometry. I avoid the former because of its highly subjective nature. Consider for example Taylor's justification for placing the Protagoras in the middle period of Plato's development along with the Republic, Phaedo, and Symposium: "The absurdity of regarding the dialogue as a juvenile performance is sufficiently shown by the perfect mastery of dramatic technique.... No beginner, however endowed with genius, produces such a masterpiece of elaborate art without earlier experiences of trial and failure." Taylor's position rests on two unjustified assumptions: 1) the Protagoras demonstrates a higher "mastery of dramatic technique" than the Euthyphro or Laches, or any other early dialogue, and 2) that an author's work necessarily gets better with time. Both assumptions are, in my opinion, highly suspect. A.E. Taylor, Plato: The Man and His Work (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 20, 235.

As a method of dating dialogues, stylometry rests on a more firm foundation than the literary approach, so long as we are thinking of *relative* dating. The nearly two hundred years of stylometric investigation have led to the consensus among scholars that Plato's dialogues can be divided into three general periods of chronological development: early, middle, and late. There is always the danger, however, of thinking that stylometry will provide an *absolute* dating system which is much more problematic. For instance, there is no reason to think that Plato wrote only one dialogue at a time; he may well have had several works in progress at any give time. Further, it might be the case that some works received later revisions and editing while others did not. Still others might have been conceived and begun in one period of his development and finished later. (This is arguably the case with the Meno and the Republic, for example.) W.K.C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy: IV Plato: The Man and His Dialogues, Early Period (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975),41-54; and for a comprehensive view of the stylometric endeavor see Brandwood, The Chronology of Plato's Dialogues (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); or, for a more concise overview of these issues see Brandwood, "Stylometry and Chronology," in The Cambridge Companion to Plato, ed. Richard Kraut, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 90-120.

be associated with Plato's earliest intellectual period we find that Socrates is focused almost exclusively on moral philosophy. "What is the right way to live?" "Who knows the right way to live?" "Can we teach others the right way to live?" "What motivates us to live the right way once we've discovered what it is?" "Is virtue an innate disposition of the soul or is it a special skill or knowledge which can be attained through education?" "Is virtue one thing or skill, or is it a general name for a set of different things or skills?" These practical questions are associated with Socrates' desire to know the nature of virtue and occupy center stage in his thought. Thus, the Socrates we encounter in the earliest works of Plato is a moralist.

Socrates the moralist stands in sharp contrast to Socrates the epistemologist, metaphysician, and psychologist we find in another set of dialogues. While he is still interested in virtue in these works, the explanation of what virtue is has been altered by the development of a complex metaphysical and epistemological system lacking from the early works. Socrates the metaphysician believes there are two distinct ontological realms—one sensible, temporal, and material, the other non-sensible, eternal, and immaterial. Our ability to know reality is directly tied to this distinction: objects of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) are limited to the Ideal realm, while the sensible world is restricted to mere opinion (δόχα). In this second period, Socrates also maintains a complex psychology corresponding to his ontology and epistemology. Humans are fundamentally divided into two distinct parts: a material body and an immaterial soul. Second, he holds that the soul itself is divided into distinct parts with distinct functions (i.e., appetite, spirit, and reason). The well-being, or health, or excellence (i.e., ἀρετή) of a person

depends upon the harmony between these different parts of the soul.[33] However, we find no similar psychological speculation or division of the soul in the dialogues thought to be from the earlier period of Plato's intellectual life.[34]

The second distinction that can be observed between the characters in Plato's dialogues is attitude. While less obvious than the doctrinal differences mentioned above, a careful analysis of the text reveals subtle but important differences in the personality of 'Socrates' in different groups of dialogues. In the early works, Socrates seems quite unsure about what, if anything, he knows. And as I mentioned above, there are numerous occasions where Socrates completely denies competency or knowledge in philosophically important matters.[35] This epistemic hesitancy on the part of the early Socrates is strangely rare for Plato's later character. Beginning with the Meno, Socrates undergoes a dramatic transformation. For the first time he offers philosophically satisfactory solutions to his own questions. The solutions he offers, as well as the speeches he begins to give, get longer and more complex. The Socrates we find in the second period is more didactic, confident of the views he presents to his interlocutors, while the earlier character seems deficient in the confidence which accompanies secure beliefs.[36] Whether or

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[33] This doctrine is clearly expressed in Republic IV (336-444) and Phaedo (237d*ff*, 246a-d)

[34] In fact, the Socrates of the early period is not even sure if there is a soul distinct from the body which survives death (Ap. 40d*ff*).

[35] Strangely enough, this sometimes occurs after he has helped construct a convincing argument. Good examples of this are Laches 200e*ff* and especially Gorgias 508e*ff* where he says the conclusion of their argument has been "buckled fast and clamped together . . . by arguments of steel and adamant;" but only moments later he goes on to claim a complete ignorance in the matter under discussion.

[36] One might object to the distinction I am drawing by arguing that it makes perfect sense for the Socrates of the early dialogues to be more circumspect than his later counterpart.

not the early Socrates is actually dubious of his knowledge or is just being ironic is a question that must be answered later.[37]

Finally, and closely associated with the difference in attitude, is the philosophical methodology of the different periods of Plato's work. Here we find three distinctions rather than two. In the early works, Socrates' method of investigation focuses on eliciting opinions from those around him and then demonstrating that their views are inconsistent. This form of questioning or cross-examination (i.e., ἐλέγχος) focuses attention on the person who claims to have knowledge rather than on Socrates. Thus, he is able to demonstrate that others do not have significant moral knowledge without being forced to offer his own positive views as an alternative.

In later works, Socrates still asks questions, but his method has shifted from elenctic to hypothetical dialectic. This second interrogative method—associated with the works of the middle period—is designed to lead

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Many of the early dialogues are dramatically set in Socrates' later life when we would expect that years of philosophical inquiry had taught him to be circumspect. The youthful Socrates we meet in many of the middle and later dialogues would naturally be less cautious. There are two reasons to reject this view: first, not all the dialogues thought to be part of Plato's early period unambiguously represent an elderly Socrates. Hence a simple developmental view of Socrates' character based on the dramatic date of the dialogues is unacceptably simplistic. Second, even if all the early, and epistemically moderate, dialogues represented an elderly Socrates, there is no indication in those works that his youth was characterized by any other attitude. For example, if he had been less cautious in younger years, we might expect the Apology to include a disclaimer of his youthful mistakes. However, there is no hint in his defense, or any of the early dialogues, that Socrates thought his youth to have been characterized by a significantly different philosophical attitude from that which he now holds.

[37] Aristotle seems doubtful as to the truthfulness of Socrates' disclaimers, characterizing him as "mock-modest" (E.N., 4:7,25 [1127b]). Irwin disagrees, claiming Topics 183b demonstrates Aristotle's acceptance of Socrates' disclaimers. While I disagree with Irwin about what Aristotle thought, I tend to agree with his view of the legitimacy of Socrates' denials. See Irwin, Plato's Ethics (New York: Oxford Press, 1995); for the very best essay on the subject to date, see Vlastos, "Socrates' Disavowal of Knowledge," in Socratic Studies, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 39-66.

an interlocutor toward a conclusion Socrates already seems to believe. This is accomplished by Socrates or an interlocutor offering a premise/definition and then inferring what should follow from the initial assumption. These conversations are proleptic, indicating that Socrates now has answers to his own questions, while the elenctic interrogations of the earlier dialogues are much more ambiguous in reference to his knowledge.[38]

In what have come to be thought of as the latest dialogues a new methodology—the method of division—emerges (Phdr. 265c-266b; Soph. 218e*ff*). Reminiscent of Aristotle's procedure in the Categories or the biological works, Plato's method of division begins with the abstract idea, or universal, and then proceeds toward the particular. By asking of the universal, "to what does it apply?" or by seeking two differential predicates—and then taking one of those and seeking its differential predicates, and so on—the interlocutors move down the ontological hierarchy until they reach something which cannot be divided further (Phd., 277b; Soph. 229d).

Taking the doctrine, methodology, and attitude of 'Socrates' as signs of Plato's intellectual development, we find the following sort of division among Plato's dialogues. Socrates the elenctic moralist who is epistemically hesitant—if not sceptical—is found in the Apology, Charmides, Crito,

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[38] One of the clearest examples of this occurs when Socrates questions Meno's slave about how to double the size of a square. There are obviously numerous layers (or subplots) in this conversation, but it is quite clear that Socrates believes he knows how to cause the slave to recall the geometrical knowledge already in his soul. Leaving aside the epistemological and metaphysical doctrines introduced here, there are few conversations in the early dialogues which are similar. The only one which comes close is the Speech of the Laws in Cr. 50-54c, but this is a unique dramatic experiment which, unlike the dialectic method, does not become a regular feature of Plato's work.

Euthydemus, Euthyphro, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Lysis, (Republic I) and Protagoras. Socrates, the confident epistemologist and metaphysician, who practices the method of hypothesis, is found in the Cratylus, Phaedo, Phaedrus, Republic,[39] and Symposium. Socrates, the critic of the doctrine of Forms, who uses the method of division is found in the Parmenides, Philebus, Theaetetus, Sophist, Timaeus, and Critias.

That leaves the Meno, as a Platonic dialogue which features Socrates as a significant character, but which does not easily fit into the groups above.[40] In the Meno we seem to find both the early and middle Socrates together: we find the elenctic methodology employed against Meno early in the dialogue (71e-79e) and the method of hypothesis used later with Meno's slave (82c-85b). We find classic denials of knowledge (71b, 71c, 80c) representing the epistemically cautious Socrates, as well as the more didactic character when the doctrine of reincarnation is introduced (81b*ff*). We also find an early

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[39] Some scholars take the first book of the Republic to be from the early period. Taken by itself it has all the hallmarks of an early dialogue (i.e., investigation of the definition of a moral term—'justice', a Socratic denial of knowledge, no definite conclusions reached, etc.). The speculation is that it was written during Plato's early phase (perhaps called the Thrasymachus) and later edited and appended as the introduction to the mature work known as the Republic. This is suggested not by the philosophical content, but also by the stylometric evidence. Other commentators such as Guthrie disagree; he says, it "remains difficult to conceive of book I as ever intended for any other place than that which it now occupies." Guthrie, History of Greek Philosophy, 437; see also Julia Annas, An Introduction to Plato's Republic, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 16-58; Brandwood, "Stylometry and Chronology," in Kraut, The Companion to Plato, 90-120; Nickolas Pappas, Plato and the Republic (New York: Routledge, 1995), 27-38.

[40] I have intentionally left out the Menexenus, not because I doubt its authenticity (Aristotle believed it to be genuine, and should have been in a position to know—Rhetoric 1367b, 1415b), but because it is in a class by itself. It cannot really be characterized as a dialogue, and it tells us virtually nothing about Platonic or Socratic philosophy. I leave it to others to explore its purpose and merit. See Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy: IV Plato, 312-323; Charles H. Kahn, "Plato's Funeral Oration: The motive of the *Menexenus*," Classical Philology (October 1963): 220-234, and Kahn, Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 54, 55; A.E. Taylor, Plato: The Man and His Work (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 41-45.

exploration of epistemology in the doctrine of recollection (i.e., ἀνάμνησις, 85d) which is developed in detail in the Phaedrus and Phaedo. Since the Meno gives us a little of both of the first two Socratic characters, it is reasonable to assume this dialogue marks a clear shift in Plato's thought—the movement from one period to another. We are therefore reasonably justified in classifying the Meno as a transitional work between the early and middle period of Plato's development. What we cannot know for certain is whether this dialogue was intentionally constructed to demonstrate the change in his thought or whether it was initially begun in the early period and set aside only to be finished after his Pythagorean conversion.

A.2.b Socratic vs. Platonic Philosophy

Having drawn a distinction between three different periods in Plato's intellectual development, we can now ask what this tells us about Socratic and Platonic philosophy. We must ask why we take the first group of dialogues to be the earliest of the Platonic corpus, and then we must ask why this might reflect the doctrine of Socrates, rather than merely reflecting the mind of young Plato.

There is external evidence for considering the third group of dialogues to be last in the chronological order of the Socratic dialogues.[41] According to Aristotle and Diogenes Laertius, the Laws is the latest of Plato's works.[42] Stylometric evidence suggests that the Statesman, Sophist, Timaeus,

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[41] Keep in mind that I am here using the term 'Socratic' only to refer to those works of Plato which feature Socrates as a major figure, not, as will be the case below, to refer to works which reflect the philosophy of Socrates.

[42] Aristotle, Pol. 2:6, 1264b; Diogenes Laertius, Lives and Opinons of Eminent Philosophers, 3:37.

Parmenides, Philebus, and Theaetetus were written in a similar style, which is significantly distinct from any of the other Platonic works.[43] Further we have internal evidence from the dialogues themselves: the Statesman is supposed to be the sequel of the Sophist, and it, in turn, is supposed to be the sequel of the Theaetetus. The Timaeus seems to be later than the Republic because it begins with a summary of the main arguments of the former. Further, the Parmenides raises serious difficulties for the doctrine of Forms espoused in the Republic and Phaedrus and seems to be a critique of this doctrine. Thus, the Parmenides, Philebus, and Timaeus are most likely among the latest Socratic dialogues, written toward the end of Plato's intellectual career. These works reflect the mature philosopher who has come to recognize weaknesses in his earlier thought.

If Plato's latest thought is represented in works such as the Parmenides, Philebus and Timaeus, and if these are at least in part a response to the doctrines we find in the works of the second group, then the first group—which ignores these issues altogether—most likely represents the earliest work of Plato. But just because these are the earliest of Plato's dialogues, why should we think this tells us anything about Socrates' philosophy? That is, if we take the philosophy of the middle and late periods to reflect the mind of Plato, why should we think the philosophy of the early period is Socratic and not Platonic?

First, when I refer to the early dialogues as 'Socratic', I do not mean to suggest that Plato was "recalling, in form and substance, the conversations of

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[43] Most striking is a concern for the rhythm of his prose including a decline of hiatus among the works of this later group which probably reflects Plato's response to the influence of Isocrates. Brandwood, "Stylometry and Chronology," 100*ff*.

his master without . . . adding to them any distinctive doctrines of his own."[44] I believe the early dialogues are Plato's attempt to capture the substance and style of Socrates' philosophy but not to report what he heard Socrates say. After all, Plato could not have been present at many of the conversations recorded in the early dialogues, and thus they could not realistically be thought of as literal reports of those conversations. The consistent dramatic style of the early dialogues casts further doubt on their pure historicity. Plato was as much a dramatic as philosophical genius and most of the early dialogues exhibit a strong dramatic flair. As such it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the character we find in the early dialogues is to some degree a Platonic creation.

On the other hand, it is perfectly reasonable to expect Plato's early intellectual development to be significantly shaped by his interaction with the historical Socrates. If he had students at all—in the broadest sense of that term—then Plato was the best and brightest of them all. We also have good reason to think Plato an intimate of Socrates, not only because he tells us he offered to secure the monetary penalty of thirty *minae* at his trial (Ap.38b), but apparently he, along with other close friends of Socrates, abandoned Athens for a time after his execution.[45] Whether he fled out of fear or disgust we do not know, but that his flight was caused by Socrates' execution seems reliable and indicates their close association. If Plato was indeed the pupil and close friend that he seems to have been, we can expect that he would have been strongly influenced by Socrates' thought. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to

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[44] Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy, 67.

[45] Diogenes Laertius Lives, 3:6.

think of the early dialogues as Plato's attempt to expound the doctrines of the historical character and explore their implications in a systematic way. So if the character—'Socrates'—we encounter in the early dialogues is essentially Platonic, we also have good reason to believe that the mind of Plato, in the early stages of its development at least, is significantly Socratic.

There is also some external evidence for thinking the early dialogues may give us insight into Socrates' philosophy. This evidence comes from Aristotle, where he distinguishes the doctrines of Socrates from those of Plato. What we find is that his testimony basically reflects the character we find in the early dialogues. Aristotle tells us that Socrates' methodology consisted solely of *elenchus*: a question or series of questions he would put to an interlocutor but which he could not answer himself (Soph. El., 183b). Aristotle also tells us that Socrates was occupied only with questions of morality, and that he had no interest in investigating the natural world apart from moral considerations (Met, 1:6). Finally, Aristotle tells us that while Socrates was interested in universals (i.e., his famous "What is *F*-ness?" questions), he did not 'separate' them from the sensory world as did Plato.[46] If Aristotle is to be believed, his testimony seems to confirm that the 'Socrates' we encounter in the early dialogues defends the doctrines of the historical character, which were substantially distinct from the mature philosophy of Plato.

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[46] ". . . for two things may be fairly ascribed to Socrates—inductive arguments and universal definition, both of which are concerned with the starting-point of ἐπιστήμη: but Socrates did not make the universals or the definitions exist apart; *they*, however, gave them separate existence, and this was the kind of thing they called Ideas." Aristotle, Met., 13:4. Unless otherwise noted all citations of Aristotle are from The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKeon, (New York: Random House, 1941).

Thus, if we set aside the works of Xenophon and focus exclusively on the works of Plato, we can proceed to tease out elements of Socratic philosophy. While we cannot be certain, it is very likely that the doctrines we encounter in Plato's early dialogues are those espoused by the historical Socrates. It is also likely that the character we find there, while no doubt embellished at times for literary effect, is a fairly accurate likeness of the common Athenian moralist philosopher executed in 399 BCE on charges of impiety and corrupting the youth of Athens. From this point on, therefore, I will refer to the early dialogues of Plato as 'Socratic', not only to indicate the central role of Socrates, but also to distinguish them from those works where Plato expresses what I take to be his own philosophical insight. I will also dispense hereafter with the cumbersome references to 'the historical Socrates' or 'the historical character' or 'Socrates' assuming, for present purposes, that there is no significant *philosophical* difference between Plato's character and the Fifth-Century BCE philosopher.

A.2.c The Reconstruction of Socratic Philosophy

Having argued that we are justified in thinking the early dialogues give us insight into Socratic philosophy, there is a further methodological problem to quickly address: Can we find philosophically interesting doctrines which Socrates held in the early dialogues? Throughout the early dialogues, Socrates consistently claims to have no significant moral/philosophical knowledge; therefore, he believes he cannot teach others how to live the moral life. Further, the Socratic dialogues almost universally end in *aporia*—without an explicit resolution of the question under consideration. For example, the Lysis asks, but does not answer, the question "What is

friendship?", the Charmides "What is temperance?", the Laches "What is courage?", the Euthyphro "What is piety?", the Republic I "What is justice?", the Hippias Major "What is beauty?", and the Protagoras "Is virtue teachable?" So if Socrates and his interlocutors do not come to any affirmative conclusions about the basic terms of morality or their proper application, how do we know what he believed? How can we in good conscience assert that Socrates firmly held any particular doctrine if he himself is so careful not only to avoid such assertions but to deny he knows anything morally significant?

There are two contrary solutions available to those interested in exploring Socratic philosophy. On one hand, we might say Socrates' denials of knowledge prevent us from recovering any positive doctrines which he would have held. Most of what we can legitimately affirm about Socrates on this view is what he *does not* believe since he makes relatively few positive assertions in the early dialogues. If we took this conservative approach, our comments about Socratic philosophy would be limited to a handful of assertions such as:

1) Socrates does not believe he knows anything morally significant;
2) Socrates does not believe anyone he has met knows anything morally significant;
3) Socrates does not believe the gods lie;
4) Socrates does not believe bad things happen to good people;
5) Socrates believes he is on a divine mission;
6) Socrates believes it wrong to disobey one's superiors.

This approach to Socratic philosophy is objectionable not only because it is philosophically uninteresting (i.e., all we can say of Socrates is what he himself says), but also because it seems unnecessarily cautious.

The alternative approach gives us more freedom. On this view we can, on the basis of what Socrates affirms (and often on the basis of what he denies), reconstruct what he *would have believed* or what he *should have believed* even though he himself may not clearly assert these positions. This view is usually referred to as the "constructivist position" and it is the position *cautiously* adopted in this dissertation.[47] I leave it to others to give a full defense of this approach[48] and restrict myself to the following comments: A limited constructivist position is more interesting—philosophically—than its conservative counterpart. Further, constructivism seems the appropriate attitude for the history of philosophy as opposed to a more historical or textual investigation of the philologist since we are interested in understanding *why* Socrates would have made many of the claims that he makes, not just *that* he made them. However, we must be vigilant not to read too much into the text. There are some commentators who, in my

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[47] It seems to me that any philosopher interested in the history of Philosophy will be a constructivist to one degree or another. If not, it seems reasonable to wonder why he is a philosopher and not just an historian.

[48] Scott Calef gives a rather extensive list of scholars who take the 'constructivist' position especially on controversial passages in the Euthyphro: see "Piety and the Unity of Virtue in *Euthyphro* 11e-14c," Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy 13 (1995): 1, n.3. For a more general account of constructivism see Terence Irwin, Plato's Ethics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 20-21; Brickhouse and Smith, Plato's Socrates, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, 64, n.49. One of the most interesting examples of a constructivist thesis is the 'Bonitz Principle' which holds that anything not clearly refuted in a Platonic dialogue represents affirmative doctrine; H. Bonitz, Platonische Studien Berlin, 1966. Terry Penner also suggests a constructivist principle for reading the early dialogues: "Always assume Socrates has *some* particular thing in mind that he wants *us* to see, even though his interlocutors do not see it." Penner, "What Laches and Nicias Miss–And Whether Socrates Thinks Courage Merely a Part of Virtue," Ancient Philosophy 12 (1992): 3. These seem to me good examples of unrestrained constructivism: such broad interpretive rules can easily obscure the limitations of context and dramatic irony. While they may gives us some help as general guidelines, I think they should always be applied cautiously.

opinion, take too much liberty with the text as will become evident in the course of my argument.

B. The Unity of Virtue Paradox

In the Socratic dialogues of Plato numerous philosophical conundrums manifest themselves. Many of these arise as a consequence of the focus on moral philosophy to the exclusion of the metaphysical and epistemological doctrines necessary for an adequate ethical theory. Some, however, are puzzling in their own right. As I have already pointed out, for example, most of the time Socrates denies having any significant moral knowledge. But there are occasions when he claims assurance of substantive moral propositions that seem to contradict his ubiquitous denials of significant moral knowledge.[49] Socrates claims that no harm can come to a good person regardless of what fortune he suffers (Ap. 41d), which seems *prima facie* false. He holds that virtue (ἀρετή, which is also translatable as 'excellence' or 'competency' depending on context) is a kind of expert knowledge (τέχνη) like medicine or horsemanship or ship-piloting, and that having this special knowledge is necessary and sufficient to make one act virtuously. Socrates' intellectualism leads him to deny moral incontinence and to assert that no one ever commits immoral actions intentionally.

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[49] Perhaps the most glaring example of this occurs at Ap. 29b, where Socrates specifically denies any knowledge of the afterlife, and by implication denies possession of any significant knowledge, and then immediately asserts: "I do know, however, that it is wicked and shameful to do wrong, to disobey one's superior, be he god or man." Plato, Complete Works, ed. John Cooper, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997). As the context makes clear, the implication of this passage is that Socrates believes failure to follow a lawful command of a superior should lead to a punishment of some kind, which is, in itself, a substantial moral claim.

Believing virtue to be a species of technical knowledge, he also seems to assert that the cardinal virtues (i.e., justice, courage, temperance, piety, and wisdom) are indistinguishable from one another. It is this last paradox—that courage, temperance, justice, piety, and wisdom are essentially the same thing—which is the focus of this dissertation. Commentators on Socratic philosophy have christened this enigma the 'Unity of Virtue' or 'Unity of the Virtues' doctrine.[50]

Numerous commentators have addressed themselves to clarifying the Unity of Virtue Doctrine (hereafter *'UVD'*) with varying results. Despite their efforts, however, there are several fundamental questions that remain unresolved among the commentators interested in this Socratic paradox:

1. What exactly does Socrates intend by the *UVD* when he introduces the issue in the Protagoras?
2. Is there a single *UVD* in the early dialogues or is Socrates inconsistent on the matter?
3. Is there a way to understand Socrates' doctrine of virtue that is rationally consistent?
4. Is the *UVD* consistent with other doctrines Socrates accepts?
5. Finally, is Socrates' doctrine correct?[51]

In the chapters that follow I attempt to put some of these issues to rest. I will argue that there is indeed a single coherent doctrine rightly referred to as the 'Unity of Virtue' which is a common thread running through many of the

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[50] Some commentators argue that Socrates thought of virtue as a composite thing and prefer 'Unity of the Virtues' while others, myself included, hold the view that virtue is not divisible and therefore prefer 'Unity of Virtue' as the label for the doctrine. I adopt the latter convention in this work.

[51] The first and third questions are suggested by Irwin; the second question arises because of Daniel Devereux's insistence that the version of the *UVD* found in the Protagoras is inconsistent with the versions found in other early dialogues. See Terence Irwin, Plato's Ethics, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 336, n.5.

Socratic dialogues. I will argue further that this doctrine is most appropriately understood to imply a strong unity among the cardinal virtues; this interpretation denies that virtue, in any philosophically meaningful sense, is divisible. Also, I will suggest why we can understand the *UVD* to be compatible with other important doctrines Socrates holds in the early dialogues. However, I have little interest in whether or not Socrates' moral theory is correct, and any attempt to argue for or against his position would take me far afield from the current project. Therefore, I leave it to others to attack or defend Socrates' view as a viable moral thesis.

That these issues remain unresolved after so many years of investigation by excellent scholars indicates what an enigma the *UVD* actually is. I therefore undertake this project with more than a little trepidation. However, I think understanding Socrates' view of virtue is paramount if we are to understand Socratic philosophy. As a philosopher so keenly interested in moral questions, the concept of virtue must play a central role in his overall philosophical perspective. If we are to understand Socrates, therefore, it seems to me we must come to grips with this problem. My approach is to investigate the major interpretations of the *UVD* that have been proposed by various commentators. I evaluate each in terms of its overall coherence, but more importantly its textual justification. No matter how compelling an interpretation may be, it must meet the ultimate test of the text itself. However, before giving an overview of the alternative interpretations of the *UVD* discussed in the chapters below, I should first give an overview of the texts containing evidence suggestive of the doctrine.

The problem of the *UVD* is most clearly articulated in the Protagoras at 329d*ff*, where Socrates asks the famous sophist for whom the dialogue is

named, if virtue is composed of distinct parts and if he thinks so, how these parts are related to one another. Protagoras defends the common-sense view that 'virtue' is the general name for distinct dispositions such as the tendency to behave justly, or bravely, or moderately, or piously. He asserts that there are five distinguishable parts of virtue (i.e., justice-δικαιοσύνη, courage-ἀνδρεία, temperance-σωφροσύνη, piety-ὁσιότης, and wisdom-σοφία) each characterized by a unique δύναμις (i.e., 'power', 'function', or 'ability') as well as name.[52] He further maintains that a person may have one or more of these dispositions, but need not have them all. On this view the just person might be impious, the wise person intemperate, the foolish person courageous, and so on. Socrates sets out to dislodge his interlocutor from this position with a series of *elenchoi* designed to demonstrate that Protagoras' position is inconsistent.[53] After a dramatic interlude the list of virtues is repeated at 349b and Protagoras argues that even if justice, piety, temperance, and wisdom are basically the same thing (a position Socrates forces him to admit), courage is substantially different from the rest. By the end of the dialogue (361*ff*) Protagoras is forced to concede that if their assumptions are correct, even courage is not significantly different from the other virtues. Although Protagoras is brought to this conclusion reluctantly, he can take solace in the fact that it supports his initial assertion that virtue is teachable (Prot. 361b).[54]

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[52] For a list of Plato's use of these terms in the early dialogues see Appendix I, below.

[53] Precisely what Socrates' position is supposed to be is the central matter of debate. I give an overview of the main alternative interpretations in § C below.

[54] Interestingly enough, Socrates admits that this contradicts the position he held at the beginning of their conversation (320c), although the irony of his admission should give us pause. It may well be that Socrates believed all along that virtue was teachable, but that a

To date, the majority of scholarship on the *UVD* (with the notable exception of Daniel Devereux) has focused primarily on these passages, taking the other dialogues as occasional supporting evidence for one or another of the various interpretations of Socrates' position in the Protagoras. I agree that the Protagoras is the logical place to begin an investigation of the *UVD* since it is the dialogue that explicitly raises this paradox. I also believe, as will become clear later, that this dialogue should be considered hermeneutically dominant over the others. However, we are not limited to the Protagoras for our knowledge of Socrates' view of virtue. Other Socratic dialogues are concerned with the nature of virtue and contain important clues to Socrates' view. Like the Protagoras many contain lists of the virtues, although these lists vary in their content. For instance, at Meno 74 the list of virtues includes courage, temperance, wisdom, and dignity (or 'high-mindedness'- μεγαλοπρέπεια). Interestingly, piety and justice are left out of the list, and this is one of the few places where high-mindedness is numbered among the virtues.[55] The Euthydemus lists temperance, justice and courage as virtues (279b, 281c) and the Republic includes temperance, courage, and wisdom along with its primary focus—justice—but makes no mention of piety as a virtue. In the Charmides, it is suggested that temperance and wisdom are identical (174d), but there is no mention of the other virtues. The Laches focuses almost exclusively on the nature of courage but at 198b justice and temperance are

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Sophist was not the right kind of teacher; this is suggested by the introduction of the dialogue (310-314c), where Socrates warns young Hippocrates about Sophists in general.

[55] The list is repeated at 88a and the term appears in the Republic VI, VII, and VIII; see Appendix I below. It should be pointed out that this list of virtues is offered by Meno, and unlike the passages in the Protagoras, it is debatable whether Socrates thinks this list accurate or complete.

included in the discussion of virtue as well. The Euthyphro goes so far as to suggest that piety is a proper part of justice, and implicitly that justice is a part of virtue as a whole (12e).[56]

By far the most complete list of characteristics labeled 'virtues' in the early dialogues comes from the Protagoras. And, as mentioned above, since the nature and relation of the characteristics called virtues is one of the primary philosophical questions, if not *the* primary question, of that dialogue, I think we are justified in taking it to be the central and therefore controlling dialogue for any investigation of Socrates' view. That is, if we can decipher Socrates' view of virtue in the Protagoras, it seems natural to use it as the paradigm when similar questions arise in other dialogues. However, it is an important part of my project not merely to assume, but to provide arguments that the view Socrates holds in the Protagoras is not confined to that dialogue, but is a view consistent with the Socratic dialogues at large.

C. Alternative Interpretations of the *UVD*

As I mentioned above, numerous commentators have, over the years, addressed themselves to a resolution of the *UVD* paradox. In this work I will focus on the four contemporary interpretations which dominate the current debate. I examine each in turn, devoting a chapter to the explication and, where necessary, refutation of their views. The first three chapters focus squarely on the problem of identifying exactly what Socrates' view is, while

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[56] This is the only place of which I am aware where it is explicitly asserted that the individual virtues may themselves have parts. Brickhouse and Smith argue that the "parts of gold" analogy at Prot. 329d supports the assertion that the individual virtues are proper parts of virtue as a whole as well as proper parts of each other. I reject this view in Chapter Four and argue that there are no proper parts of virtue in Socrates' view.

the fourth raises the issue of consistency (i.e., whether there is more than one view espoused by Socrates in the early dialogues of Plato). In the final chapter I summarize my findings and argue that the properly interpreted *UVD* is consistent with other significant doctrines held by Socrates in the early dialogues. Below is an overview of the positions addressed in Chapters Two through Five.

C.1 Gregory Vlastos and the Biconditionality Thesis

The contemporary debate on the nature of the *UVD* is due in large part to the work of Gregory Vlastos, who placed the issue of Socrates' view of virtue on the front burner of Socratic scholarship. In his opinion there had been a failure to appreciate the depth of the paradoxical nature of Socrates' view of virtue by previous commentators. In order to rectify this oversight, he set out to clarify Socrates' view once and for all.

Vlastos ultimately argues that the position Socrates takes on virtue in the Protagoras can best be defined as a 'biconditional' relation between discrete entities. This view (the *Biconditional Thesis*, or *BT*) entails that virtue is the general name of five distinct entities or dispositions (i.e., justice, temperance, courage, piety, and wisdom), but that in order for a person to be virtuous, she must instantiate all five characteristics. Thus, according to the *BT*, anyone who is wise will also *necessarily* be just, courageous, temperate, and pious. If a person has one of the virtues, then he must have them all; if one lacks any of the virtues, he lacks them all.

Vlastos is driven to this view by two primary considerations: first, he takes it to be obvious that Socrates is committed to the view that virtue is composed of proper parts (the *Parts of Virtue Doctrine*, or *PVD*) because of

passages in the Euthyphro, Laches, and Meno. If Socrates is to be consistent, which Vlastos thinks he is, there cannot be any incontinuity between the view we find in the Protagoras and that which we find in the other early dialogues. The second element that leads Vlastos to the *BT* is the realization that the only other reasonable interpretation of Socrates' view in the Protagoras is the *Unity Thesis* (i.e., *UT*), which he takes to entail absurd consequences for Socrates. The *UT* holds that all the virtues are one and the same thing, and Vlastos believes this entails that the virtue terms are synonymous. Since it is clear, Vlastos argues, that 'courage' does not mean the same thing as 'piety' or 'temperance' etc., it cannot be the case that Socrates could rationally hold any view with this consequence.

I will argue that Vlastos' view is essentially mistaken, by showing that there is no compelling reason to think Socrates is committed to the *PVD* in the early dialogues and by showing why the *UT* does not suffer the absurd consequences Vlastos thinks so obvious.

C.2 Terry Penner and the Identity Thesis

In Chapter Three I explore the interpretation of the *UVD* offered by Terry Penner. He takes the view that, in the Protagoras at least, Socrates is committed to the identity of the so-called virtues. The *Identity Thesis* (or *IT*, which is the same as Vlastos' *UT*) straightforwardly holds that all the virtue terms refer to one and the self-same thing. The reason Socrates believes the just man will also be pious, brave, temperate and wise is that 'justice', 'piety', 'wisdom', 'temperance', and 'courage' all refer to the same psychological disposition. Though the terms are not synonymous, Penner argues that they all point to the same reality: a disposition of the soul to behave in certain

prescribed ways which is caused by knowing the difference between good and evil.[57]

I take Penner to be essentially correct in his reading of the Protagoras although there are some eccentricities in his view about Socrates' epistemic project that I think are problematic and must be corrected. Another significant weakness of his view is the failure to address the question of consistency, particularly in relation to those passages in other early dialogues which Vlastos and others takes as evidence against the *IT*. I will argue that a revised version of Penner's view is consistent with the other early dialogues and the most reasonable interpretation of Socrates' *UVD*.

C.3 Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith on the Unique Role of Wisdom Among the Virtues

The fourth chapter is devoted to the most recent interpretation of Socrates' *UVD* offered by Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith. Like Vlastos, they argue Socrates is committed to the *PVD* in the Protagoras as elsewhere. However, they go on to argue that Socrates is not only committed to virtue's being composed of proper parts; they argue some of the virtues themselves (e.g., justice) are composed of parts. In their view temperance, courage, justice and piety are technical skills and all elements of a larger body of knowledge (i.e., wisdom). Hence, anyone possessing wisdom will necessarily have the requisite knowledge to perform related skills. For Brickhouse and Smith, wisdom plays the unique role among the virtues,

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[57] Penner as well as many other commentators on Plato translate ἐπιστήμη ἡ περὶ πάντων ἀγαθῶν τε καὶ κακῶν as "knowledge of all good and evil." I, however think κακός and its cognates are better rendered 'bad' or 'wicked'. I give an argument for this in Appendix III.

tying them together while at the same time demonstrating their distinctiveness.

I argue that the interpretation of the *UVD* offered by Brickhouse and Smith, though interesting, rests on a fundamental misreading of key passages and must therefore be rejected. In my response, I show how a careful reading of the text demonstrates that Socrates cannot be committed to the positions central to their interpretation. Once these misreadings are exposed, it becomes clear why the Brickhouse and Smith view is untenable.

C.4 Daniel Devereux and the Consistency Problem

Chapter Five is devoted to the view of Daniel Devereux. His work on the *UVD* focuses on the consistency problem.[58] He argues that Socrates is inconsistent on the *UVD*, holding different views in different dialogues. Specifically, Devereux argues that the position Socrates stakes out in the Protagoras is different from the one defended in the Laches. He goes on to speculate that this might reflect development in Plato's early thought: the Protagoras representing his earliest reflections on Socrates' view of virtue, and the Laches representing a more developed view.

Since it is my view that there is a coherent *UVD* in the early dialogues, I reject Devereux's position. In my response to his argument, I demonstrate why Socrates cannot be committed to the view Devereux attributes to him in the Laches. If my argument is successful, it will demonstrate that there is no inconsistency in the views Socrates espouses in these two early dialogues.

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[58] He agrees with Penner that in the Protagoras, at least, Socrates is committed to the *IT*. See Chapter Five, below.

There are, of course, many other commentators who have weighed in on each of these topics and their views will be considered in the context of the chapters that follow. Thus, here I have given only the barest outline of the material to be addressed. It has been my intention simply to provide the reader a feel for the direction of this work, not to adequately present, defend, or reject these views. That is the substance of the chapters below.

Chapter II

Vlastos on the Unity of Virtue

The contemporary debate on Socrates' doctrine of the *Unity of Virtue* is due, in large part, to Gregory Vlastos' groundbreaking 1972 paper.[1] In that paper Vlastos tries to meet head on a problem which had either eluded or baffled scholars up to that time:[2] Socrates' position at Protagoras 329c-330b on the relationship between the virtues (i.e., justice, piety, temperance, courage, and wisdom). Vlastos thinks he can solve this problem without committing Socrates either to logical inconsistency or sophistry.[3] He argues that Socrates is committed, at most, to a biconditional relationship between justice, piety, courage, temperance, and wisdom, which are distinct parts of virtue. Any stronger logical relationship between the virtues, Vlastos believes, would undermine Socrates' clear commitment to the doctrine that virtue is composed of parts.

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[1]"The Unity of the Virtues in the Protagoras" was originally published in Review of Metaphysics 25 (1972): 415-458; a revised edition, to which I will always refer unless otherwise noted, appeared in Platonic Studies 2nd ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 221-265.

[2]Vlastos mentions A. E. Taylor (1937) and Shorey (1933) as examples of those who simply fail to recognize the significance of the problem, while Friedländer (1964) and Allen (1970) recognize the problem but do not make a serious effort toward a solution. Friedländer takes Socrates' position to be indefensible since it implies a strict identity of the virtues, which in turn suggests that he is engaged in irony. Allen, on the other hand, takes Socrates to be intentionally advancing fallacious arguments. Vlastos, of course, rejects these positions since he thinks it possible to take Socrates' arguments seriously and make good philosophical sense of them. Vlastos, Platonic Studies, 222 n. 2, 223 ns. 4 and 5.

[3]Ibid., 223.

I believe we must reject Vlastos' interpretation, however, precisely because Socrates cannot be committed to the *Parts of Virtue Doctrine* (or *PVD*). I will argue that there is insufficient evidence to support Vlastos' claim that Socrates believes virtue is a composite whole of distinct parts. I use this as a foundation to argue later for a more robust version of the *Unity of Virtue Doctrine.* I divide this chapter into two sections: first, I analyze Vlastos' construal of the *Unity of Virtue Doctrine* and its dependence upon the *Parts of Virtue Doctrine.* Second, I argue that the text in no way forces us to accept a Socratic commitment to the *PVD* as Vlastos thinks. I argue further that if his reading were accurate, some of the very texts he uses to defend his position would commit Socrates to unacceptable inconsistencies.

A. The Vlastos Interpretation

Vlastos begins by looking carefully at the text in which we first discover the *UVD*: Protagoras 329c-330b. There he identifies three distinct disjunctive propositions put to Protagoras by Socrates. Each disjunction is exclusive so that Protagoras must choose only one disjunct from each of the propositions. But, Vlastos notes, none of them is meant to stand alone.[4] Each is related to the others in some significant way that will become clear when they are closely examined. From each of the disjunctions, Vlastos identifies distinct propositions and names them the *Unity Thesis,* the *Similarity Thesis,* and the *Biconditionality Thesis* respectively (or, *UT, ST,* and *BT*) since they seem to imply three different views of the relationship between the virtues.

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[4]Vlastos claims, "they are not treated in the text as logically disjoint tenets, but as successive moments in the elucidation of a single doctrine. That is how Protagoras himself understands them." Ibid., 224.

Ultimately, Vlastos will argue these do not in fact represent three distinct views, but only one. How we ought to interpret the first two theses, according to Vlastos, is unclear at best—but not so the last. It is his strategy, therefore, to find a way of reading the *UT* and *ST* through the interpretive lens of the *BT*.

A.1 The Three Theses

The first proposition, which Vlastos designates the *Unity Thesis*, is derived from Socrates' question (329d) to Protagoras after the latter's long speech on Zeus' dispensation of the virtues to humanity. Socrates asks:

> Is virtue a single whole, and are justice and self-control and holiness parts of it, or are these latter all names for one and the same one thing?

This disjunction can be divided into its separate terms and stated more clearly as:

> P1) Virtue is a composite whole and justice, piety, temperance [courage and wisdom] are parts of it.
>
> P2) Justice, piety, temperance [courage and wisdom] name the same thing.

Protagoras responds to Socrates' question by affirming the first element of the disjunction: virtue is a single thing composed of parts. In light of his choice, it is tempting to suppose that Socrates would choose P2) in opposition to Protagoras. The second term is the proposition that Vlastos refers to as the *UT*; the virtue terms all name the same thing.[5] So is Socrates committed to the *UT*? Vlastos attempts to warn us off this option by claiming that P1) is "*standard Socratic doctrine*; therefore, on this point there can be no difference

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[5]There are actually two formulations of the *UT*: the first at 329c, the second at 349b. Vlastos thinks Socrates is committed to the second but not the first. See § B.1 below.

between him and Protagoras [his emphasis]".[6] Vlastos offers two pieces of evidence to support this claim: first, Socrates' discussion with Meno (M. 78d-79e) seems to indicate that he is committed to virtue being composed of parts.[7] Second, Vlastos thinks the consequences of P2) are too bizarre even for Socrates to have considered. If Socrates were committed to P2), it would seem that all the virtue terms are synonymous; and if they are synonymous, other passages reflecting Socratic doctrine would be made false or rendered nonsense.[8] So, according to Vlastos, on the disjunction from which the *UT* is derived, we find Socrates and Protagoras in fundamental agreement: both reject P2) in favor of P1).

The second disjunction, from which the *Similarity Thesis* is derived, immediately follows Protagoras' affirmation of P1). Socrates asks him to clarify the nature of the parts which he claims make up virtue:

> Do you mean, I said, as the parts of a face are parts—mouth, nose, eyes, and ears—or like the parts of a piece of gold,

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[6]Ibid., 225.

[7]Vlastos actually makes a much stronger claim. He says "that Virtue is a 'whole' and that Justice, Temperance, etc. are its 'parts' is *unequivocally affirmed* and *strongly emphasized*. . . it is the doctrine on which the elenchus pivots" (my emphasis). Ibid., 225, n.8. But other commentators (e.g., Penner, Taylor, and Irwin) dispute that this is as clear as Vlastos thinks. He thus offers a fuller defense of this position in "Socrates On 'The Parts of Virtue'," Ibid., 418-423. I will have more to say about this defense in the section below.

[8]Vlastos points to two passages which seem difficult to square with P2): first, "there is one ideal form by which all holy things are holy" (Eu. 6d) and second, "the part of justice which is religious and is holy is the part that has to do with the service of the gods" (Eu. 12e)." In both cases synonymy of the virtues seems to play havoc with the sense of these passages. So, if these passages, as well as the Meno passage quoted above, represent Socrates' position, it makes sense for him to reject P2). I argue below, however, that we have good reasons to doubt that these passages represent "standard Socratic doctrine." Further, Penner will argue there is no reason to think P2) entails that the virtue terms are synonymous; there are many words in the English language which are not synonymous yet refer to the same thing. For example, in some parts of the United States 'soda' and 'coke' both name one thing (i.e., a carbonated beverage or soft drink), but they are clearly not synonymous terms. If there is not a problem of synonymy and Socrates is not committed to the *PVD*, then he may have been committed to P2) after all!

> which do not differ from one another or from the whole except in size (329d)?

Again we can clarify this disjunction by dividing it into its basic terms:

> P1.a) The parts of virtue are like the parts of a face [each with distinct properties].[9]
>
> P1.b) The parts of virtue are like the parts of a piece of gold, which do not differ from one another or from the whole except in size.

That this disjunction is intended to highlight the nature of the parts of virtue by identifying their differences seems *prima facie* clear. Socrates begins the question with πότερον (literally, "which of these" or "which of the two"), and, as already noted, it immediately follows Protagoras' affirmation of P1). In effect Socrates is saying "*If* Virtue is composed of parts, what are *they* like?" According to Vlastos, Socrates and Protagoras, agreeing there are distinct parts of virtue, diverge on the nature of the parts: Protagoras believes they are like the parts of a face (each with a distinct nature and δύναμις, 330a) while Socrates thinks they are more like pieces of a lump of gold (distinct only in there relative size).

If this is the correct reading of the text, Vlastos thinks we face a serious problem. Socrates' affirmation of P1.b) seems to have troubling consequences:

> To take the analogy at face-value we would have to take [Socrates] to mean that the virtues are alike in respect of *all* their qualities—that they are qualitatively undifferentiated dispositions . . . could Socrates really mean that?[10]

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[9]It is clear that Socrates thinks this option entails that there are distinct properties for each of the virtues just as there are for the parts of the face because the second half of the disjunct makes clear that there are no distinct properties except size if this option is taken, and second, when Socrates follows up the analogy at 330a he proposes what is only implied here: that each part would have its own δύναμις.

[10]Vlastos, 230.

That is, on a literal reading of the text the parts of gold analogy will not allow Socrates to assert any significant (i.e., essential) difference between the parts of virtue. So why is he committed to *parts* of virtue at all? Since Socrates apparently rejects P2), there must be some other way to understand P1.b) that would not commit him to the belief that the parts of virtue share all the same essential properties. Vlastos thinks Socrates must not really mean what he seems to affirm in P1.b). But if he does not believe the virtues share all the same essential properties, what does he mean?

The answer, Vlastos believes, is to be found in the final disjunction Socrates puts to Protagoras. Socrates wants to know, if virtue is composed of parts, and if the parts are like the parts of a face:

> Then, do men so share in these parts of virtue that some have one and some another, or must a man who possesses one of them possess all (329e)?

Once again for clarity we can divide the disjunction into two distinct propositions:

> P1.a.i) A person may possess one part of virtue without having all the rest.
>
> P1.a.ii) A person possessing one part of virtue must have all the rest.

Protagoras emphatically affirms P1.a.i) asserting that it is possible for someone to be brave without being just, while others are just without being wise.[11] He takes this to be common sense. However, Socrates (according to Vlastos) champions P1.a.ii) which asserts, having any one of the parts of virtue entails

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[11]The list of proper parts of virtue is here expanded to include 'courage' and 'wisdom' (329e-330a), making a set of five proper parts of virtue: justice, piety, temperance, courage, and wisdom.

having all the others.[12] Thus, Socrates is affirming a necessary biconditional relationship between the parts of virtue: one has courage, *iff* one has justice, *iff* one has piety, *iff* one has temperance, *iff* one has wisdom. Vlastos believes this biconditional relationship between the parts of virtue is, unlike the *UT* and *ST*, "crystal-clear."[13] Unlike the *Unity Thesis*, which denies a Socratic doctrine (for which Vlastos thinks there is independent evidence) and forces Socrates to accept the synonymy of the virtue-terms, and unlike the *Similarity Thesis*, which forces him to claim the parts of virtue are not significantly distinct at all, the *Biconditionality Thesis* does not force him into inconsistency or error. Therefore, since the *BT* is clearer than either the *UT* or *ST*, Vlastos argues we should take it as the paradigm from which to interpret the other two.

A.2 Reinterpreting the Unity and Similarity Theses

Vlastos has argued that of the three possible interpretations of the *PVD*, it is difficult to see how Socrates could be committed to either the *UT* (as expressed at 329d) or the *ST*. But his endorsement of the pieces of gold analogy at 329d5 seems to commit him to the *ST*, while his restatement of the initial disjunction at 349b seems to commit him to some version of the *UT*. On the other hand, Socrates' commitment to the *BT* at 329e presents few exegetical difficulties overall. Therefore, Vlastos argues, we should think of it as the key to interpreting Socrates' view of the other two theses.

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[12]Vlastos, Ibid., 232.

[13]Ibid. It is not at all clear, as I will argue below, why Vlastos thinks the disjunction from which P1.a.ii) is drawn is any clearer than the previous two.

If Vlastos is correct and Socrates is committed to the *BT*, we have a convenient way to interpret the troublesome propositions that seem to commit him to the *UT*. Socrates makes four separate assaults (330c-331b, 332a-333b, 333c, 349d-350c) on Protagoras' position where he concludes propositions such as:

a) Justice is holiness (331c);

b) Temperance is wisdom (333b);

c) Wisdom is courage (350c).

On the surface these statements are puzzling if Socrates denies the *UT* as Vlastos thinks. What sense then can it make to claim there are distinct parts of virtue and to claim those parts are essentially the same? But Vlastos argues these can be interpreted in a way that does not commit Socrates to anything too unusual.[14] This is because the *BT* entails a proposition that, Vlastos thinks, will link all three theses together:

L) Virtue, wisdom, temperance, courage, justice, piety are interpredicable.[15]

That is, if the *BT* holds, it should be possible to understand the predicates of the propositions asserted in a), b), and c) to be "asserted not of their abstract subject[s], but of [their] concrete instances."[16] The difficulty with this view is finding a way to ignore the *prima facie* reading of those propositions while maintaining the peculiar logical relation implied by the *BT*. Reading them

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[14]Ibid., 259-265. Also see Vlastos, "Self-Predication and Self-Participation in Plato's Later Period," and "Plato's 'Third Man' Argument (Parm. 132a1-b2): Text and Logic;" both in Platonic Studies, 2nd ed.

[15]The designator of this proposition—'L'—represents the linking function Vlastos takes the *BT* to play. Ibid., 234; n. 32.

[16]Ibid., 252.

literally just seems to commit Socrates to the *UT*: justice *is* piety, piety *is* wisdom, etc. To avoid the implications of this problematic surface grammar, Vlastos appeals to what he calls *Pauline Predication*.[17] The *Pauline Predication Thesis* simply asserts that propositions which predicate one part of virtue of another, or one part of virtue of itself, should not be read as

i) *X* is *Y*;

or

ii) *X* is *X*;

but rather as

iii) Anyone who possesses the property *X* also possesses *Y*;

or the tautology,

iv) Anyone who possesses *X*, possesses *X*.

Using Pauline Predication to get around the surface grammar, Vlastos thinks we should translate "Justice is wise" as "Anyone who has justice is wise." And this is just what the *BT* suggests: having any one of the virtues logically entails having all the rest. Thus, using biconditionality as an interpretive lens, the *UT* need not imply that the parts of virtue are synonymous or identical. All the *UT* need imply is what the *BT* demands:

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[17]Vlastos refers to these locutions as 'Pauline' after the Apostle Paul. He takes Socratic propositions such as "Justice is pious" to be similar to St. Paul's assertion of I Corinthians 13:4 that "Love (ἡ ἀγάπη) is long-suffering, love is kind, is not jealous; love does not boast [and] is not base. . ." (my translation). St. Paul is not asserting that love has the properties of patience, kindness, etc. but that a person who possesses love is patient, kind, etc. Likewise, Socrates is not claiming that the universal justice has the property of piousness but that the person who is just is also pious. In other words, we ought not predicate one universal of another as seems to be suggested by the *UT*, but rather predicate each and every one of the virtues of any person who demonstrates possession a single virtue. Ibid., 235, n.33, 252-259.

the parts of virtue "are attributes necessarily instantiated in *one and the same class of persons* [his emphasis]."[18]

Vlastos uses the same strategy to reinterpret the *ST*. It will be recalled that on Vlastos' reading of the Protagoras, Socrates supports P1.b)—the parts of virtue are like the parts of a piece of gold, which do not differ from one another or from the whole except in size—which seems to deny any significantly distinct qualities among the parts of virtue. But if we read P1.b) through *BT* (and therefore L), Socrates is only committed to the claim that the *ST* is necessary (but not sufficient) for the *BT*.[19] If the parts of virtue are interpredicable, Vlastos argues, there is "a five-point similarity between them: each is like the rest in all five of these respects."[20] Thus, what Socrates means when he claims that each of the parts of virtue are 'similar' is that each will have the others predicated of it. That is, "justice is *like* piety" in that "justice is just, wise, temperate, courageous, and pious," and "piety is pious, just, wise, temperate, and courageous," etc. 'Justice' and 'piety' share many of the same predicates, so they are similar without being identical.

I can now summarize Vlastos' argument for the *UVD* as follows. Socrates presents Protagoras with three pairs of propositions meant to elucidate the latter's view of the nature of virtue. Protagoras holds virtue to be a whole composed of parts [P1)], which are like the parts of a face [P1.a)], and which may be possessed independently of one another [P1.a.i)]. Socrates

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[18]Ibid., 246.

[19]Vlastos puts it as follows: "if each virtue has the qualities of all the rest [which is the implication of the *ST*], then to have one virtue is to have all the rest as well." Ibid., 247.

[20]Ibid. Vlastos also points out that a "corresponding similarity will hold between the *dynameis* of the virtues," n. 73.

agrees that virtue is composed of parts [P1)],[21] but holds the parts are more like pieces of a chunk of gold [P1.b)], the essential properties of which cannot be possessed independently from one another [P1.a.ii)]. The biconditionality of the parts of virtue is the key to understanding Socrates' position. If having one part of virtue necessarily entails having them all, we should understand the chunk of gold analogy to exemplify the strong similarity of the virtues without committing Socrates to their identity. Thus, the analogy is not as troublesome as it might at first appear. As for the 'unity' of the parts of virtue, they are 'one' only in the sense that if they are found at all, they are all found in the same type of person, i.e., the virtuous person. So for Vlastos, the *UT* and the *ST* should be interpreted through the *BT;* if we do so, he thinks an internally consistent view of Socrates' doctrine emerges.

B. Problems with the Vlastos Interpretation

Vlastos' interpretation of the *UVD* (i.e., *the Biconditionality Thesis*), while both novel and interesting, is not convincing. It is motivated primarily by the belief that Socrates could not have accepted the strong version of the *Unity Thesis* expressed in P2). And his belief that Socrates could not have accepted P2) is in turn motivated by the belief that it is contrary to "standard Socratic doctrine," which maintains that virtue is composed of parts (the *Parts of Virtue Doctrine*).[22] He believes there is textual evidence (outside the

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[21]See note 9 above.

[22]Vlastos was taken to task for his initially undefined claim that Socrates is committed to the *PVD*. In response to numerous criticisms, he wrote "Socrates on the 'Parts of Virtue.'" The objections I raise to the *PVD* here are by and large distinct from those he answers in that paper. See Vlastos, Platonic Studies, 2nd ed., 418-423, and the starred notes to "The Unity of the Virtues in the Protagoras," 428-430.

Protagoras) which supports his view that Socrates is committed to the *PVD*. In particular, there is data from the Meno and Laches that, he believes, make it impossible for Socrates to have accepted P2); thus, he concludes Socrates along with Protagoras must have been committed to P1).[23] I am unmoved by Vlastos' argument, and I desire to demonstrate why I think his interpretation of the *UVD* should be rejected. This requires that I focus squarely on his fundamental assumption: that P2) is contrary to standard Socratic doctrine. The primary goal of this section is to do just that: I argue that the texts of the early dialogues do not demonstrate a Socratic commitment to the *PVD* as Vlastos maintains. In addition to this, I argue that Vlastos faces an exegetical problem internal to the Protagoras that makes the *BT* less attractive still. If I am correct, the combination of these objections will undermine the warrant for Vlastos' rejection of P2) as Socrates' position on the *UVD*. That will, of course, leave Socrates' position to be spelled out later.

B.1 Some Textual Problems in the Protagoras

Before examining the texts of the Meno and Laches for their alleged support of the *PVD*, I want to highlight some problems for the Vlastos interpretation internal to the Protagoras.[24] First, if he is correctly reading the text of the Protagoras, Vlastos is forced to confront, and ultimately explain

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[23]Daniel Devereux points to the same evidence but draws a different conclusion: there is no consistent Socratic doctrine of the Unity of Virtues in the early dialogues. He takes the Protagoras to reflect Socrates' uncritical speculations on the nature of virtue, while the Laches and Meno represent later Platonic revisions of Socrates' thought. I treat Devereux's argument in detail in Chapter Five below.

[24]I do not want to leave the impression that this is a completely original objection against Vlastos. Indeed, he makes it clear that he is aware of this problem in "UVP," 225-228 (and the corresponding stared notes). However, I find Vlastos' solution to this problem unconvincing. Devereux also raises this objection in "The Unity of Virtues," 768-770.

away, a *prima facie* inconsistency on Socrates' behalf. It will be recalled that, according to Vlastos, Socrates and Protagoras agree in their rejection of P2): 'justice', 'temperance', 'piety' ['courage', and 'wisdom'] are all names of one thing. Since the disjunction of P1) and P2) is exclusive, Socrates and Protagoras must also agree that the names of the virtues refer to distinct parts which taken together compose virtue as a whole (i.e., P1)). The difference between Socrates and Protagoras, he goes on to argue, is how they understand the nature of the parts: Protagoras believes they are like the parts of a face, while Socrates thinks they are more like parts of a piece of gold. Socrates' elenctic efforts thereafter, according to Vlastos, are to dissuade Protagoras from the face analogy and its attendant consequences.

However, if Socrates and Protagoras agree that the virtue-terms are used to designate discrete parts of virtue at 329d, Vlastos is faced with a problem when Socrates reiterates the original disjunction at 349b. At that point Socrates seems to reject what Vlastos says he must accept: the *PVD*. It is a long passage but it is worth quoting in full because in it Socrates attempts to make clear Protagoras' position, and by contrast his own:

> The question, if I am not mistaken was this. Wisdom, temperance, courage, justice, and piety are five terms. Do they stand for a single reality, or has each term a particular entity underlying it, a reality with its own separate function, each different from the other? *Your* answer was that they are not names for the same thing, but that each of these terms applies to its own separate reality, and that all these things are parts of virtue, not like the parts of a lump of gold all homogeneous with each other and with the whole of which they are parts, but like the parts of a face, resembling neither the whole nor each other and each having a separate function.

In this passage Socrates restates the initial set of disjunctions presented at 329d but in slightly different terms:

> P1') 'Wisdom', 'temperance', 'courage', 'justice', 'piety' are five terms that refer to different things each with a particular entity underlying it.
>
> P2')'Wisdom', 'temperance', 'courage', 'justice', 'piety' are five terms that refer to one thing.
>
> P1.a') The parts of virtue are like the parts of a face, each having a separate function.
>
> P1.b') The parts of virtue are like parts of a lump of gold homogeneous with each other and the whole.

Protagoras reaffirms his commitment to P1) and P1.a) by affirming P1') and P1.a'). So both Socrates and Protagoras accept 349b as an accurate restatement of the original set of disjunctions at 329d. Thus, if Socrates had accepted P1), he could not possibly accept P2') without committing himself to a most obvious inconsistency! Since Socrates seems intent on dislodging Protagoras from his commitment to P1) (and as well P1')) as demonstrated by his continual elenctic probing, it would seem that Socrates accepts P2) as well as P2') (or at least prefers them to the Protagorean alternatives).

According to Vlastos, however, this is an incorrect reading of the text. He argues Socrates accepts P2') while at the same time rejecting P2) since the former is put "in a form which is not associated with the denial of [P1)]."[25] If, on the other hand, we read P2') as a natural linguistic variation of P2), Socrates would be faced with the same objections raised earlier: first, he would have to think "the five virtues are *the same virtue*," and second, he

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[25]Vlastos, UVP, 226.

would think "that their names are *synonyms* [his emphases]."[26] Both alternatives are unacceptable to Vlastos since they would be contrary to Socrates' commitment to the *PVD*. However, Socrates' commitment to the *PVD* is *a core issue* and cannot be assumed. Further, there is nothing in the context of this passage that suggests Socrates understands P2') to have a different logical import than P2). In fact, the context clearly demonstrates that both Socrates and Protagoras believe they amount to one and the same proposition!

Thus, if Socrates affirms P2')—which we have every reason to believe he does—and if the natural reading of the text suggests he believes P2') and P2) amount to the same thing, Vlastos needs some compelling reason to think he would not also affirm P2). But taken by itself, the Protagoras gives him no such reason. The text seems to indicate that Socrates rejects the *PVD* which follows from P1), in favor of the stronger *IT* which follows from P2). Therefore, the evidence on which Vlastos' thesis must depend will have to come from other early dialogues. But as I argue in the next section, the evidence for a Socratic commitment to the *PVD* in the other early dialogues is dubious.

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[26]This is what Vlastos takes to be the consequences of the *IT*, Ibid., 227. While I have no problem with the first objection, I am more dubious of the second. According to Vlastos, Plato's semantic theory is rather restrictive since "*Form-naming* words get their sense through their reference" ("UVP" starred notes, 433). Thus, for Socrates there cannot be two non-synonymous terms with the same reference. But as far as I can tell there is no clear evidence in the early dialogues that Socrates believes abstract terms *must* get their sense from their reference, or that Socrates had any systematic semantic theory at all! Neither is it clear that Socrates believes there is for each genuine abstract term a corresponding εἶδος. That is, I am doubtful that the 'Socrates' of the early dialogues has formulated a theory of Forms.

The second problem—internal to the Protagoras—Vlastos faces concerns the way he understands the initial set of disjunctions put to Protagoras at 329d-330b. We should recall that, according to him, the three disjunctions are meant to elucidate "a single doctrine." Further, the disjunctions are exclusive, not inclusive, so only one disjunct from each can be affirmed. From the first disjunction we get:

> P1) Virtue is a composite whole and justice, piety, temperance (courage and wisdom) are parts of it;

and

> P2) Justice, piety, temperance (courage and wisdom) name the same thing.

Since, according to Vlastos, both Socrates and Protagoras reject P2), Socrates poses the next disjunction as a clarification of P1) and we get:

> P1.a) The parts of virtue are like the parts of a face;

and

> P1.b) The parts of virtue are like the parts of a piece of gold, which do not differ from one another or from the whole except in size.

Here they part company, Protagoras affirming the first and Socrates the second. Both disjunctions clearly fall under P1) and are rightly understood as an elucidation of it. So far, so good. But what about the third disjunction? From it we derive:

> P1.a.i) A person may possess one part of virtue without having all the rest.

and

> P1.a.ii) A person possessing one part of virtue must have all the rest.

These two disjuncts are clearly meant to be an elucidation of P1.a) which, according to Vlastos, Socrates rejects in favor of P1.b). But it is from P1.a.ii)

that Vlastos' *BT* is derived. So how can P1.a.ii) represent the clearest formulation of Socrates' position if it is derived from a proposition which he rejects (i.e., P1.a))?

It would appear that Vlastos must surrender at least one of a number of claims important to his thesis: either he gives up the claim that the disjunctions are exclusive, or he yields the claim that Socrates is committed to the parts of gold analogy, or he gives up the last disjunct from which the *BT* is derived. The text seems to preclude the first option and the importance of P1.a.ii) to his thesis precludes the last. That leaves the parts of gold analogy. But if Socrates rejects that, he would be committed to P1.a) which entails that the virtues have distinct functions or powers, which is the Protagorean position he attacks throughout the rest of the dialogue.

There is another possibility open to Vlastos. He *could* argue that while the first and last disjunctions are exclusive, the second is not. While this would be *ad hoc*, it would allow him to maintain a Socratic commitment to the parts of gold analogy. The question then is how consistent is the parts of gold analogy and the *BT*? That is, does the *BT* really clarify the gold analogy at all? Of this I am rather dubious. Further, if the face and gold analogies are not exclusive of one another, does the *BT* also clarify the face analogy and if so, how?

The point of these observations is that if Vlastos is correctly reading the text, we are faced with a number of exegetical problems. There is, however, a simple way to avoid these difficulties. There is what I take to be a more natural reading of the text. We could read the text as committing Socrates to P2) instead of P1) and then we avoid the need to explain away the *prima facie* inconsistency between Socrates' position at 329d and 349b because there would

be no inconsistency. Further, we avoid any *ad hoc* attempts to interpret the relationship between the disjunctions at 329d-330b. But this reading of the Protagoras would commit Socrates to the *UT* which is contrary to the *PVD*. So if I am right about how we should read the Protagoras we face two possibilities: either the Protagoras is inconsistent with other early dialogues, or Vlastos is wrong about Socrates' commitment to the *PVD*. Since I reject the first alternative, I must now go on to argue against what Vlastos calls "standard Socratic doctrine."

B.2 Vlastos on Standard Socratic Doctrine

I have argued that the text of the Protagoras provides no positive evidence for a Socratic commitment to the *PVD*. In fact, I think the text precludes such a commitment. So what other evidence is there in the early dialogues which might support the claim that Socrates is committed to virtue's composite nature? Vlastos believes we find significant affirmation of the *PVD* in two early dialogues: the Laches and the Meno.[27] In both cases, he argues we find Socrates clearly committed to the *PVD*. I will argue, however, that there is no such evidence to be found in the Laches, and that the Meno is ambiguous on the issue and further, as a transitional dialogue should not be taken as evidence for Socratic doctrine.

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[27]He also believes Socrates' commitment to the *PVD* is demonstrated in the Euthyphro. There are two reasons I will not deal with that passage in the text of this chapter. First, Vlastos himself spends very little time on it focusing instead on the text of the Laches and the Meno. Second, and more importantly, the Euthyphro raises as many problems as it solves for Vlastos. According to the Euthyphro justice entails piety, but not vice versa. At 11e-12e Euthyphro and Socrates seem to agree that piety is a part, not of virtue, but of another part of virtue, namely justice. It seems that Socrates believes justice divides into two subsets: pious justice and non-pious justice. It would evidently be the case, therefore, that every pious action is just, but there will be some just actions that are not pious. This is clearly inconsistent with Socrates' conclusion at Prot. 331b as well as Vlastos' *BT*.

B.2.a Evidence from the Laches[28]

The argument for Socrates' commitment to the *PVD* in the Laches hangs on the implication of three passages: first, it is Socrates who introduces the idea that virtue is composed of parts (190d); second, it is Socrates who re-emphasizes the division of virtue to Nicias (198a); and third, it is Socrates who, at the end of the dialogue (199e), points out that they had supposed virtue to be composed of parts throughout their conversation. Since it is Socrates who continually emphasizes the premise that virtue is composed of parts, are we not justified in claiming he is committed to its truth?

I do not think the text of the Laches will bear out the assertion that Socrates is committed to the *PVD*. There are two arguments against this seemingly natural reading of the text. First, the text itself does not actually commit Socrates to anything. Consider the introduction of the *PVD*; Socrates says:

> I would not have us begin . . . with inquiring about the whole of virtue, for that may be more than we can accomplish. Let us first consider whether we have a sufficient knowledge of a part; the inquiry will thus probably be made easier to us (190d).

We can read this passage quite naturally as Socrates suggesting they *assume* virtue is composed of parts to make the inquiry easier. Because it is an assumed premise, we have no reason to think he is actually committed to its truth; he simply puts forward an hypothetical premise for the sake of argument. The question is, why? It is possible that Socrates actually accepts

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[28]Because I deal with the Laches at length in Chapter Five below, I will offer only an overview of that argument here.

the *PVD* and thinks it would be easier to inquire about a part rather than the whole. It is equally possible that while he rejects the *PVD*, he is also aware that his immediate discussion group not only accepts it, but could not imagine denying it. Perhaps what Socrates wants his interlocutors to see is that this assumption is a mistake.[29] Whichever of these two options is correct, it is the case that this text in isolation cannot resolve the issue.

If the text is ambiguous about Socrates' commitment to the *PVD*, is there any reason to favor one reading over the other? The answer is a resounding "Yes!" A few lines before Socrates introduces the *PVD* as a methodological assumption, he and Laches agree that in order to be an acceptable advisor on the education of children they must "first know the nature of virtue." Then Socrates says: "*We* say then, Laches, that *we* know the nature of virtue." Now, this is an extraordinary claim and Socrates cannot mean what he says! If Socrates did believe he knew the nature of virtue as a *prima facie* reading of this passage suggests, what are we to make of his standard denial of knowledge at 186e:

> Socrates avers that he has no knowledge of the matter—he is unable to decide which of you speaks truly—neither discoverer nor student is he of anything of the kind.

Either this is a bold-faced lie, or Socrates really does *not* know the nature of virtue. It seems to me that what this passage demonstrates is that Socrates is aware that Laches, and very probably Nicias, Melesias, and Lysimachus as well, *think* they know what virtue is, even though they do not. And, a significant element of what they *think* they know about virtue is that it is

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[29]In fact, I think that is precisely what he wants them to see, as will become presently evident.

composed of parts.[30] If we read 190d in this context, it becomes clear that Socrates is setting out to demonstrate to his interlocutors that a significant common assumption about virtue is at best questionable, at worst false.[31]

In light of this evidence I maintain that the provisional nature of the claim at 190d is sufficient to cause us to doubt that Socrates himself is committed to its truth. The centrality of this seemingly uncontroversial presupposition throughout the dialogue is a further clue for the reader to seize upon. Each time Socrates reminds an interlocutor of the *PVD*, the provisional nature of the initial claim is reinforced. This claim—"virtue is composed of parts"—appears to be what we are expected to recognize as problematic and which we are therefore expected to critically evaluate.

Thus, when considered as a whole, one point the dialogue makes is that *if* we suppose virtue is composed of parts—and it is in fact composed of parts—it should be easier to arrive at knowledge of a part rather than the whole. But if virtue is *not* divisible in this presupposed way, pursuing a part of it should lead to a dead end. And this is precisely the aporatic quandary the dialogue highlights. Thus, a re-evaluation of the initial premise is suggested by the conclusion of the final elenchus at 199e where Socrates sets the *PVD* against Nicias' seemingly Socratic definition of courage. He makes it clear that the proposition "courage is a part of virtue" is contradictory to

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[30]I take it to be rather uncontroversial that most, if not all, of Socrates' contemporaries made precisely this assumption (e.g., La. 198a, 199e, M. 74a, Prot. 329d). It is Socrates' claim that virtue is a single thing that is the revolutionary philosophical claim.

[31]This does not entail that Socrates actually knows what virtue is, only that he is confident that it is not composed of parts. It is quite consistent for him to know that, and perhaps even why, a particular assertion about virtue will fail and for him to claim that he does not know what virtue is. Penner takes a similar line in "What Laches and Nicias Miss—And Whether Socrates Thinks Courage Merely a Part of Virtue," Ancient Philosophy, 1992, 1-27.

"courage is all of virtue." If Nicias' definition is correct, then the assumed premise must be false. On the other hand, if the assumed premise is true, Nicias' definition must be false. But notice that Socrates only declares that they have failed to discover what courage is (199e). It is not clear which of the two claims is true; what is clear is that the two are inconsistent. The implication is that both propositions must be carefully re-examined if the truth is to be discovered. If Socrates had been committed to the truth of the initial assumption, he could have boldly pronounced Nicias' definition false. His failure to do this only serves to emphasize its provisional nature.

The conclusion of these considerations is that a careful reading of the Laches gives us no reason to think Socrates is committed to the claim "Virtue is composed of parts." In fact, the context of the *PVD*'s introduction makes it entirely implausible to think Socrates could believe it is true. Socrates is no more asserting the composite nature of virtue than he is claiming to know the nature of virtue! I take the aside between Socrates and Laches at 190c as a dramatic cue; we should mark that something significant is about to happen in the dialogue. What follows is an assumption that turns out to be incompatible with what appears to be Socrates' own view. So while the characters of the dialogue end in a state of *aporia*, we are meant to recognize the cause of their confusion: the *assumption* that virtue is composed of parts.

B.2.b Evidence from the Meno

The most important text in support of Socrates' commitment to the *PVD*, according to Vlastos, is Meno 71d - 79e.[32] In this section of text, Meno

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[32]It is clear that the text from the Meno is more important than that of Laches, even though Vlastos never says it explicitly. This is clear because he devotes only the last

offers a series of definitions of virtue, all of which are rejected by Socrates. But throughout the exchange, virtue is spoken of as consisting of parts. From this, Vlastos concludes that Socrates must in fact be committed to the *PVD*. Specifically, he points to two analogies as support for this view.

First, there is the bee/virtue analogy at 72b-d where Socrates emphasizes *the kind* of universal required to answer the "What is virtue?" question.[33] In response to the initial "What is virtue?" question, Meno offers five distinct varieties of virtue: the virtue of 1) a man, 2) a woman, 3) a child (male or female), 4) an old man, and 5) a slave (71e). Socrates rejects this swarm (σμῆνος) of virtues as failing to capture the essence (οὐσίας) of virtue. If there is a distinction between the virtues (bees), it must be because they have a distinctive property; they are not distinct *qua* virtue (72b). Meno agrees that this must be the case, but at the same time fails to see how to apply this to the "What is virtue?" question (72d).

The importance of this analogy, according to Vlastos, is that Socrates "is already implying that virtues do differ in various ways and are 'the same' only in respect of 'that single form they all possess by virtue of which they are all virtues.'"[34] Just as there are different varieties of bees, so too there must

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paragraph of his defense of the "parts of Virtue" doctrine on the Laches. The rest of the paper is devoted to the text of the Meno as a response to what he calls the "Penner, Taylor, Irwin objections" to his earlier claim that the "parts of virtue doctrine" is "standard Socratic doctrine." Vlastos, "SVP," 423.

[33]Nehamas is correct in pointing out that Meno does not fail to provide a universal as his response to the "What is *F*-ness?" question. Managing the city, the household, etc., which Meno proposes as the definition of virtue (71e), is not an example of particulars; rather it is an example of universals. However, these universals are insufficiently broad to answer Socrates' question. Alexander Nehamas, 1975, "Confusing Universals and Particulars in Plato's Early Dialogues," The Review of Metaphysics 29, 296; see also Hugh Benson, 1992, "Misunderstanding the 'What-is-F-ness?' Question," in Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates.

[34]Vlastos, 1980, SPV, 418.

be different varieties of virtue. So, according to Vlastos, we can take Socrates' use of this analogy as evidence of his belief that the virtues are individually distinct while unified under some common form.

But the bee analogy, as Vlastos points out, is flawed because it is too "loose." An individual bee might belong to a subspecies of bee while also participating in general bee-hood. For example, a bumble bee is different from a honey bee, while both are bees. Therefore, Vlastos believes this analogy too imprecise in relation to virtue. The virtues are different because "the [individual] virtues *are* varieties of virtue [in general]" (his emphasis).[35] It appears that Vlastos does not think there are subspecies of virtue.

To rectify the shortcoming of the bee/virtue analogy, Vlastos claims that Socrates suggests a more precise analogy of the relationship between the virtues and virtue. Here Socrates parallels the justice/virtue relationship with the round/shape (74b) and the white/color (74c) relationships: i.e., justice is to virtue as round is to shape, or white is to color. When considering the round or roundness, we call it *a* shape (σχῆμά τι) precisely because there are other shapes besides it (74c). The same is true when we consider whiteness; it is *a* color (χρῶμά τι) because there are other colors besides. Vlastos interprets this passage as Socrates struggling to help Meno understand that in all such cases there are multiple (non-identical) universals that are properly predicated of some more general universal. Thus, this second analogy depends upon justice being understood as *a* virtue (ἀρετή τι) rather than virtue (73e). The point emphasized by these distinctions is that

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[35]Ibid.

> in Socrates' view the fact that the name 'virtue' applies to all the virtues no more confounds their distinctness from virtue and from each other than the distinctness of roundness from straightness is impugned by the fact that each is [a] figure.[36]

Thus, according to Vlastos, Socrates' commitment to the parallel relationships—round/shape, white/color—demonstrates more clearly than the bee analogy his belief that virtue is properly conceived as a composite of distinct parts. From the first analogy, we only get a hint that Socrates might be committed to the *PVD*, while from the second analogy, we get much stronger evidence of such a commitment. Taken together, Vlastos is confident that these analogies, suggested by Socrates himself, represent sufficient textual evidence that the *PVD* is genuinely Socratic.

But is Vlastos' analysis of the Meno accurate? Do these analogies accurately represent Socrates' own view of virtue? I am doubtful for two reasons. First, it is not so clear that the bee/virtue and round/shape (and white/color) analogies commit Socrates to the *PVD*. Consider them in order: first the bee/virtue analogy. It is true that Socrates interjects the analogy of the swarm in response to Meno's first definition of virtue. However, there are two important limitations on this analogy that are worth highlighting. First, Socrates is being ironic when he suggests the swarm analogy in the first place. He says, "I seem to be in luck. I wanted one virtue and I find that you have a whole swarm of virtues to offer" (72a). This assertion is clearly ironic! Socrates does not really count himself lucky to have discovered more virtues than he was searching for. Rather, he is gently teasing Meno for misunderstanding the question.

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[36]Ibid., 420.

If we are not to take Socrates seriously about being lucky, should we take him seriously about finding many virtues? The irony by itself is insufficient to cause serious doubt about his commitment to a multiplicity of virtues. However, after Socrates has made clear to Meno why his first definition was insufficient, and he draws Meno's attention back to the question of virtue, he says,

> Then do the same with the virtues. *Even if* they are many and various (κἂν εἰ πολλαὶ καὶ παντοδαπαί εἰσιν), yet they all have some common character which makes them virtues (my emphasis) (72c).

Socrates is saying, not that he himself is committed to a multiplicity of virtues, but rather that even if there were many virtues, it would be irrelevant to the "What is virtue?" question. The purpose of the analogy is to demonstrate what follows from Meno's definition, *not* to highlight Socrates' beliefs about the nature of virtue. Meno proposed that there were many virtues as a response to the "What is virtue?" question, and Socrates responds by saying that this is *irrelevant* to the question he asked. Socrates is only responding to what Meno has said; he is pointing out how Meno's answer is inadequate.

Thus, when we consider both the ironic tenor of the analogy and Socrates' dismissal of the significance of their being many virtues, it is difficult to see why we should take this as hard evidence that Socrates endorses the *PVD*. It seems the most we can construe from the analogy of the swarm is that Socrates is, at best, agnostic toward there being many virtues—maybe there are, and maybe there are not.[37] Therefore, we have

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[37] We should also note that the multiple virtues being discussed at this point are the virtues of a man, woman, child (male and female), old man, and slave (M. 71e). These are not

good reason to be sceptical about Vlastos' claim that Socrates is here implying that there are different virtues that have distinct properties.

But even if I am right that we should not take the first analogy to represent Socrates' position, what about the second? Does it not clearly represent Socrates' own belief that virtue is a universal composed of the lower level universals courage, temperance, wisdom, and dignity introduced by Meno at 74a? Again, I think a careful reading of the text shows that there is insufficient evidence to attribute this view to Socrates.[38]

First, the white/color - round/shape analogies are not offered as a clarification of the bee/virtue analogy as Vlastos indicates.[39] In fact, it seems quite implausible to read them as related in any significant way except sequentially.[40] The bee/virtue analogy is inextricably tied to Meno's first definition of virtue; it is Socrates' attempt to show Meno why his first definition of virtue is inadequate. Having recognized Socrates' point, Meno tries again:

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the kinds of virtues suggested in any of the other dialogues (i.e., the cardinal virtues) and make it even more clear that Socrates is *not* asserting his own view, but merely exploring the assertion put forward by Meno.

[38] While it is not a significant part of my argument, it is worth pointing out that the list of parts of virtue is offered by Meno, not Socrates. Further, the list includes μεγαλοπρέπεια which is never mentioned by Socrates as a virtue, nor does it appear in the list of cardinal virtues in any of the other early dialogues.

[39] Vlastos says of this analogy, "To explain the relation more precisely Socrates moves to a more exact analogy: 'justice' is to 'virtue' as is 'the round' to 'figure' and 'white' to 'color'." Ibid., 419. The two analogies are tied together in his mind; they are not just sequentially related, but both seek to clarify the same question: "What is the relation between justice and virtue?" Thus, I do not believe I am being uncharitable toward Vlastos in this criticism.

[40] I should note here that Meno seems to commit the same error as before; he offers an insufficiently broad universal as a definition. So we can justifiably say there is this relation between the two definitions, and to the degree the analogy is meant to show Meno that his definition has failed, the analogies are related. But this does not suggest that the latter is intended by Socrates as a clarification of the former.

> It [virtue] must be simply the capacity to govern men, if you are looking for one quality to cover all the instances (73d).

The second analogy (74b-c) follows this proposed definition of virtue and Meno's inadvertent admission that justice *is* virtue (73d). Therefore, why should we think it is supposed to be a clarification of the weaker bee/virtue analogy that was a response to Meno's first attempted definition of virtue? It makes far more sense to read the round/shape analogy as Socrates' attempt to demonstrate to Meno that he has once again failed to comprehend what Socrates expects as an answer to the "What is virtue?" question. In fact Socrates clearly asserts that Meno has once again failed to answer the question that has been asked. After he lists 'courage', 'temperance', 'wisdom', and 'dignity' as virtues that go along with justice, Socrates says:

> This puts us back where we were. In a different way we have discovered a number of virtues when we were looking for one only. This single virtue, which permeates each of them, we cannot find (74a).

Meno has once again bungled the definition. The round/shape analogy is Socrates' response to Meno's second definition of virtue (i.e., "... the capacity to rule men..." 73d), not, as Vlastos claims, a clarification of his own position only weakly conveyed in the previous analogy. Socrates is not asserting anything about his own views; he is only exploring the implications of Meno's assertions in an attempt to help Meno answer the question that was asked in the first place.

But suppose Vlastos were to grant all this, saying he never intended to claim so strong a connection between the two analogies. Is his claim that the second analogy demonstrates Socrates' belief that virtue is a composite whole still justified? I am doubtful for two reasons. First, the context of the analogy

does not necessitate that it represents his own view, and second, Socrates would commit himself to an inconsistent position if it did represent his own view. We should recall that the analogy is only introduced as a response to Meno's inadvertent claim that "...justice is virtue" (73e). This is clearly a slip-of-the-tongue on Meno's part, and Socrates inquires to see if Meno really believes, or comprehends the logical consequences of, what he has just claimed. In fact, Meno does not believe that justice *is* virtue, but that it is one of many virtues (73e). And Socrates, if he does not know, has very good reason to suppose this is Meno's view; it is the *consensus gentium.* That is why he immediately stops Meno and asks for a clarification (73d9). Socrates does not believe, that Meno believes, what he has just said. And, had Meno not made this blunder, there would be no reason for this distinction to be introduced at all. But does not the fact that Socrates tests Meno on this point demonstrate that he himself believes that there are many distinct virtues? I do not think so. All we can legitimately infer is that he is surprised to hear Meno deny what everyone else, including Meno himself, believes.[41]

But, Vlastos may retort, when Socrates spells out the distinction between justice *being* virtue and justice being *a* virtue with the round/shape analogy he is indicating solidarity with the *consensus gentium.* Meno is initially unclear about the distinction being made; so Socrates says,

> Take roundness, for instance. *I should say* that it is a shape, not simply that it is shape, my reason being that there are other shapes as well [emphasis added] (73e).

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[41]See note 26 above.

Is this not proof enough that Socrates believes not only that there are many different shapes but that he also believes there are many different virtues as well?

I might be inclined to agree with Vlastos if this passage stood by itself. But it does not. First, consider the analogical argument which goes something like this:

1) Justice is to virtue as round is to shape.
2) There are many shapes, not just roundness.
C) Therefore we say roundness is *a* shape not shape.
3) Likewise, there are many virtues, not just justice.
C') Therefore we say justice is *a* virtue not virtue.

This argument tells us that *if* virtue is like shape, and there are many different shapes, then there must be many different virtues as well. Meno understands the argument and lists other virtues (i.e., courage, temperance, wisdom, and dignity, etc., 74a) which he takes to be analogous to other shapes. We should expect Socrates to accept this as an adequate response since it is the logical consequence of the analogy he posed to Meno. But Socrates *does not* accept this response. Why? Meno has not violated the analogy in any way; he reaches the most probable conclusion given the parameters of the analogy. Yet, Socrates is unsatisfied with the conclusion Meno reaches. I think his response is in part motivated by the fact that the virtue/shape analogy does not fairly represent his own view. Since Socrates does not fault the analogy, and yet he rejects the conclusion, he may have doubts about the premise around which the analogy is built. If Socrates is committed to the analogy between shape and virtue, he should accept Meno's conclusion that there are many different virtues. Since he doubts the conclusion, we may legitimately

conclude that he has doubts about the antecedent comparison of virtue and shape.

Vlastos might object by saying that it is I who fail to see what actually motivates Socrates' rejection of Meno's list of virtues at 74a. He might go on to say that a perfectly plausible reading of the text suggests that Socrates is only trying to remind Meno of what was concluded earlier; namely, even if there are many different virtues, it is irrelevant to the "What is virtue?" question. Therefore, Socrates could object to Meno even though he agrees that all the things he has just listed are indeed virtues. Meno has proposed a new definition of virtue which reduces to a list of universals each too narrow to be a candidate for the *F-ness* in question. Thus, Socrates *could* consistently hold both positions; he could agree with Meno that there are many different virtues and still claim that this is irrelevant to the "What is virtue?" question he has asked.

This looks like a strong response to my suspicions about Socrates' commitment to the virtue/shape analogy. After all, I have not given a single piece of evidence that, on its own, decisively shows that Socrates *could not have* agreed with Meno about the parts of virtue. So, suppose that I am completely misguided and that my objections thus far are totally without warrant. Suppose Vlastos is correct; the virtue/shape analogy does in fact represent Socrates' own view. If Vlastos were to make this rebuttal, then it seems to me that Socrates is committed to, at best, a paradoxical position, at worst, an inconsistent one.

Vlastos' justification of Socrates' belief that virtue is a composite whole rests directly upon the strength of the analogical argument: justice is to virtue as round is to shape (and white is to color). But there is good reason to

think Socrates would never accept this analogy. The multiplicity of colors and shapes depends upon their constituents being significantly different from one another. Each must have at least one unique quality that makes it impossible to affirm any two simultaneously of the same thing in the same way. Thus, if *X* is white, it is not red in the same way; if *Y* is round, it is not straight in the same way. Take the Diet Coke can on my desk: it is silver, red, white and black. The areas that are silver are not red, black, or white. The areas that are red are not silver, black, or white, etc. That is, in relation to the can, the colors are significantly differentiated from (i.e., contrary to) one another; it is not—and cannot be—silver, red, white, and black all over. So *if* Vlastos is correct and Socrates believes that virtue is analogous to color, he *ought to* believe that justice is contrary in some significant way to piety, courage, wisdom, temperance, etc. In fact, each of the virtues must be contrary to each of the others in a way similar to the way that particular colors (or shapes) are contrary to one another: they are not coextensional.

So what are the practical consequences of accepting the round/shape and white/color analogies? In relation to shape, no object can have two shapes simultaneously: a cylinder cannot be a cube, a triangle cannot be a circle, etc. In a similar way, no particular area can be more than one color all over at one time. Thus, if the analogy holds between virtue and color or virtue and shape, should we not also draw similar conclusions about the virtues? Would it not seem to follow that if virtue were like shape in the way suggested no person could be both just and temperate, pious and courageous, just and wise, etc., in the same way at the same time? Yet Vlastos' own interpretation of Socrates' position in the Protagoras commits him to the belief that the virtues are like pieces taken from a lump of gold,

differing from one another and the whole only in their size (Prot. 329d). Further, the *Biconditionality Thesis* of the *UVD* holds that anyone who has any one of the virtues not only *can* have others, but *must* have them all! If Socrates thinks the virtues are like pieces taken from a lump of gold, it is hard to see how he could also believe the virtues are like colors or shapes which differ so significantly from one another. If the analogies in the Meno represent Socrates' view of virtue, he should agree with Protagoras that the parts of virtue are more like the parts of a face (Prot. 329d).

If Socrates would be unwilling to accept the consequences of the shape/color analogies, and we have very good reason to think he would,[42] he seems to have committed a sophomoric oversight in his commitment to them. He does not recognize they will force him to claim the virtues are contrary to one another in some significant way. Likewise, he fails to recognize that this is inconsistent with the position he defends in the Protagoras.[43] Of course, another possibility is that he does not really think virtue is analogous to shape and color after all. Perhaps these analogies are only designed to show Meno the errors in his definitions of virtue. I think it would be rather uncharitable to think Socrates fails to recognize the consequences of the analogies he uses to represent his own view, hence I am inclined to think it is Vlastos, not Socrates, who has erred in this case. He attributes the analogy between shape/color and virtue to Socrates when he

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[42]For just a few examples see Charm. 165e, 167a; Gorg. 495d; Prot. 331a, 333b.

[43] Someone might be tempted to claim that Socrates has changed his mind in the interim between the Protagoras and the Meno. But this move is not open to Vlastos as he is using the text of the latter as support for his interpretation of the former; he must be committed to the consistency of the two texts. Since I am only interested in showing the inconsistency in Vlastos' interpretation in this chapter, I will not lavish further attention on this possibility here. However, I do address a similar problem in Chapter Five below.

should not. But even if Socrates were committed to the analogies in the Meno, this would not support Vlastos' argument for the *PVD* since they are inconsistent with the position Socrates defends in the Protagoras.

There is a final reason why I am dubious of appealing to the Meno as support for the *PVD*: I take it to be a transitional dialogue. In this dialogue, I think we see the emergence of a distinct set of Platonic doctrines wholly lacking from the early or "Socratic" dialogues. For example, in the Meno, we find for the first time the epistemological theory of ἀνάμνησις (and its attendant ontological doctrine of the immortality/reincarnation of the soul[44]) (81b), in ethics the sufficiency of true belief for virtuous behavior (97b), and a shift away from the elenctic method toward the method of hypothesis.[45] Thus, even if Socrates were unequivocally committed to virtue's composite nature in the Meno, we should not take that as standard Socratic doctrine unless it were confirmed in the non-transitional dialogues. But as I have already pointed out, there is no such confirmation. Therefore, we should be

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[44]It might be argued that the 'Socrates' of the early dialogues already holds the doctrine of the immortal soul, but I am sceptical for two reasons. First, Socrates' argument at Ap. 40c-41c makes it clear that he is, at best, agnostic toward the doctrine, which is significantly different from his whole-hearted endorsement of it at Meno 81b (for analysis of the argument at Ap. 40c see Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith, 1989 "A Matter of Life and Death in Socratic Philosophy," Ancient Philosophy 9: 155-165; Scott Calef, 1992 "Why is Annihilation a Great Gain for Socrates?" Ancient Philosophy 12: 285-297; David L. Roochnik, 1985 "*Apology* 40c4-41e7: Is Death Really a Gain?" The Classical Journal 80: 212-220; Rudebusch, George, 1991 "Death is One of Two Things," Ancient Philosophy 11: 35-45). Second, Socrates specifically denies he has any firm beliefs about the afterlife at Apology 29a-b: "... if I were to claim to be wiser than my neighbor in any respect, it would be in this—that not possessing any real knowledge of what comes after death, I am also conscious that I do not possess it."

[45]For an excellent analysis of the distinct methodology of the Meno, see Vlastos, 1988 "Elenchus and Mathematics: A Turning-Point in Plato's Philosophical Development," American Journal of Philology 109: 362-396, reprinted in Benson, Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. All page references will be to the reprinted edition.

keenly sceptical of whatever evidence in favor of the *PVD* we might find in the Meno.

But suppose one were to argue that the first third of the Meno, like the first book of the Republic, was actually an earlier work left unfinished until Plato's middle or early middle period. That is, why not suppose the text, up to the introduction of Meno's Paradox at 80d, reflects the character of an early dialogue and could therefore be taken as evidence of a Socratic commitment to the *PVD*? After all, is it not the case that the innovations that demonstrate the shift from early to middle Plato all occur after the ἀπορία of Meno's Paradox? The answer is "No." Prior to the ἀπορία, we find Socrates offering an example definition at 76a which reflects a firm grasp of theoretical geometry unparalleled in other early dialogues.[46] This sort of technical, mathematical definition stands in sharp contrast to the example definitions Socrates offers elsewhere.[47] This is good evidence against the thesis that the first third of the text was written prior to Plato's philosophical emergence. It is far more likely that Plato intentionally used the style of the early period, including the emphasis on the elenctic method, to dramatize the departure from his earlier philosophical positions.

In summary, I find little reason to think the Meno supports Vlastos' contention that the *PVD* is one of Socrates' basic philosophical tenets. On one hand, I have argued that even if we take the Meno as representative of Socratic philosophy, there are good reasons to doubt Socrates actually held the

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[46]This is pointed out by Vlastos himself! See "Elenchus and Mathematics," 144, 145.

[47]For example, see La., 192a, 198b; Prot. 358d, 360c and 360d; and Rep., 352e. Santas takes the definition at 76a to be genuinely Socratic and not markedly distinct from the example definitions offered elsewhere. Santas, Socrates: Philosophy is Plato's Early Dialogues, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979, 97-135.

belief that virtue is composed of distinct parts. But even if that argument fails, I have argued on the other hand that we really ought not think of the Meno as representing Socratic philosophy since it is a transitional dialogue. Taken together, I think we have legitimate reasons to doubt the Meno supports the *PVD* as Vlastos claims.

Conclusion

Vlastos' interpretation of the *Unity of Virtue Doctrine*—that Socrates is committed at most to the belief that a biconditional relationship holds between the virtues—is the strongest he can muster given his interpretation of the Protagoras, Laches and Meno. Specifically, since he believes Socrates is committed to the *Parts of Virtue Doctrine*, he cannot see how Socrates could accept the *Identity Thesis* that all the virtue terms refer to one thing. I have argued that Vlastos is unjustified in claiming the *PVD* is standard Socratic doctrine because his analysis of the text is inaccurate. And, if the *PVD* is not Socrates' considered opinion in the early dialogues, Vlastos' justification for rejecting the *IT* is undermined.

I argued first that the text of the Protagoras considered by itself does not indicate Socrates' preference of P1) over P2) as an appropriate expression of the *UVD*. Second, I argued that in the Laches Socrates' claim that virtue is composed of parts is an hypothetical proposition put forward to highlight its controversial nature to his interlocutors who uncritically assume its truth. But the text gives us good reason to believe it is not Socrates' considered opinion. Further, Vlastos' analysis of the Meno is flawed for similar reasons. First, as in the Laches, there is nothing in the text that necessarily commits Socrates to the belief that virtue is composed of parts. The evidence to which

he points is at best neutral toward Socrates' views. Second, if he were committed to the *PVD*, Socrates would seem to hold inconsistent views on the relationship between the parts of virtue. Finally, as a transitional dialogue, the Meno is tainted as a source of 'Socratic' doctrine. Since neither the text of the Laches nor the Meno supports Vlastos' claim that the *PVD* is fundamentally Socratic, and without the *PVD* we get a simpler reading of the Protagoras, we have good reason to deny Socrates accepted it. Further, if I am right, we should be able to attribute a more robust version of the *UVD* than Vlastos can allow.

Chapter III

Penner on the Unity of Virtue

Terry Penner has offered one of the most interesting solutions to the puzzle of the *Unity of Virtue Doctrine* in recent Socratic scholarship. Penner's view is attractive in large part because of its simplicity. In the paper "The Unity of Virtues,"[1] he argues that when Socrates suggests that "virtue is one thing" (Prot. 329d, La. 199e, Charm. 174c, M. 88d[2]), we should take him to mean exactly what he says: there is only one thing to which the term 'virtue', along with its derivatives, applies. On this interpretation of the *UVD*, Socrates is expressing a straight forward equivalence between the cardinal virtues: "bravery = wisdom = temperance = justice = piety."[3] Penner's view has thus become known as the *Identity Thesis* (or '*IT*').[4] He believes this interpretation offers a more natural

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[1]This paper was first published in Philosophical Review 82 (1973): 35-68. It has been subsequently reprinted in Benson, Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 162-184. All references in this paper are to the latter. His view of the *UVD* is further elaborated in "What Laches and Nicias Miss—And Whether Socrates Thinks Courage Merely a Part of Virtue," Ancient Philosophy 12 (1992): 1-27; and "Socrates and the Early Dialogues," 121-169 in Richard Kraut, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Plato (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[2]It should be noted in all fairness that in none of these passages does Socrates unequivocally assert the identity of the cardinal virtues. This silence of course is the reason there is so much disagreement on just what Socrates' view actually is.

Penner includes this passage from the Meno in his later elaboration of the *UT* contrasting it with discussion of the *PVD* at 71e-76e. He claims it is the later passage that represents Socrates' view not the earlier analogies which seem to support the *PVD*. Penner attributes this contrast to Irwin. "What Laches and Nicias Miss," 13, 14, n. 24. I have already argued in Chapter Two above that Socrates does not support the *PVD* in the Meno, and hence there is no inconsistency between it and the Protagoras.

[3]Penner, 162.

[4]This is essentially the same as what Vlastos designates the 'Unity Thesis'. However since *IT* captures the heart of Penner's view with less ambiguity, and because it is Penner's preferred designation for the doctrine, I will use this designation rather than Vlastos' *UT*.

Other notable commentators have weighed in on Penner's side of the *UVD* debate. See C.C.W. Taylor, Plato: 'Protagoras', (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 103-108, and Terence

reading of the text as well as a better philosophical solution to the enigma of the *UVD*. I will argue that while Penner's main proposal—that Socrates believes the cardinal virtues are in some sense identical—is essentially correct, his argument for the *IT* leads to some rather odd conclusions, and therefore it must be significantly modified. In order to demonstrate the problems with his analysis of the *IT*, it first must be spelled out in more detail. Hence, I will follow the same pattern as the previous chapter: first I outline Penner's view, then I criticize it.

A. The Penner Interpretation

Penner's interpretation of the *UVD* is primarily a response to Vlastos' *Biconditionality Thesis* and must therefore be understood in that context.[5] It is essential therefore to sketch the *BT* in order to fully grasp the alternative that Penner advocates. However, since I have already devoted a good deal of attention to Vlastos' view in Chapter Two above, I will here offer only a broad overview of the *BT*.

A.1 An Overview of the Biconditionality Thesis:

It will be recalled from Chapter Two that Vlastos argues the best way to resolve the paradox of Socrates' theory of virtue in the Protagoras is to interpret the unity in the *UVD* as a logical biconditionality holding between the cardinal virtues. According to his view Socrates holds that virtue is a composite whole of distinct proper parts, but that anyone who possesses one of the virtues must

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Irwin, Plato's Moral Theory, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) 86-90; Plato's Ethics, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 41-44, 80-81, 84-85. Michael Ferejohn is also in fundamental agreement with the *IT* although he too rejects some of the consequences of Penner's view. I will have more to say about Ferejohn's position in § B below.

[5] Penner himself makes this clear. See Penner, "Socrates and the Early Dialogues," 147 n. 1.

necessarily have all the others.[6] Vlastos' view is thus referred to as the *Biconditionality Thesis*. According to the *BT* persons *P* are courageous *iff* they are temperate, *iff* they are pious, *iff* they are just, *iff* they are wise.[7] On this view, in order to predicate any one of the virtues of an individual, we must predicate all of them of the same individual. Thus, according to Vlastos, it is the person of whom the virtues are predicated that is central to Socrates' theory, not the nature of the virtues themselves.[8]

Vlastos defends the *BT* of the *UVD* for two fundamental reasons: first, he believes Socrates is committed to virtue's composite nature (the *PVD*) throughout the early dialogues,[9] and second, if Socrates had opted for a stronger relationship between the "parts" of virtue in the Protagoras, he would be committed to the seemingly absurd position that the individual virtue terms are synonymous.[10] Because he believes virtue's composite nature is "standard Socratic doctrine," and since no rational person could maintain the synonymy of the cardinal virtue terms, Vlastos argues the *BT* is the strongest formulation of the *UVD* that can be legitimately attributed to Socrates.

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[6]If we take the first letter of each cardinal virtue to represent its term the *BT* can be expressed logically as: $V(x) \supset (Cx \equiv Jx \equiv Tx \equiv Px \equiv Wx)$.

[7]Gregory Vlastos, "The Unity of the Virtues in the *Protagoras*" in Platonic Studies 2nd ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 232.

[8] This conclusion seems to be the consequence of Vlastos' "Pauline Predication," which forces us to ignore the *prima facie* meaning of the text. See Chapter Two § A.2 above.

[9]Vlastos refers to this commitment as "standard Socratic doctrine" and, although initially asserted without argument (225), he later defends this position against objections by Penner *et. al.* See "Socrates on 'The Parts of Virtue'" in Platonic Studies 2nd ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 418-423.

[10]Vlastos, "UVP," 227.

A.2 Penner's Critique of the Biconditionality Thesis

Penner rejects Vlastos' *BT* as an altogether too weak formulation of the *UVD*. While Penner rejects the composite nature of virtue as "standard Socratic doctrine,"[11] his main objection to Vlastos' position is what he believes to be its dependence upon a "meaning view" of Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" question. That is, Penner wants to deny that Socrates is asking for definitions, essences, or universals when he asks a "What is *F*-ness?" question.[12] But if Socrates is not looking for the meaning of 'courage' in the Laches, or 'piety' in the Euthyphro, or 'temperance' in the Charmides, what is he looking for? Penner believes Socrates is not asking for a "conceptual analysis" of the virtues but rather is asking "the general's question: 'What is it that makes brave men brave?'"[13] He is inquiring about the psychological state, or state of the soul that, as a motivational force, explains the behavior of brave, temperate, or pious men. Since this view conceives the '*F*' in Socrates' question as a causative agent it has been labeled the "causal" rather than "meaning" interpretation of the "What is *F*-ness?" question.[14]

If it is true that Penner's interpretation of the *UVD* rests on the distinction indicated above, two important questions immediately present themselves: first, what is it about the "meaning view" of Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" question which causes Penner to reject it. Second, how does the distinction between

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[11]While Penner does not directly attack or reject this premise of Vlastos' argument in "The Unity of Virtues," it is clear from Vlastos' response in "Socrates on 'The Parts of Virtue'" that he does in fact reject the *PVD* as a Socratic doctrine.

[12]Penner, 163, 164.

[13]Ibid., 164.

[14]For another brief, but excellent summary of Penner's argument, see Michael T. Ferejohn, "The Unity of Virtue and the Objects of Socratic Inquiry," Journal of the History of Philosophy (January 1982): 7-10 So far as I can tell, it is Ferejohn who first refers to Penner's view of the "What is *F*-ness?" question as the "causal view."

meaning and causal agency make a significant difference in the *UVD* debate? Thus, to fully understand Penner's view, we must understand why he believes a proper understanding of Socrates' *UVD* rests upon the causal view of his standard interrogative.

The main reason Penner believes reinterpreting the "What is *F*-ness?" question as an investigation into the psychological state of persons rather than into the meaning of terms is that he believes it will allow him to read the text of the Protagoras, Laches, and Charmides,[15] with less interpolation than do other views. Further, he believes this causal view allows Socrates to be consistently committed to the *IT* throughout the early dialogues without entangling him in the problem of synonymy at the same time.

A.3 Penner's Rejection of the Meaning View of Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" Question

Penner's argument against Vlastos' *BT* begins with an examination of the so-called "meaning view" of the "What is *F*-ness?" question, which he takes to be the wrongheaded, albeit received, interpretation. Penner argues that the *BT* rests upon the "meaning view" since it interprets Socrates' question

1) What is *F*-ness?

or the more specific version derived from the Euthyphro

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[15] One of the weaknesses in Penner's view is that he gives little attention to the Euthyphro, which some commentators maintain shows a strong Socratic commitment to the *PVD*. While he makes occasional reference to this dialogue, he does not give it the same amount of analysis as other dialogues. The Euthyphro remains one of the difficult issues for anyone interested in defending the *IT*. It certainly appears that Socrates defends the *PVD* in the context of his argument with Euthyphro. I will have more to say about this issue in Chapter Four, below.

1') What is that one thing because of which all *F* actions are *F*?[16]

as a request for the meaning of, or a definition of, some particular "*F*-ness". If this is accurate, he argues, any proponent of this view should also be committed to

> 2) There must be, in addition to *F* persons, a thing which is *F*-ness—the meaning of '*F*-ness'—because of which all *F* persons are *F*.

Further, he argues, it is clear to any competent user of Greek (or any language with comparable terms, for that matter), that the virtue terms are *not* synonymous. Thus,

> 3) The meaning of 'courage' is ≠ the meaning of 'piety'.[17]

If Socrates believes all the virtue terms are names for one thing, the principle of identity should enable us to substitute one virtue term for another, resulting in,

> 4) The meaning of 'courage' = the meaning of 'piety'.

Therefore, unless we are willing to commit Socrates to 4), it cannot be that he believes all the virtue terms *mean* the same thing. Therefore, if the meaning view is correct, the *IT* is too strong a view for Socrates to have reasonably maintained.

However, Penner argues, we can avoid the problem raised by the substitution of one virtue term for another if we reject the semantic interpretation of 2) and replace it with

> 2') There must be, in addition to *F* persons, a thing which is *F*-ness—a psychological state or motivational force— because of which all *F* persons are *F*.

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[16] The text from which 1') is derived comes from two passages: "...tell me what is the essential form of holiness which makes all holy actions holy" (Eu. 6d), and "...show me what, precisely, this ideal is, so that, with my eye on it, and using it as a standard, I can say that any action done by you or anybody else is holy if it resembles this ideal, or if it does not, can deny that it is holy" (Eu. 6e).

[17] The same holds for the other cardinal virtue terms: the meaning of 'temperance' is ≠ the meaning of 'justice', the meaning of 'wisdom' is ≠ the meaning of 'courage', etc.

There is no reason to think that semantically distinct terms may not, as a matter of fact, refer to one and the same entity: in this case a property of the soul which will turn out to be a kind of knowledge.[18] So if the definitions of the meaning view are replaced with the references of the causal view, Socrates would have no reason to worry about the synonymy of the virtue terms. Thus, according to Penner, Socrates is not asking what 'piety' (or 'justice', 'temperance', 'courage', 'wisdom') *means*, he is asking what it *refers to;* he is asking what piety *is*. To put it simply, Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" question seems to be asking for real not nominal definitions.

Penner believes his interpretation of Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" question sustains a more natural reading of the text. This can clearly be seen from a comparison of the contrary positions of Socrates and Protagoras found at Prot. 329b-330b. Protagoras maintains the position that,

> Virtue is a composite whole of proper parts which are distinct like the parts of a face, each having a particular δύναμις, and the parts of virtue may be possessed independent from one another.

Contrary to this, Socrates holds,

> 'Courage', 'piety', 'temperance', 'justice', and 'wisdom' are all different names for one and the same thing, they all have the same δύναμις, and none can be possessed independently from the others.

It seems fairly obvious that 'courage', 'piety', 'temperance', 'justice', and 'wisdom' do not mean the same thing.[19] Thus, if Socrates asserts that virtue is

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[18]The standard example, *a la* Frege, is that the terms 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' are semantically divergent, while both refer to one and the same ontological entity: Venus. This is an empirical claim and cannot be derived from an evaluation of the meanings of the two terms. In like manner, 'piety' and 'courage' may pick out the same thing in the world, some psychological state or other, even though they mean different things. Penner, "What Laches and Nicias Miss," Ancient Philosophy (1992): 6.

[19]Penner, "The Unity of Virtue," 163.

one thing with different names (Prot. 329d*ff*, 349b) it would seem odd for him to also believe that an acceptable answer to his "What is *F*-ness?" question could be the meaning of 'courage', 'piety', 'temperance', 'justice', or 'wisdom'. Thus, Penner concludes, it is a mistake to interpret Socrates' inquiries about virtue as an investigation into the meaning of virtue.[20] And, since the *BT* depends on the 'meaning view' of the "What is *F*-ness?" question, it must be an incorrect interpretation of Socrates' *UVD*.

A.4 Penner's Arguments for the Identity Thesis

Thus far Penner has argued against Vlastos' *BT* as the appropriate interpretation of Socrates' *UVD*. However, simply showing the weaknesses of Vlastos' view is insufficient evidence to support his own interpretation. The second part of Penner's argument for the *IT* is affirmative; it attempts to demonstrate that the 'state of the soul'[21] interpretation of the "What is *F*-ness?" question makes better sense of the arguments Socrates puts to Protagoras in the rest of the dialogue. The benefits of this view are not limited to the Protagoras, however. Penner believes his interpretation of Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" question also clarifies the assertions about the nature of virtue in some of the other early dialogues. The following sections demonstrate how Penner's view applies to the Protagoras as well as to other early dialogues where the nature of virtue is discussed.

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[20]Penner offers a parallel argument for those who prefer universals or essences to meanings. He takes all of these positions to be rooted in similar accounts of the property of identity, which he rejects. See pp. 163, 164 and note 6. I find the application of the argument against universals far less compelling. See § B below.

[21]Penner drops the "motive-force" and "state of the soul" language in "What Laches and Nicias Miss," which shows that it is not central to his thesis. He clearly prefers to think of the referent of the virtue terms as "the science (or knowledge) of good and evil," which is the cause of a person's virtuous behavior.

A.4.a The Protagoras

There are four main arguments in the Protagoras, three of which, Penner argues, directly support his interpretation of the *UVD*.[22] The first he calls "the argument from opposites (332a-333b)," where Socrates attempts to show the equivalence of wisdom and temperance. Since Protagoras accepts the dictum "to one thing there is one, and only one, opposite" (332b) and since it appears that folly is the opposite of both wisdom and temperance, it must be the case that 'wisdom' and 'temperance' are the same thing (i.e., refer to the same thing, 333b). However, Penner argues, it cannot be the case that Socrates thinks what 'wisdom' and 'temperance' refer to is the meaning of these terms since that would be "grossly absurd" and require an equivocation on the term 'folly'.[23] If, on the other hand, Socrates is not referring to the definitions of the virtue terms but to some causal state in moral agents, he can soundly conclude:

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[22]Penner ignores the elenchus at 330c-331b (which he calls the argument from resemblance) because it "will prove to be relevant only to the least plausible part of Protagoras' interpretation of 'virtue is one,' and will do nothing toward establishing Socrates' interpretation of the dictum." "The Unity of Virtue," 169. I, however, think this is a mistake. In order to fully understand Socrates' position we need to examine each argument. When considered in conjunction with the other arguments Socrates poses against Protagoras' position, this argument is useful for teasing out the Socratic position. Further, Socrates indicates that this argument is connected to the position he is trying to pose against Protagoras' position by comparing the conclusion of the argument from opposites to the earlier conclusion of the argument from resemblance (333b). So Socrates sees himself as moving toward the same position through different arguments. (Whether or not these arguments are logically sound is a separate issue altogether, and one that does not concern me here.) If Penner is correct that Socrates means to defend the *IT*, and I think he basically is, then an analysis of this argument will be useful after all.

[23]Penner, 170.

> . . . in ethics there are two opposites only. One is the single thing referred to by both 'wisdom' and 'temperance' (that is, virtue), and the other the single thing referred to by 'intemperance' and 'folly' (that is, vice). Under the influence of virtue one will act temperately (and bravely), under the influence of vice one will act foolishly (and impiously).[24]

Thus, Penner concludes the argument from opposites, when read from his perspective, supports an identity of the referent of the virtue terms 'wisdom' and 'temperance' without committing Socrates to the synonymy of the terms as would the meaning view. This reading also frees Socrates from a charge of sophistry: he need not be seen as equivocating on the term 'folly' since he is not after meanings at all.[25]

The "argument from confidence (349d-351b)" which follows the argument from opposites, attempts to establish the identity of wisdom and courage by showing "that the explanation of a man's brave actions is wisdom: that what it is that makes a brave man brave is identical with what it is that makes him wise."[26] However, the character of this exchange is explanatory, not analytic. That is, Socrates' conclusion that courage is knowledge does not strictly follow from the premises:[27]

1) Those who are courageous are confident (349e);

2) Those with the relevant knowledge of a task are more confident than those without the relevant knowledge (350b);

and

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[24]Ibid., 170-171.

[25] Taylor disagrees, holding instead that there is an equivocation on both 'folly' and 'opposite' in this argument. See C.C.W. Taylor, Plato: Protagoras (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 122-131.

[26]Ibid., 171.

[27] It should be noted that these premises are paraphrased from the indicated texts; they are not intended to represent exact quotations. However, the sense of each passage is preserved in these simpler linguistic forms.

3) Those with the relevant knowledge of a task are more confident after they have the relevant knowledge than they were before they had the relevant knowledge (350b).

However, if we understand Socrates' claim that "it is their knowledge that must be courage" (350c) as an explanation of the behavior of the courageous, then it can be shown that courage is not confidence, but that 'confidence' is predicated of two distinct classes: those with the relevant knowledge of a task at hand, and those who are witless (μαινόμενοί). The confidence of the ignorant is rooted in madness while the confidence of the courageous is rooted in knowledge. Thus, all those who are brave are those who have knowledge, and no one without knowledge is brave. This explanatory view (as opposed to an analysis of definitions), Penner argues, is supported by the context of this section of the text: "Socrates is operating with, and is understood by Protagoras to be operating with, the motive-force or state-of-soul view, and attempting to establish identities."[28]

The third argument from the Protagoras (the end of the ἀκρασία argument at 360c) that Penner claims as support for his thesis, turns specifically on the locution "that by virtue of which," which renders the Greek 'διά'. Socrates has Protagoras' consent to the premises:

4) Cowardice is that by virtue of which the cowardly are cowards (and likewise, courage is that by virtue of which the courageous are courageous);

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[28]Ibid., 172. I think Penner is correct that Socrates is trying to establish the identity of courage and wisdom in this argument, but it is not altogether clear to me why this argument tells against the view that Socrates is concerned with the analysis of moral definitions. First, if this passage is exclusively explanatory why take it to be an argument at all? Philosophers commonly distinguish between explanations and arguments, so which does Penner think applies here? Second, if Socrates is posing an argument for the identity of courage and wisdom in this passage, it seems to fail. If, on the other hand, Socrates is giving a psychological analysis of those who are brave, how does this advance the argument for the *IT* and why is it inconsistent with a more traditional view of Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" question?

5) Ignorance of what to fear is that by virtue of which the cowardly are cowards;

6) Cowardice is ignorance of what to fear.

So, Socrates can conclude that cowardice just is ignorance. From here he can argue that since

7) Courage is the opposite of cowardice;

and, since

8) Knowledge of what to fear is the opposite of ignorance of what to fear,

Socrates can conclude that "knowledge of what is and is not to be feared is courage," or courage *is* wisdom (360d).[29] The sense of this argument, Penner claims, is that knowledge is the *cause* of courage, just as ignorance is the *cause* of cowardice. But the argument makes little or no sense on the traditional meaning view. For example, what sense could it make to say that the meaning of 'knowledge' is 'courage', and the meaning of 'ignorance' is 'cowardice'? The identity Socrates demonstrates to Protagoras is not an "epistemological or semantic" identity, but rather an identity of reference. Thus, the terms 'wisdom' and 'courage' refer to the same thing: the cause of courageous behavior in those persons we call courageous.

Penner argues that each of the arguments from the Protagoras fairs better when understood from the causal view than from the meaning view of the "What is *F*-ness?" question. Accordingly, Socrates is not attempting to demonstrate that there is one definition that covers each of the cardinal virtue

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[29]Because Socrates uses ἐπιστήμη and its cognates interchangeably with σοφία and its cognates, we can derive the identity courage = wisdom from courage = knowledge. I will argue below that this type of substitution is not limited to wisdom and knowledge. In fact, I take this to be partial evidence for the synonymy of the virtues in Socrates' mind. See § B.2 below.

terms. Rather, Socrates is trying to get Protagoras to see that each virtue label points to the same reality regardless of its meaning. That single reality, as Socrates points out at the end of the dialogue, is some kind of knowledge (361b*ff*). Precisely what kind of knowledge it is that causes the disposition called "virtue" is made clear in other dialogues.

A.4.b The Laches

Further evidence for the *IT*, according to Penner, is to be found in the last argument of the Laches (198-199e). Nicias has taken over the investigation of courage from Laches and suggested that courage is "the knowledge of that which inspires fear or confidence in war, *or in anything*" (my emphasis, 195a). Interestingly enough, Nicias' definition is purportedly derived from the Socratic dictum: Wisdom is the cause of goodness.[30] If Nicias' definition is properly derived from a Socratic principle, this definition (or some variation thereof) should be acceptable to Socrates. Penner argues that in the examination of the final definition of the dialogue we should see that Socrates essentially approves of this view, while also maintaining that Nicias still does not fully understand his position.[31]

The elenchus aimed at Nicias' definition of courage at 195a begins with a restatement of the earlier assumed premise:

9) Courage (like justice, temperance, etc.) is a part of virtue (198a).[32]

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[30] The full quotation from which this maxim is derived is found at 194d: "Every man is good in that in which he is wise, and bad in that in which he is unwise." It is also clear from the text that Socrates does indeed affirm this proposition.

[31] This assertion is essentially the conclusion of Penner, "What Laches and Nicias Miss," 22-26.

[32] This premise is initially asserted by Socrates at 190c. Penner believes that we are meant to see that this premise is the weakness of the argument, not the claim that courage is the

From here Socrates offers the following premises, which are all accepted by Nicias:

> 10) That which is dreadful causes fear, that which is hopeful does not (198b);
>
> 11) Fear is an expectation of future bad[33] things, not past or present bad things (198b);

but,

> 12) There is only one knowledge or science of that which causes fear and hope (198d).

Because Nicias agrees to 10), 11), and 12), it seems to follow that:

> 13) If courage is the knowledge of what to fear and what not to fear, then courage is knowledge of all good and bad things (199e).

Socrates then goes on to show that this conclusion forces them to concede that "courage...instead of being only a part of virtue, will be all [of] virtue" (199e). Thus, 13) is inconsistent with 9). Both propositions cannot be logically asserted together as they have just done, therefore, there must be a mistake somewhere in the argument. However, Nicias does not see where the mistake lies: he does not know which premise of the argument they should reject. Because Nicias does not see which proposition to sacrifice, Socrates concludes that they have failed to discover what courage really is (199e).

Penner believes this argument gives us good supporting evidence for the *IT*. Even though Socrates concludes that they have failed to grasp the nature of courage, Penner maintains that we are meant to see the correct answer. He argues that it is Nicias and not Socrates who is confused. Nicias has rightly

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whole of virtue. While I agree with Penner's conclusion, I offer a completely different, and I think more compelling, argument. My argument is spelled out in Chapter Five, below.

[33] Κακόν and its derivatives are often translated 'evil' but I find the generic 'bad' a preferable rendering. See Appendix III, below.

derived Socrates' view of courage from the dictum "wisdom is the cause of goodness," but he (and Laches) fails to see how to rescue the argument since their conclusion is inconsistent with the common sense opinion that virtue is composed of parts. However, Penner believes that Socrates does not accept 9) (i.e., the *PVD*), and thus can embrace the definition of courage as the knowledge of the good and bad.[34] If courage is the whole of virtue and not just one of its parts, then we can see that it is the knowledge of the good and bad that is the "motive force" or "state of the soul" that causes a person to be virtuous (and in this case, courageous).[35] Thus, according to Penner the Laches and the Protagoras are consistent in committing Socrates to the *IT*, not just the *BT* as Vlastos argues. In both dialogues Socrates rejects the *PVD* in favor of a holistic view of virtue, which means that no ontological distinction can be drawn between what makes a person courageous and what makes her virtuous.

A.4.c The Charmides

The final argument Penner appeals to as support for the *IT* is found at Charmides 169d-175d. Through this rather long and convoluted argument, Socrates attacks the definition of temperance, put forth by Critias, who asserts that it must be knowledge that has as its subject matter, itself (166c).[36] The

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[34] Penner, "What Laches and Nicias Miss," 22. This question, of course, leaves open the question of Socratic ignorance. If Penner is correct in thinking that the definition offered by Nicias is indeed a Socratic definition, and if it is that case that Socrates is aware that this represents his own position, how can he seriously maintain that he does not know the nature of courage (as he does, for example, at 200e-201b)? Is Socrates being ironic or dishonest when he denies having knowledge? Well, Penner believes that even if he does know certain propositions about courage, he still does not know everything about courage, and this is what Socrates has in mind when he talks about knowledge. That is, Penner does not think propositional knowledge adequately captures what Socrates means by knowledge. Ibid., 22-26.

[35] Penner, "Unity of Virtue," 175, 176.

[36] This premise is derived from Socrates' hypothetical assertion at 165c that "if [temperance] is a species of knowledge, [it] must be a science, and a science of something." I

"knowledge of knowledge" (ἐπιστήμης ἐπιστήμη) definition of temperance is further amended at 166e to cover all instances of knowledge: "[temperance] is the only science which is the science of itself as well as other sciences." Critias argues that such knowledge should enable us to distinguish what we know from what we do not. Thus, anyone having this kind of knowledge should have true self-knowledge and never mistakenly believe that he knows something that in fact he does not know (167a).

Socrates raises several objections to the "knowledge of knowledge" definition of temperance, but Penner focuses specifically on two. The first I call the "utility objection." Even if temperance is knowing what we do and do not know, as Critias proposes, "then wisdom or being wise appears to be not the knowledge *of* the things which we do or do not know, but only the knowledge *that* we know or do not know" (170d). In other words, we only know that we know something; it is not clear *what it is* that we know. This distinction seems problematic enough, but Socrates pushes forward to focus on a corollary. If Critias is correct, the temperate person could not know whether anyone else knows what she claim to know.[37] The temperate person only knows that she

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think it is important to emphasize the hypothetical nature of this assertion and to read the passage cautiously. Socrates himself reminds us of the hypothetical nature of this and other assertions at 175a-d, which, in my opinion, makes his position even more difficult to interpret.

[37] The capacity to distinguish the specialist with knowledge from the charlatan who merely pretends to know is initially suggested by Socrates as an important function of temperance at 167a. At 169b Socrates avers that "temperance is a benefit and a good" though he does not specify that this benefit is the ability to unmask those who pretend to know when they do not. However, when they return to the question of temperance's benefit at 169e and 173b-e, it becomes clear that this ability is, in part, what Socrates has in mind when he refers to the benefit we receive from temperance. Hence, any definition of temperance that does not entail the ability to discriminate genuine from false claims of knowledge is, according to Socrates, inadequate. That is not to say that this is the only benefit to be derived from temperance, as is made clear below, but it is a necessary benefit.

knows certain things, and that she does not know other things.[38] But how could such a person know that some other person—a physician, or cobbler, or pilot, or anyone else—know what they claimed to know unless temperance was the knowledge *of* what one knows, not just the knowledge *that* one knows? In order to be a guide for testing other people's knowledge (as Critias and Socrates agree it should -167a, 170d-e, 171c-d,172b), it seems that temperance must include knowledge of other things, if not knowledge of *all* other things.[39]

Socrates' second objection to Critias' definition can be appropriately labeled the '*eudaimonia* objection'. Suppose we set aside the first objection and assume that temperance should be defined as knowledge of what one knows and does not know (not just *that* one knows that he does and does not know), and suppose we further assume that such knowledge is actually possible. Granting these assumptions, Socrates wonders, would such knowledge make us happy (173d)? It would certainly be the case that if one had the kind of complete knowledge necessary to make sense of Critias' definition, a person would be able to expose those who pretend to have knowledge when they do not (171d). Further, such a person is unlikely to undertake a task for which she lacks the

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[38] Another problem presents itself here although neither Socrates nor Critias acknowledges it: how could a person know what he does not know unless they already have some knowledge of the subject? It is not at all paradoxical to assert that "I know *X*" because if queried I can provide some account of *X*. Either I give a correct account or not. But suppose I say, "I know that I do not know *Y*." In order for this to make sense it would seem that I must already know something about *Y*. This epistemological paradox, usually referred to as 'Meno's Paradox', is taken up by Plato at M. 80d, but does not seem to significantly affect the argument here.

[39] It strikes me as odd that Critias, or anyone else, would agree to this claim. Why would temperance, as traditionally conceived, enable one to test others for their knowledge? The common definition holds that temperance is the ability to control one's self, but what does this ability have to do with what someone else knows? The thesis that temperance will enable one to test others' knowledge makes sense only if temperance is wisdom or complete knowledge. I think this is an important clue to understanding Socrates' position. If Socrates believes the ability to scrutinize the knowledge claims of others is a necessary feature of temperance, it must be essentially the same as wisdom.

requisite skill (171e). But is this knowledge all that is required to achieve a great benefit (μέγα τι ἀγαθὸν)? Socrates says:

> I quite agree that mankind, thus provided, would live and act according to knowledge, for wisdom would watch and prevent ignorance from intruding on us in our work. But whether by acting according to knowledge we shall act well and *be happy*, my dear Critias—this is a point which we have not yet been able to determine (173d).

The great good or benefit we desire from knowledge, according to Socrates, is happiness (εὐδαιμονία). But why should we suppose that there is a necessary connection between a well ordered society and happiness? Socrates is pointing out that even if temperance is the knowledge of knowledge and ignorance (and this is supposed to include the actual content of our knowledge), there is no reason to suppose that we would be happier with temperance than without it. Society would certainly be well ordered if persons acted only according to what they knew, but Socrates and Critias agree that a good society ought to promote happiness as well as good order (173e).[40]

If temperance—defined as knowing what we know, and knowing what we do not know—is unable to secure the great benefit of happiness, there must be some other kind of knowledge that has as its goal our happiness. The knowledge that makes us happy, according to Critias, is "the knowledge with which [we] discern good and evil" (174b). But if it is the knowledge of the good and the bad (τὸ ἀγαθόν καὶ τὸ κακόν) that secures the great benefit of happiness for us, then temperance must not be very beneficial. Socrates and Critias have thus reached a conundrum: on one hand, they have asserted that temperance should be a great benefit (i.e., produce happiness), but on the other hand, they

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[40] If Socrates is expressing his view of a good society, then he thinks good order is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for human happiness.

believe it is the knowledge of good and bad, not the knowledge of knowledge and ignorance, that yields the great benefit of happiness. Socrates concludes, therefore, that they have been "utterly defeated, and have failed to discover what that is to which the lawgiver gave this name of temperance or wisdom" (175b).

Although he does not articulate the argument in this way, Penner would claim that Critias fails to see where the argument has gone astray, although Socrates is less confounded.[41] To the end of the argument, Critias holds that "temperance is only the knowledge of knowledge and of ignorance, and nothing else" (174e), in which case, as they have seen, it would be insufficient for happiness. What he *should* see is that temperance is properly defined, not as the knowledge of knowledge and ignorance, but rather as the knowledge of the good and the bad.[42] Socrates admits defeat at the end because his interlocutors do not see how to overcome the difficulties of the argument as they have pursued it. However, their oversight does not mean that we should conclude that Socrates' view has not emerged through the dialogue.

Thus, if Socrates identifies 'temperance' as knowledge of the good and the bad in the Charmides, then like 'courage' in the Laches, we can see that there is only one thing that the virtue terms identify: knowledge of the good and the bad. Or, to put it in simpler terms, 'temperance' in the Charmides is the same as

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[41] Penner appeals to the Charmides as support for the *IT* in "The Unity of Virtue," but does not articulate his hermeneutical principle (i.e., that we should "always assume Socrates has some particular thing in mind that he wants us to see, even though his interlocutors do not see it") until nineteen years later in "What Laches and Nicias Miss." However, it seems clear that he is thinking along these lines when he interprets this argument even if he had not yet fully articulated the principle.

[42] Thomas Schmid rejects the conclusion that Socrates accepts the "knowledge of the good and the bad" as an appropriate definition. Instead, he argues that the definition given at 167a (i.e., ". . . this is wisdom and temperance and self-knowledge—for a man to know what he knows, and what he does not know.") more correctly represents the Socratic view. Ultimately, I find his argument for this thesis unconvincing. See Schmid, Plato's Charmides and the Socratic Ideal of Rationality (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 40-60.

'courage' in the Laches, neither of which is merely a part of virtue, but each of which is identical to virtue (and hence, to each other). So Penner concludes in the Charmides, the Laches, and the Protagoras we find that Socrates holds the same view. Socrates consistently upholds the *IT* rather than the *BT*: the cardinal virtue terms all point to one reality. For Socrates 'courage', 'temperance', 'justice', 'piety', and 'wisdom' all refer to the self-same thing—knowledge of the good and the bad. Because it is knowing the difference between what is good and what is bad that makes us virtuous, Socrates can say that the five virtue terms, while not synonymous, are all names for the same thing—virtue.

B. Problems with the Penner Interpretation

I indicated earlier that I essentially agree with much of Penner's analysis of Socrates' doctrine of virtue. For example, I agree that we find a coherent view of the *UVD* expressed in the Protagoras, Laches, and Charmides. I also agree with Penner that the best interpretation of the *UVD* is the *IT*, not the *BT*. But as we have just seen, Penner argues that the *IT* can only make sense if we reject the "meaning view" of Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" question in favor of his "causal view." This move is necessary, he thinks, because the received interpretation of Socrates' famous question would commit him to a seemingly absurd position. As Vlastos originally argued, and as Penner concurs, if Socrates seeks definitions as appropriate solutions to his questions, then the *IT* would commit him to the claim that the virtue terms are synonymous. And what could be more absurd than to suggest that the definition of 'courage' is the same as 'temperance'? 'Piety' does not *mean* the same thing as 'justice', and 'wisdom' certainly has a different connotation than 'virtue'. It would seem, then, that we have no choice but to reject the *IT* in favor of the *BT* as Vlastos suggests, or offer an alternative

account of Socrates' intent when asking his famous "What is *F*-ness?" questions as Penner suggests.

I am unconvinced that the disjunction between Vlastos' meaning view of the "What is *F*-ness?" question and Penner's identity of the virtues is absolute. I think Penner is generally correct about Socrates' position in the Protagoras. However, I think Penner is incorrect about the consequences of the *IT*. I wish to argue in the final section of this chapter for a revision of Penner's thesis that embraces both the traditional epistemological emphasis implied by Socrates' search for definitions, along with the ontological implications of his identity of the virtues. Thus, I will argue that Socrates can consistently maintain a strong sense of identity among the virtue terms while at the same time being committed to something like the meaning view of his "What is *F*-ness?" question.

Michael Ferejohn also argues for a revision of Penner's thesis, but his argument differs significantly from my own.[43] Though I find his argument interesting, I do not think it goes far enough. Also, my revision of Penner's thesis requires somewhat less hermeneutical effort, and to the degree it is simpler, I think it is preferable. However, it will be useful to summarize Ferejohn's argument as an indication of the not uncommon dissatisfaction with Penner's idiosyncratic interpretation of Socrates' philosophical activity. Thus, before demonstrating how I would revise Penner's interpretation of the *UVD*, I will outline the objections raised by Ferejohn.

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[43] Ferejohn's argument can be found in "The Unity of Virtue and the Objects of Socratic Inquiry," Journal of the History of Philosophy 20 (1982): 1-21. He criticizes Irwin's interpretation of the *UVD* in "Socratic Thought-Experiments and the Unity of Virtue Paradox," Phronesis 29 (1984): 105-122. He reflects further on his interpretation of the *UVD* in "Socratic Virtue as the Parts of Itself," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 44 (1984): 377-388.

B.1 The Ferejohn Objections

Ferejohn's concern with Penner's *IT* rests squarely on the latter's rejection of the traditional reading of Socrates' fundamental quest for moral knowledge. Socrates, it will be recalled, is on a quest for a moral theory[44] motivated by his deeply held belief in a divine commission as well as his own desire to live a good life. The Delphic Oracle, when asked, proclaimed that no one was wiser than Socrates (Ap. 21a). This "riddle," as he calls it, coupled with the recognition that he was not very wise himself (Ap. 21b), motivated a search for a moral expert who could shed some light on the Oracle's enigma (Ap. 21c). In order to find an expert moralist, Socrates asks whomever he can to give an account of the good life (Ap. 21e, 22a, c). Unfortunately, what he discovers is that no one seems able to provide an account of morality that would insure the good life. Even more distressing is the fact that he is unable to find anyone who can give a rudimentary analysis of the basic elements of morality that is consistent. Socrates ultimately concludes that Apollo's riddle is meant to demonstrate the absence of moral wisdom[45] among humanity (Ap. 23a-b), and hopefully thereby to promote our interest in securing it. The seemingly absurd declaration that

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[44] It might be objected that Socrates is not attempting to develop a moral theory but simply asking some basic moral questions. I think, however, that it is fair to characterize his search as a search for a moral theory. Socrates desires to know what moral terms refer to, and he also desires to know how virtue is acquired. The first question sounds very much like a metaethical question, the second sounds like a normative one. His methodology may not be systematic, but that should not disqualify his efforts as an attempt to discover a moral theory.

[45] Socrates does not have a term equivalent to 'moral wisdom' in his vocabulary, but it seems fair to infer from his distinction between wisdom that is μέγα and that which is σμικρὸν that he wishes to distinguish the divine wisdom (Ap. 23a) that he seeks, from the human wisdom that comes from knowing how to do certain things. Vlastos argues this in "The Protagoras and the Laches," in Socratic Studies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 109-116.

Socrates is the wisest of humans is thus his commission to pursue philosophy—the quest for moral knowledge (Ap. 23b, 28e, 29c-e, 30e-31a).

If this is an accurate view of Socrates' mission, however truncated, the question at issue is *how* does he go about searching for a moral expert? That is, what criteria does he employ to test whether an individual has any significant moral knowledge? What touchstone does Socrates employ to distinguish one who might be a moral expert, from someone who definitely is not a moral expert? The traditional answer given by scholars is that Socrates looks for definitions of moral terms. This view goes all the way back to Aristotle:

> Socrates . . . was busying himself about ethical matters and neglecting the world of nature as a whole but seeking the universal in these ethical matters, and fixed thought for the first time on definitions (Met. 1:6).[46]

When asked to give an account of what they know, Socrates expects a so-called moral expert to be capable of providing definitions of moral terms, at the very least. After all, is it not necessary to first clarify the terms of an argument before advancing to more substantive issues like the teachability of virtue?[47] As an

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[46] Among contemporary commentators it is almost universally agreed that Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" question was designed to elicit definitions from his interlocutors. In fact, Penner is the only scholar to my knowledge who denies that this is Socrates' goal in asking such questions. It would be fruitless to try to list all those who differ with Penner on this point, but the following references should make it clear that this is the considered opinion of the *vast* majority of commentators: Marc Cohen, "Socrates on the Definition of Piety: Euthyphro 10b-11b," in Vlastos, The Philosophy of Socrates: A Collection of Critical Essays (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1980), 158-176; George Nakhnikian, "Elenctic Definitions," ibid., 125-157; Richard Robinson, "Socratic Definitions," ibid., 110-124; Gerasimos Santas, "Socrates at work on Virtue and Knowledge in Plato's Laches," ibid., 177-208; W.K.C. Guthrie, Plato: The Man and His Dialogues, Earlier Period (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974); Terence Irwin, Plato's Ethics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 22-27; Charles Kahn, Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 148-182; Richard Kraut, Socrates and the State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 245-293; A. E. Taylor, Plato: The Man and His Work (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), 46-74.

[47] Socrates makes precisely this point at Laches 190b when he says to the general, "For how can we advise anyone about the best mode of attaining something of whose nature we are wholly ignorant?"

example, take someone like Euthyphro: surely anyone who claimed to be an expert in piety (Eu. 4e-5a), and who was willing to prosecute his own father on the basis of this knowledge, should at least be able to define the subject of his alleged expertise.

The interpretation of Socrates' mission that asserts that he went about searching for someone who could provide definitions of moral terms, since such an individual might just be a moral expert, is precisely what Penner rejects. If Socrates intends a definitional answer to questions like "What is courage?", then he is asking for the meaning of the term 'courage'. But if he is interested in the meaning of moral terms, and if Penner's interpretation of Socrates' position in the Protagoras is correct, then it seems he will be committed to the synonymy of the virtues. Since it is "absurd" to think the virtue terms are synonymous, Socrates must not really be asking for definitions and meanings when he asks questions like "What is courage?" Thus, Penner concludes that the only thing Socrates could be asking when he poses an expert testing question is that thing which actually causes a virtue to exist in an individual. But as Ferejohn rightly notes, this supposes a false dilemma between the cause of virtue and a definitional inquiry:

> Penner gives no reason whatever for supposing that this very psychological state (which is, after all, capable of being shared by many individuals, and so is a universal) cannot *itself* be the universal *courage*, the very thing that functions as the meaning of the term "courage" (his italics).[48]

So perhaps Penner is incorrect in thinking that Socrates is either looking for definitions of virtue *or* the causes of virtue. Perhaps he is looking for both since it is not implausible that they be the same.

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[48] Ferejohn, "The Unity of Virtue and the Objects of Socratic Inquiry," 11.

A second and more dramatic weakness of Penner's position, according to Ferejohn, lies with his reading of Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" question.[49] Penner maintains (and Ferejohn agrees) that there are two forms of the "What is *F*-ness?" question, and we should always prefer the more explicit of the two. Socrates' question is most often expressed simply as:

14) What is *F*-ness?

Sometimes, however, the question is given the more explicit form:

14') What is that thing by which all *F* things are *F*?[50]

The problem with Penner's analysis, according to Ferejohn, is the way the causal idiom of 14') is interpreted. As indicated in § A.4.a above, Penner holds that we should interpret idioms like 'διά' causally rather than semantically so that we get "that which causes" or "the cause of which" rather than the more ambiguous "because of which." If he is correct, Ferejohn argues, Socrates' question becomes

14") What is that thing which causes all *F* things to act *F*-ly?[51]

However, what Socrates really wants to know are the characteristics that we can use to discriminate between those who are *F* and those who are not, or those

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[49] Ibid., 11-13

[50] There are three occasions where this longer form of the question occurs, according to Ferejohn: Eu. 6d, M. 72c, and H. Ma. 287c, 288a. Interestingly, there are reasons to worry whether or not these are intended to mean the same as the simpler 14). The Meno is a transitional dialogue and its content is, therefore, suspect of more Platonic than Socratic substance. Some commentators interpret this Euthyphro passage as an early expression of Plato's doctrine of Forms and therefore, though the dialogue is part of the early period, it shows signs of Plato's soon to emerge metaphysics. Thus, it is suspect to some degree. Finally, there are some commentators who are unsure of the authenticity and appropriate place of the Hippias Major in the Platonic canon. Unfortunately, we do not find this longer version of the "What is *F*-ness?" question in any of the undisputed early dialogues. Hence, caution is warranted in asserting that this is Socrates' preferred form of the question.

[51] Ferejohn, 12. See also Vlastos, "What Did Socrates Understand by his 'What is X?' Question," in Platonic Studies 2nd ed (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 410-417.

actions that are *F* and those that are not.[52] Thus, reading Socrates' questions as a request for the cause of behavior rather than a request for the criteria that distinguishes those with a certain property, is to fundamentally misunderstand what he is up to. After all, Socrates is a philosopher not a general, and as such it makes more sense to suppose he is curious about the formal rather than the efficient cause of courage.[53] To inquire about the efficient cause of courage "very likely is a general's question, but the texts indicate that it is surely not Socrates'."[54]

B.2 Other Objections to Penner

I think Ferejohn rightly divines Penner's misreading of Socrates' line of inquiry. It makes very little sense for Socrates to be interested in what interests generals like Laches and Nicias, at least until it is clear what courage is. Penner's reading of the Laches forces Socrates to put the cart before the horse. He is pursuing a psychological, rather than philosophical, question. He is investigating how to motivate people to act courageously (or virtuously in general) without first knowing what courage is. This all seems rather strange for any philosopher, let alone Socrates.

The possibility remains, of course, that Penner's interpretation of Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" questions is correct. Indeed, one might argue that the only

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[52] This reading certainly seems to capture the sense of the Euthyphro passage where Socrates explains why he wants to know what piety is: "Tell me then what this aspect is, that I may keep my eye fixed upon it and employ it as a model and, if anything you or anyone else does agrees with it, may say that the act is holy, and if not, that it is unholy" (Eu. 6e). Plato, Euthyphro, Harold North Fowler, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 23. Here it seems clear that Socrates is asking for a criterion by which he can judge pious acts; he is not asking for the cause of pious acts.

[53] Ferejohn, 12.

[54] Ibid., 13.

significant difference between Penner and Ferejohn is their reading of ambiguous Greek idioms. The question might remain intractable if there were not other evidence to which we could point. Fortunately, there are other reasons for rejecting Penner's causal view in favor of the traditional definitional view. To that evidence, I now turn.

B.2.a Socrates and Definitions

When Socrates poses one of his "What is *F*-ness?" questions to an interlocutor, is he, or is he not, looking for the definition of *F*-ness, which is the one thing common to many instances, or the universal *F*-ness? One strong piece of evidence in favor of this view comes to us from Aristotle. Not only does he tell us that Socrates was the first philosopher to focus exclusively on moral philosophy (Met. 1:6), but that he was also "the first to raise the problem of universal definition," which is the foundation of any systematic moral philosophy (Met. 8:4). He goes on to emphasize Socrates' characterization of definitions to distinguish his thought from that of other philosophers since Socrates did not give universals ontological independence.[55] Thus we see that Aristotle unequivocally takes Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" questions to be a request for definitions that are themselves universals. Unfortunately, Aristotle's authority is insufficient by itself to settle the issue. After all, Penner might argue that Aristotle was just as dependent on secondary literature for his knowledge of Socrates, as we are. Is it not possible that Aristotle simply misinterpreted what he read about Socrates?

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[55] Aristotle is surely referring to Plato as well as the "Pythagoreans" when he says, "they, however, gave [universals] separate existence, and this was the kind of thing they called Ideas" (M. 8:4).

Happily, evidence in Plato's texts tends to corroborate Aristotle's testimony about Socrates' search for definitions. When Socrates puts an interlocutor to the test for wisdom, he occasionally has to clarify precisely what he is looking for in the way of an appropriate response. These occasions give us a window into what he meant by the questions he posed. Thus, one method of testing Penner's interpretation of Socrates is to see if it matches the kind of responses Socrates himself uses to explain what he thinks is an acceptable answer to one of his own questions. Is Socrates looking for definitions as Aristotle suggests, or a causal analysis as Penner suggests, or, perhaps both?[56]

There are at least two dialogues where Socrates clarifies his "What is *F*-ness?" question by offering a model answer to help his interlocutor better understand what has been asked.[57] The first occurrence is at Laches 192a-b. The inquiry begins with the question: "What is courage" (190d)? Laches responds saying, courage is to remain at one's post and fight the enemy (190e). Socrates dislikes this answer and after offering a few counter-examples proposes a model of an appropriate answer to the kind of question he is asking. First he gives a long and explicit form of the question:

> I might ask what is that quality which is called quickness, and which is found in running, in playing the lyre, in speaking, in learning, and in many other similar actions, or rather which we possess in nearly every action that is worth mentioning of arms,

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[56] If, as I suspect, it turns out that he is looking for both (i.e., he wants a definition that will have certain causal powers), it will be necessary to readdress the problem of synonymy. I turn to this in § B.2.b below.

[57] It is irrelevant for my purposes why Socrates singles these individuals out for special help. This issue has been sufficiently explicated by other commentators. See Alexander Nehamas, "Confusing Universals and Particulars in Plato's Early Dialogues," Review of Metaphysics 29 (1975): 287-306; and Hugh Benson, "Misunderstanding the 'What is F-ness?' Question," in Benson, Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 123-136.

> legs, mouth, voice, mind . . . . What is that common quality, which in all these activities you call quickness (192a)?

Next Socrates offers what he takes to be an appropriate answer to this type of question:

> I should say, the quality (δύναμιν) which accomplishes much in a little time (192b).

The proposition that Socrates asserts takes the form "*F*-ness is *Y*." In this case 'quickness' is shown to be the ability (δύναμιν)[58] to "accomplish much" in a brief time, regardless of what kinds of things are being done. In this context, *F*-ness (i.e., 'quickness') is a universal—it is the one thing that stands over many instances. The predicate *Y* is a definition of *F*-ness; it is an explanation of what *F*-ness entails. So in this case, it appears that what Socrates seeks when asking his "What is *F*-ness?" question is the definition of a universal.

A similar case appears at Meno 75b.[59] Meno does not fully understand the question put to him by Socrates, and more to the point, he does not understand what form an adequate answer must take. To help him understand, Socrates offers a model question and answer, just as he did with Laches. Suppose one were to ask, "What is shape?" Socrates suggests as a model answer: "the only thing which always accompanies color." Once again we find Socrates clarifying his "What is *F*-ness?" question with an "*F*-ness is *Y*" answer. We can

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[58] Socrates' use of δύναμιν in this context suggests the possibility of a causal element in the definition. However, we should not confuse a causal element in the definition, with the definition itself. There is nothing here to suggest an intellectualist thesis, i.e., that knowing the definition of 'quickness' is necessary and/or sufficient for acting quickly. My cat Lucy often acts quickly, but I rather doubt she has the cognitive capacity to know the definition of this adverb. I do not think this is a serious problem since this example is only meant to show Laches the *form* of a proper response to the "What is courage?" question, not the substance of such an answer.

[59] Because the Meno is a transitional dialogue, we must be careful about any evidence we find there for what Socrates may have believed. However, since this case is virtually identical with the case in the Laches, which is an early dialogue, I think we are justified in appealing to it as evidence.

define the universal 'shape' with the expression "that which always accompanies color." However, this definition would be inadequate for someone who was blind, or someone examining an object in a very dark room. Such failures may be the heart of Meno's objection that this account of shape is too simple (εὔηθες). Thus, Socrates provides a second definition which, he thinks, equally well serves as an explanation: shape "is the limit of a solid" (76a). Once again Socrates offers an "*F*-ness is *Y*" answer to the "What is *F*-ness?" question. So here, as in the Laches, Socrates uses a universal and a definition of that universal to explain to his interlocutor what he is looking for as an adequate response to his "What is *F*-ness?" question.

Penner might object that in neither of these cases does Socrates, in describing an adequate answer, use the word 'definition' (ὅρος).[60] This silence does not constitute a serious problem. Whether we call these expressions 'definitions' or 'explanations' or 'accounts' is irrelevant. After all, a linguist might say a definition just is an account of how a term is properly used by a group of speakers. The point is that Socrates indicates that he is searching for universals and some account of how those universals are employed in philosophical discourse. Therefore, it would appear that Aristotle assessed Socrates' method correctly. The question that remains to be answered is whether Aristotle's being right about Socrates makes Penner's analysis wrong.

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[60] In fact, this term occurs very infrequently in the early dialogues. It can be found at Gorg. 470b, 488d, H. Ma. 283b, Ly. 209c, Men. 238d, and Rep. I 331d.

B.2.b Synonymy Reconsidered

We should recall that Penner rejects the claim that Socrates seeks definitions of universals because, like Vlastos, he believes this account of the "What is *F*-ness?" question along with the *IT* would commit Socrates to a belief that the virtue terms are synonymous. The claim that the virtue terms are synonymous is taken, by nearly everyone, to be absurd since it would seem to entail that 'virtue' *means* the same thing as 'courage', or 'temperance', or 'piety', or 'justice', which obviously it does not. In this final section, I wish to argue that this view rests on an unnecessarily narrow conception of synonymy, and that an alternative account is possible that allows Socrates to rationally hold the *IT* while at the same time searching for definitions of universals.

At first glance it might seem uncontroversial to assert that two terms are, or are not, synonymous. Synonymy is commonly conceived as a relation that exists between two terms that have the same meaning.[61] Thus, two terms are said to be synonymous if and only if they mean the same thing. If two terms mean the same thing, it is further held that these two terms can be exchanged, one for the other, without disturbing the sense of the statement. Thus, if 'gelding' and 'castrated horse' are synonymous (i.e., mean the same thing), we can exchange one term for the other without disturbing the sense of a linguistic expression. For example, the proposition

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[61] I take this to be the common notion among philosophers as demonstrated in philosophical dictionaries and encyclopedias. See Robert Audi, ed., The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), s.v., 'meaning'; Antony Flew, A Dictionary of Philosophy, revised 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), s.v., 'synonymy'. Quine traces this notion of synonymy back to Leibniz who suggested that interchangeability *salva veritate* is the sufficient condition for synonymy; see W. V. O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," Philosophical Review (1951), reprinted in Quine, From a Logical Point of View, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1994), 20-46. It might well be the case that ordinary people or specialists in other fields use the term differently. However, my purpose here is to focus on philosophy, not lexicography.

15) Silver-Far was a beautiful gelding.

can be altered to

16) Silver-Far was a beautiful castrated horse.

Any literate speaker of English (or any other ordinary language with a sufficiently similar grammar) would, it seems, understand 15) and 16) to express the same meaning (assuming they also understood that 'Silver-Far' rigidly designates a particular horse). With this type of example in mind, we can see that there are at least two important elements of synonymy: first, there is a semantic criterion that tells us that synonymous terms share a common meaning. Second, there is a usage criterion that indicates that synonymous expressions are acceptable substitutions for one another in a single context.

The common notion of synonymy seems *prima facie* uncontroversial, but is it really? Consider the semantic criterion. What does it mean to assert that two terms share the same meaning? This claim is less than clear until we answer the question, what *is* a meaning? Assuming we could provide an uncontroversial answer to that question, we would also have to tackle two larger questions: how do meanings get attached to terms? and how does the same meaning get attached to different terms? That is, what is the nature of the relationship between meanings and terms?[62] It would seem, therefore, that before we can offer an adequate account of the semantic criterion of synonymy that we must be able to give an adequate account of both the nature of meaning and how

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[62] This problem takes us beyond mere linguistic practice and into the realm of metaphysics. For example, we need to know the nature of the relationship between the meaning entity and the word which is associated with it. Is this relationship an independent ontological entity or does it only exist in the mind of the speaker? Whether one comes down on the side of Realism or Nominalism makes little difference: we are here clearly in the realm of metaphysics. Also, we need to analyze how we come to know the meanings of terms, which raises sticky epistemological questions. Thus, an adequate philosophical investigation of synonymy will have to include significant groundwork in both metaphysics and epistemology.

meanings get attached to specific terms in a language. Since the meaning of 'meaning' is less than clear, perhaps it would be more advantageous to begin an analysis of the semantic criterion of synonymy somewhere else. It might turn out that an account of reference would give us all we really need to account for synonymy and thus we need not bother with the problem of meaning at all.

It might be suggested that the synonymy of two expressions rests on the fact that two terms refer to, or name, the same thing. After all, the etymology of 'synonymy' suggests this is the proper way to understand the problem since it is the transliteration of συνωνυμία (which is a cognate of συνώνυμος), meaning "of similar name."[63] And, if an explanation of synonymy could be given in terms of reference without having to appeal to meaning, so much the better. However, as Gottlob Frege has pointed out, two terms can refer to or name the same thing, while having distinct meanings.[64] Repeating his well-worn example, 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' *refer* to the same thing—the planet Venus—but they have different *meanings*. If reference were all we had to account for synonymous expressions, we would end up with numerous cases of equivocation. Thus, synonymy cannot be explained simply by the fact that different words refer to the same object: reference and meaning are distinct. It would seem then, that an account of reference cannot resolve the problem of synonymy. The semantic criterion of synonymy is necessarily associated with meaning after all, and therefore, we cannot escape the difficulties associated with an account of meaning if we focus on this criterion.

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[63] Liddell and Scott, An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon, *s.v.* συνώνυμος.

[64] Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference," in Robert Harnish, ed., Basic Topics in the Philosophy of Language (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1994), 142-160.

Whether we begin an analysis of the semantic criterion of synonymy with the question of meaning or reference seems to make very little difference. We apparently need an account of both if we are to give an adequate analysis of the semantic criterion. However, as anyone remotely familiar with the contemporary fields of Philosophy of Language and Linguistics is aware, these questions are reasonably disputed by reasonable people.[65] Thus, if we are forced to begin an analysis of synonymy with the semantic criterion, it may turn out that synonymy is far more difficult to explain than at first appeared. As Quine has noted,

> Just what it means to affirm synonymy, just what the interconnections may be which are necessary and sufficient in order that two linguistic forms be properly describable as synonymous, is far from clear.[66]

The preceding discussion highlights two important points: first, a rudimentary philosophical understanding of synonymy, as defined by the semantic criterion, requires significant ontological and epistemological assumptions. Second, rational people disagree about the ontological and epistemological conditions that give rise to synonymy as it is commonly understood. Both points are important in relation to resolving the dispute over the *UVD*. If the problem of synonymy partially motivates both Vlastos and Penner, what kinds of ontological and epistemological assumptions do they project onto the mind of Socrates? That is, if it would be irrational for Socrates to

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[65] One has only to compare the views of Russell, Frege, Quine, Wittgenstein, *et. al.* to recognize that there is no universally accepted view of meaning or synonymy. My point is simply that if there is disagreement on these issues, it may be that Socrates has his own views about synonymy that differ from those we are inclined toward today. Thus, we should not be too quick to dismiss the possibility that for Socrates the virtue terms are synonymous.

[66] Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," 24, 25. See also Pursuit of Truth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 37-59.

assert that 'justice' and 'temperance' are synonymous on the grounds that such a relation would violate the semantic criterion (i.e., they do not mean the same thing), would not Socrates have to have a sufficiently rich semantic theory to inform him of this fact? Would not such a claim assume that Socrates has some theory about meaning and reference that would make it implausible for him to claim the synonymy of the virtue terms? But what evidence is there that Socrates has any interest in semantic theory at all? It is not at all clear that Socrates was even cognizant of the ontological or epistemological notions necessary to form an astute semantic theory. In fact, the term 'συνώνυμος' does not appear in the Greek philosophical vocabulary until Aristotle.[67] Thus, while it would be odd for Vlastos and Penner to assert the synonymy of the virtue terms, it is much less clear in the case of Socrates.

Thus far, I have argued that the notion of synonymy we take for granted ought not be taken for granted in the case of Socrates. I seriously doubt the philosophical tools necessary for conceptualizing the problem of synonymy, as we understand it, were available to him. It is unlikely, therefore, that Socrates has anything like the semantic criterion of synonymy in mind when he raises the question of the unity of virtue to Protagoras. However, just because Socrates is not likely to have had a sophisticated notion of synonymy, does not mean he had no notion of synonymy at all. Ordinary people with no philosophical background whatsoever execute synonymous expressions all the time. So, how do we account for those who know how to practice synonymy even though they could not begin to give an adequate philosophical account of what they are

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[67] Aristotle refers to synonymous expressions in several locations: Cat. 1.a6 Rhet. 1405a, Met. 990b, 1065b, 1079a, E.N. 1111b, Top. 1.15, 4.3, 6, 6.10, 13, 7.4.

doing? The answer, it seems to me, lies in the usage criterion. Ordinary language users understand that words can sometimes be substituted for one another without weakening their ability to communicate. The usage criterion shifts our understanding of synonymy away from epistemology and ontology and toward linguistic practice and convention. By focusing on Socrates' linguistic practice, I think we gain a far better understanding of his theory of virtue than we ever could by forcing him to meet the contemporary standards of a semantic theory.

It should be clear by now that I am profoundly sceptical of using contemporary notions from semantic and linguistic theory to unravel Socrates' *UVD*. It falls to me, then, to suggest an alternative that make sense of the *IT* without reading too much into Plato's text. I think the key to understanding Socrates' view is to focus on the usage criterion. How does Socrates use language and how does he treat synonymous expressions? Are there clear passages where Socrates uses terms synonymously and, if so, what do they tell us about his understanding of synonymy? Further, how does his use of language illuminate the *IT* interpretation of the *UVD*?

B.2.c Socrates and the Synonymy of the Virtue Terms

There are some clear cases where Socrates engages in the linguistic practice of using terms synonymously. Perhaps the most famous, and commonly noticed by commentators,[68] is Socrates' synonymous use of the Greek terms for 'knowledge' and 'wisdom', especially ἐπιστήμη, φρονήσις and σοφία. There are

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[68] It seems many commentators recognize this practice on Socrates' part. For two very good examples see Guthrie, Plato: The Man and His Work, 265, and Taylor, Protagoras, 152*ff*.

numerous instances throughout the early dialogues where Socrates treats 'knowledge' and 'wisdom' interchangeably. In the Apology for example, Socrates claims that he is not wise (21b, 22e, 23b) or does not have significant knowledge (20e, 21d, 22c-d). There seems to be no significant difference in the usage of terms in these contexts. Also, at 19c, we find Socrates exchanging 'wisdom' and 'knowledge' in the context of a single passage, which could easily be described as synonymous. An even clearer case is seen at Protagoras 349e-350c where Socrates substitutes 'wisdom' for 'knowledge' in the midst of an argument. In each of these cases, and there are others (e.g., Euth. 281a-b, La. 194e, Prot. 357-358), Socrates substitutes one word for the other without hesitation, and in each case his interlocutor(s) fully understand the locution. I think it is safe to conclude, therefore, that Socrates uses these terms synonymously.

The synonymy of 'knowledge' and 'wisdom' in the early dialogues is taken to be uncontroversial by many commentators because of the ambiguity of these terms in the Greek language. And indeed, these notions are closely related. Also, prior to Aristotle many thinkers may not have drawn sharp distinctions between them. However, this observation does not weaken my argument. If ordinary language users engage in a linguistic practice that violates the rules of a systematic theory of language they did not have, we should not be too troubled. Whether individuals succeed in communicating with one another is the central issue. Thus, as long as Socrates can successfully communicate with his interlocutors, it does not matter that he may, at times, violate the rules of our semantic theory. After all, we would draw a clear distinction between 'knowledge' and 'wisdom' because these terms do not *mean* the same thing.

However, it would be inappropriate to chastise Socrates for using these terms synonymously unless he recognizes the distinctions we draw between them.

There is further evidence about Socrates' notion of synonymy to be found in the early dialogues. At times Socrates distinguishes between important terms, and fortunately he tells us what criterion he uses in doing so. The passage in which he lays out what I take to be his criterion for synonymy long escaped my notice because it is buried in the Ion, an early dialogue that receives little attention among commentators. However, when I stumbled upon this passage, its importance was immediately clear. It is in this passage that Socrates indicates how he distinguishes between the terms for certain activities. Socrates is trying to help Ion see how to distinguish between various activities (τέχνη). He claims, and Ion agrees, that each τέχνη "has been apportioned by God a power of knowing a particular business" (I. 537c).[69] Further each art is properly distinguished by the knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) that is peculiar to it:

> Do you argue this as I do, and call one art different from another when one is a knowledge of one kind of thing, and another a knowledge of another kind (I. 537d)?[70]

Thus, for Socrates, the terms for two activities are synonymous if the knowledge on which they depend is the same.

With the criterion from the Ion in hand, we can see how Socrates can consistently and rationally hold that the terms 'justice', 'piety', 'wisdom', 'courage', and 'temperance' are synonymous. Socrates holds the view that virtue—and each of the terms used to describe virtue—is a kind of τέχνη. Therefore it will be distinguished from other human activities by the special

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[69] Plato, Ion, trans., W.R.M. Lamb (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925).
[70] Ibid.

knowledge associated with it. Since the knowledge associated with virtue is knowledge of the good and bad (La. 199d), the term for any other skill that is based on knowledge of the good and the bad will be synonymous with it. Since, as we have already seen, Socrates argues that virtue, courage (La. 199c), and temperance (Charm. 174b) are properly identified with knowledge of the good and the bad, these terms are for him synonymous with 'virtue' (and with each other). Further, from the arguments he gives in the Protagoras, we see that Socrates attempts to establish the same for justice and piety (Prot. 330c-331b). Though it is true that he never explicitly shows the connection between justice and piety and the knowledge of the good and bad as he does with temperance and courage, it is strongly suggested at Laches 199d. Thus, I think we are justified in claiming that the *IT*, which Socrates embraces in opposition to Protagoras, rests on his belief that the virtue terms all point to the same thing—knowledge of the good and the bad. Since he explicitly tells us he discriminates between human activities based on the knowledge associated with each, we are justified in asserting that he does in fact believe that the virtue terms are synonymous. More simply put, Socrates' notion of synonymy is less narrowly focused than our own. His broad conception enables him to treat, as synonymous, terms that are for us, heteronomous.

Conclusion

I began this chapter with an outline of Penner's view of the *UVD*, which asserted that Socrates intends to affirm a strong sense of identity among the virtue terms as opposed to Vlastos' *BT*. However, because Penner agrees with Vlastos that the virtue terms cannot be synonymous, he is forced to reinterpret Socrates' mission so that his "What is *F*-ness?" questions are not requests for

definitions. Instead, he takes Socrates to be searching for some causal account of what makes a person act virtuously. I have argued that while Penner is correct that the *IT* is the proper way to understand Socrates' view of the *UVD*, we are not forced to give the radical reinterpretation of his "What is *F*-ness?" questions that Penner suggests. I have argued that it is the case that Socrates searches for definitions that are universals, but, in the case of the virtues, the definition he keeps discovering is the knowledge of the good and the bad. Since Socrates distinguishes between specializations by the knowledge peculiar to each, and since he believes that each virtue term can best be defined as requiring the same kind of knowledge as do the other terms, it is the case that for Socrates the virtue terms are synonymous.

I suspect that if we could put the question to Socrates, he would say that the various virtue terms contribute significantly to the confusion about virtue. When we come through philosophical scrutiny to see that each of the so-called virtues is an activity that rests on knowing the difference between that which is good and that which is harmful, we should also see that the apparent differences between the virtues disappear. That is, I think Socrates would be quite happy to do away with the cardinal virtue terms and simply talk about virtue—the knowledge of the good and the bad. As a linguistic convention Socrates is quite happy to talk about courage, or piety, or justice, etc., knowing that most folks fail to recognize that these terms all point to one and the same thing. However, as the Protagoras illuminates, Socrates believes there is nothing distinctive about them. There is no distinctive power associated with them, nor can they be found separated from one another, nor is there any distinct substance associated with them. They are for him, merely different words for the same thing.

Chapter IV

Brickhouse and Smith on the Unity of Virtue

In this chapter I turn attention to Thomas Brickhouse's and Nicholas Smith's interpretation of the *UVD*.[1] They argue that Socrates' notion of the relation between the virtues is not sufficiently captured by either Vlastos' *Biconditionality Thesis* or Penner's *Identity Thesis*. But, like Vlastos and Penner, they argue that the claims of the Protagoras are not hopelessly at odds with other accounts of virtue found in the early dialogues. Also like Vlastos, they are firmly in the intellectualist camp and argue that Socrates believes virtue is a special kind of skill or knowledge, a significant part of which consists in knowledge of definitions of moral terms. But when the skill of virtue is applied in varied circumstances, non-definitional knowledge is required to consistently achieve virtuous action. On their account, the cardinal virtues will be distinct both in their definitions and in the attendant knowledge necessary to achieve virtuous behavior. The unity of virtue, on their account, depends upon the special role of wisdom among the cardinal virtues. Since virtue is a type of wisdom/knowledge, all the particular virtues will be an application of wisdom in different circumstances. On their account of the *UVD*, the wise person will be the one who knows all the

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[1]The account I offer here is derived primarily from their Plato's Socrates (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 60-72, 103-136; Socrates On Trial (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); and "Socrates and the Unity of the Virtues," The Journal of Ethics 1 (1997): 311-324. The latter work offers no new insights into their position. It is, however, a concise presentation of their view.

definitions of the virtues as well as how to actualize virtue in each unique moral situation. Thus, the wise man is, for Socrates, a virtue craftsman.

I will follow the same pattern here as in previous chapters: in the first section, I will outline Brickhouse and Smith's analysis of the Socratic doctrine of virtue. In the second section of this chapter, I will offer objections to their position.

A. The Brickhouse and Smith Interpretation of the *UVD*

Like other commentators, Brickhouse and Smith (hereafter B&S) are concerned with the apparent inconsistency in the account of virtue found in the Protagoras and those found in the Laches, Euthyphro, and the Meno.[2] As we have seen previously, the Socratic position on virtue in the former dialogue seems to indicate that it is a single thing. B&S hold that there is at least *prima facie* evidence in the others that indicates 'virtue' is the name for a set of related but discrete entities. Like Vlastos and Penner, B&S believe a consistent account of these texts can be provided.[3] Thus, we need not think Socrates is committed to a sophomoric inconsistency, nor need we claim that at least one of the views fails to be genuinely Socratic.[4]

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[2] It is interesting that B&S do not give attention to the Charmides and the evidence of the *UVD* we find there. I think this highlights a serious gap in their analysis.

[3] It should be noted that Penner excludes the Euthyphro from his discussion of the *UVD*. See Penner, "The Unity of Virtue," in Benson, Essays on the Philosophy of Socrates (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 165, 166.

[4] Daniel Devereux maintains that the Protagoras expresses a genuine Socratic *UVD* while the doctrine expressed in the Laches and Meno is likely a Platonic revision of the earlier, and less systematic, Socratic doctrine. For a full treatment of Devereux's position, see Chapter Five below.

B&S argue that the coherence of Socrates' *UVD* depends upon recognizing that an acceptable answer to his "What is *F*-ness?" question, where 'virtue' is the *F*-ness under discussion requires no less than two distinct elements. First, they hold that Socrates searches for an acceptable definition of virtue (or one of the cardinal virtues) which servers as an identifying universal. This definition will help Socrates recognize legitimate instantiations of virtue. Second, in order for Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" question to be adequately answered a specification of what is produced by virtue is required. That is, not only do we need a universal to use as a standard for evaluating purported cases of virtue, we also need to know what kinds of effects to expect from a virtuous person.

Along with Vlastos, and in opposition to Penner, B&S accept the traditional interpretation of Socrates' activity which holds that he searches for definitions of moral terms.[5] For example, in the Charmides he pursues a definition of σωφροσύνη (temperance), in the Laches of ἀνδρεία (courage), in the Lysis of φιλία (friendship), in the Euthyphro of ὅσιον (piety), and in the Protagoras and the first part of the Meno ἀρετή (virtue) itself. However, B&S believe that a satisfactory definition of virtue must include more than a specification of the necessary and sufficient conditions for virtue. They also believe that an adequate definition of virtue must include an account of its ἔργον (or ἔργα, as the case may be) or what is accomplished by the possession

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[5] For the sake of clarity I will henceforth refer to this as the 'lexical element' of a Socratic definition of virtue. This is the part of a Socratic definition that sets out the necessary and sufficient conditions for virtue.

of the virtue.[6] The importance of this second element arises because they believe Socrates conceives of virtue as a species of knowledge or wisdom, but he also believes that all the particular virtues as essentially distinct, albeit related parts of wisdom.[7] Because Socrates thinks of wisdom as a kind of τέχνη or 'craft', an adequate answer to his "What is *F*-ness?" question must specify both the productive and lexical elements of the definition. That is, Socrates not only seeks knowledge of the definition of *F*-ness, but also what is produced by the person who possesses it, the person who, in this case, is a virtue-craftsman.

B&S also maintain that Socrates is committed to the belief that some of the particular virtues may be proper parts of other particular virtues: in the Euthyphro, for example, it appears that Socrates believes piety is a proper part of justice. They will account for this by arguing that a craft may have more than one ἔργον and that since Socrates believes the particular virtues are crafts, it is possible some have multiple and distinct ἔργα. Thus, justice might have two ἔργα, one corresponding to the craft we call 'justice' the other to the craft we call 'piety'. In the same way wisdom/virtue may have multiple ἔργα which correspond to that which is labeled 'courage', 'temperance', 'justice', or 'piety' respectively.

I will raise two fundamental objection to B&S's interpretation of the *UVD*. First, I think the texts they use to construct their position are

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[6] I will refer to this as the 'productive element' of the Socratic definition of virtue.

[7] One consequence of this view will be that wisdom is both necessary and sufficient for the possession of the other cardinal virtues. I will argue below that this raises a fundamental problem for their view of the *UVD*.

inconsistent. On the one hand, if the Socrates of the Protagoras believes wisdom is both necessary and sufficient for all the particular virtues, then having any one of the virtues will necessarily entail having them all. This seems to mean, at the very least, that a biconditional relation holds between the virtues. There are places, which I point out below, where they seem to accept this. On the other hand, if the virtues are proper parts of each other as construed in the Euthyphro, there cannot be a biconditional relationship between them. The text that is central to their interpretation of the Protagoras is incompatible with the text they appeal to in the Euthyphro. Unless Socrates is to be committed to an inconsistent position on the nature of virtue, they must yield one or the other of these two positions.

My second objection is even more fundamental. I do not think the texts they use to support their thesis are actually endorsed by Socrates. As I have suggested in previous chapters, there is scant evidence for a Socratic commitment to the *PVD* in the early dialogues. This goes to the heart of B&S's contention that Socrates thinks of the virtues as proper parts of each other. Further, I do not think the parts of gold analogy of the Protagoras which, as we shall see, is central to B&S's interpretation of the *UVD* represents Socrates' position at all. It may turn out not to be incompatible with the position Socrates does hold in the Protagoras, but as I will argue below, it is not—and I think it unlikely that it would be—endorsed by him. It is a mistake, therefore, to place the interpretive weight on this passage which B&S do.

A.1 Definitional Knowledge and Virtue

To fully grasp B&S's position on the *UVD*, we must first be aware of their analysis of the role of definitions in Socratic epistemology. Understanding the role of definitions in answering Socrates' "What is *F*-ness?" questions, they maintain, will help clarify his seemingly inconsistent views on the nature of virtue. This is because Socrates holds virtue to be a kind of knowledge and because definitions are a necessary part of the knowledge he calls "fine and good" (καλὸν κἀγαθὸν Ap. 21d). Therefore, Socrates' treatment of definitional knowledge will be vital in understanding the *UVD*.

To clarify Socrates' position on the role of definitions in knowledge, B&S start with an epistemological puzzle found in the Apology. Part of their philosophical project is to provide an account of Socrates' epistemology wherein he can consistently maintain:

1) that he has no significant wisdom/knowledge (21b);

2) that he knows certain significant moral truths (29b);

and,

3) one of the things he knows is that he is a good man (41c*f*).

These claims seem clearly contradictory. Taken together, how could anyone attribute these assertions to the same person, in the same context, with a straight face?

B&S point out that we must first understand what Socrates understands by 'wisdom' in order to solve this paradox. Perhaps being

virtuous consists in more than just doing the right thing. Thus, Socrates could believe that he consistently does the right thing, and hence believes himself a good man, without *knowing* what virtue is.[8] That is, right action, even a lifetime of consistent right action, might be insufficient for being a virtue-craftsman. So what does Socrates lack which, when added to his right action, would make him an expert on virtue? The obvious answer, they maintain, is that wisdom/knowledge is what he lacks. But what is wisdom?

Unfortunately, Socrates never gives a precise conceptual analysis of wisdom, nor does he ever make a definitive pronouncement on what he takes wisdom to be, but B&S believe there are significant clues scattered throughout the early dialogues which offer a partial answer to this question. One clue is Socrates' relentless pursuit of definitions. But there are two important questions to be answered about the way definitions function for Socrates:

> 4) Are definitions merely a constitutive parts of wisdom, but by themselves do not give a complete account of wisdom?

If so, we may ask:

> 5) What role do definitions play in his account of wisdom?

That is, are definitions necessary or sufficient, or both necessary *and* sufficient, for wisdom according to Socrates?

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[8] Brickhouse and Smith have a dual approach to this claim. They believe Socrates is justified in this claim not only by his δαιμονίον, which prevents him from doing evil, but also from several elenctically secured moral propositions. See Brickhouse and Smith, 1984, "The Paradox of Socratic Ignorance in Plato's Apology," History of Philosophy Quarterly; and Socrates on Trial.

B&S conclude that Socrates does indeed think moral definitions are a necessary part of wisdom from the evidence of the Apology and the Euthyphro. At the trial Socrates claims that his pursuit of wisdom at the oracle's behest took the form of elenctic examinations of those who were reputed wise (21a-23b). And the examples of these investigations related in other early dialogues[9] make clear that Socrates believes definitions of moral terms are a necessary element of the wisdom he seeks. If Socrates is searching for wisdom, and if he rejects others' claims to wisdom on the grounds of their inability to provide definitions consistent with their other beliefs, then Socrates must think definitions are a necessary part of wisdom. Since no one, including himself, is able to provide definitions which are consistent with their other beliefs, no one Socrates has met can be called wise. Thus, B&S argue there can be no wisdom without definitional knowledge, or definitional knowledge is at least necessary for Socratic wisdom.

Given that Socrates thinks definitions are necessary for wisdom, we should ask why he thinks so. According to B&S, the reason he thinks definitions are fundamental to wisdom is that wisdom is a kind of craft-knowledge (i.e., τέχνη). The person who is wise will be able to serve as a kind of specialist—a craftsman of wisdom. Being a specialist in a field, they maintain, entails being able to define the area of one's expertise. Thus, the

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[9] After a perusal of the early dialogues, one could almost say that Socrates is more interested in definitions than anything else. For example, in the Euthyphro, Socrates pursues "What is piety?"; in the Laches, "What is courage?"; in the Charmides, "What is temperance?"; in the Lysis, "What is friendship?"; in the Hippias Major, "What is beauty?"; in Republic I, "What is justice?", etc. With the pursuit of definitions taking up so much of Socrates' quest for wisdom, it seems incontrovertible that he thought definitional knowledge at least necessary for wisdom.

expert should be able to offer a definition of her expertise. But Socrates believes definitions serve a more important function in the life of the expert as tools of criticism. He makes this clear when he asks Euthyphro for a definition of piety:

> . . . that, with my eye on it, and using it as a standard (παραδείγματι), I can say that any action done by you or anybody else is pious if it resembles this ideal (ὁσιον εἶναι), or, if it does not, can deny that it is pious (Eu. 6e).

Unfortunately, Socrates has been unable to find a wisdom-specialist since none of the people he has met could produce a definition consistent with their other beliefs.

But what does Socrates ask his interlocutors to define? Primarily he asks for definitions of virtue (or the virtues). If knowing the definition of virtue is necessary for being a virtue-craftsman, virtue must be knowledge in some sense. Since Socrates uses 'knowledge' and 'wisdom' interchangeably, it would appear that virtue in some sense just is wisdom.[10] So anyone who is wise will be virtuous and anyone who is virtuous will also be wise. Since neither he nor anyone else he knows can define virtue, neither he nor anyone else he knows qualifies as a moral expert. Since neither he nor anyone else he knows is a moral expert, neither he nor anyone else he knows is wise. Thus B&S conclude that for Socrates knowledge of moral definitions is necessary for an adequate account of the nature of virtue.

So Socrates believes knowledge of moral definitions is necessary for wisdom, and anyone who is wise will, like the skilled craftsman, be able to

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[10] Brickhouse and Smith, Plato's Socrates, 70.

provide paradigmatic definitions to guide the unskilled. It would be tempting to stop here and say that Socrates believes virtue simply is the knowledge of moral definitions. But B&S point out that knowledge of definitions, while necessary, could not possibly be sufficient for being wise.[11] "Even if one were to know that wisdom is defined as the knowledge of good and evil, one would not by that knowledge alone be able to steer one's way through vexing [moral] issues."[12] In addition to a definition of virtue, the moral expert needs other information relevant to particular cases in order to apply her definitional knowledge. Suppose, for example, one knew the definition of 'courage' was "standing firm in battle." Unless one also knew the relevant rules of military engagement, this definition by itself would be impotent in the production of courage. Thus B&S argue that knowledge of definitions, while necessary, is insufficient for wisdom according to Socrates.

A.2 The Role of ἔργα in Socratic Virtue Theory

The first clue in understanding Socrates' conception of virtue is his insistence that an expert is someone who is able to supply appropriate definitions to be used as guides to moral action and moral criticism. But

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[11] Brickhouse and Smith are following Richard Kraut's lead in this observation. In Socrates and the State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), he argues that definitions can play only a partial role in Socrates' conception of wisdom. What Socrates wants, Kraut argues, is not just definitions of moral terms, but rather a "substantive theory, organized around a small number of core statements, that tells us how to decide all practical questions" (282). But Brickhouse and Smith take issue with Kraut. They do not see any reason to think Socrates believed a moral paradigm, based upon a definition of virtue, must be capable of solving *every* moral dilemma. Therefore, they argue Socrates need not be seeking the kind of comprehensive moral theory Kraut has in mind. Brickhouse and Smith, 1994, 61-63.

[12] Ibid.

these definitions by themselves are not enough to make us act rightly; the moral expert needs to know why, how, and when to apply definitional knowledge in different circumstances. This is what B&S take to be the second major clue for understanding Socrates' conception of wisdom/virtue.[13]

It was noted above that, according to B&S, Socrates takes wisdom to be analogous to craft-knowledge, and because of this he thinks of anyone with wisdom as a moral expert, or craftsman of morality. The significance of the analogy between τέχνη and wisdom/virtue is rather obvious. A craftsman will not only be able to give a definition of his art, but will also be able to tell why the art is employed and know when and how to employ it. So if we asked a cobbler, for instance, for an account of cobblery, he could reply not only that it is the "art of shoe-making," but also point out the relevant benefits of his art for society at large. Most important of all, he could tell us how to make shoes. Any technical expert worth his salt should be able to demonstrate the relevant purpose (i.e., ἔργον) for which the art is practiced as well as define what he does. If moral expertise is analogous to craft expertise, as Socrates seems to think it is,[14] the moral expert should be able to specify three distinct things: 1) the definition of her art, 2) what her art aims to produce, and 3) how to produced it. For Socrates, therefore, complete

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[13] Ibid., 63-65.

[14] The relevant passage toward which Brickhouse and Smith point as evidence for this claim is Gorg. 448e where Socrates begins the examination of Gorgias. There are two points which make this passage significant for Brickhouse and Smith: first, Socrates consistently refers to Gorgias' activity as τέχνη in this passage which indicates his belief that the moral expert is a kind of craftsman. Second, if moral expertise is a kind of craft, they hold "the craft in question can be defined in terms of knowledge of how to produce some characteristic product, or *ergon*." Ibid., 64.

knowledge of virtue includes knowing the definition of virtue (or knowledge of the definitions of the virtues if there are more than one), knowing what the ἔργον of virtue is, and knowing how to achieve the ἔργον of virtue.[15]

With the distinction between knowledge of the definition, knowledge of the ἔργον, and knowledge of how to produce the ἔργον, B&S are in a position to solve the epistemological puzzle of the Apology. First, they take Socrates' view of wisdom/virtue to be composed in part of definitional knowledge. Moral definitions will be a necessary element of any account of wisdom that Socrates can accept. Second, the knowledge of definitions is, by itself, insufficient to make one a wise and virtuous person. Third, since wisdom is akin to craft-knowledge, the moral expert or moral craftsman should be able to specify the goal or product (ἔργον) of the defined skill along with the knowledge of how to produce the goal in particular circumstances. Hence, virtue requires knowledge of the definition of virtue, knowledge of the ἔργον, and knowledge of how to produce the ἔργον. Now, it is quite possible for a person to be good (i.e., to do the right thing) without having the relevant definitional and product knowledge necessary for moral expertise. Such a person might be described as accidentally good. It also seems possible that a person might know some morally relevant propositions and yet fail to

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[15] Ibid. What Brickhouse and Smith fail to clarify is whether ἔργον knowledge and the knowledge necessary to produce the ἔργον are to be counted as part of a complete definition of moral terms or distinct elements of moral knowledge. If they are to be counted as part of the definition, then a definition of virtue should be sufficient for making one a virtue-craftsman which they want to deny. On the other hand, if these are distinct elements of moral knowledge, it may turn out that Socrates knows more than he lets on, and his denials of definitional knowledge may have to be taken as ironic, which they also wish to deny. See § B.1 below.

have the definitional and product knowledge which is sufficient for moral expertise. Thus, on B&S's account, Socrates can consistently claim that he is a good man, that he knows some morally relevant propositions, but that he also fails to have knowledge sufficient for his being a moral expert.

A.3 The Unity of Virtue

The puzzle from the Apology highlighted the role of definitions in Socratic epistemology and led B&S to emphasize the importance of the virtue/craft analogy in understanding the nature of virtue. In turn this analogy highlighted the importance of non-definitional knowledge in Socrates' account of virtue. Having explored these constitutive elements (knowledge of the definition of virtue, knowledge of the ἔργον of virtue, and knowledge of how to produce the virtue), B&S turn to the problem of the unity of these diverse elements. How is it that together they form the unity of virtue? Here they must answer the following kinds of questions: if there is more than one virtue, what property do they all share which legitimizes their common appellation? And what does the craft analogy reveal that will help unify the seemingly inconsistent accounts of virtue found among the early dialogues?

A.3.a The Euthyphro

B&S have already argued that because Socrates thinks moral knowledge is analogous to craft knowledge, being a moral expert entails being able to provide a definitional account of one's craft, an account of the purposes or benefits of that craft, as well as being able to actualize the product

of the craft. On this account, it follows that definitional knowledge is insufficient for virtue if not accompanied by the appropriate product knowledge. A perfect example of this, they claim, can be found in the Euthyphro where Socrates and Euthyphro agree to the following propositions on the nature of piety (ὅσιον):[16]

6) Piety is a part of justice (12d);

7) Piety is the part of justice concerning service (θεραπεία) toward the gods (12e);

8) The remainder of justice concerns service (θεραπεία) towards humans (12e);

9) The definition of piety is incomplete without specifying its ἔργον (13e).

But there is something missing from their analysis of piety which is necessary for its completion. All they need, B&S argue, is to identify the product of piety: "Socrates specifically says that Euthyphro will complete the definition of piety by specifying the benefit produced by the craft of piety."[17] Of course, Euthyphro is unable to elucidate the proper product of piety (14b-c), and so they are unable to arrive at knowledge of piety. It is because Euthyphro is unable to satisfy Socrates' curiosity about the product of τῶν θεῶν θεραπείαν that he chides Euthyphro.[18] But what is important for B&S is Socrates' claim

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[16] It is important for their account that Socrates not merely entertain these propositions, but actually be committed to them. But as I pointed out in the previous note, if these propositions do express genuine Socratic doctrine, we raise other problems for Socratic epistemology.

[17] Ibid., 66.

[18] "Surely, Euthyphro, if you had wished, you could have summed up what I asked for much more briefly. But that fact is you are not eager to instruct me. That is clear. But a

that he and Euthyphro were on the verge of arriving at knowledge of piety. Here we have a case where it seems a satisfactory definition of a moral term is reached, but knowledge of piety is still lacking since Socrates and Euthyphro are unable to discover the product accompanying the definition of piety.

There are several important points that should be emphasized about this reading of the Euthyphro. First, If B&S are correct, it would seem to follow that Socrates has discovered two morally relevant, though incomplete, definitions:

D1) Justice is service (θεραπεία) toward humans;

D2) Piety is service (θεραπεία) toward the gods.

This would be no small matter since he seems to deny any hint of definitional knowledge in other definitional dialogues.[19] Aware of this fact, B&S deny this is a consequence of their position. Instead, they assert the much weaker claim that Socrates finds the conception of piety partially stated towards the end of the Euthyphro to be "more plausible" than any he has heard from Euthyphro and others who profess to know what piety is.[20] They emphasize, however, that what is important for their view is that knowledge

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moment since, you were on the very point of telling me—and you slipped away. Had you given the answer, I would now have learned from you what piety is, and would be content" (Eu. 14b).

[19] For example, see Charm. 165b; La. 186e; Ly. 216c, 223b.

[20] Brickhouse and Smith, 67. While it is clear why, it is not at all clear how they can deny that Socrates has discovered the definitional aspects of piety and justice. If they take the constructivist position and they take Socrates' assertion at 13e to mean that the definition of piety will be completed when accompanied by the appropriate product knowledge, it should follow that he knows the definitional aspects of piety and justice. And, if 'know' is too strong a word, we should at least be able to say that he has a strongly justified belief that the definitional aspects of piety and justice put forward are correct.

of the definition of piety (or justice) is insufficient by itself to make one pious.[21]

A second consequence of their reading of the Euthyphro is that it commits Socrates to a position that divides virtue into proper parts.[22] Not only is virtue divisible into proper parts (e.g., justice, piety, courage, temperance, etc.), but at least some of the parts of virtue are divisible (i.e., they have different scopes) as well.[23] Piety, on this view, turns out to be a proper part of justice (Eu. 12d) as well as a proper part of virtue. It also appears that Socrates is not merely claiming to believe that piety has a smaller scope than justice. If he is committed to 6), 7), and 8) above, he must surely know that virtue has a different scope than justice which has a different scope than piety.

Finally, if Socrates accepts D1) and D2) and he knows that piety is a proper part of justice, then it would seem plausible that the virtues are

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[21] There is an even more puzzling problem that follows. Even if this is a correct reading of the text of the Euthyphro Socrates will still not have complete knowledge of piety because the second element of product knowledge (knowledge of how to produce the ἔργον of piety) has not been specified. Articulating the product of piety is different from specifying how to achieve that product. All Socrates has requested of Euthyphro is a specification of the product, and this along with the definition of piety is insufficient for knowledge of piety on Brickhouse and Smith's account. It is possible that Socrates has conflated knowing the product of piety and knowing how to produce the product of piety. But if this is the case, we must wonder why he would conflate a distinction central to his own analysis of moral knowledge. This, along with problems I raise in § B below, should cause us to reject this reading of the text.

[22] I am using the term 'proper parts' to designate the species and sub-species of virtue in basically the same way it would be used in set theory: any set *X* can be a subset of itself and hence a part of itself, but any sub-set *Y* which has at least one distinct property from *X* is a proper subset of *X*. On B&S's account of the cardinal virtues, justice, piety, temperance, courage, etc. are proper parts of virtue since each has a peculiar element (its ἔργον) not found in the others. In the same way, piety is a proper part of justice because each pious act is considered a just act, but justice has a wider scope than piety.

[23] Ibid., 70.

definitionally distinct as well. If virtues such as piety and justice are definitionally distinct, the question becomes, are they different in their intension, their extension, or both? B&S claim the text supports the latter alternative. When Socrates explains his question about the scope of piety and justice, he uses the examples of fear and reverence and odd numbers and numbers (Eu. 12c). "Not only do the paired terms have different intensions, but they obviously have different extensions as well."[24] Therefore, if piety is to justice as odd numbers are to numbers, piety and justice must be distinct in both intention and extension. Piety is definitionally distinct from justice, and both are (presumably) definitionally distinct from virtue.

So according to B&S's interpretation of the Euthyphro, Socrates is committed to the *PVD*, a position in which virtue is a composite whole of proper parts that are distinct in their definitions and scope. If we add to this their conclusions about Socratic definitions, it must be the case that each definitionally distinct virtue is also distinguished by the ἔργον at which it aims.

A.2.b The Protagoras

If this is the correct interpretation of Socrates' position in the Euthyphro, the natural question to ask is whether this account of virtue is consistent with the accounts found elsewhere? *Prima facie* it seems consistent with the accounts of virtue in the Laches and Meno where Socrates

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[24] Ibid., 68.

apparently holds the *PVD*.[25] But what about the central dialogue on the nature of virtue—the Protagoras? In this dialogue it would appear that Socrates does not believe that virtue is a composite whole of proper parts. But B&S argue that Socrates' position here is consistent with his position in the Euthyphro. So, how is it that the cardinal virtues, each with a distinct definition and product, can be thought of as one thing?

B&S argue the unity of virtue becomes clear when we compare the two analogies of virtue Socrates offers Protagoras at 329e. After Protagoras has asserted that virtue is a composite thing (329d), Socrates asks for a clarification of the relation of the parts to the whole:

> Do you mean, said I, as the parts of a face are parts—mouth, nose, eyes, and ears—or like the parts of a piece of gold, which do not differ from one another or from the whole except in size.

Protagoras accepts the first alternative and goes on to assert that each part must have a distinct function or power (δύναμις). So for Protagoras no two virtues are alike in appearance or capacity (330b); virtue is thus a composite whole of functionally distinct parts. If this is his view, Socrates should accept the alternate analogy—the parts of virtue are like parts of gold; they differ in no way other than size. The problem for B&S is to show how the definitionally distinct, proper parts of virtue of the Laches, Meno, and Euthyphro are more like pieces removed from a chunk of gold than the parts of a face.

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[25] La. 190d, 198a, 199e; M. 72c, 73e, 78e, 79b. I have already argued in Chapters 2 above that I do not think these texts commit Socrates to the *PVD*. I will say more about this in § B below, as well as Chapter Five.

The key, they argue, is to remember "that wisdom occupies a special place among the particular virtues in that all the other particular virtues are in some sense wisdom."[26] What they mean is wisdom/virtue is a single τέχνη but it may be applied in different circumstances to achieve distinct ἔργα. Each proper part of virtue is distinguishable by its peculiar product as well as its peculiar definition. But they are also the same in a significant way just as the parts removed from a gold bar are significantly the same. The skill of wisdom/virtue, they argue, is like the mathematical skill of triangulation.[27] While triangulation is a single skill, it has many different applications, and since each application of triangulation is designed to achieve a distinct purpose, each application of the skill is distinct. For example, even though a navigator and a surveyor both use the same skill—triangulation— their purposes are sufficiently distinct, thus we do not confuse the two. There is only one skill applied in both professions, but the effects of that skill are unique.

But B&S take this analogy further. Not only may we divide triangulation into separate applications, there may be distinct applications within applications.[28] For example, navigation may be sub-divided into coastal and harbor navigation each having its own distinct application of the

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[26] Brickhouse and Smith, 70.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 71. It should also be noted that Brickhouse and Smith's position is different from Kraut's subdiscipline thesis. Kraut is reticent to push the gold analogy too far, and Brickhouse and Smith take this to be a fundamental flaw in his position. They argue further that the subdiscipline thesis is unable to account for the "special status" of wisdom among the virtues, since none of the subdisciplines of an academic field like economics are fundamental to all the others. Ibid., 70, n. 54.

triangulation skill. This is why the gold analogy of the Protagoras is central to their interpretation: it allows them to make sense of the passage at Euthyphro12d. If the parts of virtue are related to each other in the same way that pieces of gold removed from a gold bar are related, then Socrates can hold that justice is a proper part of virtue, and piety is a proper part of justice. Wisdom/virtue is a skill like triangulation, and justice is the application of that skill in the service toward humans just as navigation is the application of triangulation in moving ships through the water. Likewise, piety, as a subdivision of justice, is the application of justice in service toward the gods, just as harbor navigation is the subdivision of navigation that is the application of triangulation in bringing ships safely to dock. The scope of navigation is clearly more broad than harbor navigation, and by analogy the scope of justice is more broad than piety. So, like pieces of a chunk of gold or the skill of triangulation, the parts of virtue differ in their scope, but they are all still applications of wisdom in different circumstances. The virtues are thus unified in being the skill wisdom, but are distinct in their particular applications.

Thus, the *UVD* for B&S falls out of Socrates' position that virtue is a technical skill. And the skill of virtue is like a piece of gold; it is one thing with multiple applications. Just as we may take different parts of a piece of gold and use them in diverse ways, we may use the skill of virtue in diverse circumstances. When applied to fearful situations, virtue is called 'courage', when applied to human relations 'justice', when applied to the gods 'piety', etc. Thus even though there is only one 'skill/knowledge/wisdom', each part (or application) of virtue is distinct in its aim to produce a specific goal. So

while there is a unity to virtue, it is also appropriate to speak of its proper parts. In the Laches, Euthyphro, and Charmides, for example, Socrates and his interlocutors are focused on one or other of the applications of virtue—courage, piety, and temperance respectively—while in the Protagoras and (the first part of) the Meno, they are after virtue itself. Thus, in these latter works, it is natural for Socrates to emphasize the unity of virtue rather than its distinctiveness. However, the differences in emphasis should not lead us to conclude the notions of virtue in these dialogues are inconsistent.

B. Problems with the Brickhouse and Smith Interpretation

B&S have offered some useful insights into the problem of Socrates' *UVD*. For example, they correctly see that the *UVD* is motivated by Socrates' epistemology, and must therefore be understood within an epistemological context. Because Socrates generally treats wisdom and knowledge as the same thing, and since he thinks virtue is a kind of knowledge, it is impossible to understand the *UVD* without some conception of his epistemological intuitions. They are also correct to emphasize the importance of definitions in Socrates' account of virtue. But, however helpful these insights may be, I believe their interpretation of the *UVD* is fundamentally flawed at its core. First, as I have already argued in Chapter Two above, it is very unlikely that Socrates is committed to the *PVD* in the early dialogues. Second, I do not think a careful analysis of the Protagoras shows a Socratic commitment to the parts of gold analogy that is central to B&S's interpretation. Third, even if Socrates were committed to the parts of gold analogy in the Protagoras, Socrates' position would still be inconsistent with their reading of the

Euthyphro. On one hand, they hold that having wisdom necessarily entails having all the other "parts" of virtue, but on the other hand their interpretation of the Euthyphro seems to deny such a strong logical relation. In the following sections, I spell out these criticisms in more detail.

B.1 Socrates and the Parts of Virtue[29]

I am very sceptical that there is evidence from the early dialogues which commits Socrates to the *PVD*. Those commentators who argue for it usually look to three dialogues: the Laches, Meno, and Euthyphro. There are three passages in the Laches that seem to indicate that Socrates thinks of virtue as a composite of proper parts. First, at 190d Socrates introduces the notion of the parts of virtue, suggesting to Laches that it will be easier to understand the whole of virtue if they first understand the nature of the parts. Later at 198a, when Nicias takes Laches' place as the main interlocutor, Socrates reminds him that they originally assumed courage was only a part of virtue. Finally at 199e, Socrates points out that the definition of courage they have come to is inconsistent with the premise that courage is only a part of virtue. B&S argue that because it is Socrates who introduces and reiterates the parts of virtue premise throughout the dialogue, it *must* represent his considered opinion. But I have already argued this cannot be the correct reading of the text for two fundamental reasons: first, that virtue is composed of parts is from the beginning an assumed premise which is shown at the end

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[29] To prevent repetition, I will only outline the arguments against a Socratic commitment to the *PVD* from the Laches and Meno here. For a full discussion, see Chapter Two above, and Five below.

of the dialogue to be inconsistent with a Socratic definition of courage. Second, the premise that virtue is composed of parts is introduced in a context which makes it clear that Socrates could not affirm it.[30]

The second text used by commentators to support a Socratic commitment to the *PVD* is Meno 71d - 79e. The bee analogy (72b), the shape analogy (74b), and the color analogy (74c) each seem to indicate that Socrates believes virtue is divisible into distinct parts. But as in the case of the Laches, it is not clear whether he poses these analogies to accurately represent his view, or to cause Meno to think more critically about his own views. But even if the analogies of the Meno did represent Socrates' view, we should be very wary of taking them as paradigms of Socratic doctrine because the Meno is a transitional dialogue. As such, it represents the emergence of Platonic doctrine and thus the 'Socrates' we find there is more Platonic than Socratic.[31]

The final text used to argue for a Socratic commitment to the *PVD*, and on which B&S heavily depend, is Euthyphro 12c. Here Socrates introduces the numbers/odd numbers, fear/reverence analogies to argue that the scope of justice is more broad than piety:

> So it is not right to say that 'where fear is, there too is reverence.' No, you may say that where reverence is, there too is fear—not, however, that where fear is, there always you have reverence. Fear, I think, is wider in extent than

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[30] Just moments before the *PVD* is introduced Socrates gets Laches to agree that he and Socrates already "*know* the nature of virtue" and therefore they will easily be able to spell out the nature of courage since it is only a part of what they already know. What is being made clear is that Socrates knows that Laches *thinks* he knows what virtue and courage are, when in fact, as the dialogue quickly bears out, he does not. I discuss this in detail in Chapter Two above, and Chapter Five below.

[31] This is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two above.

> reverence. Reverence is a part of fear, as the uneven is a part of number; thus you do not have the odd wherever you have number, but where you have the odd you must have number.

These analogies are peculiar and therefore require close analysis. Socrates is evidently trying to get Euthyphro to see that piety is a proper part of justice. He begins by suggesting that justice is to piety as fear is to reverence. Every case of reverence is a case where fear will be present because the set of reverential things is part of the larger set of fearful things. That is, there is a set of things called 'fearful' which will be composed of the sub-set 'reverential' and the sub-set 'non-reverential fearful'. Now, we cannot infer the presence of members of the set of non-reverential fearful things from the set of reverential things, but as a sub-set of the fearful, we know that every case of reverence will be a case of fear.

The numbers/odd numbers analogy makes this point clearer. There is a set of things called 'numbers' that is composed of the sub-set 'odd numbers' and the sub-set 'even numbers'. We cannot infer the presence of members of the even set from the odd set, but as a sub-set of numbers, we know that every instance of an odd number will be a number. In the same way, there is a set called 'justice' which is composed of the sub-sets 'pious' and the 'non-pious just' or the just.[32] Each pious act will be just in the sense that the pious is part of the larger set justice. However piety and justice will be distinct in the same

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[32] The fact that 'justice' gets used twice in this example causes a good deal of confusion. It would have been clearer if Socrates had said, "Piety and justice are parts of virtue." However, since he did not, it would seem that the position Socrates is advocating here (supposing he is advocating any position at all) is that justice is composed of two related but distinct things: the pious and the non-pious just. To put it another way, Socrates is distinguishing between the just proper, the part of justice that has to do with the gods, and the part of justice that has to do with men.

way that the odd and the even are distinct. So Socrates seems to be pointing out to Euthyphro the seemingly analytic truth that acts of reverence are acts of fear, that odds are instances of numbers, and evidently that pious actions are just.

If these analogies accurately represent Socrates' view in the Euthyphro, then this 'Socrates' seems to hold views different from the 'Socrates' of the Protagoras and Laches.[33] This would not be too surprising if the Euthyphro was placed toward the end of the early period as a transitional dialogue along with the Meno. There are a couple of reasons why commentators might be tempted to adopt this interpretation. First, since there is broad agreement that the Protagoras and Laches are representative of early dialogues and therefore Socratic doctrine, and since the Euthyphro is apparently inconsistent with them, we have some reason to think the latter represents the emergence of Platonic doctrine.[34] Now, by itself this seems purely *ad hoc* and unconvincing, but there is internal evidence that might suggest the Euthyphro demonstrates a transitional character. For example, at 6d Socrates asks Euthyphro for the εἶδος of piety against which any particular act might be compared. Many commentators take this to represent the earliest expression

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[33] In the Protagoras Socrates explicitly argues that justice and piety are identical (Prot. 331b) and at the conclusion of the Laches he suggests that courage is no different from any of the other so-called virtues (La. 199e), and by implication that all the virtues are identical.

[34] One significant exception to the commentators who accept this dating is Charles Kahn, who places the Gorgias among the earliest of the Socratic dialogues and places the Protagoras next to the Euthydemus, and Meno as one of the very last. See Kahn, "Did Plato Write Socratic Dialogues," in Benson.

of the theory of Forms that Plato brings to maturity in the middle dialogues.[35] If this were correct, the Euthyphro, like the Meno, might represent the emergence of Plato's thought and could therefore be considered late among the early dialogues.[36] Therefore, the Socratic assertion of the *PVD* found in the Euthyphro should not be taken as counter evidence to the doctrine of the unity of virtue found in the Protagoras, Laches.

While I am sympathetic to the suspicion that Plato is beginning to emerge in the Euthyphro, I reject B&S's interpretation of this text on other grounds. I do not think we should take the numbers/odd numbers, fear/reverence analogies to be positive assertions of Socratic doctrine. It is true that Socrates makes assertions such as "I do not think that 'where fear is, there too is reverence'" (12b), and "Fear, I think, is wider in extent than reverence" (12c), and piety is that part of justice that "has to do with the service of the gods" (12d). But he also asserts, with equal or greater enthusiasm, propositions such as, "A person ought not prosecute a relative for murder unless the victim was also a relative" (4b), which, while consistent with popular Athenian morality of the time, seems completely out

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[35] See R. E. Allen, Plato's *Euthyphro* and the Earlier Theory of Forms, (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), William Prior, The Unity and Development in Plato's Metaphysics (La Salle: Open Court Publishing Co., 1985), 9-50; Nicholas White, Plato on Knowledge and Reality (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1976), 5-10.

[36] Penner makes a similar argument in "The Unity of Virtue" saying that the Euthyphro, Euthydemus, and Meno are more interested in what he calls the "demotic" virtues. Penner, "Unity of Virtue," 165-166. However, he later rejects the existence of demotic virtue as part of Socratic doctrine. See Penner, "What Nicias and Laches Miss—And Whether Socrates Thinks Courage Merely a Part of Virtue" Ancient Philosophy 12 (1992): 13 n. 4.

of character for Socrates.[37] He also asserts throughout the dialogue that Euthyphro can teach him the nature of piety when it is clear that Euthyphro does not in fact know what it is![38] The point is that this dialogue is so saturated with irony that it is difficult to tease out what Socrates does and does not actually believe. Given this fact alone, we should be particularly careful about attributing positive doctrines from this dialogue to Socrates. But if there are things Socrates asserts here that do represent his considered opinion, we should find them corroborated in other dialogues. The interpretive principle we should employ in such circumstances is, "is this doctrine consistent with what Socrates asserts in other early dialogues?" If not, we should be sceptical about attributing it to him. In the section which follows I demonstrate that the connection B&S attempt to draw between justice and piety in the Euthyphro, and the parts of gold analogy of the Protagoras will not hold, since Socrates does not endorse that analogy. Thus the Euthyphro need not undermine the consistent Socratic position we find in the Protagoras, Laches, and Charmides since it is unlikely that what we find there represents genuine Socratic doctrine.

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[37] Of all people, it seems we should expect Socrates to agree with Euthyphro that it makes no "difference whether the victim was a member of the family, or not related, when the only thing to watch is whether it was right or not for the man who did the deed to kill him. If he was justified, then let him go; if not, you have to prosecute him, no matter if the man who killed him shares your hearth, and sits at table with you" (Eu. 4b).

[38] For example see Eu. 5a, 5c, 9a, 11b, 11e, 14c, 15d-e.

B.2 The Protagoras and the Parts of Gold Analogy

B&S's interpretation of the *UVD* depends in large part on their reading of the Protagoras which commits Socrates to the pieces of gold analogy at 329d. But is Socrates really trying to spell out this own view of the *UVD* with this analogy? B&S offer no positive argument for attributing this to Socrates; they simply assert that "the gold/pieces of gold analogy [is] endorsed by Socrates."[39] I think he is not employing the analogy to express his own view, and I think there are good reasons to believe he could not be using this analogy to express his own view. For one thing, as I indicated in the section above, I do not think Socrates believes the terms 'justice', 'wisdom', 'piety', 'temperance', and 'courage' refer to proper parts of virtue in the Laches. And I think the context of the discussion in the Protagoras makes this clear as well.

It will be recalled that Socrates puts three related disjunctions to Protagoras at 329d-330b which are designed to clarify the latter's view of the nature of virtue. Each disjunction is exclusive and Protagoras chooses one term from each as an adequate articulation of his view. The three disjunctions are:

First,

P1) Virtue is a composite whole and justice, piety, temperance (courage and wisdom) are parts of it;

or

P2) Justice, piety, temperance (courage and wisdom) name the same thing.

Second,

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[39] Brickhouse and Smith, 70.

P1.a) The parts of virtue are like the parts of a face each with a distinct δύναμις;

or

P1.b) The parts of virtue are like the parts of a piece of gold, which do not differ from one another, or from the whole, except in size.

And finally,

P1.a.i) A person may possess one part of virtue without having all the rest;

or

P1.a.ii) A person possessing one part of virtue must have all the rest.

Protagoras chooses P1), P1.a), and P1.a.i), expressing the view that virtue is composed of proper parts which have distinct functions and which may be possessed independently from one another. The context in which the disjunctions progress shows that the second disjunction is an attempt to clarify P1), and the third is intended to clarify P1.a). So if the pieces of gold analogy of P1.b) were to express Socrates' view, it seems that he would have to agree with Protagoras on P1)—that virtue is composed of proper parts. However, nowhere in this discussion does Socrates suggest he accepts P1). Taken by itself, the presentation of the three disjunctions gives us no reason to think Socrates takes any position at all! In fact, it is not until he begins elenctic scrutiny of Protagoras' position at 330c that we begin to see what Socrates' position might be.

So what does Socrates' scrutiny of the Protagorean position reveal about his own view of the nature of virtue? We find many clues throughout the dialogue, but especially from the conclusions of the *elenchoi* he brings

against Protagoras.[40] At 331b Socrates concludes: "justice is either the same thing as piety or very like it." Similarly at 333b he concludes: "temperance and wisdom [must] be the same." At 350c and again at 360d he concludes that knowledge (or wisdom) is the same as courage. Finally, in summarizing the view he has defended against Protagoras, he claims to have tried to demonstrate "that everything is knowledge—justice, temperance, and courage alike" (361b), which is tantamount to saying that virtue is "a single whole." The first three conclusions are aimed squarely at P1.a), which leaves open the possibility that Socrates is expressing his own view in the pieces of gold analogy of P1.b). But the summation of the dialogue leaves little doubt that Socrates takes himself to have been arguing against P1) throughout. At 361b, he articulates the dilemma that has grown out of his and Protagoras' opposing views:

> One of you [Socrates], having said at the beginning that virtue is not teachable, now is bent upon contradicting himself by trying to demonstrate that everything is knowledge—justice, temperance, and courage alike . . . . If it [virtue] turns out to be, as a single whole, knowledge—which is what you are urging, Socrates—then it will be most surprising if it cannot be taught.

So if Socrates thinks he has been attacking P1), and since a commitment to the pieces of gold analogy requires a commitment to P1), either Socrates is very confused, or he never intended the pieces of gold analogy to represent his own view.

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[40] It should be pointed out that many commentators believe that the arguments Socrates uses to dislodge Protagoras from his position are either intentionally or unintentionally fallacious. For my purposes, this issue is irrelevant since I am only suggesting what Socrates' position might be, not whether he is justified in holding it.

By analyzing the conclusions he draws from the cross-examination of Protagoras it seems fairly clear that Socrates wishes to endorse P2) in opposition to P1). However, the clearest evidence that Socrates is committed to P2), and therefore cannot be committed to the pieces of gold analogy, comes not at the end of the dialogue, but at 349b. After the long interlude in which Simonides' poetry is discussed, Socrates refocuses the discussion on the *UVD* by rearticulating the two opposing positions. Protagoras has defended the position expressed in P1)—that virtue is a composite of distinct parts—and clarified this view with P1.a), and P1.a.i). Though he does not directly say it, it is clear that since they disagree, Socrates opposes the Protagorian view and, therefore, prefers P2)—that the different virtue names all refer to one and the same thing. The way Socrates sets up the disjunction shows that P1) and P2) are incompatible. But P2) is also incompatible with P1.b) (i.e., the pieces of gold analogy) as well as P1.a). This is the case because both the pieces of gold analogy and the parts of a face analogy are designed to explicate P1), which Socrates rejects. Both analogies are logically bound to the *PVD* expressed in P1); they are both offered to Protagoras as possible consequences of the ambiguous *PVD* expressed in P1). Thus, if Socrates rejects P1) in favor of P2), he cannot also intend P1.b) as a clarification of his own view.

B.3 The Incompatibility of the Protagoras and the Euthyphro

If my analysis of the Protagoras is correct, Socrates is not trying to spell out his view of the *UVD* with the pieces of gold analogy. But for the sake of argument, let us suppose that it does represent his view. Even if that were the case, B&S's interpretation is still fundamentally flawed. The logical

consequences of the pieces of gold analogy are incompatible with the logical implications of the numbers/fear analogies of the Euthyphro. The analogy from the Protagoras entails that from any one of the "parts" of virtue, we may infer any and all of the others, while the numbers/fear analogies from the Euthyphro explicitly denies inferring an instance of piety from an instance of justice. That is, in the Euthyphro we find a material implication between piety and justice, but in the Protagoras we find a biconditional relation between all the parts of virtue. So it would appear that B&S must alter their reading of either the Euthyphro or the Protagoras.

It will be recalled from Chapter Two above that a biconditional relationship holds between the "parts" of virtue just in case having any one of the virtues necessarily entails having them all.[41] If a biconditional entailment holds between the cardinal virtues, we may infer that any person who is virtuous will be wise, temperate, just, courageous, and pious. But not only may we infer this; if biconditionality holds, it is necessary that anyone who lacks any part of virtue will lack all of virtue. Biconditionality thus ensures an all or nothing relationship between the parts of virtues.[42]

The *BT* is derived from the exchange between Socrates and Protagoras when the latter asserts that virtue is a unity of distinct parts with distinct

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[41] Gregory Vlastos, "WP," 1981, 232.

[42] I should here draw a distinction between biconditionality as a logical relation and the *Biconditionality Thesis*. The latter is the claim, initially put forward by Vlastos, that possessing any one of the virtues necessitates having them all, but that each is a discrete thing. Because of its emphasis upon the *PVD*, the *BT* precludes a stronger logical relation between the virtue terms. However, if one holds the stronger *Identity Thesis* put foreword by Penner, one will also accept biconditionality, for the *IT* entails biconditionality, but not vice versa. See Penner, "The Unity of Virtue," in Benson, 163.

names (329d). Socrates proposes the pieces of gold and parts of a face analogies to clarify Protagoras' assertion that virtue is composed of parts. Protagoras favors P1.a), asserting that the virtues are like

> the parts of a face are parts—mouth, nose, eyes, and ears . . . [which] differ both in themselves and in their function (δύναμις) (330a, 330b).

As Socrates points out, this analogy entails that a person may posses some of the parts without possessing them all (329e). In affirming the face analogy, Protagoras rejects the alternative description which B&S think represents Socrates' view. They believe Socrates affirms the pieces of gold analogy which means that the parts of virtue do not differ from one another or from the whole *except in size* (329d). The fundamental question is, what distinction is Socrates highlighting with these cases? What point is he trying to make about the parts of virtue which Protagoras affirmed in P1)? B&S take the size distinction of P1.b) to be the point Socrates is making. However I think the text makes it clear that the function of the parts is what distinguishes the two cases.

In order for biconditionality to hold among the virtues, the pieces of gold analogy must entail that anyone who possesses one of the parts of virtue, must possess them all (329e).[43] However, Socrates suggests that the significant difference between the parts of a face and pieces of gold is that in the first case each can accomplish a distinct task, while in the second case we can accomplish the same task with each. That is, what Socrates highlights

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[43] Vlastos claims that this is not only the implication of the text but that this "is a transparently clear expression of a well-known Socratic tenet." Ibid., 233.

with the two cases is the δύναμις, or ability to accomplish a task, of each part, not the relative size of the parts. But B&S think the size of the various parts is the point Socrates is trying to make.[44] However, this simply makes no sense. Suppose the relative size of the parts is what Socrates is trying to highlight with the two analogies: there would be no significant difference between the two cases. Both parts of a face and pieces taken from a bar of gold will have different sizes. This is trivially true in the first case though less so in the second. However if the size distinction is what is supposed to distinguish the two cases, Socrates has failed to make any significant distinction at all. So if he is trying to draw a distinction with the two analogies, which obviously he is, the size criteria of P2.b) cannot be the important element of the distinction. Thus, what Socrates emphasizes as the difference between P1.a) and P1.b) is the δύναμις of each. If the parts have the same power, we can accomplish the same kinds of tasks with the different pieces. The parts of a face each have distinct powers, but the pieces of gold will all have the same essential powers so long as quantity is not an essential consideration.

There is another reasons to think the pieces of gold analogy implies a biconditional relationship between the parts of virtue: Protagoras thinks this is the consequence of the analogy. The elenctic exchanges that follow 330b all involve Protagoras defending the notion that a person may have one of the virtues without having them all. This is a consequence of biconditionality,

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[44] This is essential to their interpretation because if true, it would allow them to claim that Socrates is expressing his own view in the Euthyphro where it is argued that piety is a part of justice.

not size. Socrates is committed to opposing Protagoras on this point; with each elenchus he concludes that it is implausible to think someone could have one of the virtues and not all the others. Protagoras is taken along with great reluctance, but it is clear that he understands that the pieces of gold analogy implies a biconditional relationship between the virtues, which he wants to deny (especially in the case of courage at 349d).

Thus, it seems that if the pieces of gold analogy represents Socrates' view, he is committed to the *BT*. B&S seem to recognize some of the implications of the parts of gold analogy as it affects their understanding of the *UVD*. For example, they interpret the sameness of the virtues expressed in the pieces of gold analogy to mean that each virtue name (i.e., justice, piety, temperance, courage, etc.) refers to an application of one and the same skill (i.e., wisdom, or "the knowledge of good and evil"[45]) in different circumstances.

> Wisdom, then, is what is common to all of the virtues. One who possesses this virtue will possess them all, for anyone who is wise will recognize what he or she should do in all morally relevant circumstances and contexts. Moreover, one must possess wisdom in order to possess any one of the other virtues . . . . So it is that no one can have any one of the virtues without having all of the others. For no one can be virtuous in any way without being wise, and if one is wise, one can use one's wisdom to produce all of the different moral *erga*.[46]

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[45] Brickhouse and Smith, 69.

[46] Ibid., 71.

Thus, in order to be just, one must possess knowledge of good and bad and be able to apply it in the circumstances of human relations. In order to be pious, one must possess knowledge of good and bad and be able to aid in the circumstances of service to the gods. In order to be courageous, one must possess knowledge of good and bad and be able to apply it in fearful circumstances, and so on. So B&S are committed to biconditionality between the "parts" of virtue in some sense: if a person is virtuous, she must have wisdom, and if she has wisdom, she has courage, justice, and piety.

The question which remains is whether their use of the Euthyphro to support the claim that knowledge of definitions is insufficient for knowledge of virtue is consistent with the biconditionality of the pieces of gold analogy. Their analysis of the Euthyphro revealed that Socrates must be committed to the parts of virtue having distinct and varying scopes. At 12a-e, he seemed to be committed to the claim that justice and piety are related in the same way as numbers and odd numbers, fear and reverence. The set of numbers is composed of both odds and evens while the set of odd numbers is smaller because it leaves out the even. So whenever we take the set of all numbers, we will also have the subset of odd numbers. But it is clearly not the case that when we take the set of odd numbers, we have all numbers since the odd excludes the even. The scope of the odd set is smaller than the scope of the set of numbers. Thus, we could not infer the even from the odd. In the same way, fear has a scope more broad than reverence because everywhere there is reverence, there is fear, but there are cases of fear which do not include reverence. Thus, we cannot infer reverence from non-reverential fearful situations. The important point is that in neither case do we have the

biconditionality suggested by the pieces of gold analogy. But, if B&S are right, Socrates believes these analogies accurately represent the relation between justice and piety. Like numbers and fear, justice has a larger scope than piety: every case of piety will therefore be a case of justice, but not every case of justice will be a case of piety.

B&S want to maintain that the analogies of the Euthyphro are consistent with the pieces of gold analogy of the Protagoras. Virtue, like a piece of gold, is one thing (i.e., a single "psychic condition"[47]), and if we take off different pieces of the gold, they will share all the same essential properties of the whole except their size. In like manner, the parts of virtue are all still essentially the same, like the pieces of gold, but they are different in their various extensions. And this seems *prima facie* consistent with the numbers/fear analogies of the Euthyphro since the set of numbers is bigger than the set of odd numbers and since the set of fearful things is larger than the set of reverential things. Unfortunately, it is impossible for Socrates to be committed to both analogies without being inconsistent. If the pieces of gold analogy entails a biconditional relationship between the parts of virtue as indicated above, we know that from *any* instance of virtue (not just wisdom), we can infer the presence of all the others. So if anyone has piety he must also have justice, temperance, courage, etc. But according to the analogies of the Euthyphro, Socrates *cannot* believe that possession of justice necessitates the possession of piety. The set 'justice' will include the set of all pious things but will also include the set of all non-pious just things. It would be true that

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[47] Ibid., 69.

having the whole set of just things necessitates the set of pious things because the latter is a proper part of the whole set 'justice'. But the numbers/fear analogies explicitly preclude inferring the whole from the part. Thus, if B&S are correct and Socrates is committed to these analogies in the Euthyphro, he should not endorse the pieces of gold analogy of the Protagoras. The logical implications of the analogies from these two dialogues are simply inconsistent. An alternative interpretation can offer a much simpler resolution to this dilemma: if neither the numbers/fear nor pieces of gold analogy are intended to articulate Socrates' position, there is no *prima facie* inconsistency for B&S to resolve.

Conclusion

I have argued in this Chapter that Brickhouse and Smith offer some interesting insights into the epistemological foundations of Socrates' *UVD*, but that their interpretation of that doctrine, dependent as it is on the *PVD*, is inadequate. Specifically, I think their attempt to synthesize the accounts of virtue in the Protagoras and Euthyphro is problematic. The Euthyphro, like the Meno, shows signs of an emerging Platonic epistemology and metaphysic which is moving toward distinct forms corresponding to each virtue term. The Protagoras, on the other hand, gives us good reason to believe Socrates thought the various virtue terms refer to only one thing. Another problem with Brickhouse and Smith's interpretation of the *UVD* is that it looks rather more like the position defended by Protagoras than the one defended by Socrates. If their analysis were correct, each virtue would be distinct from every other in its definition as well as what it aims to produce (i.e., its ἔργον).

This is strikingly similar to Protagoras' claim that the parts of virtue are distinct in themselves—like the parts of a face—and in their power (or δύναμις) to accomplish distinct things. Finally, the text does not support, and therefore there is no reason we should afford, wisdom priority over any of the other virtues. Socrates treats wisdom no differently than the other so-called "parts" of virtue. In the texts where the *UVD* is discussed, wisdom is just one instance of virtue, no different from courage, piety, justice, or temperance. For these reasons, I think the interpretation of the *UVD* offered by Brickhouse and Smith ultimately fails to capture Socrates' doctrine of the *UVD*. Besides, as I have already argued in the chapter above, we can attribute a much stronger sense of unity to virtue than Brickhouse and Smith can allow. The only question left to investigate is whether or not there really is a coherent doctrine of the *UVD* in the early dialogues. Daniel Devereux denies there is a coherent doctrine in the early dialogues, and to this challenge I now turn.

Chapter V

Devereux on the Unity of Virtue

One way to resolve the apparent textual inconsistencies that shape the enigma of Socrates' doctrine of virtue is to argue that there is no single Socratic doctrine of virtue, and, therefore, there is no problem to solve. If different early dialogues demonstrate Socrates' commitment to different views on the nature of virtue, at different times, with different interlocutors, the simplest solution might be to argue that Socrates simply does not have a single coherent theory of virtue. Perhaps he expresses genuinely distinct, and inconsistent, views on the nature of virtue in different dialogues. Perhaps he had not thought the problem through, or perhaps he changed his mind over time. Alternately, one might argue that in some texts we find the doctrine of the historical Socrates and in others Plato's revision of his mentor's unsystematic views. Something like this second possibility has been suggested by Daniel Devereux.[1]

Devereux has argued that there is no coherent, systematic, Socratic *UVD* to be found throughout the early dialogues of Plato. He maintains that the doctrine we find Socrates expressing in the Protagoras is hopelessly at

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[1]Devereux makes the strongest case for the 'Socrates' of the Laches not being the historical Socrates in his 1977 paper. However, I will not focus on this article since his later work represents the same basic position with a primary focus on the problem of the *UVD* which is the focus of this study. There is an important shift, however, in how he interprets the *Parts of Virtue Doctrine* in the Laches, as I point out in § B.1 below. See Daniel Devereux, 1977, "Courage and Wisdom in Plato's Laches," Journal of the History of Philosophy, 129-141; and Devereux, 1992, "The Unity of the Virtues in Plato's Protagoras and Laches," Philosophical Review, 765-789.

odds with the views he expresses in other early dialogues. Thus, the whole enterprise of trying to fit the disparate views of Socrates together into a single coherent doctrine is doomed from the start. Because I believe there is a systematic *UVD* found not only in the Protagoras but also in other early dialogues, and because my interpretation of the *UVD* depends upon this view, I must respond to Devereux's objections and demonstrate why I think his interpretation of the early Platonic corpus is mistaken.

A. The Devereux Interpretation of the *UVD*

While there are disputes over exactly how we should understand the *UVD*, the belief that there is a coherent *UVD* to be found throughout the early dialogues is held by most commentators on Socratic philosophy. The general consensus is that Socrates was committed to a view in which the virtues courage, temperance, piety, justice, and wisdom are related in some necessary way which makes it impossible for anyone to have one, but not others, and that virtue is some kind of knowledge.[2] But Devereux parts from the majority and denies there is a systematic *UVD* in the early dialogues. He claims that what we find in the Protagoras is a genuine Socratic theory of virtue, but the views expressed in the Laches and Meno are inconsistent with

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[2]For Example, c.f. Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith, Plato's Socrates (New York: Oxford Press, 1994); Michael Ferejohn, 1982, "The Unity of Virtue and the Objects of Socratic Inquiry," Journal of the History of Philosophy 20: 1-21; Terence Irwin, Plato's Ethics (New York: Oxford Press, 1995); Richard Kraut, Socrates and the State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984; Terry Penner, 1973, "The Unity of Virtues," Philosophical Review 82: 35-68; Gerasimos Santas, "Socrates at Work on Virtue and Knowledge in Plato's Laches," Review of Metaphysics 22: 433-460; C.C.W. Taylor, Plato: Protagoras (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Gregory Vlastos, "The Unity of the Virtues in the Protagoras," in Platonic Studies (Princeton, Princeton University Press); Paul Woodruff, "Socrates on the Parts of Virtue," Canadian Journal of Philosophy Supplementary Volume II (1976): 101-116.

it and, therefore, most likely represent a Platonic revision of Socrates' doctrine.[3]

Devereux's argument centers on an analysis of the Laches that highlights what he believes are several apparent inconsistencies with the texts of the Protagoras. He justifies this narrow focus by pointing out that "those who have discussed the unity of the virtues in the early dialogues have focused most of their attention on the Protagoras, and have not appreciated the complexity of the view suggested in the Laches."[4] In the latter, he believes we find a view of the *UVD* which is not only different from the position outlined in the Protagoras, but which is also inconsistent with the competing interpretations of the *UVD* offered by other scholars (e.g., Vlastos' *Biconditionality Thesis* and Penner's *Identity Thesis*).

Devereux's argument against a coherent *UVD* is twofold: first, he argues that in the Laches Socrates is committed to virtue's composite nature (as he is in the Meno), and in the Protagoras he is committed to its non-composite nature; therefore, these dialogues are inconsistent. The second part of the argument is itself twofold: first, he argues that wisdom plays a central unifying role among the virtues not found in the Protagoras. Second, Socrates' position in the Laches indicates the parts of virtue will each be distinguished by some non-intellectual element such as endurance which is

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[3]Devereux, 1992, 788.

[4] Ibid., 767. Devereux does not offer an analysis of the texts of the Meno which, he believes, are also inconsistent with the Protagoras. He sidesteps the Meno for two reasons: first, Vlastos has already provided a thorough investigation of these texts and he thinks it is unnecessary to repeat that work; second, he believes the theory of virtue laid out in the Meno is significantly different from that related in the Laches (771). The precise difference between these two accounts is spelled out below. However, despite the differences between these two dialogues, Devereux believes they both show Socrates' commitment to the Parts of Virtue doctrine which, he maintains, is wholly lacking from the Protagoras.

also incompatible with the theory of virtue articulated in the Protagoras. Given the combined force of these two arguments, Devereux believes any attempt to tease out a single *UVD* in the early dialogues is ultimately futile. I believe Devereux's analysis of the Laches is fundamentally flawed, and therefore the radical conclusion he offers is unwarranted. Before I offer a detailed criticism of his position, however, his argument must be laid out in detail.

A.1 Why the Laches and Protagoras are Inconsistent

Devereux first argues that there cannot be a consistent, Socratic *UVD* because the Laches and Protagoras, both early dialogues, contain inconsistent views on the nature of virtue. This argument rests on a *prima facie* reading of three particular passages in the Laches where it appears Socrates commits himself to the position that virtue has a composite nature. I refer to this as the *Parts of Virtue Doctrine* (hereafter, *PVD*).[5] In the Laches, according to Devereux, Socrates is committed to the *PVD* since he asserts to both Laches and Nicias that virtue is composed of definitionally distinct parts, of which courage is but one.

The first passage which Devereux believes commits Socrates to the *PVD* is found at 190d:

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[5]There are a number of ways to conceptualize the relationship between virtue and its parts. One way is to think that 'virtue' names a set of distinct things (e.g., definitionally distinct universals). An alternative is to think of the universal virtue as a genus of knowledge with distinct species falling under it. Devereux opts for something like the first alternative and ultimately claims that, in the Laches at least, the universal 'wisdom' (or, knowledge of the good and the bad) is identical with virtue, and the universals courage, temperance, piety, and justice are necessarily present whenever it is. Devereux, "The Unity of the Virtues," 778.

> I would not have us begin, my friend, with inquiring about the whole of virtue, for that may be more than we can accomplish. Let us first consider whether we have a sufficient knowledge of a part; the inquiry will thus probably be made easier to us.

From this passage, Devereux derives:

> 1) Socrates himself introduces the *PVD* and is therefore committed to it.

The second passage is found at 198a where Nicias takes over as interlocutor for Laches and Socrates reminds him of their agreement on the *PVD*:

> Do you [Nicias] agree with me about the parts [of virtue]? *For I say* that justice, temperance, and the like, are all of them parts of virtue as well as courage (my emphasis).

This passage leads Devereux to assert:

> 2) Socrates unequivocally affirms his commitment to the *PVD*.

The third and final passage to which Devereux points as support for Socrates' commitment to the *PVD* is found toward the end of the dialogue at 199e:

> . . . Nicias, courage according to this new definition of yours, instead of being only a part of virtue, will be all virtue . . . . But we were saying that courage is one of the parts of virtue?

We can summarize Devereux's interpretation of this passage as

> 3) Socrates reminds Nicias of their commitment to the *PVD* and is therefore committed to it.

Taken by themselves, any one of these passages certainly seems strong *prima facie* evidence for Socrates' commitment to the *PVD*, and of the three 2) is clearly the strongest. But when we consider 1), 2), and 3) together, it seems almost impossible to doubt Socrates' commitment to the *PVD* in the Laches. Given these assertions on Socrates' part, how could we possibly come to any other conclusion?

If the *prima facie* reading of the texts highlighted by Devereux accurately represent Socrates' position in the Laches, what is the position he defends in the Protagoras and how is it different? Devereux agrees with the majority of commentators that in the Protagoras there are only two descriptions of virtue available for Socrates to adopt. At 329d, Socrates asks Protagoras:

> Is virtue a single whole, and are justice and self-control and holiness parts of it, or are these latter all names for one and the same thing?

The disjunction Socrates articulates can be divided into

> 4) Virtue is a composite whole and justice, piety, and temperance are parts of it;

and

> 5) Justice, piety, and temperance name one and the same thing.

Either Socrates agrees with Protagoras that virtue has a composite nature by asserting 4), or he is committed to 5) and believes that all the particular virtue names refer to "one and the same thing" (329d).

Gregory Vlastos has defended the first alternative and argued that Socrates must take the first disjunct because this is the same position found in the Laches and Meno.[6] Socrates goes on, Vlastos believes, to disagree with Protagoras on just what is entailed by the *PVD*, but he is consistent in his commitment to virtue's composite nature throughout the early dialogues. But Devereux rejects this interpretation because he believes it is internally inconsistent with the position Socrates takes in the rest of the Protagoras.

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[6]Vlastos calls the *PVD* "standard Socratic doctrine," "UVP," 225; see also "Socrates on 'The Parts of Virtue,'" 418-423. I deal with Vlastos in detail in Chapter Two above.

Specifically, when Socrates and Protagoras return to their debate on the nature of virtue at 349b, Devereux argues that Socrates clearly shows he has been committed to P2) all along.[7] Socrates reiterates the initial disjunction of 329d:

> Wisdom, temperance, courage, justice and holiness are five terms. Do they stand for a single reality, or has each term a particular entity underlying it, a reality with its own separate function, each different from the other?

From this, Devereux argues, we can derive:

> 4') 'Wisdom', 'temperance', 'courage', 'justice' and 'piety' are names of distinct things with distinct functions;

and

> 5') 'Wisdom', 'temperance', 'courage', 'justice', and 'piety' are names of one and the same thing.

The context makes clear that Socrates thinks 4') and 5') affirm the same positions as 4) and 5), and since Socrates rejects 4'), he must also reject 4). Thus, in the Protagoras Socrates rejects the claim that virtue is composed of parts (the *PVD*) in favor of the much stronger claim that all the particular virtues are really one and the same thing (the *IT*).

Given the analyses of the Protagoras and Laches favored by Devereux, it is easy to see his argument emerge. In the Laches Socrates is committed to virtue's composite nature while in the Protagoras he favors an identity of the so-called "parts" of virtue. These are inconsistent views, so either Socrates held what are clearly incompatible views at the same time, or the two different views represent distinct phases of Socrates' thought. It would clearly violate the principle of charity to suppose Socrates failed to see the obvious

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[7]Devereux, 769.

inconsistency between the *PVD* and *IT*. Therefore, it must be that Socrates does not mean to hold the same view in both the Protagoras and the Laches. For whatever reason, Plato is not putting a single, consistent doctrine of virtue in the mouth of Socrates, but is presenting different doctrines in these two dialogues. Devereux ultimately speculates that the Laches may represent Plato's attempt to resolve some of the problems found in the doctrine represented in the Protagoras,[8] and therefore it probably represents a later work. But whatever the case may be, Devereux holds that it is futile to search for a consistent *UVD* in the early dialogues if we include the Laches in our investigation.

A.2 The Peculiar Role of Wisdom in the Laches

The second part of Devereux's argument that the Laches represents a unique doctrine of virtue focuses on what he takes to be the peculiar role of wisdom among the various parts of virtue. In the Protagoras we find wisdom listed as one of the parts of virtue (329e, 349b), whereas in the Laches we do not (198b). Further, in the Protagoras Socrates offers arguments designed to convince Protagoras that wisdom and temperance (332a-333b) and wisdom and courage (349e-350c, 353b-360d) are the same thing. Devereux thinks this should not be surprising since he believes Socrates is committed to the *IT* of the *UVD* in the Protagoras. But in the Laches, Devereux argues, Socrates rejects the claim that courage and wisdom are the same and is instead committed to the view that "the other virtues are united *through* wisdom,

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[8]Ibid., 788; see also Devereux, 1977.

and [thus] wisdom is regarded not as a part but as the whole of virtue."[9] So, in the Laches wisdom is conceived differently than in the Protagoras, and this is further evidence for Devereux's claim that there is no coherent *UVD* in both dialogues.

The argument for the distinctive role of wisdom in the Laches begins with the final elenchus between Socrates and Nicias. The general has argued that courage, which all agree is good, is a kind of knowledge which inspires fear or confidence depending on the situation (195a). And the knowledge that causes fear or confidence is knowledge of what will happen in the future (198b). But Nicias also believes that for any subject there is, properly speaking, only one ἐπιστήμη (or science) covering past, present, and future events (198d-e). So if there is an ἐπιστήμη of courage, it must be knowledge of not only the future, but also the past and present which would make it equivalent to the knowledge of goods and bads generally (199d). Now, if it is true that courage is not just knowledge of the future (i.e., what is fearful and hopeful) but also knowledge of the past and present (i.e., knowledge of the good and the bad), then "instead of being only a part of virtue, [courage] will be all virtue" (199e). But Socrates immediately points out that Nicias earlier agreed (198a) that courage was only a part of virtue, which is a contradiction of the conclusion they just reached. It must therefore be, claims Socrates, that "we have not discovered what courage is" (199e).

We should now recall Devereux's previous argument that Socrates is committed to virtue's composite nature. He says,

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[9]Devereux, "The Unity of the Virtues," 767.

> in treating courage as a part of virtue, [the Laches] *demands* a distinctive definition of this virtue, a definition that indicates how it differs from wisdom and the other virtues.[10]

Thus when Socrates tells Nicias that they have not yet discovered the nature of courage at the end of the dialogue, it would appear he is rejecting the claim that knowledge of goods and bads (i.e., wisdom) is sufficient for courage.[11] After all, there must be something that distinguishes courage from, say, temperance, justice, or piety.[12] However, as Devereux admits, the text clearly commits Socrates to the sufficiency of wisdom for virtue.[13] So on the one hand, Socrates thinks there is some property that distinguishes courage from the other virtues, while on the other hand, this property does not undermine wisdom's sufficiency for virtue overall. So, what is that property which when added to wisdom yields courage as opposed to some other part of virtue, and how is it related to wisdom?

The answer, according to Devereux, was introduced in an earlier part of the dialogue (192b) where Laches suggested that courage is a kind of endurance (καρτερία).[14] Even though the elenchus leaves Laches in utter

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[10]Ibid., 774.

[11]The argument would go something like this: Socrates' main objection to Nicias' definition is that it is inconsistent with the conjunction of 1), 2), and 3). Because they all agree that courage is only part of virtue, and because the new definition would make courage equivalent to wisdom (and therefore all of virtue), it must be the case that wisdom, while necessary, is insufficient for courage.

[12] Devereux's claim rests entirely on Socrates' acceptance of the *PVD*. However, as I argue below, it is not at all clear that the text forces us to conclude that Socrates is committed to the *PVD* and there is therefore no need to think of the virtues as definitionally distinct in the way that Devereux suggests.

[13]"I have argued that both endurance and knowledge of good and evil are essential for courage . . . . It would seem to follow that the knowledge by itself is not a sufficient condition for courage. However, in the final argument Socrates clearly asserts that knowledge of good and evil *is* sufficient for all the virtues." Devereux, "Unity of Virtues," 778.

[14]Literally, "an endurance of the soul" (καρτερία τις εἶναι τῆς ψυχῆς).

confusion and Nicias takes the conversation in a different direction, "Socrates does nothing to disabuse Laches of his belief that endurance is essential to courage."[15] So if Socrates is committed to the *PVD* and it is therefore necessary that there be some property that distinguishes courage from the other virtues, why not take καρτερία to be that property? Thus, despite Laches' confusion, courage will turn out to be *wise endurance* (192c) after all.[16]

If Devereux's analysis is thus far correct, there remains one nagging question: If wisdom is sufficient for courage, how can it be that καρτερία is necessary for courage? After all, wisdom, a cognitive property, and endurance, a noncognitive property, are clearly not the same thing. But Devereux suggests we might conceive of καρτερία as a "necessary concomitant" of wisdom without doing injustice to Socrates' intellectualism. That is, "one might think of endurance as a quality one could not fail to possess if one had knowledge of good and evil."[17] If this is correct, then we can see why Socrates rejects Nicias' definition of courage at the end of the Laches. While it is true that wisdom is sufficient for courage, Nicias' definition leaves us no way of distinguishing courage from any other part of virtue because it fails to highlight an essential feature of courage not found in any other part of virtue. And although not argued in the Laches, it will be a

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[15]Devereux, "Unity of Virtues," 777.

[16]For Devereux's account of why Laches is tripped up by Socrates' elenchus, see "Courage and Wisdom in Plato's Laches."

[17]Devereux, "Unity of Virtues," 779.

corollary of this view that each 'part' of virtue will have some peculiar property, necessitated by wisdom, which distinguishes it from any other.[18]

So, according to Devereux's analysis of the Laches, wisdom, which is equivalent to knowledge of the good and the bad—or virtue, is not one of the parts of virtue but is sufficient for the presence of each in an individual. Thus, each of the parts of virtue will be connected through wisdom. That is, wisdom is what guarantees the 'unity' of the virtues since having it will insure having each of the others. Further, it cannot fail to be exemplified in any courageous, temperate, just or pious action.[19] Thus, anyone who is wise will also, in virtue of that wisdom, be courageous, temperate, and pious. So the role Plato assigns wisdom in the *UVD* of the Laches is, according to Devereux, much stronger than that of the Protagoras. So if we put this conclusion together with that of the previous argument (that Socrates is committed to the *PVD* in the Laches but not the Protagoras), Devereux believes we can come to only one conclusion: The Laches and the Protagoras do not represent a single, coherent, Socratic *UVD*, but rather two divergent theories of how virtue is one thing.

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[18] This makes very little sense to me. If 'endurance' is supposed to be a property of courage, and courage is supposed to be distinct from wisdom, how can it reasonably be asserted that wisdom is sufficient for courage? If this property is so closely associated with wisdom that you cannot have wisdom and fail to have it, it would seem better to think of endurance as a property of wisdom, not a property of courage. Of course, Devereux could not accept this without abandoning the thesis that Socrates is committed to the *PVD*. This objection is spelled out in more detail in § B.1 below.

[19] Ibid., 778.

B. Problems with the Devereux Interpretation

Devereux has argued that the project of discovering a Socratic doctrine of the Unity of Virtue in the early dialogues is fundamentally flawed because the Laches and Protagoras attribute distinct and incompatible views to Socrates. In the latter, Socrates seems content with the view that each of the names of virtue actually refers to one and same thing, while in the former he seems committed to a view where the names of virtue point to distinct things. The argument for this position rests upon two claims: first, in the Laches Socrates is committed to virtue's composite nature, and second, in the Laches Socrates gives one of the parts of virtue (i.e., wisdom) logical precedence over the others. It should be pointed out that Devereux's second argument is logically dependent upon the first. Because he takes the commitment to the *PVD* in the Laches as genuinely Socratic, Devereux is forced to read the rejection of Nicias' definition of courage at 199e as he does. I wish to suggest that we have good reasons for doubting that Socrates is committed to the *PVD* in the Laches, and therefore we get a completely different (and, in my opinion, more natural) reading of the end of the text. More importantly for my purposes, if I am correct, then there is no reason to think the Laches and Protagoras are inconsistent so far as the *UVD* is concerned. But before I offer my response to Devereux, I will note some significant objections to his position raised by Terry Penner.

B.1 The Penner Objections

Devereux's reading of the Laches has not escaped criticism by other commentators. Terry Penner has suggested two problems raised by Devereux's reading of the Laches: 1) if he is correct, Socrates must reject what

appears to be a clearly Socratic argument given by Nicias and, 2) the Socrates of the Laches would seem to reject the Socratic maxim that virtue is knowledge.[20] Unfortunately, Penner does not flesh out these objections in much detail. But because they are worthy of note, I will undertake to do so briefly before moving on to my own objections to Devereux's position.

Penner's first objection is that on Devereux's reading of the Laches Socrates must reject the argument put forward by Nicias at 194d. That Socrates opposes an argument put forward by an interlocutor is not surprising, but in this case it is an argument built on Socrates' own premises:

> Nicias: I have often heard you [Socrates] say that 'Every man is good in that in which he is wise, and bad in that in which he is unwise.'
>
> Socrates: That is certainly true, Nicias.
>
> Nicias: And therefore if the brave man is good, he is also wise.

If we were to schematize this argument it would go as follows:

> 6) *X* is good, if and only if *X* is wise.
>
> 7) If the courageous are good, then the courageous are wise.
>
> 8) The courageous are good. (*assumed premise*)
>
> 9) Therefore, the courageous are wise.

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[20]Terry Penner, 1992, "What Laches and Nicias Miss—And Whether Socrates Thinks courage Merely a Part of Virtue," Ancient Philosophy 12: 4. Penner goes on to object that "Devereux seems to find the only real Socrates in Xenophon and Aristotle!" However, this objection seems as much rhetorical as substantive and I will not comment on it further except to say that Devereux does in fact spend a good deal of time trying to show that Socrates' conception of virtue in the Laches is not too far removed from Aristotle's and Xenophon's conception of self-control (ἐγκράτεια). See Devereux, "Unity of Virtues," 779-783.

The first premise (one which Socrates admits to having asserted in the past, 194d) holds that wisdom is both necessary and sufficient for goodness, and because it is assumed by Socrates, Nicias, and Laches that courageous men are good men, it must follow that all courageous men are wise. Socrates turns to Laches to see if he follows the argument (which he does not) and clarifies Nicias' position by saying, "he appears to me to mean that courage is a sort of wisdom" (194d). This conclusion actually requires the further premise:

> 10) Courage is what makes the courageous man courageous (and similarly, wisdom is what makes the wise man wise).

which then enables Socrates to conclude:

> 11) Therefore, courage is a kind of wisdom.

The interlocutors then go on to clarify what kind of wisdom (or knowledge) courage is which ultimately leads to the contradiction between Nicias' definition (195a) and the premise that courage is only a part of virtue. We should recall that Devereux argues that Socrates is committed to the *PVD*, so he must reject Nicias' definition of courage; and since that definition is based upon the argument just outlined, Socrates must reject what seems to be a Socratic argument put forward by Nicias.

The question is, to which part of the argument does Devereux object? That is, which premise or inference in Nicias' argument is Socrates supposed to find unpalatable? In an earlier paper,[21] Devereux argues it is 6) (i.e., *X is good, if and only if X is wise*) which is unacceptable to Socrates. He thinks the most we can get out of the claim 'Every man is good in that in which he is wise' is that "wisdom is a sufficient, but not necessary, condition of

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[21] Devereux, "Courage and Wisdom in Plato's Laches," 137-141.

goodness."[22] Devereux's main reason for reading Nicias' claim at 194d as a sufficient, but not necessary, condition for goodness is that if Socrates endorses this argument, he ought also to endorse the definition of courage at 195a which would then force him to reject the premise that courage is only a part of virtue at the end of the dialogue. However, Socrates does not openly reject the *PVD* at the end of the dialogue but merely concludes "we have not discovered what courage is" (199e). Devereux takes this to be evidence for Socrates' continued commitment to the composite nature of virtue (along with1), 2), and 3) noted above). After all, if Socrates accepted the first premise as formulated above, why not go all the way and conclude that we should reject the premise that courage is a part of virtue?

But this reading of the argument simply will not hold up. If we go back to Nicias' original statement of the Socratic maxim: '. . . every man is good in that in which he is wise, *and bad in that in which he is unwise,*' we see that Devereux has neglected an important element of the maxim. The second half of the proposition demands a stronger reading than he wants to allow. The first half of the conjunction tells us that "every wise person is a good person," which Devereux accepts as an assertion of the sufficiency of wisdom for goodness. And if wisdom is sufficient, but not necessary for goodness, there should be cases of good people who are *not* wise. But the second half of the conjunction implies that where wisdom is absent so too is goodness.[23] So the

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[22]Devereux, "Courage and Wisdom," 139, n. 33.

[23]As I read it, the maxim states $(W \supset G) \& (\sim W \supset \sim G)$ from which the material equivalence of $W \equiv G$ can be derived. Thus, if Devereux accepts the first disjunct to read "wisdom is necessary for goodness," it seems to me he must accept the implication of the second disjunct. That means the best reading of this maxim is that wisdom is both necessary and sufficient for goodness.

question is, does Socrates believe a person can be good and at the same time fail to be wise? The second disjunct seems to tell against there being any good people lacking wisdom.[24] Thus, if Socrates accepts the maxim put forward by Nicias (which he clearly seems to), then it would appear that he is committed to wisdom being *both* necessary and sufficient for goodness.

In his more recent paper "The Unity of the Virtues in Plato's Protagoras and Laches," however, Devereux moderates his earlier view. While accepting that there can be no courage without wisdom, he still wants to defend a Socratic commitment to the *PVD*. On this latter view, wisdom (i.e., the knowledge of the good and the bad) is sufficient for all the parts of virtue, but each part is distinguished by some non-intellectual property which cannot fail to accompany wisdom. So the non-intellectual property 'endurance', which is a "necessary concomitant" of wisdom, distinguishes courage from piety, justice, and temperance.[25] Likewise, each of the other parts of virtue will have some non-intellectual property that demarcates them from the other parts of wisdom. So while Socrates accepts the claim that wisdom is necessary and sufficient for courage, he also rejects the conclusion of Nicias' argument that courage and wisdom are the same thing (and therefore all of virtue).

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[24]If my reading of the maxim is accurate, we immediately face an ancillary paradox in Socratic virtue theory which exceeds the scope of this work. The Apology seems to indicate that Socrates thought himself a good man who lacked wisdom (41c-d). If I am correct about the Laches passage, we must eventually come to grips with this paradox. In fact, some commentators have already attempted to resolve this issue. See Brickhouse and Smith, 1990 "What Makes Socrates a Good Man?" Journal of the History of Philosophy 160-179; and Vlastos, "The Paradox of Socrates," in The Philosophy of Socrates (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971.

[25] Devereux, "The Unity of the Virtues," 779.

There are several objections that can be raised to Devereux's reading of the final elenchus of the Laches. One objection goes to the heart of my response to Devereux's reading of 1), 2), and 3) which I give below, so I will set it aside for now. A second objection, raised by Penner, is that Nicias' argument is introduced as Socratic, and at no time does Socrates point out that Nicias has misunderstood what was meant by the Socratic maxim "Wisdom is the cause of goodness." This stands in sharp contrast "with Critias in the Charmides who gets exceedingly rough treatment for his pains in trying to be Socratic—being shown really to understand nothing of what he may have picked up from Socrates."[26] Since Socrates does not disabuse Nicias of the Socratic nature of the argument, Penner concludes he most likely endorses this position.[27] If he accepts the argument as valid and does not question the truth of the premises, he should also accept the conclusion (and therefore, reject the *PVD*).

The second objection Penner raises against Devereux's position is that if he is correct, the Socrates of the Laches must reject the traditional Socratic maxim that virtue is knowledge. Even if καρτερία is a necessary concomitant of knowledge as Devereux speculates, there is a non-intellectual property which is necessary for the existence of courage, thus wisdom alone cannot be sufficient for courage. But Penner points out that there is no need to think the accounts of the Laches and Protagoras are inconsistent just because there is a discussion of καρτερία in the former but not the latter. If knowledge is

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[26]Penner, "What Laches and Nicias Miss," 4, n. 6.

[27]This does not mean, as Penner rightly points out, that Nicias fully understands Socrates' views. Ibid.

necessarily accompanied by a kind of power[28] in the account of virtue in the Protagoras, the discussion of καρτερία as a necessary condition for courage in the Laches need not represent a different doctrine. The 'endurance', to which Devereux appeals as a distinct addition to Socrates' earlier formulation of courage, may be nothing more than the 'power' (δύναμις) which is identical to, or necessarily accompanies, knowledge. That is, the 'endurance' of the Laches just is the 'power' of the Protagoras. Thus Penner objects that Devereux "does not consider the possibility that for the Socrates of the Laches as for the Socrates of the Protagoras, there is no more to (wise) endurance than just wisdom."[29] And, if we can account for the data of the Laches on the same interpretive model we use for the Protagoras, we have a more parsimonious explanation. Thus, we have sufficient justification for doubting Devereux's claim that the Laches and Protagoras are inconsistent simply because the former includes a discussion of wise endurance.

While I think Penner's objections to Devereux's reading of the Laches are damaging, there are more profound objections to be raised against his view. I think Devereux makes a fundamental error in attributing1), 2), and 3) to Socrates in the first place. I believe there is a natural way of reading the text which does not force Socrates to accept the *PVD*. In fact, as I will argue in the next section, I think the context in which1), 2), and 3) are introduced and reiterated makes it virtually impossible to take them as Socratic

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[28]It seems clear that Socrates does in fact attribute power to knowledge: Prot. 357c ". . . we two agreed that there was nothing more powerful than knowledge, but that wherever it is found it always has the mastery over pleasure and everything else." An interesting question, which must be deferred until later, is whether this power is a distinct quality of knowledge or merely a consequence of possessing knowledge.

[29]Penner, 4, n. 7.

endorsements of the *PVD*. Since this is the foundation of Devereux's reading of the text, when this objection is coupled with those raised in this section, I think Devereux's interpretation of the Laches founders altogether.

B.2 Problems with the Text

It will be recalled that Devereux bases his argument that the Laches and Protagoras present inconsistent views of the *UVD* on Socrates' commitment to the *PVD* in the former. If the Socrates of the Laches believes that courage is but a part of virtue while the Socrates of the Protagoras rejects this claim, must it not be the case that these two dialogues represent two distinct doctrines of virtue? And is it not, as Devereux points out, Socrates himself who suggests to Laches at the beginning of the dialogue that in order to understand virtue, we must first understand its parts, specifically courage (190d)? And does not Socrates reemphasize this premise, and in fact commit himself to it, when he reminds Nicias of their agreement on it at the beginning of the final elenchus of the dialogue (198a)? And finally, is it not Socrates himself who points out that Nicias' definition of courage is inadequate just because it conflicts with the premise that courage is only a part of virtue (199e5)? Do not these passages (1), 2), and 3)) taken together clearly indicate that in the Laches Socrates is committed to virtue's composite nature?[30]

I do not think that any one of the passages mentioned above, taken individually or together, commit Socrates to the *PVD*. In order to

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[30]On this point Kraut emphatically agrees with Devereux: "There is simply no evidence in the Laches that Socrates really means to reject his own claim that courage is a part of virtue." Richard Kraut, Socrates and the State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 261. In what follows I show why this claim is false.

demonstrate why I reject Devereux's reading of the text, we should review the premises in order. At the beginning of the first elenchus with Laches, Socrates suggests they inquire after part of virtue because "the inquiry will thus probably be made easier" (190d). Laches agrees, and off they go chasing after courage, assuming it to be a proper part of virtue as a whole. However, this is clearly an assumed premise; it is a premise accepted on the grounds that it *might* make the inquiry simpler. It is equally plausible that it will make the inquiry more complicated. In fact, it is possible that Socrates does not believe virtue is compose of parts, but he at the same time knows that Laches, and very likely many others, do. Rather than rejecting the *PVD* outright, Socrates could very well believe it better to help Laches discover for himself that virtue is not composed of parts. My point is that we ought not read too much into an assumed premise. Taken by itself, we have no way of knowing what Socrates believes about this assumption.

If the statement of the *PVD* at 190d is an assumed premise, are there any clues elsewhere in the text to help indicate whether or not Socrates accepts, rejects, or is genuinely unsure about the truth of 1)? Are there any passages where Socrates emphatically asserts the truth of a proposition with which we can compare this one? In fact, as we noted in the section above, there is. Compare 190d with 194d to which Socrates admits he is committed:

> Nicias: I have often heard you say that 'Every man is good in that in which he is wise, and bad in that in which he is unwise.'
>
> Socrates: That is certainly true, Nicias. (194d)

Nicias here quotes Socrates to Socrates. Why? Because Nicias wants to argue from premises that he knows Socrates believes true. This premise is not

assumed to be true by Nicias or Socrates for the success of the argument. Rather, Socrates is unequivocally committed to its truth. Thus, the qualification of the initial premise should give us serious pause; at best Socrates is neutral to its truth.

However, Devereux anticipates this objection.[31] That is why he goes on to emphasize 2). When Nicias takes over for Laches and he and Socrates begin the final elenchus of the dialogue, Socrates is careful to remind Nicias of the assumed premise from the beginning of the dialogue:

> I must beg of you, Nicias, to begin again. You remember that we originally considered courage to be a part of virtue (198a).

Socrates goes on to remind Nicias that he (Nicias) had accepted the claim that courage was a part of virtue and that there were many other parts—the sum of which *is* virtue (198a5). But more importantly for Devereux, Socrates gets Nicias' agreement on what the parts of virtue are, and this is a passage where it looks as if Socrates commits himself to the *PVD*:

> Do you agree with *me* about the parts? For *I say* that justice, temperance, and the like, are all of them parts of virtue as well as courage. Would you not say the same (198a9) [emphasis mine].

Even if Socrates were neutral toward the initial passage, how could we doubt his commitment to the *PVD* here?

What we should keep in mind about this passage is that it clearly refers back the assumed premise from the beginning of the dialogue. And, as I have already argued, the qualification of that premise gives us cause to be dubious about ascribing it to Socrates. If this passage had occurred without reference to that earlier premise, I would think it more likely that Socrates was committed

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[31]Devereux, "Unity of Virtues," 772.

to its truth. However, given the overall context in which it occurs, I take it Socrates is simply being rigorous about the initial assumption. It is as if Socrates is saying: "*If* virtue is composed of distinct parts, as we initially assumed, then those parts would be justice, temperance, etc." But the fact that Socrates begins by reminding Nicias of the initial assumption and then goes on to spell out the implications of the assumption only serves to underscore its provisional nature.

The final passage Devereux suggests as evidence that Socrates was committed, from the beginning, to the truth of the assumed premise is the conclusion of the final elenchus.[32] If Socrates had been neutral to the truth of the premise, the argument should have ended, he claims, with a disjunction between Nicias' last definition and the assumed premise that virtue is composed of parts. But because Socrates concludes they have failed to discover what courage is (199e9), Devereux takes it that he is committed to the initial premise, and therefore rejects Nicias' definition. But the implication of the conclusion is that we must either yield one or the other. And it is not at all unusual for an elenchus to end with this kind of conclusion without explicitly stating the disjunction.[33] So the fact that the disjunction is not explicit is not evidence that Socrates was committed to the truth of the assumed premise and therefore the falsity of Nicias' definition.

Thus far all I have argued is that the provisional nature of the premise that virtue is composed of distinct parts gives us good reason to be sceptical about Socrates' acceptance of it. There is, however, a further piece of evidence

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[32]Ibid.

[33]For example, see the following early dialogues: Charm. 175b; Ly. 223b; Eu. 8a; Prot. 361a-c.

from the text which I think makes it impossible for Socrates to have endorsed the *PVD* implied in 1), 2), and 3). Before he introduces the assumption that their inquiry after virtue will be made easier if they first pursue a part of virtue, Socrates says to Laches:

> Socrates: Then must we not first know the nature of virtue? For how can we advise anyone about the best mode of attaining something of whose nature we are wholly ignorant?
>
> Laches: I do not think we can, Socrates.
>
> Socrates: *We* say then, Laches, *that we know* the nature of virtue.
>
> Laches: Yes.
>
> Socrates: And *that which we know* we must surely be able to tell?
>
> Laches: Certainly [190b-c; my emphasis].

As the dialogue makes clear, Laches knows the nature of neither courage nor virtue even though he thinks, at the beginning, that he knows both. Are we to assume then, that Socrates is claiming to *know* what courage and virtue are from the very beginning of the dialogue? I think that is very improbable. Rather, it seems he believes that Laches *thinks he knows* what courage is, and that a good part of his efforts thereafter are designed to show Laches that he does not know what he thought he knew. Given what we know of Socrates from other early dialogues, it is completely out of character for him to claim to know what virtue is. In fact, it would not only be out of character for Socrates to openly claim to know the nature of virtue (or its so-called parts) in

reference to other early dialogues,[34] but he has already claimed in the Laches that "he has no knowledge of the matter" (186e). So if we cannot take Socrates' assertion—that he and Laches *know* what virtue is—at 190b seriously, why should we take seriously the claim at 190d that virtue is composed of parts? A far more natural reading, as I have already suggested, is that Socrates has reason to believe that Laches (and probably Nicias too) believes that courage, justice, piety, etc., are distinct parts of virtue. This is, after all, a common sense view of the nature of virtue. Even the great sophist Protagoras defends a similar view. Thus, armed with the realization that Laches and Nicias believe courage to be only a part of virtue, he sets out to test the generals on the elenctic battlefield.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Daniel Devereux's claim that the Laches and Protagoras represent distinct and incompatible views of Socrates' *UVD* is unwarranted. Devereux's thesis rests upon two related arguments, both of which, I have argued, fail. First, there are three passages in the Laches that look as if they might commit Socrates to the claim that virtue is composed of distinct parts. Upon closer examination, however, it appears they are assumed for the sake of argument, and we may consistently read the text without attributing them Socrates. In fact, the context in which he introduces these remarks makes it implausible to think Socrates *could* believe them to be true. Second, on Devereux's reading of the Laches wisdom plays a

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[34]One of the most consistent elements of the early dialogues is Socrates' denial of significant moral knowledge. See Ap. 21b, 21d; Charm. 165b, 166c; Laches: 186e; Ly. 216c; Eu. 15c; Gorg. 506a, and 509a.

distinctive role among the virtues not found in the Protagoras. But the motivation for this argument rests directly upon Socrates' commitment to the *PVD*, and I have shown such a commitment to be altogether lacking. This objection, combined with those of Terry Penner, show that the uniqueness of wisdom—as conceived by Devereux—is unfounded. Thus, if my argument holds, there is sufficient reason to reject Devereux's claim that the 'Socrates' of the Laches maintains a more complex, non-Socratic, doctrine of the nature of virtue. This allows us to consider the arguments of the Laches as genuinely Socratic and therefore part of the overall theory of *the Unity of Virtue Doctrine* found in other early dialogues of Plato.

Chapter VI

Conclusions

The enigma of Socrates' assertions on the nature of virtue has long caused commentators a good deal of frustration. As I noted at the beginning of this work, there are many questions that have resisted clear resolution, questions that have proved fruitful ground for debate and speculation about Socrates' theory of virtue. First, there is debate over what view Socrates actually holds in the Protagoras where he most clearly raises the question of the unity of virtue. Second, commentators have struggled with his assertions on the nature of virtue found in other early dialogues. Do different dialogues provide evidence that Socrates held a single theory of virtue or is there no single theory to be discovered? That is, does Socrates have any theory of virtue at all? If he does have a doctrine of virtue, is it rationally consistent? That is, can we come to understand what motivates Socrates to hold such a doctrine; does it make sense from his perspective? This question is closely related to the issue of overall coherence: is Socrates' doctrine of virtue generally consistent with the other doctrines he seems to hold? Ultimately, Socratic scholars might be interested in a final question: is his account of virtue a plausible theory from our perspective? That is, do we think Socrates is right about the nature of virtue?

The fact that insightful commentators have radically differed on these questions of Socratic interpretation only serves to highlight the immensity of the task facing anyone interested in Socratic philosophy. This diversity of interpretation highlights the fact that it is insufficient to look to a single text, or even a few texts, to resolve questions such as, "What did Socrates think about

X?" But even taking the whole Socratic corpus (i.e., the early Platonic Dialogues) into account, along with the voluminous secondary literature, does not guarantee success. The History of Philosophy will likely always be plagued with gaps and puzzles. However, the uncertainty of the project, and the tentative conclusions we can reach, are in large part what keep us interested in the subject. Hopefully, the process not only sheds new light on old problems, but also forces us to reconsider ourselves in the light of the great thinkers of the past. This has certainly been my own experience.

My interest in Philosophy began with Socrates some sixteen years ago when I first read the Apology. From that time to the present, my life has been, to one degree or another, under the spell of the Athenian νάρκη. However, I hope my research has been something more than an exercise in self-indulgence. I think I have offered some important, or at least interesting, insights and have helped advance the cause of the scholars who have proceeded me. In this final chapter, I summarize what I take to be the highlights of my research and I conclude by raising some questions which remain for others to address.

A. Expectations and Discoveries

The first thing I should say about my research into the labyrinth of Socrates' theory of virtue is that I had very different expectations about what I would eventually conclude when I began the project. At first I was very much opposed to the *Identity Thesis*, which I took to be an implausible expression of Socratic doctrine. My initial preference was for something like the Brickhouse and Smith interpretation, which I conceived as a compromise between the weak *Biconditionality Thesis* of Vlastos and Penner's much stronger thesis. However,

the more I researched the problem, and the more seriously I threw myself into the text, the closer I moved toward Penner's position. But this was not an easy pill to swallow since I wanted Socrates' theory not only to make sense and be textually consistent, but also to be correct. That is, I wanted Socrates' theory to be the sort of theory that I could present and say, "This is worth believing today." However, this was not my ultimate conclusion. That is, while I do believe Socrates had a consistent theory of virtue, and while I think he advanced the field of moral Philosophy beyond his predecessors, I think his theory rests on a naive view of human psychology, and an incomplete epistemology and metaphysic as well. Thus, I think we would be hard pressed to take Socrates' moral theory seriously today.

This conclusion, however personally disappointing, is instructive in its own right. It is an easy trap for those like myself who are interested in the History of Philosophy to lose sight of their project. Legitimately, the task of the History of Philosophy is to try to make sense of past philosophers in their historical context. It is, however, all too easy for anyone engaged in this process to extend the principle of charity beyond the boundaries of legitimacy. The temptation to go beyond making good sense of the great thinkers of the past, the temptation to make them right about the subjects they address, is strong. This temptation, ever present to those in this field of Philosophy, ought to be resisted, however. Personally speaking, I think this is one of the greatest lessons I have learned in the process of my research. We must be vigilant when attempting to resolve the puzzles handed us from past philosophers to respect the context in which they arose. While it is unfair to dismiss the accomplishments of our predecessors because they do not meet our standards of philosophical rigor, it is

equally unfair to attribute to those same philosophers more insight than they could possibly have had. We diminish the achievements of past thinkers such as Socrates by forcing them to cohere with our understanding of the world.

B. Contributions to the Field of Socratic Studies

One important question to face at the end of any research project such as this is what contributions to the field, if any, have been achieved. I believe my research has provided several important insights into the enigma of Socrates' *Unity of Virtue Doctrine*. The best way to articulate these points is to put them in the context of the view I have developed throughout the proceeding chapters. This will serve to tie together the strands of argument developed in opposition to previous scholarship and at the same time to give an overview of my position.

My investigation of Socrates' *UVD* has been primarily guided by two of the questions noted above: 1) What is Socrates' position in the Protagoras, and 2) Is Socrates' view in the Protagoras consistent with the views he espouses in other early dialogues? In order to answer the first question, I examined the work of Gregory Vlastos, Terry Penner, and Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith. Vlastos defends the *Biconditionality Thesis*, Penner the *Identity Thesis*, and Brickhouse and Smith offer a compromise view. The second question required an investigation into the work of Daniel Devereux, who argues that the early dialogues are inconsistent on the *UVD*. My struggles with these commentators have brought me to a unique, and probably controversial, interpretation of Socrates' doctrine of virtue's unity.

B.1 Socrates' View in the Protagoras

The enigma of the *UVD* begins with Socrates' conversation with Protagoras on the nature of the relationship between the cardinal virtues—courage, justice, piety, temperance, and wisdom. Protagoras defends the view that virtue is best understood as a composite whole while each of its "parts" is distinct in name (ὀνόματα), substance (οὐσία), power (δύναμις), and he believes each may be possessed independently from the others (329d*ff*). While he moderates his view slightly during their debate, until the end of the dialogue Protagoras maintains that there is some significant distinction between the cardinal virtues. He holds that a person may have some of the virtues (particularly courage) while failing to have them all (349d).[1] There is little debate among commentators that this is the view Protagoras holds. But what view, if any, does Socrates defend in opposition to Protagoras?

Vlastos argues that Socrates agrees with Protagoras that virtue is a composite whole, but disagrees with him on the nature of the relationship of the parts.[2] According to Vlastos, Socrates prefers the pieces of gold analogy to the parts of a face analogy as a description of the relationship between the proper parts that compose virtue. This analogy, however, is problematic in itself and must be interpreted through the lens of Socrates' assertion that anyone having one of the virtues must have them all. Thus, Socrates' commitment to the pieces

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[1] Even though Protagoras is forced in the end to conclude that courage is knowledge (360e), it is clear that he is not convinced that the argument has led them to the truth. He makes his doubts clear by saying, ". . . to oblige you, I will say that by what we have admitted I consider it impossible [that anyone may lack wisdom and be courageous]." This assertion demonstrates that Protagoras is unwilling to embrace the unity of virtue Socrates has defended although he is not sure where the argument went astray.

[2] See Chapter Two, § A.

of gold analogy, coupled with the assertion that having one part of virtue entails having them all, means, according to Vlastos, that the strongest relationship that can exist between the parts of virtue is logical biconditionality. Therefore, Vlastos labels Socrates' position in the Protagoras the *Biconditionality Thesis*.

Vlastos' argument for interpreting Socrates' *UVD* as the *BT* is motivated by two main concerns. First, Vlastos thinks it impossible that Socrates could embrace the view that the five virtue terms are simply different names for the same thing. This, he thinks, would commit Socrates to the belief that the virtue terms are synonymous. Since it is *prima facie* absurd to assert that the virtue terms mean the same thing, Socrates, like Protagoras, must think that the virtue terms refer to different dispositions of character. The second motivation for the *BT* is that, according to Vlastos, Socrates demonstrates a strong commitment to the *Parts of Virtue Doctrine* in other early dialogues. If Socrates did embrace an identity of the virtue terms in the Protagoras he would be defending a view which is inconsistent with the views he expresses in dialogues such as the Meno and the Laches. But why should we commit Socrates to an incoherent set of views about virtue if there is a coherent alternative account available to us?

According to Vlastos' interpretation, it is possible to provide an account of Socrates' theory of virtue in the Protagoras that is both rational and coherent with the views he holds in other dialogues. Brickhouse and Smith agree, in large part, with Vlastos' analysis of the Protagoras. However, they think the *BT* is too weak to capture the view Socrates defends against Protagoras.[3] They concur that Socrates believes that virtue is a composite of proper parts—both in the

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[3] Chapter Four, § A.

Protagoras and other early dialogues—but they believe the relationship between the parts of virtue is stronger than Vlastos' *BT* indicates. For Brickhouse and Smith, the interpretive key in the Protagoras is the parts of gold analogy, not the biconditionality of the virtues. This analogy, along with the parts of a face analogy, is put to Protagoras to clarify his claim that the various virtues' powers are distinct (i.e., that each can accomplish a distinct end). If one takes a bar of gold and separates it into pieces, each piece can be used to accomplish the same kinds of tasks as any other piece—assuming quantity or size is not important. Therefore, according to Brickhouse and Smith, Socrates asserts that virtue is like a bar of gold, and the parts of virtue are like the parts of gold. Just as the essential properties of each piece of gold are the same as any other, the essential properties of the virtues are the same. But what are the essential properties of the virtues that are shared in common?

The virtues, according to Brickhouse and Smith, are understood by Socrates to be the application of specialized craft knowledge (τέχνη) with a specified goal (ἔργα). What is common to all the virtues is that they are forms of knowledge or wisdom applied to different moral situations. Thus, in their view, the proper parts of virtue are arranged hierarchically with wisdom playing a dominant and unifying role. Wisdom is the essential aspect common to each particular virtue. Each virtue just is wisdom applied to a different set of moral circumstances. Just as a skill such as triangulation can be applied in different circumstances to create distinct crafts like navigation and global surveying, so too wisdom can be applied in diverse situations to create the distinct skills justice and courage. Justice is the application of wisdom in the field of human relations, and courage is the application of wisdom in fearful situations.

Another example of the hierarchical nature of the virtues, according to Brickhouse and Smith, is seen in the relationship of justice to piety. Just as temperance, courage and justice are each parts of wisdom (i.e., the application of wisdom in diverse moral circumstances), so too is piety a proper part of justice. According to Brickhouse and Smith, Socrates understands the generic term 'justice' to refer to wisdom applied to different relations. However, we can understand human relations in two different ways: human-to-human relations and human-to-divine relations; 'justice' is best predicated of the former, 'piety' of the latter. Thus, as Socrates seems to assert in the Euthyphro (12d), piety actually is a part of justice as justice is a part of virtue.

For Vlastos and Brickhouse and Smith, Socrates is committed to the *PVD*, but for Brickhouse and Smith the relationship—or unity—between the parts of virtue is much stronger than it is for Vlastos. According to Vlastos' view, the parts of virtue are essentially as well as nominally distinct, and the unity of the virtues is grounded in the fact that anyone possessing one must necessarily posses them all. For Brickhouse and Smith, the substance of all the virtues is the same—they are all just wisdom. What distinguishes the cardinal virtues in the latter view is how wisdom is applied in diverse moral circumstances, or more specifically, what we intend to accomplish with wisdom in diverse moral circumstances. According to my interpretation, however, both of these views are mistaken. In both cases, it is assumed that Socrates is committed to the *PVD* in several of the early dialogues, and, therefore, he must agree with Protagoras'

initial assertion that 'virtue' names a composite thing. I think this view rests, in part, on a misreading of the text of the Protagoras.[4]

If we carefully observe the logical structure of the passage in the Protagoras from which the *UVD* is derived (329d*ff*), we see that both the parts of gold analogy and the biconditionality of the parts of virtue are intended to clarify Protagoras' view, not to articulate Socrates' position.[5] This is not to say that these views are necessarily inconsistent with Socrates' doctrine. Indeed, if Socrates prefers the view that the cardinal virtues are simply different names for the same thing (as I maintain along with Penner), it will be the case that Socrates could accept some of the implications of the pieces of gold analogy. By themselves, however, both the biconditionality of the virtues and the parts of gold analogy fail to capture the full strength of Socrates' conviction and, therefore, cannot be taken as adequate expressions of the *UVD*.

I would like to suggest that one of the important contributions I offer to Socratic scholarship is the observation that the logical structure of the argument presented by Socrates at Protagoras 329d*ff* precludes either the pieces of gold analogy or biconditionality of the virtues as accurate interpretations of his view. Socrates presents Protagoras with three disjunctions; he is asked to choose one alternative from each. The structure of the argument breaks down in the following manner:

The first disjunction offers that

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[4] Here I argue that Vlastos' and Brickhouse and Smith's reading of Prot. 329d*ff* is inconsistent with the rest of the dialogue and therefore ought to be rejected. I will deal with the question of inter-dialogue consistency in § B.2.a, 2.b, and 2.c below.

[5] See Chapter Two, § B.1 and Chapter Four, § B.2.

P1) Virtue is a composite whole and justice, piety, temperance (courage and wisdom) are parts of it;

or

P2) Justice, piety, temperance (courage and wisdom) name the same thing.

The second disjunction is offered by Socrates to clarify P1) which Protagoras embraces:

P1.a) The parts of virtue are like the parts of a face each with a distinct δύναμις;

or

P1.b) The parts of virtue are like the parts of a piece of gold, which do not differ from one another, or from the whole, except in size.

Because Protagoras asserts P1.a), which Socrates still thinks is ambiguous, the third disjunction is put forward:

P1.a.i) A person may possess one part of virtue without having all the rest;

or

P1.a.ii) A person possessing one part of virtue must have all the rest.

Protagoras chooses P1), P1.a), and P1.a.i), expressing the view that virtue is composed of proper parts which have distinct functions and which may be possessed independently from one another. The important thing to notice about the structure of this argument is that the second and third disjunctions are proposed as clarifications of Protagoras' initial assertion and should not, therefore, be assumed to directly articulate Socrates' view. Yet this is precisely what many commentators conclude; Brickhouse and Smith take P1.b) to articulate Socrates' position, while Vlastos argues it must be P1.a.ii). It is easy to reject P1.a.ii) as an adequate expression of Socrates' view since it is clearly

intended as a clarification of P1.a), which Socrates rejects, as the rest of the dialogue makes clear. The case is not so clear with P1.b), however. It could represent Socrates' view, but only if Socrates joins with Protagoras in asserting P1). However, the conclusion of the dialogue makes it doubtful that Socrates could embrace P1). In drawing aporatic conclusions about the teachability of virtue, Socrates identifies himself not with P1), but with P2). He understands himself to have defended the view which takes terms such as 'justice', 'temperance', and 'courage' (and presumably 'piety' as well) to all refer to one and the same thing (Prot. 361b). So it seems that Socrates favors P2) not P1). Hence, P1.b) could not be intended as an adequate expression of his view any more than P1.a.ii). This leaves open the question of whether Socrates' view in the Protagoras is consistent with the view he holds in other dialogues. However, when we carefully observe the logical structure of the argument in the Protagoras, it becomes clear that Socrates must favor the claim that the five virtue terms are "all names for one and the same thing" (Prot. 329d).

B.2 The Coherence of the *UVD* in the Early Dialogues

Both Vlastos and Brickhouse and Smith think Socrates is committed, along with Protagoras, to the claim that the cardinal virtues are all proper parts of virtue as a whole (i.e., the *PVD*). As I mentioned above, this view is motivated, in part at least, because these commentators believe Socrates is committed to the *PVD* in other early dialogues, specifically the Meno, the Laches, and the Euthyphro. Daniel Devereux concurs that Socrates embraces the *PVD* in some of the early dialogues, though he thinks this view is rejected in the Protagoras. Devereux is therefore committed to the position that Plato's early dialogues are

simply inconsistent on the matter of the *UVD*. I have argued that Devereux,[6] Vlastos, and Brickhouse and Smith are all wrong to think that Socrates is committed to the *PVD* in any significant way in the early dialogues.

B.2.a The Laches

Devereux is primarily motivated to assert a Socratic commitment to the *PVD* based on evidence from the Laches. There are three passages where Socrates seems to assert that virtue proper is a complex entity compounded of the cardinal virtues. At Laches 190d, Socrates suggests to Laches that they should "first consider whether [they] have a sufficient knowledge of a part [of virtue]; the inquiry will thus probably be made easier." Again at 198a, Socrates seems to favor the position that "justice, temperance, and the like" are distinct parts of virtue. Finally, at 199c, Socrates points out to Laches and Nicias that the definition of courage they have derived is inconsistent with their earlier assertions that virtue is composed of proper parts. In each case, it is Socrates himself who raises the specter of the *PVD*, and commentators such as Devereux take this as strong evidence that he does in fact hold this position, at least in this dialogue.

The argument I offer against this interpretation of the Laches represents what I take to be the second important contribution I make to Socratic studies. A careful reading of the text of this dialogue makes it clear that, no matter what else Socrates might believe, it is extremely unlikely that he is committed to the *PVD*. My argument rests on two observations: first, Socrates introduces the

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[6] See Chaper Five, § B.2.

PVD as an hypothetical proposition and as such it is reasonable to doubt that he himself has a strong commitment to its truth. Not only is the proposition introduced hypothetically at the beginning of the dialogue, but Socrates also draws attention to the fact that this is an assumed premise whenever it is restated. I take this to demonstrate the tenuous nature of the claim. The assertion that there are distinct parts of virtue is being held up for examination; it is as if Socrates is saying "look, we assumed this to be true, but is it really?" In the end, the assertion that virtue is composed of parts turns out to be inconsistent with a definition of courage that seems to be Socratic. The dialogue ends without deciding which claim should be rejected, but that does not mean we cannot infer which alternative Socrates would prefer.

The second observation that makes me dubious of Socrates' commitment to the *PVD* is the context in which it is introduced. If Socrates' introduction of the *PVD* at 190c is taken as an assertion of his own firmly held belief, we must also assert that Socrates believes that he knows "the nature of virtue" (190c). These two claims are made in the same context, and both are asserted with the same vigor by Socrates. However, if he knows the nature of virtue, he contradicts his own denial of significant moral wisdom (at 186e and 200e). It simply cannot be the case that he both knows the nature of virtue and at the same time does not know the nature of virtue. This passage is crucial in understanding the hypothetical status of the *PVD* in the Laches, and it is completely overlooked by commentators such as Vlastos, Devereux, and Brickhouse and Smith. Socrates introduces the *PVD* because he rightly believes that Laches, and most likely the other interlocutors as well, accept this belief. What we discover in the course of the dialogue, however, is that Socrates must

reject this very notion if he is to be consistent! Either Socrates is being ironic when he claims to know the nature of virtue, or he is being ironic when he claims that he does not know what courage is. It seems to me that the former is more likely to be the case than the latter, especially since the definition of courage reached at the end of the dialogue rests on principles we know Socrates accepts.

B.2.b The Meno

If my analysis of the Laches is correct, and Socrates is not committed to the *PVD* in that dialogue, what about Plato's other dialogues that seem to suggest such a commitment on his part? The Meno is a good example of such a dialogue. It too has led some commentators to the conclusion that Socrates endorsed the view that virtue is composed of distinct parts. I believe that a careful reading, however, demonstrates that it is no more likely that Socrates is committed to the *PVD* in this dialogue than in the Laches.[7]

The evidence for a Socratic commitment to the *PVD* in the Meno is found in the introductory section of the dialogue (70a-79e) and relies on the fact that from time to time Socrates and Meno both speak as if virtue has a composite nature. At 73e, it even appears that Socrates commits himself to the truth of this view. However, the *prima facie* evidence for such a commitment evaporates upon close scrutiny of the arguments in this section of the text. When asked to give an account of virtue, Meno offers various lists of virtues (71e, 74a), but as Socrates points out, this does not provide any insight into the nature of virtue itself (72c*f*, 74a, d, 79a-d). Socrates speaks of virtue's parts only in response to Meno's

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[7] See Chapter Two § B.2.b.

inadequate answers to his standard "What is *F*-ness?" question. Thus, when Socrates refers to the parts of virtue (73b, 78d*f*, 79b), it is only to point out that Meno does not understand the nature of the question under discussion. Nowhere in this dialogue does Socrates suggest that supposing virtue to have a composite structure is accurate or even helpful. There is simply no indication that Socrates is committed to the view that virtue is composed of parts in this dialogue.

I am dubious of the supposed evidence of a Socratic commitment to the *PVD* in the Meno for a further reason. The Meno is a transitional dialogue and as such it represents the emergence of distinctly Platonic doctrine. Even if we suppose the first third of the text was written during the early period and later spliced onto the rest of the text, there is no reason to suppose that Plato did not edit the earlier work to conform to his new thought. There is no way to be sure that the views we find expressed by Socrates in the Meno are more Socratic than Platonic. I, therefore, think it wise to be cautious about looking to the Meno for clarification of the views expressed in the Protagoras or other early dialogues.

Given the fact that Socrates does not unequivocally commit himself to the *PVD* in the Meno, and taking into account that this is a transitional dialogue, I think we are justified in doubting that it provides evidence for a Socratic commitment to the *PVD*. As with the Laches, a *prima facie* reading might suggest that Socrates thinks virtue is composed of parts, but a careful examination of the text makes this less clear. Thus, it is far less likely, given the evidence from these two dialogues, at least, that Socrates could agree with Protagoras that virtue is best described as a composite of proper parts. There is, however, one other

dialogue that seems to commit Socrates to the *PVD* that must be considered before we draw any final conclusions.

B.2.c The Euthyphro

The third dialogue that seems to suggest a Socratic commitment to the *PVD* is the Euthyphro. This is, in my opinion, the most troubling of all the texts that suggest the *PVD*. Unlike the Laches there are no passages in the Euthyphro which unequivocally indicate that Socrates could not be committed to the view he articulates. Further, while there is some evidence that the Euthyphro shows signs of the emergence of distinctive Platonic thought like the Meno (Eu. 5d, 6d-e), it is difficult to argue that the bulk of the text is not Socratic.[8] Nonetheless, I think we are justified in being suspicious of the claim that the Euthyphro commits Socrates to the *PVD*.

First, as I have already pointed out in relation to the Meno and the Laches, it is insufficient to conclude from Socratic assertions such as "I do not think that 'where fear is, there too is reverence'" (12b) that Socrates actually held this view. If we take every case of such an assertion to be a truthful expression of Socrates' own views, we must also conclude that he thinks Euthyphro is a very wise person (5a*ff*, 9a, d, 12a, e, 14b, c, d, 15d). However, we have very good reason to believe that Socrates is being ironic when he extols Euthyphro's wisdom. Socrates does not really believe that Euthyphro is wise, or even very bright. Thus, when Socrates utters a declarative sentence, we have to interpret it in the

[8] See Chapter Four, § B.1.

wider context of the dialogue, and perhaps other dialogues as well, to know if it really represents his considered opinion.

Second, there is some contextual evidence in the Euthyphro that should cause us to be hesitant about attributing the *PVD* to Socrates. As with the Laches and the Meno, the argument from which the evidence for the *PVD* is supposedly derived is couched in hypothetical assertions. The claims put forward by Socrates at 11e*ff* are aimed at eliciting Euthyphro's knowledge of piety and may not really represent Socrates' considered opinion at all. Euthyphro has become frustrated in his attempts to offer a definition of piety and so Socrates takes over the conversation. However, as he does with Meno, Socrates takes over the conversation not to offer the right answer, but rather to demonstrate how one might go about answering his "What is *F*-ness?" question. Euthyphro fails to understand, just as Meno had failed to understand, how to answer Socrates' question. Socrates makes it clear that he is offering an hypothetical case to help Euthyphro understand the kind of answer he expects. He says, ". . . I will make bold with you to show how you might teach me about holiness" (11e). It is the method, not necessarily the content, which Socrates emphasizes in the following passages. Thus, we should be cautious when thinking about the content of such passages.

The hypothetical nature of Socrates' assertions about justice and piety become even more clear later in the argument. After demonstrating that we can differentiate between things in reference to their properties Socrates says: "Then see what follows. *If* holiness is a part of justice, it seems to me that we must find out what part of justice it is" (my emphasis, 13d). The assumption that justice and piety have distinct properties in the same way that fear and reverence or

numbers and odd numbers do parallels the assumption at the beginning of the Laches that courage is a part of virtue. But as we saw in that dialogue, the hypothetical assumption itself turns out to be open to question. It is true that Socrates *seems* to agree with Euthyphro when he articulates different properties for justice and piety (Eu. 13a), but he also *seems* to agree with Laches when he claims to know the nature of virtue (La. 190c). The point is that we have to look to the broader context to understand these assertions. In the Laches, it turned out that the assumption that courage is but a part of virtue was inconsistent with a Socratic definition of courage. Similarly, in the Euthyphro, the assumption that piety is a part of justice leads to a dead end (15b).

Given the kinds of parallels between the Laches, Meno, and the Euthyphro that I have pointed out, I think we are justified in rejecting Brickhouse and Smith's claim that Socrates is demonstrating a commitment to the *PVD* at Euthyphro 11e*ff*. There is, however, a final reason I would offer for rejecting their reading of the Euthyphro. If we suppose that dialogues such as the Charmides, Euthyphro, Laches, Meno, and Protagoras all address, in varying degrees, the nature of virtue, we can ask which, if any, are controlling. That is, should we use any of these dialogues as a paradigm by which to evaluate the others? If so, even if there are minor variations among the dialogues, these might be overlooked in light of the controlling doctrine we find expressed in the paradigmatic dialogue. Thus, is there any reason to think one of these dialogues should be taken as a paradigm for interpreting the others?

I would suggest that we have good reason to think the Protagoras provides us with the paradigmatic expression of Socrates' *UVD*, and we should look to it as the primary interpretive model. There are two reasons I am inclined

toward this position. First, the Protagoras is the dialogue where the problem of the *UVD* is directly articulated, while in the Charmides, Euthyphro, Laches, and Meno it is at best a peripheral issue. Second, an analysis of the linguistic data suggests that the Protagoras provides a more thorough investigation of the issue than the other dialogues.[9] The virtue terms occur more frequently in the Protagoras than any other early dialogue. It is true that it is the longest of these dialogues, but it is not significantly longer than the Meno. However, the relative frequency of the virtue terms is higher in the Protagoras than in the other dialogues. For example, in the Laches, 'courage' appears thirty-five times while 'justice', 'piety', 'wisdom', and 'temperance' occur only eleven times between the four. The data indicates that courage is the central theme of the dialogue. In the Euthyphro, 'courage', 'justice', and 'temperance' do not appear at all while 'piety' appears twenty-five times and 'wisdom' eight.[10] Thus, the data shows that piety is the central theme of this dialogue. Similar results are found with the Charmides. In the Protagoras, however, each of the virtue terms appear with roughly equal frequency suggesting that the terms are equally important. In other words, while we find narrow discussions of virtue in most of the dialogues,

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[9] I have organized the data I refer to here in Appendix II below.

[10] It is an interesting feature of the Euthyphro, which distinguishes it from the other early dialogues where the *UVD* is discussed, that the abstract noun δικαιοσύνη does not appear at all. Instead, Socrates uses τὸ δίκαιον ('the just', or 'the right', or 'that which is right'). This term and its cognates appears eighteen times in this dialogue (7d.1, e.2, 7, 9; 8d.9; 11e.5, 7; 12a.1, d.1,2, 6, 7, e.2, 6, 8), thirteen of which refer to the piety/justice relationship. It may even be a mistake to interpret the discussion from 11e-12e as an argument for piety being a part of justice since the latter term does not appear. This however, is likely too restrictive a reading of the text. It is worth noting, however, that Socrates favors the usage of δικαιοσύνη when the *UVD* is being discussed elsewhere.

the Protagoras gives us a comprehensive discussion of the nature of virtue and the so-called "parts" of virtue.

The reasons listed above lead me to suggest that we can think of the Protagoras as the central dialogue in reference to Socrates' *UVD*. By itself, this would not be sufficient to disarm any inconsistencies we might find in other dialogues. However, when we add this to the other concerns I have raised, I think we are justified in arguing that Socrates holds a consistent doctrine of virtue in the early dialogues, and that this doctrine is the one we find expressed in the Protagoras. So what is the doctrine Socrates affirms in the Protagoras?

B.3 The Problem of Synonymy

If I am correct that the Protagoras represents the clearest articulation of Socrates' views on the nature of virtue, and if I am also correct that this view is confirmed by the majority of the other early dialogues which consider the issue, it only remains to clarify the position held there. This brings us to the most controversial part of my interpretation of the *UVD*. I take it that Socrates believes all the virtue terms are names of one and the same thing (πάντα ὀνόματα τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἑνὸς ὄντος, Prot. 329d), and that, for him, there is no philosophically interesting distinction to be drawn between them. The consequence of this view is that Socrates has no reason to believe that one virtue term might not be exchanged for any other in a given context. To put the matter more directly, the virtue terms are, for Socrates, synonymous. The difficulty of this position lies in offering a reasonable account of, what seems to many, an

absurd view that is neither *ad hoc* nor inconsistent with the other beliefs Socrates seems to hold.[11]

Terry Penner was the first contemporary commentator to suggest that Socrates held the strong view of the unity of virtue. This view has come to be known as the *Identity Thesis*. However, like Vlastos before him, Penner believed that Socrates could not consistently believe that adequate answers to his "What is *F*-ness?" questions could be definitions of *F*-ness and at the same time believe that all the virtue terms name one and the same thing. Such a view would imply that Socrates thinks the virtue terms are synonymous. Rather than giving up the strong sense of unity implied by the *IT*, Penner chose to give up Socrates' emphasis on definitions. If Socrates believed the virtues were all essentially the same, he could not be searching for the meaning of 'temperance', or 'courage', or 'justice', or 'wisdom', or 'piety'. Instead, Penner argued that Socrates wanted to know what caused a person to be just, pious, wise, etc. By interpreting his mission as a search for the efficient causes of the virtues rather than their meaning, Socrates could be spared what seems to be a sophomoric oversight: thinking the virtue terms share the same meaning. The problem with this view is that it is at least as clear that Socrates is searching for definitions as it is that he thinks the various virtue terms name the same thing.

My solution to the problem of interpreting the *UVD* is to grasp both horns of the dilemma. I believe that when Socrates asks his "What is *F*-ness?" questions, he is seeking definitions. I also believe that Socrates embraces a strong sense of identity among the virtues. This means that Socrates must think that the

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[11] See Chapter 3, § B.2.

virtue terms can be exchanged for one another without equivocating. Thus, for Socrates, the virtue terms are synonymous. This thesis seems grossly absurd to contemporary philosophers, myself included, because when we predicate synonymy of two terms, we focus on the meaning of the terms. We say that two terms may be exchanged for one another if they share the same meaning. Thus, 'temperance' and 'courage' may be exchanged for one another in a single context if and only if they share the same definition. Because we believe that the virtue terms do not mean the same thing, they cannot be exchanged with one another without equivocation.

However, for Socrates the emphasis is different. In reference to τέχνη, it is his linguistic practice to exchange one term for another if it relies on the same ἐπιστήμη (I. 537d). More precisely, because the skill labeled 'virtue' depends on the knowledge of good and bad, and because the various virtue terms all turn out to be the application of the knowledge of good and bad, there is no real distinction to be made with the designations 'courage', 'justice', 'temperance', 'piety', or 'wisdom'. According to Socrates, we can only distinguish between skills if there is different knowledge behind the skill. The mistake that Socrates' interlocutors repeatedly make is to suppose that the virtue terms refer to different kinds of knowledge (e.g., the knowledge of how to be brave, or just, or pious, etc.). I suspect that Socrates would be quite happy to do away with these terms altogether and just use the word 'virtue'. However, because those around him insist on using these terms, he is content to show that they are all the same skill because they are all the same kind of knowledge—the knowledge of the good and the bad.

Thus, when in the Protagoras Socrates challenges the great sophist on the nature of the various virtue terms, he is defending the position that each of the terms used to describe virtuous action not only refer to the same thing, but also mean the same thing. Insofar as 'virtue' has a meaning, it is "to act in accordance with the knowledge of the good and the bad." The same is true for each of the so-called cardinal virtues: 'courage' just means "to act in accordance with the knowledge of the good and the bad," 'piety' just means "to act in accordance with the knowledge of the good and the bad," etc. It is true that the context of the application of the knowledge of good and bad can differ from situation to situation.[12] But as Socrates makes clear in the Ion, the context has nothing to do with the distinction between different kinds of skills. For Socrates it is the knowledge that is being incorporated in a given situation that warrants the designation. If we are exercising the same kind of knowledge in different circumstances, we are, according to him, exercising the same kind of skill, and thus we are justified in using the same label for that skill. For example, if I am exercising the knowledge of good and bad in the contexts of religion and the battlefield I am being virtuous. If an interlocutor insists on using the terms 'piety' and 'courage', then Socrates would say that I could refer to the former as courage and the latter as piety without equivocation because the knowledge we employ is the same in both cases.

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[12] On this point Brickhouse and Smith were very close to the correct interpretation of Socrates' doctrine. Unfortunately, they failed to recognize Socrates' commitment to the *IT* which led them to try to distinguish between the virtues in much the same way many of his interlocutors did.

C. Final Thoughts

I have argued that when Socrates asserts that the virtues are one, he understands the unity of the virtue terms in the strongest possible way. He believes that temperance, piety, justice, wisdom, and courage are all names for one and the same thing, i.e., virtue. This interpretation allows us to understand the aporetic nature of many of the early dialogues as the interlocutor's failure to grasp why their investigation has failed. For example, if we assume that courage is only a part of virtue, as Laches and Nicias do, then the observation that courage is the knowledge of the good and bad will not be helpful. If temperance is assumed to be distinct from the other virtues, as Critias assumes, then it will appear that it will be insufficient for happiness. If we assume along with Protagoras that the virtues are distinct kinds of things with distinct powers as well as names, it will prove difficult to see how virtue could be taught. In each of these cases, the aporatic conclusion of the dialogue rests on the interlocutor's assumption that the virtues are distinguishable in some philosophically significant way. If we remove these assumptions, we come to the conclusion that virtue is simply knowing the difference between the good and the bad. And, regardless of the context in which we apply the knowledge of good and bad, we apply the same knowledge. The various words we use to refer to the application of this knowledge in different contexts all refer to, and, for Socrates, mean the same thing. Thus, Socrates might argue that for clarity's sake we should dispense with the different names of virtue and simply utilize the word 'virtue'.

If the analysis of the *UVD* I have offered is correct, there remain some important and interesting questions to be explored. For example, does my position commit me to the claim that Socrates has significant moral knowledge?

If so, we can ask what this tells us about his general epistemology. We should also address how this knowledge coheres with his ubiquitous denials of significant moral wisdom. Is Socrates merely being ironic when he claims not to know the answers to his "What is *F*-ness?" questions where virtue is the subject? Another interesting question that remains to be explored is whether, and how, Plato differs from Socrates on the interchangeability of terms. Plato will offer an alternative account of virtue in the middle dialogues—especially in the Republic—but does Plato move closer to a conception of synonymy that we would hold? Does the theory of Forms create a metaphysical groundwork upon which later formulations of synonymy rest? Does Socrates' lack of such a metaphysical view prevent him from clearly articulating the concept of synonymy? That is, does Socrates' *UVD* seem odd to us precisely because we make metaphysical assumptions, Platonic or otherwise, that he did not? All of these questions are deserving of attention, but go far beyond the scope of this work. I can only hope that what I have offered here will prove fertile ground for further inquiry into Socrates' enigmatic thought on the nature of virtue.

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APPENDIX I

Virtue Terms in Plato's Dialogues Listed by Individual Passage[1]

The following lists represent occurrences of the Greek terms for the virtues found in Plato's dialogues. I originally collected this data to help me identify useful passages for my research. I realized that it might be helpful for others as well, and thus decided to include it as an appendix to the main text. I was primarily interested in the abstract nouns and their derivatives and thus excluded their verbal, adjectival, and adverbial cognates (with the exception of ὅσιος which seems to be preferred to ὁσιότης in the early dialogues). In this appendix I show those locations where Plato may be involved in an analysis of the virtues, not simply where the concepts appear. I have organized the terms by two criteria: 1) alphabetical occurrence of terms (and their derivatives) by dialogue, and 2) dialogues by philosophical development. These lists are not intended to be exhaustive but rather representative of Plato's usage of the virtue terms. I have thus neglected to note multiple occurrences of terms within individual passages.[2]

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[1] The data contained in this appendix, and Appendix II below, I distilled from Leondard Brandwood, A Word Index to Plato (Leeds, England: Maney and Son, 1976).

[2] For example, the Greek term translated 'courage' (ἀνδρεία) occurs at La. 194a lines 3 *and* 5. There are several such instances but I have only listed the passages where the terms occur, not each individual occurrence.

ἀνδρεία – Courage ('manliness'):

Early -
La. 190d. e; 192b,c, d; 193d; 194a, e; 199a, b, c, d, e
Prot. 330a, b; 349b, d; 350b,c; 351b; 359b; 360d; 361b
Crat. 413e; 414a

Middle –
M. 74a; 88b
Phdo. 68c; 69b, c
Rep. IV 429a; 431e
Rep. VI 490c; 494b

ἀνδρείαν:

Early -
Gorg. 492a; 495c, d
La. 190d; 191e; 192b, c, d; 193d; 194c, d; 196d, e; 197e; 198a, c; 199c, e
Prot. 310d; 350d; 351a; 359b; 360c

Middle –
M. 88a
Phdo. 68d
Rep. II 361b
Rep. IV 429c; 430b, c
Rep. VI 491b
Rep. VII 536a
Rep. VIII 561a
Sym. 194b; 196c; 212b; 219d

Late -
Phil. 55b

ἀνδρείας:

Early -
La. 193e; 194b; 195a; 197b; 199c; 200a
Prot. 353b

Middle –
Crat. 413e
Rep. III 402c
Rep. IV 426d; 433b
Rep. VI 487a; 504a
Sym. 192a; 196d

Late -
Tim. 70a

ἀνδρεία:

Early -
Ap. 35a
La. 198a
Prot. 342b

Middle –
Phdo. 115a
Rep. IV 433d

ἀρετή – Virtue

Early -
Ap. 18a; 30b
Cr. 53c
Eud. 274e
Gorg. 479b; 492c; 504c, e; 506d, e; 512d
H. Ma. 248a
La. 190b; 198a; 199e
Prot. 320c; 326e; 327b; 328c; 329c; 360e; 361a, b

Middle –
Crat. 386d; 415a, b
M. 70a; 71a, c, e; 72a, d; 73a, c, d, e; 74a; 77a, b; 78b, d, e; 79a, c; 81e; 86c, d; 87b, c, d, e; 88c; 89c, d; 93b, e; 94e; 96c; 98d; 99a, e; 100b
Phdo. 69b; 93e
Phdr. 253d; 256b
Rep. I 335c; 351a; 353b, c; 354b, c
Rep. III 407c; 409d
Rep. IV 444d
Rep. VIII 550e; 551a; 554e;
Rep. X 601d; 617e

Late -
Phil. 64e
Tht. 176c

ἀρετήν:

Early -
Ap. 20b; 29e; 35b
Eud. 273d; 274e; 283a, b; 285d; 287a
Gorg. 492e; 499d; 503c; 517e; 519e; 526a; 527d, e
H. Ma. 283c, e; 284a
La. 190b
Prot. 319e; 320b; 324a, b, c, d; 325a, c; 328b; 329b; 340e; 349e; 361c

Middle –
Crat. 395a, b; 404a; 411a; 415e
M. 71a, d, e; 72a; 73a; 74b; 75c; 76b; 77b; 78c, d; 79a, b, e; 87d; 88d; 89a; 91b; 92d; 93b, d; 95b; 100a
Phdo. 69a; 82b; 93b,c
Phdr. 232d; 234b; 256e; 270b
Rep. I 335b, c; 348c; 350d; 353c, d, e
Rep. II 378e
Rep. III 407a; 409d
Rep. IV 433d; 441d; 445b
Rep. V 457a
Rep. VI 492a, e
Rep. VIII 547b; 459b; 550e
Rep. X 598e; 600d; 613b; 618c
Sym. 179a, d; 180a; 184c, d, e; 185b; 209a, e; 212a

Late -
Phil. 55c
Tht. 145b; 176b
Tim. 34b

ἀρετῆσ:

Early -
Ap. 20b; 30b; 31b; 38a; 41e
Cr. 45d; 51a
Eud. 275a; 278
Gorg. 506d; 519c
H. Mi. 370e; 374c
La. 188c; 189b; 190c, d; 198a, 199d, e
Prot. 322d; 323a, c; 324a; 326e; 327a, d, e; 328a; 329d, e; 349a, c, d; 353b; 359a, b; 360e

Middle –
Crat. 406b

M. 71b, 72a, d; 75a, b; 77a; 78e; 79a, b, c, d, e; 80b, d; 81c; 86d; 87b; 89e; 90b; 91a, b; 93a, c, e; 95b, e; 96c; 97b
Phdo. 93e; 114c
Rep. I 342a; 348e; 353c, e
Rep. II 363d; 364b; 365a, c; 381c
Rep. IV432b; 444e; 445c
Rep. VI 484d; 500d
Rep. VII 536a
Rep. VIII 549b; 556a, c
Rep. IX 585c; 586a
Rep. X 599d; 600e; 608b, c; 619d
Sym. 180b; 181e; 184c; 185b; 196b; 208d; 209b; 212a; 222a

Late -
Phil. 63e
Soph. 223a; 224c, d; 227d; 247b; 267c
Tht. 167e
Tim. 18b

ἀρετῇ:

Early -
Ap. 35a
Charm. 158a
La. 184c
Prot. 320a; 323b

Middle –
M. 87a
Rep. I 335d; 349a; 353c
Rep. III 402e; 403d
Rep. VI 498e
Rep. IX 576c, d; 580b; 588a
Rep. X 612c

Late -
Phil. 45e; 48e
Tim. 24d, e; 25b; 34c

ἀρεταί:

Middle –
M. 72a, c
Rep. VII 518d

ἀρετάσ:

Middle –
M. 73e, 74a

Late -
Soph. 251a
Tim. 87d

ἀρετῶν:

Middle –
M. 72a, c

Late -
Phil. 49a

ἀρεταῖσ:

Early -
Prot. 328a

Middle –
Rep. X 618b

δικαιοσύνη – Justice:

Early -
Cr. 48a; 53c
Gorg. 464c; 504d, e; 507d
H. Ma. 287c
H. Mi. 375d
Prot. 325a; 327b; 329c; 330b, c; 331a, b, c, d; 333b; 349b; 361b

Middle –
Crat. 411a; 412c
M. 73d
Phdo. 69b, c
Rep. I. 332d, e; 333d, e; 334b; 335c; 336a; 343c; 351a, c, d; 352c
Rep. II 358e, 364a; 366c, e; 367b, e; 368b, e; 371e
Rep. III 392b, c
Rep. IV 427d; 430d; 432b; 433a, b; 434a, c, d; 442d; 443c; 444c
Rep. V 472b
Rep. VIII 545a
Rep. X 612c; 614a
Sym. 209a

δικαιοσύνην:

Early -
Gorg. 464b; 465c; 492b; 519d; 527e
H. Mi. 375e
La. 198a
Prot. 329c; 331b, c

Middle –
Crat. 413d
M. 73e; 78d; 79a, b; 88a
Phdo. 82b
Phdr. 247d
Rep. I 331c; 332d; 333a, d; 336e; 345b; 348c, e; 350d; 353e
Rep. II 357d; 358c, d; 361b, c; 362e; 363a, d; 366b, c, e; 367c, d; 369a; 372e; 376d
Rep. IV 420b; 430c, d; 433c, d; 434d; 435a; 443b; 444a, c, d; 445b
Rep. V 472b, c
Rep. VII 517e
Rep. VIII 545b
Rep. IX 591b
Rep. X 612b; 621c

δικαιοσύνης:

Early -
Cr. 54a
Gorg. 460e; 470e; 492b, c; 508b; 519a
H. Mi. 376a
La. 199d
Prot. 323a

Middle –
M. 73b; 78e; 79b, c
Phdr. 250b; 276e
Rep. I 331d, e; 337d; 343c, 344c; 345a; 348b; 351a, b, c; 354a, b
Rep. II 358c; 359a, b; 360d, e; 361c, d, e; 363e; 365b; 366e; 367a, d; 368a
Rep. IV 435b; 443c
Rep. VI 487a; 500d; 504a, d; 506d
Rep. IX 576b
Rep. X 608b; 612b, d
Sym. 188d; 196d

Late -
Parm. 131a
Phil. 62a
Soph. 247a, b; 267c
Tht. 175c

δικαιοσύνη:

Early -
Gorg. 478a
H. Ma. 287c
Prot. 323b

Middle –
M. 73b
Phdo. 115a
Rep. I 335c
Rep. II 360b; 362d, 368b
Rep. IV 247e;
Rep. X 612b
Sym. 196c

δικαιοσύνας:

Middle –
Rep. X 611c

μεγαλοπρέπεια - Dignity (or, 'high-mindedness')

Middle –
M. 74a
Rep. VI 486a; 490c; 494b

μεγαλοπρέπειαν:

Middle –
M. 88a
Rep. VII 536a
Rep. VIII 561a

μεγαλοπρεπείας:

Middle –
Rep. III 402c

ὁσιότης – Piety (or 'holiness'):

Early -
Eu. 13b, c, d; 14d, e;
Prot. 329c; 330b, e; 331a, b, c; 333b; 349b

ὁσιότητα:

Early -
Eu. 14c
Prot. 330d; 331b, c

Middle –
M. 78e

ὁσιότητος:

Early -
La. 199d

ὁσιότητι:

Early -
Prot. 331b, d

ὅσιος – that which is *Pious* (or that which is *Holy*):[3]

Early -
Eu. 7a

ὅσια:

Early -
Ap. 35d
Eu. 6d, e; 8a; 12e; 14b; 15e
Gorg. 507b

Middle –
Rep. I 344a

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[3] Plato also uses the term εὐσέβεια (Eu. 13b), εὐσέβειαν (Symp. 188d, 193d), and εὐσεβείας (Rep. X 615c) as alternatives to ὁσιότης. These terms seem to be used interchangeably, but are obviously much more rare.

Rep. II 380c
Rep. III 391e; 416e
Rep. V 463d

Late -
Tht. 172a

ὅσιον:

Early -
Cr. 51c
Eud. 283e
Eu. 5d; 6d, e; 7a; 8a; 9c, d, e; 10a, d, e; 11a, b, e; 12a, d, e; 13c; 14c; 15b, c, d, e
Gorg. 507b;
Prot. 325a, d; 330d, e; 331a, b, c, e

Middle –
Phdo. 62a
Rep. II 368b; 378c
Rep. III 391a
Rep. IV 427e
Rep. V 458e; 461a
Rep. X 607c

Late -
Phil. 28e
Tht. 176b

ὅσιοι:

Middle –
Rep. X 615b

ὁσίοις:

Middle –
Rep. II 363a

Late –
Tht. 172b

ὁσίου:

Early -
Eu. 4e; 5d; 9d; 10d; 11e

Middle –
Phdo. 75d
Rep. II 363d

ὁσίους:

Middle –
Rep. III 395c

ὁσίων:

Early -
Eu. 4e; 6d

Middle –
Rep. II 363c
Rep. V 479a

ὁσίως:

Early -
Gorg. 523b; 526c

Middle –
M. 78d
Phdo. 113d; 114b
Rep. I 331a

ὁσιώτερον:

Early -
Cr. 54b

σοφία – Wisdom (sometimes 'Knowledge'):

Early -
Ap. 20d, e; 23a
Eud. 271c; 279d; 280a; 281d, e; 282c; 300d
H. Ma. 283c; 296a, e
La. 194e; 195a
Ly. 212d
Prot. 330a; 332a; 333a, b; 341a; 349b; 350c, e; 358c; 350d

Middle –
Crat. 404d; 412b

M. 71a; 74a
Rep. I 338b; 351a, c; 354b
Rep. IV 428b; 431e
Rep. X 605a
Sym. 175d, e; 204b

Late -
Phil. 30c
Tht. 145e; 176c

σοφίαν:

Early -
Ap. 20d, e; 22d, e; 23b; 29d
Eud. 271c; 272d; 274a; 275c; 278c; 279c; 283a; 288b; 296e; 297c; 301b; 304c; 305e
Eu. 3d
Gorg. 467e; 487c
H. Ma. 281d
H. Mi. 364a; 368b
I. 542a
La. 194d; 197d
Prot. 321d; 342b; 343a; 350d; 352d

Middle –
Crat. 404d; 428d
M. 93e
Phdr. 236b; 258a
Rep. I 350d
Rep. II 365d
Rep. IV 429a; 443e
Rep. VI 493a, b, d
Rep. X 602a
Sym. 184c, e; 197a

Late -
Phil. 30b
Tht. 145b; 162c, e; 165e; 166d; 170b; 172b; 180d; 201a

σοφίας:

Early -
Eud. 272b; 274d; 276d; 278d; 280b; 281b; 282b; 294e; 299a; 300b; 303c; 305d
Eu. 3c, 4b; 12a; 14d
Gorg. 487c, e

H. Ma. 282d; 283a
Hi Mi. 364b; 368c; 372b
La. 188c
Ly. 214a
Prot. 337d; 343b

Middle –
Crat. 396c, d; 401e; 410e
M. 70c; 91a, d
Phdo. 96a; 101e
Phdr. 274e; 275a
Rep. I 348e
Rep. III 398a; 406b
Rep. V 457b; 475b
Rep. VI 504a
Rep. VII 516c
Sym. 175e; 196d; 202a; 203e

Late -
Phil. 15e; 49a
Tht. 150c; 161e

σοφία:

Early -
Ap. 22b; 35a
Charm. 153d
Eud. 301e
Eu. 9b; 11e
H. Ma. 281c; 287c; 289b; 291a; 300d
H. Mi. 368e; 372b
La. 200a
Prot. 332e; 342b; 343c; 361e

Middle –
M. 70b; 81c; 90a; 99b
Phdr. 229e
Rep. I 349a
Rep. IV 433d
Rep. VI 485c
Rep. X 600d
Sym. 206b

Late -
Tht. 145d; 161c

σοφίαι:

Late -
Tht. 176c

σωφροσύνη – Temperance (or 'self-control'):

Early -
Charm. 158b, e; 159a, b, c, d; 160b, c, d, e; 161a, b; 162a; 165c, d; 166b; 167a; 170d; 171c, e; 172d, e; 173, d; 174d; 175a
Gorg. 504d, e; 507d
Prot. 325a; 329c; 330b; 333b; 349b; 361b

Middle –
Crat. 411e
M. 74a; 88b
Phdo. 68c; 69b, c
Phdr. 237e; 256b
Rep. II 364a
Rep. IV430d, e; 431e; 442d
Sym. 196c; 209a

σωφροσύνην:

Early -
Charm. 157a; 158b; 159a; 160e; 161d; 162a, d, e; 163a, e; 164d; 165b; 169a, b; 171d; 172b, c; 173c; 175b, d, e
Gorg. 492a; 507d; 508a
La. 198a
Prot. 323b

Middle –
M. 78d; 79a; 88a
Phdo. 68c, d, e; 82b
Phdr. 241a; 247d
Rep. III 390a; 404e; 410a
Rep. IV 430d; 432a
Rep. VI 490c; 491b
Rep. VII 536a
Rep. VIII 555c; 560d
Rep. IX 591b
Sym. 219d

Late -
Phil. 55b

σωφροσύνης:

Early -
Charm. 157b, d; 158c; 161b; 162c; 165d; 166b, e; 169c; 171d. e; 172a, c; 175a, e
Gorg. 492b, c; 508b; 519a
La. 199d
Prot. 323a; 326a; 332d, e; 333a

Middle –
M. 73b
Phdr. 244d; 250b; 253d; 254b
Rep. III 389d; 402c
Rep. IV 430d; 433b
Rep. VI 487a; 500d; 504a; 506d
Rep. IX 573b
Sym. 188d; 196c, d; 216d

Late -
Tim. 27c

σωφροσύνη:

Early -
Charm. 170c, e; 171c
Prot. 332b

Middle –
M. 73b
Phdo. 144e
Phdr. 256e
Rep. III 402e
Rep. IV 433d

APPENDIX II

Number of Passages Containing the Cardinal Virtue Terms Listed by Dialogue

This appendix is intended to demonstrate the contrast of occurrences of virtue terms in Plato's dialogues.[1] As in Appendix I above, these lists are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to demonstrate the distribution of references to the virtues in Plato's early works (I have included the middle and later works for contrast). It is evident that the Protagoras contains the most numerous references to the cardinal virtues in Plato's early period. While not conclusive by itself, it is some evidence for the claim that the Protagoras should be taken as a controlling dialogue for interpreting the *Unity of Virtue Doctrine.*

Early -

Ap.
Courage -1
Justice – 0
Knowledge - 1
Piety - 1
Temperance - 0
Wisdom - 11

Charm.
Courage - 0
Justice – 0
Knowledge - 83
Piety - 0
Temperance - 65
Wisdom - 1

[1] I am including in these lists the occurrences of ἐπιστήμη and its cognates because Socrates often uses this term synonymously with σοφία. However, I have listed them under the more literal translation 'knowledge' so as to avoid confusion.

Cr.
Courage - 0
Justice – 3
Knowledge - 0
Piety - 2
Temperance - 0
Wisdom - 0

Eud.
Courage - 0
Justice – 0
Knowledge - 34
Piety - 1
Temperance - 0
Wisdom - 33

Eu.
Courage - 0
Justice – 0
Knowledge - 2
Piety - 25
Temperance - 0
Wisdom - 8

Gorg.
Courage - 3
Justice – 16
Knowledge - 13
Piety - 4
Temperance - 10
Wisdom - 4

H. Ma.
Courage - 0
Justice – 2
Knowledge - 0
Piety - 0
Temperance - 0
Wisdom - 11

H. Mi.
Courage - 0
Justice – 3
Knowledge - 5
Piety - 0
Temperance - 0

Wisdom - 7

I.
Courage - 0
Justice – 0
Knowledge - 6
Piety - 0
Temperance - 0
Wisdom - 1

La.
Courage - 35
Justice – 2
Knowledge - 20
Piety - 1
Temperance - 2
Wisdom - 6

Ly.
Courage - 0
Justice – 0
Knowledge - 0
Piety - 0
Temperance - 0
Wisdom - 2

Prot.
Courage - 17
Justice – 17
Knowledge - 23
Piety - 21
Temperance - 13
Wisdom - 21

Middle –

Crat.
Courage - 3
Justice – 3
Knowledge - 5
Piety - 0
Temperance - 1
Wisdom - 8

M.
Courage - 3
Justice – 12

Knowledge - 38
Piety - 2
Temperance - 7
Wisdom - 10

Phdo.
Courage - 5
Justice – 4
Knowledge - 19
Piety - 4
Temperance - 8
Wisdom - 2

Phdr.
Courage - 0
Justice – 3
Knowledge - 9
Piety - 0
Temperance - 9
Wisdom - 5

Rep. I
Courage - 1
Justice – 35
Knowledge - 3
Piety - 2
Temperance - 0
Wisdom - 6

Rep. II
Courage - 1
Justice – 42
Knowledge - 2
Piety - 6
Temperance - 1
Wisdom - 1

Rep. III
Courage - 1
Justice – 2
Knowledge - 2
Piety - 4
Temperance - 6
Wisdom - 2

Rep. IV
Courage - 8

Justice – 26
Knowledge - 26
Piety - 1
Temperance - 9
Wisdom - 5

Rep. V
Courage - 0
Justice – 3
Knowledge - 12
Piety - 4
Temperance - 0
Wisdom - 2

Rep. VI
Courage - 5
Justice – 5
Knowledge - 7
Piety - 0
Temperance - 6
Wisdom - 5

Rep. VII
Courage - 1
Justice – 1
Knowledge - 14
Piety - 0
Temperance - 1
Wisdom - 1

Rep. VIII
Courage - 1
Justice – 2
Knowledge - 0
Piety - 0
Temperance - 2
Wisdom - 0

Rep. IX
Courage - 0
Justice – 2
Knowledge - 3
Piety - 0
Temperance - 2
Wisdom - 0

Rep. X
- Courage - 0
- Justice – 11
- Knowledge - 3
- Piety - 2
- Temperance - 0
- Wisdom - 3

Symp.
- Courage - 6
- Justice – 4
- Knowledge - 14
- Piety - 0
- Temperance - 7
- Wisdom - 11

Late -

Parm.
- Courage - 0
- Justice – 1
- Knowledge - 23
- Piety - 0
- Temperance - 0
- Wisdom - 0

Phil.
- Courage - 1
- Justice – 1
- Knowledge - 35
- Piety - 1
- Temperance - 1
- Wisdom - 4

Soph.
- Courage - 0
- Justice – 3
- Knowledge - 11
- Piety - 0
- Temperance - 0
- Wisdom - 0

Tht.
- Courage - 0
- Justice – 1
- Knowledge - 119
- Piety - 3

Temperance - 0
Wisdom - 16

Tim.
Courage - 1
Justice – 0
Knowledge - 2
Piety - 0
Temperance - 1
Wisdom – 0

APPENDIX III

On the Appropriate Translation of Κακός

It is not uncommon for translators of Plato's texts to render κακός and its cognates 'evil'.[1] I, however, do not find this an acceptable translation for Plato's works, especially for the Socratic dialogues. I think we should be careful to be as faithful to the author's intent as possible by using the most precisely equivalent expressions in our vocabulary for translations. And, I do not think 'evil' accurately captures what Socrates/Plato had in mind.

First, in the context of theodicy, we draw a distinction between two types of evil: natural and moral. Natural evil refers to events in nature or events caused by natural law which cause human suffering. This includes a wide range of events including disease and death, as well as natural catastrophes. Any event whose causal roots lie in non-human action that inflict physical and/or mental anguish on human beings can be referred to as natural evil. Moral evil, on the other hand, refers to events that cause human suffering where the cause of the suffering is an action willed by a moral agent. In both these cases we see the word 'evil' employed to refer to situations where human suffering occurs; we differentiate the two cases based on the cause of the suffering. In Plato's early dialogues there is very little attention paid to the problem of natural evil. Socrates himself asserts that he has very little interest in the investigation of the natural world, and disavows any knowledge of the workings of the natural

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[1] Examples of this practice are so numerous I will offer only a few as examples: Hugh Tredennick, Ap. 29b; Benjamin Jowett, Charm. 156e, Rosamond Kent Sprague, La. 199d; W.K.C. Guthrie, Prot. 351d.

world (Ap. 19c). Thus, we are safe in asserting that Socrates has no interest in what we would call natural evil.

If Socrates is not interested in what theodicists call natural evil, he is keenly interested in moral evil. More specifically, Socrates is concerned with discovering the nature of morality so that we may avoid actions that are immoral. It is certainly true that immoral acts can cause both mental and physical anguish, but does that mean we should think of all immoral acts as evil?

The English language enables us to distinguish between at least three levels of moral disapproval: 'bad', 'wicked', and 'evil'. Broadly speaking we predicate 'bad' of any action (or person) which violates an established normative standard. The term clearly expresses disapproval of a particular action, but our disapproval is muted. For instance, we might say that a child has behaved badly by disregarding her father's admonition not to eat a cookie before dinner. A colleague may be thought to behave badly when he fails to keep secret an intimacy related by a coworker, broadcasting it instead to the entire office via email. A spouse may be properly denominated 'bad' for failing to remember the birthday anniversary of her husband. A soldier is bad if he deserts his post. In each of these cases we express moral dissatisfaction both with the action and the agent. However, our dissatisfaction in these types of cases does not reach the level of moral outrage. We expect that the offending behavior can be corrected given the appropriate sort of motivation.

When an action causes a sense of moral outrage in us we do not limit the signification of our disapproval to 'bad'. Rather we move on to the much stronger term 'wicked'. Here we not only express our disapproval of the behavior, but we also indicate the possibility of a moral defect in the character of

the agent. Everyone violates the moral order at one time or another, thus, "to err is human." A wicked act, however, evokes an entirely different level of moral antinomy. The teenager who tortures and mutilates animals, the adult who derives genuine pleasure from causing and/or observing suffering in others, the swindler who bilks the elderly and the vulnerable out of their sustenance, all exemplify a morally damaged character.[2] These types of cases demonstrate not the *in*sensitivity associated with bad acts, but actually signify moral *de*sensitivity. We not only disapprove of the character and behavior of the wicked individual, we wonder whether she can be reformed at all.

The highest form of moral disapproval can be expressed in English with the term 'evil'. An evil action is one that is recognized to be wrong and is willfully chosen, not *in spite* of its antinomy with the moral code, but *because* of its antinomy with the moral code. What is most disturbing about evil actions, or more specifically—agents, is that they are, apparently, rational. Evil acts are directed against the moral code itself in an attempt to overthrow it.[3] If we adopt the Hebraic metaphor we might say evil is the attempt to make chaos out of order.

It is perhaps impossible for modern English speakers to separate this last concept 'evil' from its roots in the Christian tradition. Historically speaking, Christianity has provided the substance of the dominant moral code as well as

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[2] What it is that causes the kind of damage to a person's character that allows them to engage in such actions is a topic for Psychology, and I will not venture to offer any explanation. I am only interested here in how we differentiate between these kinds of moral violations in our language.

[3] To be more specific, evil is the attempt to eliminate morality altogether, not just replace one moral code with another. Thus, a cultural critic like Frederick Nietzsche is not promoting evil when he suggests we abandon the Western moral code which is so entwined with Christianity. Even Nietzsche's nobleman cannot live without a moral code, he merely does not submit to a heteronomous morality. Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, Walter Kaufmann. trans., ed. (New York: The Modern Library, 1968), 394-398.

the mythology for Western society and, therefore, speakers of English. It gained ascendancy over Hellenistic (i.e., Greco-Roman) morality in the Fifth Century of the Common Era and has faced few, if any, challenges until the Twentieth Century. Christian morality is thus deeply rooted in the Western mind.

Because the Christian scriptures (i.e., the New Testament) were written in Greek we can highlight the similarities and differences between the Christian concept of 'evil' and the Platonic view of moral transgression.[4] For the authors of the New Testament the most popular word translated as 'evil' is πονηρός. Appearing over fifty-six times, and used in both the gospels and epistles, it is the favorite designator for demonic powers, the devil, and even the fabled 'Cain' from Hebrew mythology. By comparison, κακός (Plato's favored term) appears thirty-six times and refers almost exclusively to the realm of human action. In this restriction to human action we see a similarity with Plato's use of the term. However, this similarity is superficial as a more thorough investigation of the Christian doctrine of evil makes clear. For the authors of the New Testament, human evil is caused not simply by poorly informed decisions or a deficient moral character, but a malevolent spiritual power. The cause of moral evil lies with the fall of humanity (Rom. 5:12*ff*), which was fostered by Satanic temptation (2 Cor. 11:3).[5] Thus, immorality is a symptom of the demonic attempt to undo

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[4] It should be noted that the New Testament texts were written in common (κοινή) Greek of the First Century C.E., which is different in some minor respects from the Classical Greek of Plato. However, these differences are relatively minor and do not impact the comparison being made here.

[5] There are certainly many ways of interpreting the mythology of Genesis. However, the preferred orthodox Christian interpretation has been that the serpent in the Garden of Eden was an incarnation of Satan (Rev. 12:9). Thus Christian mythology holds that malevolent spiritual forces have, from the very beginning, tried to undo the good works of a benevolent creator in part by persuading humanity to violate God's moral order.

the good and orderly creation of God.[6] Immorality represents a kind of warfare between the powers of good and evil. Given the doctrine of collective guilt, moral short-comings are thus shared by humanity equally, and spiritual rebirth is the only avenue of escape from the divine justice which follows death.

In Plato we find no hint of inherited moral guilt or a malevolent supernatural agency which contributes to our downfall. Further, Greek mythology generally is free of the radical dualism so central to the Christian worldview. There are no gods who are by nature evil or good; the gods, like us, must make moral choices.[7] Sometimes they choose correctly, sometimes not. Hence, the supernatural forces of Greek mythology are not defined as good or evil, but rather define their own character by the choices they make. To put it another way, there is no personification of evil in Greek mythology as there is in Christian mythology.[8]

Because the Christian worldview has been seminal to the Western mind for at least fourteen-hundred years, it has shaped many of the concepts we take for granted. The concept of evil is one significant example; it is so deeply entwined with the Christian metaphysical view, that it looses most of its meaning if imported into another cultural context. Thus, because the concept we encapsulate in the term 'evil' is so foreign to the Classical Greek mind, I strongly doubt it should be used to render the thought of Plato. 'Bad' or 'wicked' seem appropriate translations of κακόν depending on the context. However, I do not

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[6] Jeffrey Burton Russell, The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity, (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1977), 221-249. See also Jeffrey Burton Russell, Satan: The Early Christian Tradition, (Itica: Cornell University Press: 1981).

[7] Russell, The Devil, 123.

[8] Russell, The Devil, 122-173.

think 'evil' can be effectively used without fundamentally misconstruing Plato's thought.

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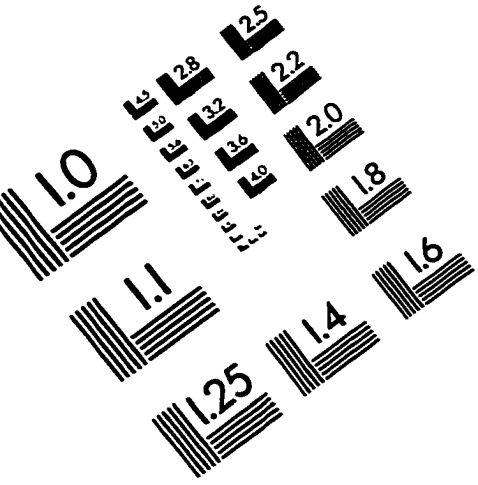

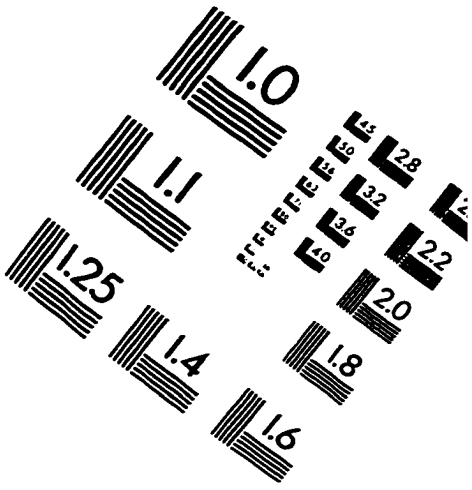

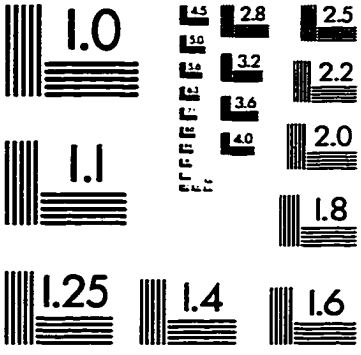

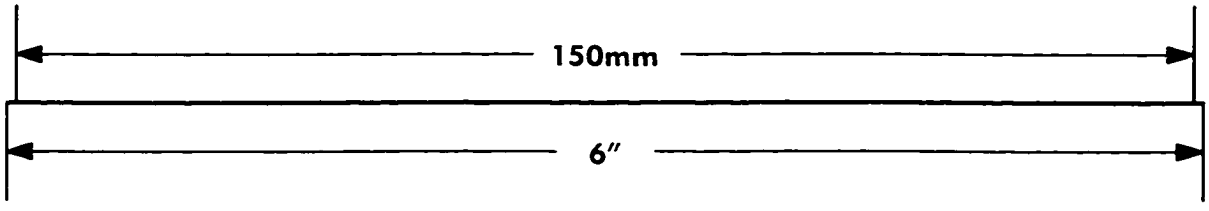

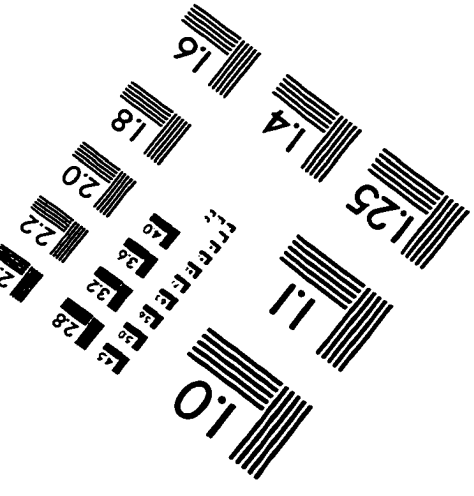

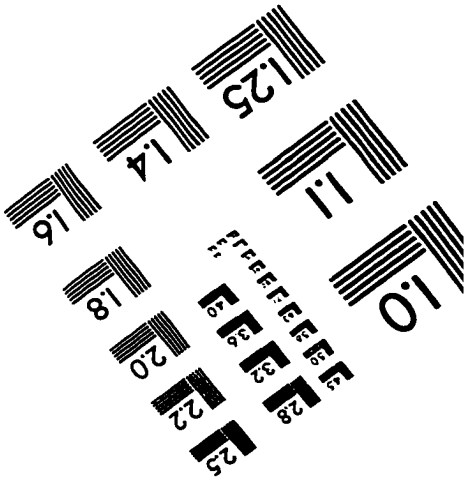

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