

ΔΥΝΑΜΙΣ IN *LACHES*

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I. SOCRATES' "WHAT-IS-*F*?" QUESTION

PRIOR TO 1973, Socrates' "What-is-*F*?" question (hereafter WF question) was widely interpreted as a request for the meaning of "*F*."¹ In that year, Penner argued, against the meaning-interpretation, for a causal-interpretation of the WF question.² According to Penner, when Socrates asks what *F* is, he is seeking an account of what causes people to behave in an *F*-like manner.³ For example, in the case of courage in *Laches*, Socrates is seeking what causes people to act courageously. Penner argues that *F* is a psychological power or motive-state. Therefore, the thesis of the unity of the putative components of excellence that Socrates arguably endorses in dialogues such as *Laches* and *Protagoras* is not to be interpreted as claiming that "courage," "sound-mindedness," "justice," and so on mean the same thing, but that these words all refer to the same psychological state.

Penner claims that Forms (εἶδη), universals, and essences (οὐσίαι) have the same identity-conditions as meanings. He also recognizes that in *Meno* and *Euthyphro* Socrates characterizes *F* as a Form.⁴ Thus, he is compelled to argue for

¹The symbol *F* is conventionally used for the domain of entities whose identity Socrates investigates in the early definitional dialogues. These include sound-mindedness (σωφροσύνη), courage (ἀνδρεία), justice or justness (δικαιοσύνη), beauty or the beautiful (τὸ καλόν), and human excellence as a whole (ἀρετή). How widely is difficult to judge—there seems to be some discrepancy between American and British scholars. For instance, in 1964 Kerferd writes (in defense of the contents of a paper of his of 1947): "But it cannot be too frequently repeated that when Plato asks questions in the form 'What is *x*' he is not asking questions about the meaning of a word or about linguistic usage—he is asking questions about something which he regarded as a thing" (13).

²Penner 1973.

³"[the 'What is *X*?' question] ... is not a request for the meaning of a word or a request for an essence or universal ... but rather a request for a psychological account (explanation) of what it is in men's psyches that makes them brave. For the 'What is *X*?' question is often put as 'What is the single thing by virtue of which (with or by which) the many *F* things are *F*?'; and I will be arguing that too is a causal or explanatory question rather than an epistemological or semantical one" (Penner 1973: 56–57). Cf. also Penner's statement (1973: 30–40): "When Socrates asked 'What is bravery?' and so forth, he did not want to know what the meaning of the word 'bravery' was, nor what the essence of bravery was, nor what the universal *bravery* was. His question was not (what has become) the philosopher's question ... it was not a request for a conceptual analysis ... His question was rather the general's question, 'What is bravery?'—that is, 'What is it that makes brave men brave?' The general asks this question not out of interest in mapping our concepts, but out of a desire to learn something substantial about the human psyche. He wants to know what psychological state it is, the imparting of which to his men will make them brave."

⁴Penner does not discuss *Hippias Major*, in which *F* is also characterized as a Form. Presumably, this is because in 1973 the authenticity of *Hippias Major* was more controversial than it has subsequently become.

a division of the early definitional dialogues into two sets. Prior early definitional dialogues include *Laches* and *Charmides* as well as *Protagoras*, which, strictly, is not a definitional dialogue but which is, to a significant extent, concerned with the identity of excellence and the relation of its putative components. Posterior early definitional dialogues include *Euthyphro* and *Meno*. In these later texts, Penner argues, Socrates is not concerned with true, but with “demotic” excellence, that is, with excellence as conventionally conceived. Therefore, in these later dialogues, Socrates does investigate the meaning of “*F*”—and thus his characterization of *F* as a Form and an essence.

Penner’s argument, or at least core elements of it, has been influential. Today, the meaning-interpretation of Socrates’ WF question is rarely endorsed. But Penner’s argument is also faulty in several respects. I have discussed these defects recently,⁵ and I will merely note them here. First, for various reasons, the distinction of prior and posterior early definitional dialogues is untenable. Second, the view that in *Euthyphro* and *Meno* (and Penner might now have to include *Hippias Major*) Socrates seeks components of excellence conventionally conceived is also untenable. Third, in advocating his causal-interpretation of the WF question, Penner conflates semantic and pragmatic aspects of the WF question. The WF question seeks the identity of *F*; in other words, the WF question seeks a real definition. The reason Socrates pursues the WF question, interpreted as such, may be that he wants to know what makes people behave virtuously or excellently and that he wants to encourage them to behave so. But such an interest in pursuing the WF question is distinguishable from what Socrates means when he asks what *F* is.⁶

Socrates’ WF question seeks a real definition, that is, the identity of *F*.⁷ I have argued that Socrates pursues answers to the WF question, that is, satisfactory definitions of *F*, by evaluating proposals (made by his interlocutor or himself) according to whether those proposals satisfy conditions for the identity of *F* that Socrates himself introduces and to which he is committed.⁸ For example, in *Charmides*, Charmides suggests that sound-mindedness is quietness. Socrates then rejects this definition on the grounds that sound-mindedness is necessarily fine, whereas quietness is not. Such conditions for the identity of *F* are called “*F*-conditions.” Thus, in the case of *Charmides*, necessarily being fine is an *F*-condition that the *definiens* must satisfy.

⁵ Wolfsdorf 2005.

⁶ The distinction between the semantics and pragmatics of Socrates’ WF question was first discussed by Santas (1979), i.e., after the publication of Penner’s paper. I have recently developed this topic with minor criticism of Santas in Wolfsdorf 2005.

⁷ The question will, accordingly, arise: How is Socrates’ pursuit of *F qua* Form to be reconciled with the view that the WF question is not a pursuit of the meaning of “*F*,” if Forms and meanings have the same identity conditions? This question is addressed below in section v.

⁸ Wolfsdorf 2003.

In my study of Socrates' pursuit of definitions, I clarify all the *F*-conditions that Socrates employs in the so-called early definitional dialogues—*Charmides*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Euthyphro*, *Hippias Major*, *Meno*—as well as in *Republic* 1. The clarification of *F*-conditions and the correlative proposed definitions of *F* among these definitional dialogues facilitates more general comparative analysis of their investigations of *F*. This paper argues for a division of these definitional dialogues into two sets similar to Penner's prior and posterior dialogues—however, the division is made on fundamentally different grounds from Penner's. Much of the discussion focuses on one *F*-condition, being a δύναμις, that Socrates introduces early in the investigation in *Laches*. As will become clear in the course of the discussion, the examination of this single *F*-condition is crucial for understanding the relation between the investigations in all the definitional dialogues.

I should also emphasize that whether the definitional dialogues under examination were in fact early compositions in Plato's literary career and whether *Republic* 1 was originally composed independently of *Republic* 2–10 is irrelevant to this study. The thematic and structural unities of the texts justify their comparative analysis. I will hereafter refer to them simply as "the definitional dialogues."

II. MISUNDERSTANDING THE "WHAT-IS-*F*?" QUESTION IN *LACHES*

In *Laches*, Laches first responds to Socrates' question "What is courage?" as follows (190e4–6):

Οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία . . . οὐ χαλεπὸν εἰπεῖν· εἰ γάρ τις ἐθέλοι ἐν τῇ τάξει μένων ἀμύνεσθαι τοὺς πολέμιους καὶ μὴ φεύγει, εὖ ἴσθι ὅτι ἀνδρεῖος ἂν εἴη.

"By Zeus . . . it is not difficult to say. If someone should be willing to remain in rank, defend against the enemy, and not flee, rest assured, he would be courageous."

Socrates believes that this response does not answer the question he asked.⁹ He believes that Laches has confused courage (ἀνδρεία) with a species of courage,¹⁰ for Socrates presumes that Laches regards those who perform various other act-types as courageous.¹¹ Socrates suggests that all courageous men commonly possess the same thing, courage, and it is the identity of this that his WF question seeks.¹² Laches' initial confusion resembles Euthyphro's, Hippias', and

⁹ *Lach.* 190e7–9: Εὖ μὲν λέγεις, ὦ Λάχης· ἀλλ' ἴσως ἐγὼ αἴτιος, οὐ σαφῶς εἰπὼν, τὸ σὲ ἀποκρίνασθαι μὴ τοῦτο δὲ διανοοῦμενος ἠρόμην, ἀλλ' ἕτερον ("You speak well, Laches. But perhaps I am at fault in that I did not speak clearly; for you have not answered the question as I intended it, but otherwise").

¹⁰ More precisely, Socrates believes that Laches has confused what Socrates expects Laches would agree courage is with a species of courage.

¹¹ In his response (*Lach.* 191a8–e11, 192b5–8), Socrates enumerates a number of other ways in which people may demonstrate their courage.

¹² *Lach.* 191e6: τὴν ἀνδρείαν κέκτηνται ("They have come to possess courage"); *Lach.* 192b5–8: Πειρῶ δὴ καὶ σύ, ὦ Λάχης, τὴν ἀνδρείαν οὕτως εἰπεῖν, τίς οὐσα δύναμις ἡ αὐτὴ ἐν ἡδονῇ καὶ ἐν λύπῃ καὶ ἐν ἅπασιν οἷς νῦν δὴ ἐλέγομεν αὐτὴν εἶναι, ἔπειτα ἀνδρεία κέκληται ("Try now to

Meno's initial confusions of Socrates' WF question. All of these interlocutors initially respond with descriptions of types of *F* rather than *F* itself.¹³ Socrates attempts to resolve their confusion, as he does with Laches, and immediately or eventually Euthyphro, Meno, and Laches answer the question as Socrates originally intended that it be answered.¹⁴ Granted, Socrates thinks that none of their answers is correct; still, he accepts them as correct sorts of answers to the WF question.¹⁵

On the other hand, Socrates' response to Laches' first response to the WF question differs from Socrates' responses to Euthyphro's, Hippias', and Meno's first responses. In clarifying the distinction between *F* and kinds of *F* in *Laches*, Socrates draws an analogy between courage and quickness.¹⁶ Subsequently, Socrates characterizes quickness as a δύναμις. He then asks Laches what δύναμις courage is. In other words, Socrates suggests that being a δύναμις is an *F*-condition that the *definiens* must satisfy. In contrast, in *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, and *Hippias Major* Socrates never characterizes *F* as a δύναμις.¹⁷ Moreover, in *Meno* Socrates clarifies the distinction between *F* and kinds of *F* also by using an analogy, in this case between excellence and bees. Socrates speaks of that by which all bees are identical *qua* bees and that by which all kinds of excellence are identical *qua* kinds of excellence. Subsequently, he employs analogies with health, size, and strength for the same purpose; and he describes health and strength, common to all healthy and strong individuals, as Forms.¹⁸ In response

say what courage is, it being the same δύναμις in pleasure and pain and in all the situations we just described, which is singled out by the name 'courage'").

¹³I have discussed this topic in Wolfsdorf 2004. Compare also Theaetetus' response in the eponymous dialogue (146c).

¹⁴After Hippias' three failed attempts, Socrates subsequently offers more satisfactory definitions himself.

¹⁵Benson (1990) distinguishes the two kinds of failed responses to Socrates' WF question as "materially" and "formally" incorrect. I have accepted and developed this distinction with criticisms of Benson in Wolfsdorf 2004.

¹⁶192a1–10: ὥσπερ ἂν εἰ τάχος ἡρώτων τί ποτ' ἐστίν, ὃ καὶ ἐν τῷ τρέχειν τυγχάνει δὴν ἡμῖν καὶ ἐν τῷ καθαρίζειν καὶ ἐν τῷ λέγειν καὶ ἐν τῷ μανθάνειν καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις πολλοῖς, καὶ σχεδόν τι αὐτὸ κεκτῆμεθα, οὐ καὶ περὶ ἄξιον λέγειν, ἢ ἐν ταῖς τῶν χειρῶν πράξεσιν ἢ σκελῶν ἢ στόματός τε καὶ φωνῆς ἢ διανοίας; ("Suppose, for instance, I were asking you what quickness is, as we find it in running and playing the cithara, in speaking and learning, and in many other activities, and as possessed by us practically in any action worth mentioning, whether of arms or legs, or mouth or voice or mind . . .").

¹⁷In *Hippias Major* the sixth definition of the beautiful or beauty is δύναμις (295e9–10). But this is an identity claim. In *Meno* Meno's second definition suggests that excellence (ἀρετή) is the ability to rule people (ἄρχειν οἷον τ' εἶναι τῶν ἀνθρώπων, 73c9). Meno's third definition suggests that excellence is the ability to procure goods (δύναμις τοῦ πορίζεσθαι ἀγαθὰ, 78b9–c1). But, notably, in his elaborate account of the kind of entity he is seeking, in response to Meno's first and second responses to his WF question, Socrates does not suggest that the *definiendum* is a δύναμις.

¹⁸*Meno* 72d4–73c4. Socrates describes health as a Form at *Meno* 72d8 and strength as a Form at *Meno* 72e5.

to Euthyphro's and Hippias' first definitions, Socrates also characterizes *F* as a Form. In *Laches*, however, Socrates never characterizes courage as a Form.¹⁹

It is a question, then, why in *Laches* Socrates suggests that the answer to his WF question must satisfy the condition that *F* be a δύναμις and, in contrast, why in *Euthyphro*, *Hippias Major*, and *Meno* Socrates never employs this *F*-condition, as well as why in the latter three dialogues, but not in *Laches*, Socrates characterizes *F* as a Form. In an attempt to answer these questions, section III examines Socrates' use and conception of δύναμις in *Charmides* and *Republic* 1 particularly in relation to a passage in *Republic* 5. Section IV then applies these results to the analysis of Socrates' use and conception of δύναμις in *Laches*. Finally, section V applies the results of both preceding sections to explain why being a δύναμις, but not being a Form, occurs as an *F*-condition in *Laches*, whereas being a Form, but not being a δύναμις, occurs as an *F*-condition in *Euthyphro*, *Hippias Major*, and *Meno*.

III. ΔΥΝΑΜΙΣ

In *Charmides*, Critias suggests that sound-mindedness is a kind of knowledge (ἐπιστήμη). Socrates tries to identify the kind by comparing it with other kinds of knowledge. He first suggests that certain kinds of knowledge produce works (ἔργα), and he questions what kind of work sound-mindedness produces (165c10–d6):

Εἰ τοίνυν με, ἔφην, ἔροιο σύ, ἱατρικὴ ὑγιεινοῦ ἐπιστήμη οὐσα τί ἡμῖν χρησὶμη ἐστὶ καὶ τί ἀπεργάζεται, εἴπομ' ἂν ὅτι οὐ σμικρὰν ὠφελίαν· τὴν γὰρ ὑγίειαν καλὸν ἡμῖν ἔργον ἀπεργάζεται Καὶ εἰ τοίνυν με ἔροιο τὴν οἰκοδομικὴν, ἐπιστήμην οὐσαν τοῦ οἰκοδομεῖν, τί φημι ἔργον ἀπεργάζεσθαι, εἴπομ' ἂν ὅτι οἰκῆσεις·

"If, then, you should ask me," I said, "wherein medicine, being the knowledge of health, is useful and what it produces, I would say that it is a great benefit. For it produces health, a fine work for us And if you should ask me with respect to architecture, it being the knowledge of building, what work it produces, I would say houses."

Here Socrates understands a work (ἔργον) to be a physical object or condition that results from activity for which the knowledge is responsible. However,

¹⁹Two referees expressed the concern that in *Euthyphro* in particular Socrates is not using "εἶδος" in a technical sense. I do not claim that the conception of Form developed in *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, and *Hippias Major* is identical to that in, say, *Phaedo* or *Parmenides*. However, I do believe that in these three definitional dialogues, Plato is introducing εἶδος as a metaphysical concept and drawing an ontological distinction between εἶδη and their participants. Specifically, an εἶδος (in these texts) satisfies three conditions that its participants do not. The presence of the property *F* in *all* eponymous participants is explained by the εἶδος *F* (universality condition). An εἶδος *F* itself has the property *F* purely, whereas participants may also have the polar opposite property not-*F* (purity condition). An εἶδος is responsible for its participants having the property *F* (aetiological condition). I have discussed these conditions and the general topic in greater depth in Wolfsdorf 2003 and Wolfsdorf 2005.

Critias criticizes Socrates for assuming that sound-mindedness can be analogized with types of knowledge that produce such works. He claims that not all types of knowledge have *such* a work (τοιούτον ἔργον), and he cites geometry and calculation²⁰ as examples that do not.²¹ Socrates agrees, but the expression “τοιούτον ἔργον” permits him, despite his agreement, to believe that geometry and calculation have other kinds of works.

This hypothesis is strengthened by Socrates' definition of work in *Republic* 1 (352e2–9):

ΣΩ. Ἀρ' οὖν τοῦτο ἂν θείης καὶ ἵππου καὶ ἄλλου ὁποιοῦν ἔργον, ὃ ἂν ἡ μόνω ἐκείνῳ ποιῇ τις ἡ ἄριστα:

ΘΡ. Οὐ μανθάνω, ἔφη.

ΣΩ. Ἄλλ' ὧδε· ἔσθ' ὅτῳ ἂν ἄλλω ἴδοις ἢ ὀφθαλμοῖς; . . . ἀκούσῃς ἄλλω ἢ ὠσίν; . . . οὐκοῦν δικαίως ἂν ταῦτα τούτων φαίμεν ἔργα εἶναι:

“Would you be willing to establish that the work of a horse or anything else is that which one can do only with it or best with it?” “I do not understand,” he said. “Consider this. Do you see by anything else than the eyes? . . . Do you hear by anything else than the ears? . . . Would we not justly say that these are the works of these entities?”²²

Socrates here defines a work as a type of action or operation rather than the product or result of such an action or operation. Accordingly, for convenience, when necessary, I will distinguish works that are physical products or conditions that δυνάμεις produce from actions or operations that δυνάμεις produce by referring to the former as “worksp” and the latter as “works_A.” Thus, arithmetical or geometrical thought, that is, mental activity, might be conceived as the work_A of calculation and geometry. This possibility is not entertained in *Charmides*. But I suggest that this is because Socrates intends to introduce another means by which kinds of knowledge (and δυνάμεις in general) can be distinguished. Specifically, Socrates grants that although certain types of knowledge, for example, geometry and calculation, do not produce such works, namely worksp, these types of knowledge are *of* entities that are distinct from themselves. That is to say,

²⁰ On this translation of “λογιστική,” see Klein 1968: 17–25.

²¹ *Chrm.* 165e3–166a8.

²² Socrates continues (*Rep.* 1.353a1–7): μαχαίρᾳ ἂν ἀμπέλου κλήμα ἀποτέμοις καὶ σμίλῃ καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς; . . . Ἄλλ' οὐδενὶ γ' ἂν οἶμαι οὕτω καλῶς ὥς δρεπάνῳ τῷ ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἐργασθέντι . . . Ἀρ' οὖν οὐ τοῦτο τούτου ἔργον θήσομεν; (“You could cut vine branches with a dagger or carving-knife or many other things? . . . But, I think, with nothing so well as a pruning-knife, one made for this [task]. . . . Must we not establish that this is the work [ἔργον] of the pruning-knife?”). In short, the word ἔργον is as ambiguous as the word “work” is. Elsewhere in the discussion Socrates says that it is the work (ἔργον) of heat to make things hot, and the work (ἔργον) of dryness to make things dry (335d3–6). He also says it is the work (ἔργον) of goodness (τὸ ἀγαθόν) to benefit (335d7–8).

they have distinct objects and thus can be distinguished according to these objects (166a3–b3):

ἀλλὰ τόδε σοι ἔχω δεῖξαι, τίνος ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη ἐκάστη τούτων τῶν ἐπιστημῶν, ὃ τυγχάνει ὄν ἄλλο αὐτῆς τῆς ἐπιστήμης· οἷον ἡ λογιστική ἐστὶ τοῦ ἀρτίου καὶ τοῦ περιττοῦ, πλῆθους ὅπως ἔχει πρὸς αὐτὰ καὶ πρὸς ἄλληλα· . . . οὐκοῦν ἐτέρου ὄντος τοῦ περιττοῦ καὶ ἀρτίου αὐτῆς τῆς λογιστικῆς . . . καὶ μὴν αὖ ἡ στατική τοῦ βαρυτέρου καὶ κουφοτέρου σταθμοῦ ἐστίν· ἕτερον δέ ἐστι τὸ βαρὺ τε καὶ κούφον τῆς στατικῆς αὐτῆς.

“But I can point out that of which each of these types of knowledge is, which is different from the knowledge itself. For instance, calculation is of the odd and the even, their magnitudes with respect to themselves and one another And you grant that the odd and even are different from calculation itself Moreover, weighing is of the lighter and the heavier weight. But the heavy and the light are different from weighing itself.”

For convenience, I will refer to these objects of knowledge as “*relata*,” that is, related objects.

Critias claims that sound-mindedness, as a kind of knowledge, is unlike geometry, calculation, or weighing, in that its *relatum* is knowledge itself. That is to say, sound-mindedness is the knowledge of knowledge itself. Socrates is dubious that this can be the correct definition of sound-mindedness because he assumes that sound-mindedness exists and because he doubts that such a thing as the knowledge of knowledge could exist. In view of the following principle, he argues that the knowledge of knowledge does not exist (168d1–3): ὅτι περ ἂν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ δύναμιν πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἔχῃ, οὐ καὶ ἐκείνην ἔξει τὴν οὐσίαν, πρὸς ἣν ἡ δύναμις αὐτοῦ ἦν (“Whatever has its own δύναμις related to itself will not have the being to which its own δύναμις is related”).

Socrates explains this principle by a variety of examples. The first kind includes the senses,²³ specifically sight and hearing.²⁴ Socrates says that hearing is of sound (φωνή); therefore, for a hearing of hearing to exist, hearing itself would have to have sound of its own (φωνὴν ἐχούσης ἑαυτῆς). Similarly, sight is of color (χρῶμα); therefore, for a sight of sight to exist, sight itself would have to have color (χρῶμά τι αὐτὴν ἀνάγκη ἔχειν). These examples and a number of others conform to the principle; and so, on the strength of the analogy, Socrates suggests that it is unlikely that the knowledge of knowledge exists.

This section of *Charmides* indicates that Socrates regards types of knowledge, as well as a broad range of other kinds of entities, as δυνάμεις. He does not explicitly claim that all δυνάμεις can be distinguished and identified by their works, or *relata*, but the discussion suggests that he may assume this. This hypothesis gains support from a passage in *Republic* 5, in which Socrates is distinguishing two psychological states, knowledge and opinion, and in which Socrates presents a

²³ *Chrm.* 167d7–9.

²⁴ Sight at *Chrm.* 167c8–d2 and 168d9–e1; hearing at 167d4–5 and 168d3–7.

definition of δύναμις. Note that this is the only passage in the corpus where δύναμις is explicitly defined. Socrates regards both knowledge and opinion as δυνάμεις, and he begins his explanation of their distinction with the following general characterization of δύναμις (477c1–d5):

ΣΩ. Φήσομεν δυνάμεις εἶναι γένος τι τῶν ὄντων, αἷς δὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς δυνάμεθα ἃ δυνάμεθα καὶ ἄλλο πᾶν ὅτι περ ἂν δύνηται, οἷον λέγω ὄσιν καὶ ἀκοὴν τῶν δυνάμεων εἶναι, εἰ ἄρα μανθάνεις ὃ βούλομαι λέγειν τὸ εἶδος . . .

ΣΩ. Ἄκουσον δὴ, ὅ μοι φαίνεται περὶ αὐτῶν· δυνάμεως γὰρ ἐγὼ οὔτε τινὰ χροῖαν ὁρῶ οὔτε σχῆμα οὔτε τι τῶν τοιούτων, οἷον καὶ ἄλλων πολλῶν, πρὸς ἃ ἀποβλέπων ἕνια διορίζομαι παρ' ἑμαυτῷ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα εἶναι, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα· δυνάμεως δ' εἰς ἐκεῖνο μόνον βλέπω, ἐφ' ᾧ τε ἔστι καὶ ὃ ἀπεργάζεται, καὶ ταύτῃ ἐκάστην αὐτῶν δύναμιν ἐκάλεσα, καὶ τὴν μὲν ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῷ τεταγμένην καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἀπεργαζομένην τὴν αὐτὴν καλῶ, τὴν δὲ ἐπὶ ἐτέρῳ καὶ ἕτερον ἀπεργαζομένην ἄλλην.

“Shall we agree that δυνάμεις are a type of thing by which we, as well as everything else, are capable of whatever we are capable of and whatever anything else is capable of? For example, sight and hearing are δυνάμεις—if you understand the type of thing I want to describe . . . Listen, then, to what I think of them. I do not see the color of a δύναμις, nor its shape, nor any such thing, as I do in the case of many other things I look at to define. But in the case of a δύναμις I look only at that to which it is related and at what it produces. In this way I come to call each of them a δύναμις. And that which is connected to the same thing and produces the same thing I call the same δύναμις; and that which is connected to a different thing and produces a different thing I call a different δύναμις.”²⁵

In this passage Socrates suggests that in attempting to distinguish and define a δύναμις he considers what it produces and that to which it is related or connected.²⁶ What a δύναμις produces (ὃ ἀπεργάζεται) is of course its work_{sp} or work_A. That to which it is related or connected (ἐφ' ᾧ ἔστι or τεταγμένην) is not given a name, nor is there an obviously appropriate nominal expression in Greek for such a thing. Following the verbal construction, we might call it “*the thing to which [the δύναμις] is related*” (τὸ ἐφ' ᾧ ἔστιν). However, in view of our

²⁵ A referee expressed the following concern about this passage: as translated, Socrates employs a series of conjunctions (καὶ) that imply that all δυνάμεις produce work_{sp} and work_A and have *relata*. The referee suggests translating some instances of “καὶ” disjunctively. I have retained my translations of “καὶ” as “and.” But while I do believe that Socrates (or Plato) conceives of all δυνάμεις as having *relata* and also work_A, I am also committed to the view that Socrates (or Plato) does not believe that all δυνάμεις produce work_{sp}. Consider a sentence such as the following: “When I manage situations *A*, *B*, and *C*, I consider factors *D*, *E*, and *F*.” This does not imply that in managing each situation, I consider each factor; in managing a given situation, I may consider some subset of factors. Cf. also Hintikka’s discussion (1974: 5–13) of this passage, and note, further, that Socrates uses the same verb (ἀπεργάζεσθαι) here as in the *Charmides* passages cited above.

²⁶ On the use of the verb “connect,” consider the language of yoking in the citation from *Republic* 6 discussed below, 332.

discussion of *Charmides*, it seems clear that this is just what we have been calling the “*relatum*,” and so I will hereafter assume that τὸ ἐφ’ ᾧ ἔστιν of a δύναμις is identical to the *relatum* of a δύναμις.

We have seen in *Charmides* that not all δυνάμεις produce worksp. But I suggest that those δυνάμεις that have a *relatum* relate or connect to that entity by their characteristic action or operation, that is, by their work_A. For instance, the *relatum* of the δύναμις of sight is a concrete macroscopic object and specifically its aspects of color and shape. The δύναμις of sight relates to visible objects through the action of seeing.²⁷

Socrates never attempts a general characterization of the nature of the relation or connection between a δύναμις and its *relatum*. But it is clear that whatever this relation-type might be, it covers a wide variety of kinds whose distinction, of course, depends upon the kind of δύναμις and *relatum* in question. For instance, the senses perceive their *relata*, whereas types of knowledge intellect their *relata*. Consider, for instance, that in *Republic* 6, Socrates suggests that the δυνάμεις of sight and hearing differ in the way that they relate to their *relata*. Hearing occurs through a simple relation of the δύναμις of hearing and its *relatum* sound; but, for its operation, sight requires, in addition to a visible object, the presence of light (507c10–508a2):

ΣΩ. ἔστιν ὅτι προσδεῖ ἀκοῇ καὶ φωνῇ γένους ἄλλου εἰς τὸ τὴν μὲν ἀκούειν, τὴν δὲ ἀκούεσθαι, ὃ ἐὰν μὴ παραγένηται τρίτον, ἢ μὲν οὐκ ἀκούσεται, ἢ δὲ οὐκ ἀκουσθήσεται:

ΓΛ. Οὐδενός, ἔφη.

ΣΩ. Οἶμαι δέ γε, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, οὐδ’ ἄλλαις πολλαῖς, ἵνα μὴ εἴπω ὅτι οὐδεμιᾷ, τοιούτου προσδεῖ οὐδενός . . . ἐνούσης που ἐν ὁμμασιν ὄψεως καὶ ἐπιχειροῦντος τοῦ ἔχοντος χρῆσθαι αὐτῇ, παρουσίας δὲ χροῶς ἐν αὐτοῖς, ἐὰν μὴ παραγένηται γένος τρίτον ἰδίᾳ ἐπ’ αὐτὸ τοῦτο πεφυκός, οἶσθα ὅτι ἢ τε ὄψις οὐδὲν ὄψεται τὰ τε χρώματα ἔσται ἀόρατα . . . οὐ σμικρᾷ ἄρα ἰδέᾳ ἢ τοῦ ὁρᾶν αἴσθησις καὶ ἢ τοῦ ὁρᾶσθαι δύναμις τῶν ἄλλων συζεύξεων τιμιωτέρῳ ζυγῷ ἐζύγησαν, εἴπερ μὴ ἄτιμον τὸ φῶς.

“Do hearing and sound need some other kind of thing for the one to hear and the other to be heard; or if some third entity is not present, does the one not hear and is the other not heard?” “There is need of nothing else,” he said. “I think so too,” I said, “and this is the case with many other [δυνάμεις]—although not with all of them . . . Although sight is

²⁷ The decision to focus on either the works (ἔργα) or *relata* (τὰ ἐφ’ ᾧ ἔστιν) of the δυνάμεις in the process of defining them seems simply to be a practical consideration. The work (ἔργον) or *relatum* (τὸ ἐφ’ ᾧ ἔστιν) of a δύναμις may be the more salient of the two. Thus, attention to the one rather than the other may be most convenient in the process of definition. For example, in *Republic* 5 Socrates distinguishes the δύναμις of knowledge from that of opinion, in that knowledge is related (ἐπὶ) to being (τῷ ὄντι), whereas opinion is not related to being (*Rep.* 478a6). The mental activity that knowledge produces is presumably different from that which opinion produces as well. But it is analytically more convenient to distinguish the two powers with respect to their *relata* rather than the character of their activities.

present in the eyes and its possessor tries to use it and color is present, without the presence of a third thing specifically and naturally for this, sight will not see and colors will remain invisible The sense of seeing and the δυνάμεις of being seen are yoked together by a not trivial kind of thing, but by a yoke more honorable than that by which other entities are yoked—if light is not a dishonorable kind of thing.”

The passage provides evidence of Socrates’ belief that multiple elements may be necessary for the operation of a subset of δυνάμεις. It also provides evidence of his belief that *relata* themselves are conceived as having particular δυνάμεις such that they can relate or connect to the δυνάμεις of which they are the *relata*. For instance, the *relata* of sight have δυνάμεις such that they can be seen. This distinction between the two types of δυνάμεις may conveniently be described as *active* versus *passive*.²⁸

In conventional Greek discourse, δυνάμεις is principally used to mean *power to act* and thus to describe what we are calling active δυνάμεις.²⁹ It is used in this way in several of the definitional dialogues as well. For instance, as we saw, during Socrates and Critias’ discussion of the existence of the knowledge of knowledge, Socrates suggests that an entity with a given δυνάμεις would not have the being (οὐσία) to which its own δυνάμεις is related. He does not say that it would not have the (active) δυνάμεις to which its own (passive) δυνάμεις is related. Presumably, this is to avoid confusion in an already complicated discussion. But whereas in *Charmides* Socrates does not describe sight and hearing as lacking the δυνάμεις to be seen or to be heard, he uses precisely this language in *Republic* 6 (507c6–8):

ἐννεόηκας τὸν τῶν αἰσθήσεων δημιουργὸν ὅσῳ πολυτελεστάτην τὴν τοῦ ὁρᾶν τε καὶ ὁρᾶσθαι δύναμιν ἐδημιούργησεν:

Have you considered how exquisitely the creator has created the δυνάμεις of seeing and being seen?

In sum, the evidence from *Charmides* and *Republic* 1 is consistent with Socrates’ characterization of δυνάμεις in *Republic* 5, with the qualification that in the definitional dialogues Socrates’ use of δυνάμεις is limited to active δυνάμεις. Δυνάμεις are powers that enable their possessors to act or operate in a particular way. Furthermore, Socrates is no behaviorist. He does not take talk of δυνάμεις to be a convenient way of characterizing the world and making predictions, while remaining ontologically neutral. He believes δυνάμεις are—in a sense that I grant is difficult to clarify—real. For instance, as I will argue in the following section,

²⁸ On the meaning of δυνάμεις at *Sophist* 247e, Cornford (1935: 234) writes: “‘*Dynamis*’ is the substantive answering to the common verb ‘to be able’ (δύνασθαι), and it covers the ability to be acted upon as well as the ability to act on something else, whereas most of the corresponding English words—power, force, potency, etc.—suggest active, as opposed to passive, ability. *Dynamis* includes passive capacity, receptivity, susceptibility, as well.”

²⁹ On the common use of δυνάμεις, see Souilhé 1919: 1–23. On the mathematical use of δυνάμεις, see Szabó 1978: 36–40.

Socrates believes that the δύνάμις courage is a state of the soul, and he regards the soul as a substantial entity. It is unclear, however, how Socrates understands the relation of the being (οὐσία) of an entity to its δύνάμις, that is, in modern terms, how he understands the relation of the categorical properties of an entity to its dispositional properties.³⁰

Furthermore, Socrates speaks of the characteristic action or operation of a δύνάμις as an ἔργον. This I refer to as “work_A.” Additionally, certain δυνάμεις produce objects or physical conditions, and Socrates also speaks of such products as ἔργα. For clarity’s sake, I refer to them as “work_{sp}.” Furthermore, it should be noted that there is some ambiguity in the way Socrates speaks of the relation between a δύνάμις and its ἔργον (work_A or work_p). In *Republic* 1, Socrates speaks of the δύνάμις appropriate for an entity to perform its (the entity’s, not the δυνάμεις’s) characteristic work_A. For example, the presence in the eye of the δύνάμις of sight enables the eye to see. However, sometimes Socrates speaks of the δυνάμεις’s work_A or work_p. I regard this ambiguity as innocuous and explicable. As others who have examined Plato’s conception of causation or rather *aetiology* have noted, Plato tends to have his characters speak of αἰτίαι not in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions, but in terms of saliency. For example, the αἴτιον or cause of something tends to be conceived as a salient object or property.³¹ Accordingly, Socrates may speak of the entity or, more precisely, its δύνάμις as responsible for a work_A or work_p.

In *Republic* 5, Socrates says that, in defining δυνάμεις, he turns his attention to their works (ἔργα) as well as to their *relata* (τὰ ἐφ’ οἷς ἔστιν) rather than to the δυνάμεις themselves because δυνάμεις differ from most things whose identities one may grasp just by looking at them. Δυνάμεις do not have color (χρῶα) or shape (σχήμα) or any such thing (τι τῶν τοιούτων), that is, any perceptible properties. I take it that this is Socrates’ way of characterizing the metaphysical peculiarities of δυνάμεις and the attendant epistemological difficulty of knowing them. A δύνάμις is not perceptible in the way that a concrete macroscopic object is. Rather, as we might put it, one comes to understand what will result from the presence of a certain entity in certain conditions through induction based on past observation of that entity or others of its kind under conditions of that kind. Furthermore, on the basis of such observation one infers that the entity possesses a δύνάμις that enables such-and-such to occur under such-and-such conditions.³² Socrates, of course, is not conducting experiments in empirical psychology. But,

³⁰ On this distinction, see Armstrong 1996: 4–7.

³¹ For example, Sedley 1998 and Wolfsdorf 2005.

³² In cases where the δυνάμεις do not have work_{sp}, such as knowledge or sight, and where the work_A are not perceptible as, for instance, bodily action is, inference will of course be more complex, though not fundamentally different. This may be why Socrates assumes that it is a condition of definitional knowledge of *F* that one be able to give an account of what *F* is; that is, verbal accounts are perceptible. Benson (2000: 114) calls this the verbalization requirement.

I take it, his analysis of δύναμις in *Republic* 5 reflects commonsensical, non-technical processes by which people make inferences about the existence and properties of δυνάμεις. In the following section, I apply these general results concerning δύναμις to the interpretation of Socrates' insistence in *Laches* that courage is a δύναμις.

IV. COURAGE AS A ΔΥΝΑΜΙΣ OF THE ΨΥΧΗ IN *LACHES*

Elsewhere I have defended the following point.³³ Of the five entities that Socrates and Protagoras distinguish in *Protagoras* as putative parts of human excellence, it is commonly overlooked that, at least in conventional discourse, justice (δικαιοσύνη) and holiness (δσιότης) differ from sound-mindedness, courage, and knowledge (σοφία) in the following respect. The last three are necessarily psychological properties, whereas the first two are not. For instance, an act may be holy (ὅσιον) or just (δίκαιον) regardless of the psychological state of the agent. In contrast, an act's being sound-minded (σώφρον), courageous (ἀνδρεῖον), or wise or intelligent (σοφόν) depends on the psychological state of the agent. In fact, entities may be holy or just quite independently of human interests. For instance, a place may be holy simply because it is reserved for a certain kind of activity; and a social condition may be just, regardless of whether it results from the interests of any particular agents. Accordingly, we may speak of sound-mindedness, courage, and knowledge, as opposed to justice and holiness, as *personal* human excellences.

Before he poses the WF question in *Laches*, Socrates explicitly indicates that ἀνδρεία is the sort of entity found in the soul (ψυχή; 185e1–2): Οὐκοῦν νῦν φάμεν περὶ μαθήματος σκοπεῖν τῆς ψυχῆς ἔνεκα τῆς τῶν νεανίσκων: ("We now say, then, that we are considering this subject [namely, fighting-in-arms] for the sake of the soul of the young men?").³⁴

In fact, Laches' response also contains a suggestion that courage is a psychological entity. Recall that Laches uses the verb "be willing" (ἐθέλοι) in his response: "If someone should be willing to remain in rank" This suggests that one who is courageous and remains in rank, defends against the enemy, and does not flee has a certain psychological state. Specifically, given the character of the act-type and the resistance to flight, the courageous man must feel fear, but have the strength to resist it.

³³ Wolfsdorf 2002.

³⁴ See also *Lach.* 190b3–5: Οὐκοῦν, ὦ Λάχης, καὶ νῦν ἡμᾶς τῷδε παρακαλεῖτον εἰς συμβουλὴν, τὴν ἂν τρόπον τοῖς υἱέσιν αὐτῶν ἀρετὴ παραγενομένη ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἀμείνους ποιήσειεν; ("And you know, Laches, at this moment our two friends are inviting us to a consultation regarding the way in which excellence may be made present to the souls of their sons so as to improve them"). In the context of this passage, where excellence is characterized as the thing that when made present to the soul improves its condition, Socrates also uses the analogy of the eyes and ears and sight and hearing (see *Lach.* 190a1–b5).

On the other hand, the focus of Laches' definition is on the character of the act-type, rather than the psychological state of the agent. Consider Socrates' initial response to Laches (191a1–3): ΣΩ. ἀνδρείός που οὗτος, ὃν καὶ σὺ λέγεις, ὃς ἂν ἐν τῇ τάξει μένων μάχηται τοῖς πολεμίοις. ΛΑ. Ἐγὼ γοῦν φημι (“That man who, as you say, remains in rank and fights against the enemy is courageous.” “I at least assert it”). As his response continues, however, Socrates does not elicit Laches' assent to the claim that many other act-types are courageous. He elicits Laches' assent to the claim that people who perform other act-types are courageous. The distinction is important, for although what Socrates is seeking is perhaps identifiable with what we call a “universal,” I suggest that he would not be content with a response that described a very general type of action, for instance, resisting danger—even though this very general act-type would cover the broad range of act-types he describes in his response. Those who claim that Laches' first response is not broad enough are misguided in this respect.³⁵ Courage simply is not an act-type.³⁶

Support for my proposal comes from *Charmides*. As I have suggested, sound-mindedness, like courage, is, at least in conventional discourse, a personal excellence. In *Charmides*, as in *Laches*, and only in these two early definitional dialogues, immediately before he poses his WF question, Socrates suggests that *F*—in the case of *Charmides*, sound-mindedness—is a psychological entity. He describes his alleged Thracian charm with these words (157a3–b1):³⁷

θεραπεύεσθαι δὲ τὴν ψυχὴν ἔφη, ὃ μακάριε, ἐπωδαῖς τισιν· τὰς δ' ἐπωδὰς ταύτας τοὺς λόγους εἶναι τοὺς καλοὺς· ἐκ δὲ τῶν τοιούτων λόγων ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς σωφροσύνην ἐγγίγνεσθαι, ἧς ἐγγενομένης καὶ παρούσης ῥάδιον ἦδη εἶναι τὴν ὑγίειαν καὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ καὶ τῷ ἄλλῳ σώματι πορίζειν.

“He said, my friend, that the soul is treated by means of certain charms and that these charms are fine words. From such words, sound-mindedness is engendered in souls; and when sound-mindedness is engendered and present, then health comes more easily both to the head and to the rest of the body.”

³⁵ Nehamas (1975: 295) writes: “His definition is, of course, not general enough.” See also Fine 1993: 47: “Sometimes an answer is rejected because it is too narrow. For example, courage cannot be defined as ‘standing firm in battle,’ since courage can be displayed in other sorts of behavior (*La.* 191ce).”

³⁶ Rather, courageous action is the work_A of courage (or of the courageous soul).

³⁷ See also *Chrm.* 158e7–159a3: δῆλον γάρ ὅτι εἴ σοι πάρεστι σωφροσύνη, ἔχεις τι περὶ αὐτῆς δοξάζειν. ἀνάγκη γάρ που ἐνοῦσαν αὐτὴν, εἴπερ ἔνεστιν, αἰσθῆσιν τινα παρέχειν, ἐξ ἧς δόξα ἂν τίς σοι περὶ αὐτῆς εἴη, ὅτι ἐστι καὶ ὁποῖόν τι ἡ σωφροσύνη “Ἵνα τοίνυν τοπάζωμεν εἴτε σοι ἔνεστιν εἴτε μή, εἰπέ . . . τί φῆς εἶναι σωφροσύνην κατὰ τὴν σὴν δόξαν (“Now it is clear that if sound-mindedness is present in you, you are able to form some opinion about it. For it is necessary, I suppose, that if it is in you, it provides a sense of its presence, from which you would form an opinion both of what it is and of what sort of thing sound-mindedness is So, then, in order to guess whether or not it is in you . . . tell me what in your opinion sound-mindedness is”).

After Socrates rejects Charmides' first definition, he encourages Charmides to reconsider what sound-mindedness is. He does this in such a way as to suggest, as he had done before he posed the WF question, that sound-mindedness is a psychological entity (160d5–8):

Πάλιν τοίνυν . . . ὃ Χαρμίδη, μάλλον προσέχων τὸν νοῦν καὶ εἰς σεαυτὸν ἐμβλέψας, ἐννοήσας ὁποῖόν τινά σε ποιεῖ ἢ σωφροσύνη παρούσα καὶ ποία τις οὖσα τοιοῦτον ἀπεργάζεταιτο ἄν.

"Once again now . . . Charmides, concentrate hard and look inside yourself. Consider what sort of person sound-mindedness makes you, if it is present, and what sort of thing it would have to be in order to affect you in that way."

Charmides' first definition is of an act-type, quietness. By this Charmides means behaving quietly.³⁸ His second definition is modesty. Here it is unclear whether Charmides means a mode of behavior or a psychological state responsible for that mode of behavior. Socrates rejects both definitions on the grounds that sound-mindedness necessarily is fine (καλόν) and good (ἀγαθόν) and because the definitions do not satisfy these conditions. The third definition is doing one's own thing (τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν), which is interpreted to mean *doing good things* (τὸ τὰγαθὰ πράττειν). This definition clearly cannot be refuted by the claim that it is not necessarily fine or good. At this point, Socrates questions whether a doctor who healed a patient, that is, performed some good act, but did so by accident, would be sound-minded. Critias denies that he would and insists that sound-mindedness must be a kind of epistemic condition.³⁹ I suggest that Socrates introduces the example of the felicitous doctor precisely to draw out the psychological aspect of sound-mindedness.

Whereas in conventional Greek discourse ἀνδρεία is used to designate the psychological state that enables one to overcome the impulse to flee from fearful states of affairs, σωφροσύνη is used to designate the psychological state that enables one to resist the impulse to indulge in pleasures. Both states depend on the cognizance of the fearfulness or desirability of the pertinent external state of affairs respectively. Accordingly, if a soldier is engaged in a drill in which he must crawl across a stretch of earth while machine-gun fire passes just above his head and he falsely believes that the gunners are using blanks, then his willingness to perform the exercise does not as such involve courage. Similarly, a man who turns down a delicious meal because he falsely believes that it is poisoned does not as

³⁸This is clear from the formulation of Charmides' first definition (159b): σωφροσύνη εἶναι τὸ κοσμίως πάντα πράττειν καὶ ἡσυχῇ, ἐν τε ταῖς ὁδοῖς βαδίζειν καὶ διαλέγεσθαι, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα ὡσαύτως ποιεῖν. καὶ μοι δοκεῖ, ἔφη, συλλήβδην ἡσυχιότης τις εἶναι ὃ ἐρωτᾷς ("... sound-mindedness is doing everything in an orderly and quiet manner, walking in the streets, talking, and everything else of that kind. 'In a word,' he said, 'I think the thing about which you ask may be called 'quietness'").

³⁹*Chrm.* 164a1–d4.

such demonstrate sound-mindedness.⁴⁰ The extent to which these psychological states are in fact identifiable with epistemic states is, of course, debatable. But that courage and sound-mindedness, like knowledge or wisdom (σοφία), are some kind of psychological state is clear.

Let us now turn to the work_A of courage. As I noted at the end of section III, there is some ambiguity in this very formulation. We might, more appropriately, inquire after the work_A of the soul that possesses courage. The obvious candidate is courageous corporeal action; that is to say, the psychological state of courage enables a person to act courageously. However, Socrates himself never explicitly describes things as such. We have seen that in *Republic* 1, Socrates defines the work of an entity as that which can only or best be done with it. Toward the end of that text, he claims that the soul has a work or number of works: to care for, calculate, and govern.⁴¹

At least the second of these is a mental activity. So, it is plausible that the work_A of courage or rather the courageous soul may be or at least may include a mental activity. Moreover, in the same passage in *Republic* 1, Socrates defines the excellence (ἀρετή) of the soul as justice (δικαιοσύνη),⁴² where by excellence he understands the condition that makes an entity fit for its work_A. Also, by this point in the text he has suggested that justice is knowledge (σοφία).⁴³ And since there is ample evidence in *Laches* and elsewhere that Socrates regards human excellence and so courage as knowledge of some kind, he may very well regard the work_A of courage or the courageous soul as including mental activity and perhaps precisely as caring for, calculating, and governing. I believe that this is the view of the work_A of human excellence or of the soul in a condition of human excellence that Plato intended to advance as a compelling alternative to pre-analytic, conventional views. I will call it the "Socratic conception." Moreover, courageous, as well as sound-minded, just, and holy corporeal activities fall within the scope of caring for and governing, but they do not exhaust the work_A of human excellence.

On the other hand, the Socratic conception of human excellence and especially of courage as a kind of knowledge is not conventional. I suggest that in their pre-analytic grasp of the concepts, Socrates' interlocutors would regard the work_A of courage, holiness, justice, and sound-mindedness, where these are understood as psychological states, as correspondingly virtuous or excellent corporeal action. This hypothesis is supported by a range of evidence.

Most of Socrates' interlocutors' initial responses to the WF question describe act-types. Charmides defines sound-mindedness as quiet behavior; Critias as

⁴⁰In contrast—as we have seen (above, 334)—the common translation of δσιον as "pious" is misguided because "piety" is a personal excellence-term. On the other hand, "holy" is not.

⁴¹*Rep.* 1.353d3–6.

⁴²*Rep.* 1.353e1–9.

⁴³*Rep.* 1.350c4–5 and 351a3–4. I assume that Socrates and Plato understand the words ἐπιστήμη and σοφία as equivalents.

doing good things. Laches defines courage as paradigmatic hoplite conduct. Cephalus defines justice as truth-telling and returning borrowed items; Polemarchus as rendering each his due. Euthyphro defines holiness as what he is doing, prosecuting one who commits sacrilege, regardless of his relation to the offender. Meno defines excellence, for a man, as managing political affairs and, for a woman, as managing household affairs.⁴⁴

In *Republic* 1, Socrates asks Thrasymachus whether one city will have the δύναμις to enslave another if it lacks justice.⁴⁵ Socrates suggests that a city whose citizens lack justice will be incapable of organizing a successful military campaign. This is because the work of injustice is to breed hatred among the citizens of the enslaving city.⁴⁶ Socrates then speaks of injustice as having a δύναμις⁴⁷ and suggests that if injustice is present among at least some members of a group it will disable the group from cooperatively carrying out its enterprises (351e6–352a3):

Ἐάν δὲ δὴ . . . ἐν ἐνὶ ἐγγένηται ἀδικία, μὴν μὴ ἀπολεῖ τὴν αὐτῆς δύναμιν, ἣ οὐδὲν ἦττον ἔξει. Μηδὲν ἦττον ἐχέτω, ἔφη. Οὐκοῦν τοιάνδε τινὰ φαίνεται ἔχουσα τὴν δύναμιν, οἷον, ᾧ ἂν ἐγγένηται, εἴτε πόλει τινὶ εἴτε γένει εἴτε στρατοπέδῳ εἴτε ἄλλῳ ὁμοῦν, πρῶτον μὲν ἀδύνατον αὐτὸ ποιεῖν πράττειν μεθ' αὐτοῦ διὰ τὸ στασιάζειν καὶ διαφέρεσθαι, ἔτι δ' ἐχθρόν εἶναι αὐτῷ . . . :

[If, in the case of two people,] injustice is present in one, will it lose its δύναμις or retain it? "Let it have it just the same," he said. "Then is it not apparent that it has a certain kind of δύναμις such that wherever it is present, be it in a city, family, army camp, or anywhere else, it first makes the thing incapable of acting within itself on account of faction and division, and then it renders the thing an enemy to itself . . .?"

In *Protagoras*, it is Protagoras who, during his account of the origin of society, first introduces the word δύναμις.⁴⁸ There δυνάμεις are treated as entities Zeus charges Prometheus and Epimetheus to distribute to animals. Among the entities said to be δυνάμεις are strength⁴⁹ and quickness (τάχος),⁵⁰ as well as

⁴⁴ For references, see the table below, 340–342.

⁴⁵ *Rep.* 1.351b1–9. It clearly cannot be assumed that the work of justice is understood as enslaving another city, for it has been denied that the work of justice can be to harm others. It seems more accurate to say that the work of justice is to act cooperatively.

⁴⁶ *Rep.* 1.351d9–e1.

⁴⁷ In different texts Socrates occasionally describes the same entities as having δυνάμεις and as being δυνάμεις. For instance, in *Laches* he says that courage is a δύναμις; and in *Protagoras* he says that courage has a δύναμις (330a4–b3). This is not to be confused with the fact that some entities that have δυνάμεις, for example, the eye and ear, are not identical to their δυνάμεις, sight and hearing. Rather, I take it that when Socrates says that an entity that otherwise there is reason to believe he regards as a δύναμις has a δύναμις, this is simply a manner of speaking and that the predicate "has a δύναμις" is to be interpreted as equivalent to "is a δύναμις."

⁴⁸ *Prt.* 320d5.

⁴⁹ *Prt.* 320d8.

⁵⁰ *Prt.* 320e1.

other means of self-preservation.⁵¹ Presumably, Protagoras intends to convey that Epimetheus distributed the δύναμις of strength to certain animals to enable them to fight well and that he distributed the δύναμις of quickness to other “weaker” (ἄσθενεστέρους) animals to enable them to flee.⁵²

It is necessary, then, to distinguish the proper Socratic view of the work_A of human excellence or of the soul in the state of excellence from the conventional view to which Socrates’ interlocutors may be committed—assuming they recognize that the putative components of excellence are psychological states. In their case, the work_A of courage or the courageous soul is courageous corporeal action. Again, in Socrates’ case, it is mental as well as corporeal activity.⁵³

In sum, Socrates believes that courage is a δύναμις of the soul, that is, a psychological state or, more literally, power. Thus, Laches’ first response to Socrates’ WF question is unsatisfactory because Laches confuses a type of work_A with the δύναμις responsible for that work_A. In response, Socrates tries to impress upon Laches that there are numerous other types of courageous behavior; in other words, there are numerous other works_A for which courage is responsible. But Socrates does not do this in an effort to persuade Laches to identify courage with a sufficiently general act-type; rather, he does so in order to draw Laches’ attention to the common psychological δύναμις that all such agents share.⁵⁴

V. ETHICAL VERSUS METAPHYSICAL DEFINITIONAL DIALOGUES

Having clarified why, in response to Laches’ first definition, Socrates insists that courage is a δύναμις, I turn now to the question of why in *Laches* Socrates does not introduce the condition that *F* is a Form and why in *Euthyphro*, *Hippias Major*, and *Meno*, he introduces the latter *F*-condition, but not the former. I will begin with a list of all the definitions in the definitional dialogues and the correlative *F*-conditions that they fail to satisfy.⁵⁵

⁵¹The line is: “while for those with an unarmed constitution (ἄοπλον φύσιν) he devised some other δύναμις for survival” (*Pr.* 320e1–3).

⁵²*Pr.* 320d8–e1. The text does not explicitly say that Epimetheus distributed these δυνάμεις to the animals for the purposes I have suggested. But this assumption seems beyond doubt.

⁵³I note that I have not here discussed the *relatum* of courage (or human excellence). Insofar as Socrates or Plato conceives of human excellence as the knowledge of goodness, the *relatum* of the δύναμις is goodness. Whether Socrates or Plato conceives of the putative components of excellence as identical is, of course, controversial, and I must here sidestep the debate.

⁵⁴It should be noted here that, in defense of the meaning-interpretation of the WF question, Vlastos (1981: 410–417) presents an idiosyncratic argument against the view that δύναμις in *Laches* means “power.” For a criticism of Vlastos’s argument, see Wolfsdorf 2005.

⁵⁵Note that I have excluded consideration of *Lysis* on the grounds that because of the significant ontological difference of friendship (φιλία) from all the other *definienda*, the structure of the investigation in this text is anomalous.

Text	Definition	F-Condition
<i>Rep.</i> 1	(1) Truth-telling and returning borrowed items	Just (1.331c1–5)
	(2) Rendering each his due	Useful, ⁵⁶ just ⁵⁷
	(3) Aiding a good friend and harming a bad enemy	Not harmful (1.335d11–12)
	(4) The good for the stronger ⁵⁸	Altruistic (1.342c11–e11)
<i>Chrm.</i>	(1) Quietness	Fine (160b7–9)
	(2) Modesty	Good (161a11–b2)
	(3) Doing one's own thing ⁵⁹	Implies self-knowledge (164c5–d3)
<i>Lach.</i>	(4) Self-knowledge ⁶⁰	Exists (169a7–b1), beneficial ⁶¹
	(1) Paradigmatic hoplite conduct	A power
	(2) Toughness of the soul	Fine (192d7–8)
	(3) Knowledge of what is to be feared and dared ⁶²	A part of excellence (199e3–7)
<i>Euth.</i>	(1) Prosecuting sacrilege regardless of personal relation	Not a type of holiness (6d9–11)
	(2) That which is loved by some gods	Purely holy (8a10–12)
	(3) That which is loved by all the gods	An essence (11a6–b9: οὐσία)
	(4) Attention to the gods ⁶³	An essence ⁶⁴

⁵⁶ Socrates' response to this definition is complex. It begins with the reinterpretation of the definition itself as aiding friends and harming enemies (*Rep.* 1.331e5–332d9). He then asks how the just man is able to aid friends and harm enemies. In other words, an attempt is made more precisely to determine the just man's particular expertise. It appears that the just man is rather useless since he is only good for guarding items when they are not in use (*Rep.* 1.332d10–333e5). Subsequently, Socrates suggests that the ability to guard also implies possession of the polar opposite skill, namely the ability to steal. Accordingly, the just man appears to be a thief (*Rep.* 1.333e6–334b6). At this point, Polemarchus concedes perplexity, yet reaffirms that justice is aiding friends and harming enemies (*Rep.* 1.334b7–9).

⁵⁷ Given the possibility of misjudging people, one might harm a good person, mistaking him for an enemy, and benefit a bad person, mistaking him for a friend. In response to this, it is granted that it is just to harm the unjust and benefit the just (*Rep.* 1.334d9–11).

⁵⁸ In the first movement of Socrates' response to this definition, it is clarified that the genuine ruler does not pursue policies that are harmful to himself, mistakenly believing them to be beneficial to himself (*Rep.* 1.338d7–341a4).

⁵⁹ Reinterpreted as doing what is good.

⁶⁰ Reinterpreted as knowledge of knowledge (and of lack of knowledge and of all other knowledges).

⁶¹ Insofar as Socrates believes himself incompetent to determine whether knowledge of knowledge exists, he concedes that even if it did exist, it would not be beneficial (*Chrm.* 171d1–2; see also 172c–d).

⁶² Reinterpreted as knowledge of good and bad.

⁶³ Reinterpreted as service to the gods.

⁶⁴ On the assumption that holiness is service to the gods, Socrates questions what benefit it provides. Euthyphro's response (15b10–c2) implies that holiness is pleasing to the gods, and as such this definition falters on the same grounds as the preceding definition.

Text	Definition	F-Condition
<i>Hip. Maj.</i>	(1) A fine woman	Purely fine (287c3–5: τὸ καλόν)
	(2) Gold	Purely fine (291c6–8) ⁶⁵
	(3) To be rich, healthy, honored, live to old age, etc.	Purely fine (293c2–5)
	(4) Propriety	Makes things fine (294d9–e3)
	(5) Utility ⁶⁶	Not harmful (296c6–d1)
	(6) Benefit	Not a type of goodness ⁶⁷
	(7) Aesthetic pleasure ⁶⁸	Not a type of goodness ⁶⁹
<i>Meno</i>	(1) Managing political affairs, managing domestic affairs, etc.	Not a type of excellence (72c6–d1)
	(2) Ability to govern people	Not a type of excellence (74a7)
	(3) Desiring what is fine and being able to procure it ⁷⁰	Not a type of excellence ⁷¹

With a few exceptions, all the *F*-conditions fall into two categories: ethical and metaphysical. In most cases, it is clear from the list which *F*-condition falls into which category. However, there are several misleading or ambiguous cases. Being purely holy, being purely fine, and making things fine are introduced to advance metaphysical rather than ethical ideas. Precisely, the Form *F*, unlike its participants, is purely holy or fine; moreover, the Form *F*, unlike its participants, is responsible for its participants having their correlative properties. Accordingly, I categorize these *F*-conditions as metaphysical. In sum, the ethical *F*-conditions include being just, useful, not harmful, altruistic, fine, good, and beneficial; the metaphysical *F*-conditions include existing, not being a type of holiness, being purely holy, being an essence, being purely fine, making things fine, not being a type of goodness, and not being a type of excellence.

⁶⁵ See also *Hip. Maj.* 290d.

⁶⁶ Reinterpreted as power.

⁶⁷ No single line encapsulates the *F*-condition upon which the refutation of the definition depends.

⁶⁸ Reinterpreted as beneficial pleasure.

⁶⁹ The refutation of this definition depends upon the same complex point as that involved in the refutation of the previous definition. But consider Socrates' statement (*Hip. Maj.* 303e11–13): "Well, then," he will say, 'benefit is that which creates the good, but that which creates and that which is created were just now seen to be different; and our argument has come round to the earlier argument, has it not?'"

⁷⁰ Reinterpreted as desire for what is good and ability to procure it. But see following note.

⁷¹ Socrates argues that all people desire the good (*Meno* 77b6–78b8). Accordingly, this aspect of the definition is dropped and Socrates concentrates on the ability to attain the good. As in the second definition, Socrates suggests that such procurement should entail the exercise of specific excellences such as justice, whereupon the same problem arises (*Meno* 79a3–5).

The exceptional cases include implying self-knowledge, being a power, and being a part of excellence. Implying self-knowledge is obviously an epistemic or cognitive psychological condition and ostensibly not an ethical one. Being a power appears to be a metaphysical property. However, as we have seen, in the context in which it is used Socrates intends to convey the more specific idea that *F* is a psychological power. Therefore, being a power is more accurately categorized as psychological, although not ethical. Being a part of excellence is a meta-ethical condition. Beyond the apparent dissimilarities of these *F*-conditions, their functions within the contexts of the investigations pertain to the Socratic-Platonic consideration of the unity of excellence, the identification of excellence with knowledge of a kind, and the conception of knowledge as a psychological power. Accordingly, this miscellaneous set of three *F*-conditions may conveniently be subsumed under the rubric "intellectualist."

The basic division of *F*-conditions into ethical and metaphysical categories corresponds almost precisely with the division of two sets of dialogues. The investigations in *Republic* 1, *Charmides*, and *Laches* are almost wholly concerned with ethical and more broadly psychological and intellectualist aspects of *F*. (This is also true of the discussion of the relation and identity of the putative components of excellence in *Protagoras*.) The investigations in *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, and *Hippias Major* are also almost wholly concerned with metaphysical aspects of *F*. Specifically, only in *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, and *Hippias Major* are the concept of Form, including the suggestion that *F* is a Form, and the distinction between the Form *F* and its participants introduced and developed.

It is also noteworthy that while existing—introduced as an *F*-condition in examining the knowledge of knowledge in *Charmides*—is obviously an ontological topic, the function of this *F*-condition differs from all the other metaphysical *F*-conditions introduced in *Euthyphro*, *Hippias Major*, and *Meno*. All of the latter are employed to convey the idea that *F* is a Form and so distinct from its participants. As we have seen, in *Charmides* Socrates' principal objective in examining whether the knowledge of knowledge exists is not to develop a metaphysical idea, but to determine whether, on the assumption that sound-mindedness exists, knowledge of knowledge does.

In short, the investigations in *Republic* 1, *Charmides*, and *Laches* are distinct from those in *Euthyphro*, *Hippias Major*, and *Meno* in that the latter set involve the identification of *F* as a Form, whereas the former do not. The significance of this point may be underscored by comparing aspects of the investigations in a few dialogues. Consider the first definition in *Republic* 1, truth-telling and returning borrowed items; as a definition of justice, this could be criticized as being too narrow. Instead, Socrates criticizes the definition on ethical grounds. *Charmides*' first two definitions of sound-mindedness, quietness and modesty, arguably also could be criticized as inadequately general. But Socrates criticizes them on ethical grounds. In contrast, *Euthyphro*'s and *Meno*'s first definitions

could be criticized on ethical grounds, but Socrates criticizes them on metaphysical grounds. This is, perhaps, especially noteworthy in the case of *Euthyphro*, for at no point in the investigation does Socrates criticize a proposed definition on ethical grounds. Yet, as the discussion in *Protagoras* makes clear, holiness, like courage, sound-mindedness, and justice, was conventionally recognized as a principal constituent of excellence.⁷³ In short, Plato was not logically compelled to have Socrates criticize these particular definitions exclusively on either ethical or metaphysical grounds; rather, Plato chose to compose the investigations in certain definitional dialogues and not others to introduce the metaphysics of Forms.

This division of definitional dialogues into two sets largely corresponds to Penner's division of prior and posterior early definitional dialogues. I myself make no claims about their relative dates of composition. Furthermore, since Penner's claim that in *Euthyphro* and *Meno* (and, we must now add, *Hippias Major*) Socrates pursues demotic, not true excellence is untenable, the grounds for the division must be explained otherwise. One of the fundamental problems with Penner's argument is that in, rightly, criticizing the meaning-interpretation of the WF question in *Laches* and *Charmides* (as well, we should add, as *Protagoras* and *Republic* 1) and claiming, more controversially, that Forms, universals, and meanings have the same identity conditions, Penner is compelled to admit the meaning-interpretation of the WF question in those dialogues where Socrates characterizes *F* as a Form. Yet, even if Forms have the same identity conditions as meanings, Socrates himself need not have conceived of his WF question in *Euthyphro*, *Meno*, and *Hippias Major* as a request for the meaning of "*F*." Rather, as in *Laches*, *Charmides*, and *Republic* 1, Socrates could have—and surely did—conceive of his WF question as a request for the identity of the referent of "*F*." The difference between the sets of dialogues, of course, is that in the one set Socrates conceives of the referent specifically as a psychological δύνανταις, whereas in the other set he conceives of the referent specifically as a Form. Note, however, that Socrates need not have conceived of being a psychological δύνανταις as inconsistent with being a Form. Indeed, it may be argued that the two are not inconsistent. Surely, there are Forms of psychological kinds. And surely Socrates holds both that human excellence (ἀρετή) is a Form and that human excellence as a whole is knowledge of a kind, which is a non-demotic conception of human excellence as a whole.

⁷³In *Meno*, the investigation does lead toward consideration of at least the broader psychological aspects of excellence. Moreover, it is perhaps entirely reasonable that ethical aspects of excellence are not considered, at least insofar as the goodness and fineness of excellence would have been considered obvious (indeed, as we might say, analytic). It is noteworthy in this regard that the one proposition that Socrates offers later in the investigation as stable and secure is that excellence is good.

Why, then, did Plato compose the investigations in one set of early definitional dialogues to focus on the ethical and more broadly psychological aspects of *F* and another to focus on the metaphysical aspects of *F*, specifically the conception of *F* as a Form? The answer, I suggest, is for pedagogical reasons. The ethical and more broadly psychological aspects of human excellence that Plato intended to clarify and advance are complex and controversial. Likewise, the metaphysical conception of *F qua* Form is complex and was novel and momentous. Consequently, for the sake of pedagogical efficacy, Plato, to a large extent, segregates these aspects of *F* among the two sets of dialogues.

In closing, I would like to air one further consideration relating to the distinction of the two sets of definitional dialogues that also pertains to Penner's causal-interpretation of the WF question. As explained in section 1, Penner's causal-interpretation conflates semantic and pragmatic aspects of the WF question. We should distinguish these aspects. On the one hand, the WF question seeks the identity of *F*. On the other, Socrates may pursue the WF question because he wants to know how to make people act virtuously or excellently and so because he wants to know what is responsible for such behavior. Given the evidence, in particular from *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Republic* 1, and *Protagoras*, that Socrates conceives of human excellence as a power whose work_A is virtuous or excellent corporeal and mental action, I want to question more closely whether Socrates (or rather Plato) conceives of the relation between the psychological δύνάμις and the ἔργον as causal. I do not intend to resolve this question here, but I do want to propose two reasons that should make us reluctant to embrace a positive answer to it.

Vlastos, for one, has claimed that for Socrates the only motive-force responsible for action is desire for the good. On this view, human excellence *qua* knowledge directs this motive-force.⁷⁴ Accordingly, either the claim that human excellence produces works_A must be interpreted as describing a causal relation in what Wakefield has call "a relaxed sense";⁷⁵ or Socrates has two conceptions of the psychology of action that are inconsistent between definitional dialogues such as *Laches* and *Charmides*, on the one hand, and, say, *Gorgias*, on the other.⁷⁶ Alternatively, granting Wakefield's point, Socrates expresses different views about

⁷⁴ Vlastos 1981: 428; see also Wakefield 1991: 53–54 and n. 10. It may also be noted that in *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Republic* 1, *Euthyphro*, and *Hippias Major*, Socrates does not discuss the relation of desire and the *definiendum*. In *Lysis* he claims that desire (ἐπιθυμία) is the αἰτία of friendship (φιλία) (220e6–221c5) and in *Meno* he discusses the view that all people desire the good and the relation of this notion to the definition of excellence (*Meno* 77e–78c).

⁷⁵ Cf. Wakefield's (1991: 54, n. 10) remark: "Vlastos uses 'motive' in a legitimate but restricted sense; if, as is common, the term is applied more broadly to the reasons (in Davidson's sense) that cause someone's actions, then motives includes beliefs as well as desires. Thus Vlastos' opponents are entirely consistent—although perhaps not optimally clear—in agreeing with the 'knowledge' analysis of virtue despite their 'motive-force' talk."

⁷⁶ Cf. *Rep.* 469b–c.

the psychology of virtuous or excellent action in different texts just because Plato focuses on different aspects of the psychology of action in different texts. Elaborating on this alternative—which strikes me as the more plausible of the two—in certain definitional dialogues Plato has Socrates focus on the responsibility of human excellence in the psychology of virtuous or excellent action, and in, say, *Gorgias*, he has Socrates focus on the responsibility of desire in the psychology of action.

A deeper reason for questioning whether Socrates or Plato conceived of the relation between human excellence *qua* psychological δύναμις and excellent action as causal relates to the problem of Plato's conception of causation. For several decades now, particularly in the wake of Vlastos's "Reasons and Causes in the *Phaedo*,"⁷⁷ it has been debated whether Plato anticipated Aristotle in distinguishing different kinds of *aetiological* accounts, specifically whether Plato distinguished causal and logical relations. Elsewhere I argue that neither in *Phaedo* nor in the rest of the corpus did Plato clearly distinguish these relation-types.⁷⁸ Rather, Socrates or the principal interlocutor of the dialogue refers to both kinds as *aetiological*—notably, sometimes conflating the two. Consequently, since logical relations are not identical to causal relations, we cannot, without anachronism, claim that, for Socrates or Plato, human excellence *qua* psychological δύναμις *causes* virtuous or excellent action. Instead, we are compelled to accept the more vague claim that, for Socrates or Plato, human excellence(s) *qua* psychological *dynam(e)is* is the αἴτιον (or αἰτία) of virtuous or excellent action.

This might seem like a pedantic point. But consider the special poignancy it assumes when we consider passages such as the following one from *Charmides*, which we have already discussed in section III. Recall that in examining the knowledge of knowledge as a definition of sound-mindedness, Socrates introduces the following principle (*Chrm.* 168d1–3): "Whatever has its own δύναμις related to itself will not have the being to which its own δύναμις is related." Socrates uses the examples of sight of sight and hearing of hearing to clarify this principle. Among other examples Socrates uses are, for lack of a better phrase, quantitative relational conditions: the double, more, heavier, and older. For example, Socrates argues that the double of itself could not exist, for then the same entity would be both double and half of itself. These examples are extremely puzzling. As Benson writes:

a Socratic *dunamis* is typically associated with particular types of activities. (I say "typically" because it is unclear what activities are associated with the *dunamis* of the greater, the double, the heavier, the lighter, the older, and the younger in *Charmides* [168b–d]) A thing that possesses a *dunamis* does various things."⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Vlastos 1969.

⁷⁸ Wolfsdorf 2005.

⁷⁹ Benson 1997: 80–81 and n. 5. The sentence in parentheses is from n. 5. Other commentators—Schmidt (1998), Hyland (1981), and van der Ben (1985)—do not offer any explanation.

A problematic passage such as this—and there are others in the corpus⁸⁰—encourages us to be cautious in interpreting Socrates' or Plato's concept of δύνاميς as causal.

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⁸⁰These are discussed in Wolfsdorf 2005.