Revisiting the Virtue of Courage in Aristotle

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Abstract

Aristotle views the courageous man as someone who endures and fears the right things, for the right motive, in the right manner, and at the right time, given that a courageous man feels and acts according to the merits of each case and as reason directs him. Aristotle is guided to some degree by distinctions inherent in ordinary terms but his methodology allows him to recognize states of courage for which no names exist. This paper also deals with Aristotle's unique emphasis on courage as linked to the battlefield for he considers the concept of courage as one of those many terms that are ambiguous. His insistence that the mean is a "relative mean" and not an objectively calculated mathematical mean, indicates his inclination towards practicality and empiricism. Developing the virtue, courage, in his view remains the shared responsibility of all citizens.

Aristotle defines virtues (*aretai*) in terms of the passions which they involve and the kind of context and conduct in which they are displayed. Man is a rational being, and hence his purpose will be the attainment of wisdom. The actions which bring one to the realization of this perfection of living according to reason are called virtues. Virtue, for Aristotle, is not the end, but the means to attain perfection, and consists in a conscious action fulfilled according to reason. He breaks down virtue into four aspects which are: a state that decides in mean, consisting in a mean, the mean relative to us, which is defined by reference to reason (Nicomachean Ethics 1107a in Aristotle, 1987). He also states that there are two kinds of virtue: one of thought or intellect (*dianoitike*) and one of character or actions (*ethike*) and that virtue is mainly a state of character and is achieved by habit.

According to Aristotle, the intellectual virtues include: scientific knowledge (*episteme*), artistic or technical knowledge (*techne*), intuitive reason (*nous*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*), and philosophic wisdom (*sophia*). Scientific knowledge is a knowledge of what is necessary and universal. Artistic or technical knowledge is a knowledge of how to make things, or of how to develop a craft. Intuitive reason is the process that

establishes the first principles of knowledge. Practical wisdom is the capacity to act in accordance with the good of humanity while philosophic wisdom is the combination of intuitive reason and scientific knowledge.

In Aristotle's view the moral virtues, on the one side, include: courage, temperance, self-discipline, moderation, modesty, humility, generosity, friendliness, truthfulness, honesty, justice. The moral vices, on the other side, include: cowardice, self-indulgence, recklessness, wastefulness, greed, vanity, untruthfulness, dishonesty, injustice. Acts of virtue bring honour to an individual, acts of vice bring dishonour to an individual. In the determination of ethical virtues, Aristotle is in compliance with the whole of Greek Socratic-Platonic thought in which science or knowledge is virtue. But Aristotle recognizes the fact that man is not pure reason, that he also has passions; that he is a rational being. In this, Aristotle goes far beyond the simple Greek intellectualism of other philosophers.

I

Before I venture into Aristotle's ideas about courage a more specific exposition of his doctrine of the mean is essential. He states: *"If then, as we say, good craftsmen look to the mean as they work, and if virtue, like nature, is more accurate and better than any form of art, it will follow that virtue has the quality of hitting the mean. I refer to moral virtue, for this is concerned with emotions and actions, in which one can have excess or deficiency or a due mean. For example, one can be frightened or bold, feel desire or anger or pity, and experience pleasure and pain in general, either too much or too little, and in both cases wrongly; whereas to feel these feelings at the right time, on the right occasion, towards the right people, for the right purpose and in the right manner, is to feel the best amount of them, which is the mean amount – and the best amount is of course the mark of virtue. And similarly there can be excess, deficiency, and the due mean in actions. Now feelings and actions are the objects with which virtue is concerned; and in feelings and actions excess and deficiencies are errors, while the mean amount is praised, and constitutes success; and to be praised and to be successful are both marks of virtue. Virtue, therefore, is a mean state in the sense that it is able to hit the mean."* (Nicomachean Ethics 1106b14-b28 in Aristotle, 1973, 1975, 1984, 1987). Therefore, every ethical virtue is a condition intermediate between two other states, one involving excess, and the other deficiency. In this respect, Aristotle says, the virtues are no different from technical skills: every skilled worker knows how to avoid excess and deficiency, and is in a condition intermediate between two extremes. The courageous person, for example, judges that some dangers are worth facing and others not, and experiences fear to a degree

that is appropriate to his circumstances. He lies between the coward, who flees every danger and experiences excessive fear, and the rash person, who judges every danger worth facing and experiences little or no fear. Aristotle holds that this same topography applies to every ethical virtue: all are located on a map that places the virtues between states of excess and deficiency. He is careful to add, however, that the mean is to be determined in a way that takes into account the particular circumstances of the individual.

According to Sparshott (1994:150) the most noted characteristic of Aristotle's definition of courage is its intricacy. This intricacy arises from the subtlety of the relations between courage on the battlefield and other manifestations of endurance, on the one hand, and alternative sources of military success – such as desperation – on the other. As to the unique emphasis of courage linked to the battlefield one needs to accept that Aristotle treats the word and concept of courage as one of those many terms that are ambiguous, but of which all the related applications should be explained by one paradigm case, much in the same way that substance is the paradigm of "being". In this respect the logical deduction is that military courage is the paradigm of courage in general. Moreover Sparshott (1994) is of the opinion that the anomalous relation of courage to pleasure and the two concomitant feelings of aggressiveness and endurance should not be a cause of confusion to philosophers. In the first place, virtues are defined by the situations that call for them: in the case of courage, those that inspire fear - in a word, dangers. But handling fear really does involve two quite different modes of appropriate response namely handling the fear itself, and doing something about what inspires it. And in the military realm that involves knowing when to advance and when to retreat - and being able to do either positively. Sparshott (1994:150-151) relates the double nature of courage to the specific military method of upper-class Greeks, the hoplite phalanx. It was a method that called for the utmost discipline – a quality with which the Greek and Greek-trained armies of Alexander the Great overran the neighbouring empires. In the phalanx, the heavily armoured Greek soldier was almost invulnerable: his left side was guarded by his shield, his right side by the shield on the left arm of his neighbour. But this worked only so long as the line was intact. As soon as someone ran away, there was a gap in the line through which inroads could be made. The same was true if someone lost his cool and ran towards the enemy. But, although this fact must have made Aristotle's point graphically clear to his upper-class audience, as only those who could afford the expensive equipment could join the phalanx, the point seems clear enough without that.

The Greek word for courage is "andreia" which literally means manly courage or bravery. Morever it refers to the state or quality of mind or spirit

that enables one to face danger, fear or vicissitudes with self-possession and resolution. It is a mental or moral strength to face danger with fear and reflects to the quality of mind or spirit that enables one to face difficulty, danger, pain and any adverse circumstances. According to Leighton (1987: 79) since virtue and with that courage is developed through habituation in regard to the relevant actions and passions, the acquisition of the virtue courage would seem to involve learning to act and to feel certain passions in the right way, at the right time. Aristotle's explanation of courage is thus also contained under his doctrine of the mean. For him, courage is a mean with respect to things that inspire confidence or fear. By "things that inspire confidence or fear" Aristotle simply means the formal objects of confidence and fear, where confidence is apparently meant as the opposite of fear. A more pointed formulation of the same thesis may therefore be this: Courage is the mean between fearfulness and fearlessness. Excess of fearfulness is cowardice, says Aristotle, whereas excess of fearlessness is an unnamed vice. The virtue to be found in-between is courage.

For Aristotle any account of the virtues requires that virtues be exemplified in concrete lives. Humans become virtuous by tending to copy the lives of virtuous people. Hereby is meant that "to copy" is not some mechanical imitation, though that may not be a bad place to start, but rather it involves having the same feelings, emotions, desires that the virtuous person has when he acts (Hauerwas, 1993:251). Aristotle observes that it is a hard task to be good: *"Hence also it is no easy task to find the middle, e.g. to find the middle of a circle is not for every one but for him who knows; so too, any one can get angry – that is easy – or give or spend money; but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive, and in the right way, that is not for every one, nor is it easy; wherefore goodness is both rare and laudable and noble"* (Nicomachean Ethics, 1109a 24-29 in Aristotle, 1987). The virtues, for Aristotle, do not only require disposition for pertinent action, but also an attitude that personifies the appropriate emotions and desires. In order to become virtuous one needs to be educated through the gradual buildup of the required qualities. Aristotle notes that: *"we are masters of our actions from the beginning right to the end, if we know the particular facts, but though we control the beginning of our states of character the gradual progress is not obvious, any more than it is in illnesses; because it was in our power, however, to act in this way or not in this way, therefore the states are voluntary".* (Nicomachean Ethics, 1114b 31-33 in Aristotle, 1984, 1987). Courage is crucial to all the virtues becoming "voluntary" in Aristotle because as already discussed courage is the mean between fear and confidence. Aristotle thought courage and temperance particularly important in order to acquire any virtue since courage and temperance are the virtues

that form what he assumed were the most basic human desires namely fear and pleasure. The purpose of the virtues for Aristotle is not to repress such desires but to form human desire to fear rightly. Reckless people cannot be people of courage because they lack fear. They may do what courageous people do but they are not courageous as they lack the proper feeling. Aristotle thus assumes that the descriptions of actions are inseparable from the character of the agent. That certain actions are always wrong is but a way of saying that no virtuous person could ever foresee performing such an action. Accounts of the virtues do not exclude rules or actions that are prohibited, but rather insist that rules and such actions affect negatively the practices of the community necessary for sustaining virtuous people.

II

Aristotle in a synergetic way distinguishes between moral courage or true courage and "five kinds of courage inappropriately so-called":

a) There is political courage which is the type that looks mostly like true courage. The "citizen-soldier" who has this kind of courage stands resolute against great danger due to a sense of shame. The person of political courage stands steadfast against great peril with the aim of avoiding reproaches and legal penalties and of winning honour but not for the sake of the noble. Hence the bravest people seem to be those among whom cowards are held in dishonour and courageous men in honour (Nicomachean Ethics 1116 a 15-35 in Aristotle, 1962, 1970, 1973, 1975, 1984, 1987).
b) The next one is the courage of experience and expertise such as shown by professional soldiers. A professional soldier may appear brave to those inexperienced with war because the latter tend to overestimate dangers, whereas the former knows there are many false alarms. Professional soldiers, however, may become cowards whenever the danger subjects them to too severe a strain and they are inferior in numbers and equipment. For citizen-troops look upon flight as a disgrace, while professional soldiers go into action assuming their own superiority, but when they find themselves outclassed they flee, fearing death more than dishonour. Aristotle is of the opinion that the courageous man is not that kind of fellow.
c) The third kind of courage is the courage of passion. A person manifesting this passion stands firm against great danger due to irrational feelings such as love or anger. In Aristotle's words: *"the form of courage inspired by passion seems to be the most natural, and develops into true courage if choice and the right motive be added. Men then as well as beasts*

experience pain when they are angry and pleasure when they take their revenge. Those, however, who fight on this account, though valiant fighters, are not courageous; for they do not act for honour's sake ("kalon"), nor as the rule ("logos") directs but it springs from feeling ("pathos"). However they have something akin ("paraplesion") to true courage". (Nicomachean Ethics 1117a3-9 in Aristotle, 1975). Thus someone may act bravely in the grips of a passion but a genuinely courageous person acts deliberately and withstands danger when that is justified, for its own sake.

d) The fourth kind is the courage of good hope "*euelpis*". Sanguine people may appear brave, but only because they are unwarrantedly confident. Aristotle maintains that when drunken men also behave in this way they become sanguine. Persons who possess this kind of courage stand firm against great danger due to the fact that they think they are not in danger and nothing really bad can happen to them. But when things do not turn out as they expect, they flee.

e) The fifth kind is the courage of ignorance. Such persons may appear brave simply because they do not know of the presence of danger and though these persons closely resemble those of sanguine temperament, they are on a lower level inasmuch as they possess none of that self-reliance which the sanguine have. When they realise that they are in danger, they will run away from danger.

In all the above-mentioned categories the agent is not really courageous either because he does not act from noble motive or he has no appropriate sense of fear or confidence. As already discussed the term courageous is applied to those who resolutely face up to what is painful. Courage therefore, implies the presence of positive pain, and is rightly praised because it is harder to confront what is painful than to abstain from what is pleasant. By quoting the example of boxers and the hammering they receive before any honours are bestowed on them Aristotle states that the end which courage has in view is recognised as pleasant but it is none the less overshadowed or obscured by the accompanying circumstances.

Aristotelian courage (*andreia*) is concerned with the passions of fear (*phobos*) and confidence (*tharsos*). It is thus exhibited in the face of what is fearful and dangerous. Strictly speaking, it is concerned only with the greatest kind of harm – with death, more specifically with death in battle, though we may by analogical extension, talk of courage in other contexts. Bearing in mind that virtue typically comprises both passion and action, one needs a context in which the courageous person can be active, not merely suffering an inevitable death from disease or shipwreck and this involves nobility. According to Duff (1987:5) the courageous person feels both fear

(*phobos*) and confidence (*tharsos*) as, when, and as much as he should. Courage is thus the mean with regard to feelings of fear and confidence and these are distinct feelings. Humans are subject to fear and also to lack of confidence. The former is the natural felt response to present danger; the latter is the emotion that corresponds to a belief that we will be unable adequately to cope with our fear and with the danger. Both feelings admit of excessive response in two directions. A person may fear too much or too little. It is right to fear some things: *"for to fear some things is even right and noble, and it is base not to fear them e.g. disgrace"*. (Nicomachean Ethics, 1115a 13 in Aristotle, 1973). But other fears are inappropriate, e.g. fear of a noble death, or disease, or poverty. If a person fears too much, he is a coward; if he fears too little, or not at all, he would be a sort of madman or insensitive to pain. The courageous person is the person who fears the right things and from the right motive, in the right way and at the right time. Likewise, confidence admits of extremes in two directions. One may have more confidence than is warranted and in this instance the particular person is rash. Or one may have less confidence than is warranted and as such he may be too easily discouraged or despairing. Both these are failings of character. The excellent or virtuous character in relation to fear and confidence is courage, the mean between these excesses. If these are distinct emotions, there should then in principle be four ways of going wrong in that a person's fear or confidence might be either excessive or deficient. In the Eudemian Ethics fear and confidence are apparently inversely correlated so that there are just two vices: a coward feels more fear and less confidence while a reckless person feels less fear and more confidence, than is proper. This may suggest that fear and confidence are not distinct emotions, but opposed poles of the same emotional range.

Aristotle's concept of courage is more constricted than the contemporary one, since it accentuates the military meaning of courage. He states it as follows: *"Now we fear all evils, e.g. disgrace, poverty, disease, friendlessness, death, but the brave man is not thought to be concerned with all; for to fear some things is even right and noble, and it is base not to fear them - e.g. disgrace; he who fears this is good and modest, and he who does not is shameless. He is, however, by some people called brave, by a transference of the word to a new meaning; for he has in him which is like the brave man, since the brave man also is a fearless person. Poverty and disease we perhaps ought not to fear, nor in general the things that do not proceed from vice and are not due to a man himself. But not even the man who is fearless of these is brave. ... With what sort of fearful things, then, is the brave man concerned? Surely with the greatest; for no one is more likely than he to stand his ground against what is awe-inspiring. Now death is the most fearful of all things; for it is the end, and nothing is thought to be any*

longer either good or bad for the dead. But the brave man would not seem to be concerned even with death in all circumstances, e.g. at sea or in disease. In what circumstances, then? Surely in the noblest. Now such deaths are those in battle; for these take place in the greatest and noblest danger. And these are correspondingly honoured in city-states and at the courts of monarchs. Properly, then, he will be called brave who is fearless in face of a noble death, and of all emergencies that involve death; and the emergencies of war are in the highest degree of this kind". (Nichomachean Ethics, 1115a10-30 in Aristotle, 1975). Aristotle's idea of courage here conflicts with the concept of courage held by Socrates who believed that it was possible that one could be courageous facing disease and the other struggles of everyday life. Socrates also believed that the virtue courage was a form of knowledge that could be taught while Aristotle believed that courage was more of a disposition that each individual possessed and cultivated. According to Brafford (2003) Socrates expanded the possibilities for courage so broadly that it would be very difficult for anyone to formulate a definition of courage that would apply to all of these situations. It seems that Aristotle starts constricting Socrates' definition of courage by taking his broad deliberations of courageous action and replacing them with a drastically narrower consideration of courage. Aristotle proposes his narrow definition of courage as follows: *"Properly, then, he will be called brave who is fearless in face of a noble death, and of all emergencies that involve death; and the emergencies of war are in the highest degree of this kind... At the same time, we show courage in situations where there is the opportunity of showing prowess or where death is noble; but in these forms of death neither of these conditions is fulfilled".* (Nicomachean Ethics, 1115a32 - 1115b5 in Aristotle, 1975). It is thus evident that the befitting Aristotelian courage is the courage of a citizen who runs the risk of dying on the battlefield in pursuit of victory for his city. The point may be raised as to what is actually about the battlefield that earmarks it as the appropriate stage for the display of courage. It is only upon the battlefield that a man faces and fears the terrible danger of having his own life taken from him by another man in mortal combat. The soldier runs the risk of losing his own life, and yet he still is able to overcome his fear somehow and do the right thing at any rate. By limiting the possibility of courageous action to the battlefield Aristotle narrows the widened definition of courage that not only asserted itself during the times of Plato but is also common across the world today. Furthermore Aristotle recognises that virtuous action at times requires from a person to do what is painful or extremely unpleasant. For instance he says of the courageous man in battle: *"And so, if the case of courage is similar, death and wounds will be painful to the brave man and against his will, but he will face them because it is noble to do so or because it is base*

not to do so. And the more he is possessed of virtue in its entirety and the happier he is, the more he will be pained at the thought of death; for life is best worth living for such a man, and he is knowingly losing the greatest goods, and this is painful. But he is none the brave, and perhaps all the more so, because he chooses noble deeds of war at that cost. It is not the case, then, with all the virtues that the exercise of them is pleasant, except in so far as it attains its end" (1117 b 9-16 in Aristotle, 1975). Aristotle does not imply that the war hero surrenders to wounds and death without being reluctant but instead he affirms that the exercise of virtue is pleasant. It is not pleasant to the extent that the particular action in which it consists is painful, but it is pleasant as far as the person attains his goal and thus manages to do and get himself to do what he knows is noble. Roberts (1989: 298) also accepts the view that courage is a tendency to fear appropriately and to feel confidence appropriately in the presence of dangers. He redefines the virtue of courage as "rational affect regarding dangers" and avers that the shape of this virtue will vary from one morality to another, depending on what is considered, in that particular context, to be truly dangerous. He quotes the example of Socrates who was convinced that nothing is so appalling as the prospect of losing one's integrity. Even death by execution pales into insignificance when compared with this danger. Socrates seems to have had no fear of death but instead a surpassing fear of losing his integrity. In doing so he conforms to Aristotle's description of the brave man as one who is composed in the face of things that inspire fear in others. Roberts (1989: 299) expresses the view that Socrates due to the near perfect way he had brought his fears into line with his moral convictions, had outgrown the need for courage. He continues by explaining that courage is not a matter of fearing just those things that are worthy of fear, in just the degree that dangers warrant, along with other aspects of the situations in which they are faced. It is, instead, the ability to manage whatever fears one has, rational or irrational, in such a way as to avoid being disturbed by them. Therefore courage is not so much a disposition to proper passion, but a capacity of self-management. And it does not necessarily go with moral perfection, but more often is a corrective action that enables those who are imperfect and thus lack the virtue of "affect with respect to dangers" to cope morally.

III

Since the courage of the citizen soldier is the most similar to courage it deserves a broad examination so that we may see what about it is courageous and what is not. The story in Herodotus' "Histories" concerning Aristodemus and the Spartan Three Hundred at the Battle of Thermopylae is of relevance here. Before the battle began Leonidas the Spartan king and

military leader released two men namely Aristodemus and Eurytus both of whom were members of the Three Hundred, from the responsibility of taking up arms in the upcoming battle. Both soldiers were suffering from severe pains in their eyes and were experiencing trouble seeing, so they were given the opportunity to recuperate in the nearby Locrian town of Alpeni. Once they arrived at their destination they were informed that the Spartans and Persians were engaged in heavy fighting. Although he could hardly see, Eurytus, knowing the shame Spartan society would put upon him if he did not fight, asked his slave to hand him his sword and lead him back to the battlefield. Upon returning to the battlefield the slave assisted Eurytus to rejoin his comrades where he thrust himself into the press of the battle. However, as can be imagined for a blind man upon the battlefield he was rapidly and easily killed when he ventured into battle. During the intervening time, Aristodemus due to his sick condition elected to remain behind, and when the Three Hundred fought and died valiantly on the battlefield, owing to his exceeding fortune or misfortune he was the only surviving member of the Three Hundred. Having survived the battle Aristodemus decided to return home to Sparta and as expected upon arrival he was met with an immense amount of insult and rejection. The people were furious and heaped shame upon him that would last for the rest of his life and even after his death. They even gave him a nickname that he was to be called from that time on, "Aristodemus the Coward". The members of the Three Hundred had what would appear to be Aristotle's idea of the courage of the citizen soldier. There was a profound sense of honour and shame attached to courage and cowardice. It seems that Spartan society had a pretty strict maxim that was unwritten but known by all that one should come home victorious or not come home at all. The Spartans were fighting the battle for the glory of Sparta, and they could not return home unless they had achieved victory. Even though Eurytus and Aristodemus had legitimate medical excuses, which should have excused them from any shameful punishment, Eurytus was not willing to take that chance and he ran into battle even though he could not see. Despite the fact that Aristodemus most likely understood the future result of his decision he still made the choice to stay away from the battle and he suffered life-long consequences.

Naturally one is faced with the question as to who of the two soldiers appeared to be the most courageous. If one is using the Aristotelian definition of courage then Aristodemus the coward would seem to be more of an example, although an imperfect one, of this type of courageous man. Reason guided Aristodemus and so he lived to fight and die courageously in the battle of Plataea later on. Aristodemus sensibly made the rational choice not to fight at Thermopylae because he was blinded by an eye infection. Eurytus would seem to have been reckless instead of truly courageous when

he charged into the battle blindly. The citizen soldier is like Eurytus who chose to fight even though he would certainly die rather than endure the shame of returning to Sparta as a surviving member of a defeated army. Aristotle when discussing the courage of the citizen soldier noted that, courageous action ought to be motivated not by compulsion, but by the fact that it is noble. In his recklessness to overcome possible shame that would be heaped upon him, Eurytus actively looked for his own death. For it cannot be said that a blind man running into battle was performing as reason directed for the sake of acting nobly. For a blind man it certainly is not reasonable to fight in battle. Aristotle believed that nothing was more terrifying than the thought of dying in battle, but for Eurytus the anticipated disgrace by the community goaded him to action because in his mind it was even more terrifying than death. But Aristodemus, who chose to stay behind despite the threat of punishment, survived and lived to fight another day at the battle of Plataea after he was cured of the infection. Herodotus (1987) readily envisaged Aristodemus returning to Sparta without disgrace, if only he had not had the fortune/misfortune of being a companion to Eurytus. Unfortunately by being the sole survivor raised suspicions about his courage, envy for his good fortune, and persistent uncertainty that his survival is in some inexplicable way the cause of his companions' death. Miller (2000: 19) propounds a theory, which differentiates between a semblance of courage that is "mad fury" and of a more deliberate and genuine courage of a person who fights with a full realisation that he has something to lose, which he would rather keep if that could be attained without weakening his desire to act bravely. Thus a distinction is drawn between a willingness to risk death in battle and a desire to seek death in battle. According to Brafford (2003) when the appropriate time at Plataea arrived Aristodemus evidently realised that the interests of the polis required him to take to the field in defence of it. Since the Spartans taught their children to be courageous following the model of the courage of the citizen soldier, if Aristodemus was truly courageous then it seems that he in some way had actualized the "element of nobility" in his actions. It is thus fair to say that in accordance with Aristotelian courage the bravest of the Spartans perhaps was Aristodemus, who having being the lonesome survivor of the Three Hundred at Thermopylae, nevertheless had been discredited and dishonoured. One could deduce from this story the view that to the Spartans, courage was not just an issue of thoughtless fearlessness, but either a proper overcoming of fear properly felt, or acting bravely in the presence of a proper awareness of the risks, which awareness could be experienced as fear. History would have in all probability forgotten Aristodemus if he had simply been a coward or if he had done his duty in heroic fashion by sacrificing his life at Thermopylae. The case of

Aristodemus is *"interesting because he was neither shameless, not a constitutional coward nor constitutionally courageous, but equally capable of cowardice and sublime heroism, swinging wildly between extremes"* (Miller, 2000: 27).

IV

Some of the bafflement that readers experience when they read Aristotle's text on courage is to be explained by the inadequacy of translation as words translated from one language to another do not cover in most cases identical semantic fields. Both English words "courage" and "bravery" are wider and more inclusive than the Greek word "andreia". Thus, as already noted Aristotle states that standard cases of courage are displayed only in warfare and in the face of death and to utilise the concept in another context is to extend it. Accordingly Urmson believes that the term "valour" is a more appropriate translation than "courage" or "bravery". Moreover Urmson contends that there are two kinds of fear, the one is the opposite of confidence but another is essentially not associated with confidence. When fear is defined as expectation of what is bad or evil, less fear is equal to more confidence, so fear and confidence are inversely related. This kind of fear is not concerned with courage. He also holds the view that Aristotle has made two errors. Firstly he has failed to distinguish two kinds of fear and secondly he did not differentiate the triad concerned with fear of the dangerous – cowardice, bravery and foolhardiness – from another triad the members of which might be called overconfidence, caution and overcautiousness (Urmson, 1988: 65). If Urmson is right, the feeling with which courage is essentially concerned is the fear of death. Confidence is not completely irrelevant to courage, but it has no essential connection with courage. It appears that Urmson is correct in emphasizing that fear and confidence are not equally related to courage, but he does not note that confidence, when it is understood as expectation of safety, is clearly inversely related to the fear of danger. For Aristotle, thus, courage is concerned with both fear and confidence although it is not equally concerned with them (Jiang, 1994: 28). Since Aristotle believes that the fear which the courageous person has is medial fear, the understanding of Aristotelian medial fear is the key to the understanding of the nature of fear which an Aristotelian courageous person has. Feelings can be excessive or defective. To achieve the mean in feelings is to have the right degree of a certain kind of appropriate feeling at the right time, on the right occasion with the right aim (Nicomachean Ethics 1106b14-22 in Aristotle, 1975, 1987). So, medial fear is the appropriate amount of fear displayed at the right place, right time, for the right purpose. It seems to Aristotle that the criterion of the right

amount of fear is totally determined by circumstances. Therefore a certain amount of fear is medial or right on one occasion but may not be medial or right on another occasion. In this case medial fear is always the fear which is not much nor too little under a certain circumstance and there is no uniform criterion of medial fear for all circumstances.

Several scholars are of the opinion that when Aristotle says that a courageous man is fearless, he does not mean that the courageous man has no fear at all since he will have nothing to face if he has no fear and there will be no courage if there is no fear. In Pears's view (1980: 178) Aristotle means that the courageous person is emotionally unperturbed although he has fear in the face of the greatest danger such as death and that the courageous person behaves fearlessly. Pears accentuates the significant distinction between two uses of the words "fearless" and "fearlessly" and that this distinction runs through the whole of Aristotle's teaching that people should fear medially. Therefore a man may behave fearlessly because he lacks the appropriate fear or despite of having it, he behaves like a man who lacks it. The account given by Jiang (1994:32)in this regard is noteworthy. In her view when Aristotle says that the courageous person is fearless, he means that a courageous person may feel no fear at the moment he/she faces danger and this indicates the courageous person has the fear as an emotion to an appropriate degree. Consequently the courageous person could have medial fear and feel no fear at the same time.

A self-controlled person is emotionally disturbed by his fear and therefore his fear needs to be controlled as in this respect, his fear is excessive. A courageous person has fear, but his fear does not disturb him and as such requires no control. Thus his fear is medial or appropriate. It is evident that if fear does not entail the desire to flee, it is possible that a truly courageous person calmly faces noble death, though he/she has a certain amount of fear, without struggling against the desire to avoid death. Therefore by establishing that there is no necessary connection between the fear and the desire to flee, we can demonstrate that Aristotelian medial fear can exist and Aristotelian courageous persons are different from self-controlled persons.

Some philosophers reason out that the medial confidence which the courageous person possesses, enables the courageous person to enjoy the courageous action. In order to determine whether medial confidence refers to a positive feeling motivating the courageous person to act courageously one needs to understand what Aristotle means by confidence (tharsos) within the context of courage. In his "Rhetoric" Aristotle (1960) states that fear involves pain and disturbance aroused by the expectation of impending evil, and is naturally expressed in flight. Confidence (tharsos) involves a hopeful

confidence aroused by the expectation that safety is close at hand or danger significantly far, and is naturally expressed in perseverance. Pears contends that the "tharsos" involved in courage is a matter of estimating the odds. Confidence of this nature must be based not on certainty but on an assessment of the odds (Pears, 1980: 184). A person whose confidence is appropriate to his situation correctly judges the chances of death and of success as he/she neither overestimates nor underestimates the risk which he faces. A courageous person, thus, assesses accurately the chances of death and of safety. It was also revealed by Pears that such an interpretation of the confidence associated with courage can make sense in relatively frequent cases of courage but not in the case of desperate courage. By "desperate courage" he refers to the case in which the brave man knows for sure that he has no chance to survive if he acts courageously for what he believes is noble. A relevant example here is the above-mentioned case of the Spartans at Thermopylae who were confident in the nobility of their sacrifice, and died gladly to save their friends. A courageous man might also persevere to his post when facing certain death even when no military advantage is to be gained, believing that retreat or surrender would in that context be disgraceful. The Spartans had appropriate confidence because they believed that their self-sacrifice would delay the Persian advance and contribute to the eventual victory of their nation.

If the confidence with which courage is concerned is the confidence in the worthiness of one's action, many other moral virtues would also be linked to confidence. But Aristotle does not state that virtues other than courage are concerned with confidence. In Aristotle's view the confidence with reference to courage is not a feeling shared by many virtues but a feeling uniquely related to courage. Hence "tharsos" of this nature cannot be the confidence in the worthiness of one's action. According to Jiang (1994: 62-63) demonstrating that the Aristotelian courage is not a form of self-control cannot be considered as proof that such courage is a unity of action and passion, since the latter requires passion's positive role in motivating the courageous agent. She concludes that courage in Aristotle cannot be regarded as a typical Aristotelian virtue which embodies the harmony between action and passion and whose psychological state is positioned between Stoic apathy and a typical Aristotelian virtue.

V

Courage as a virtue is a feature of persons who are courageous to the extent that they engage in courageous actions. A courageous action is one in which, based on the good intentions of the agent in attempting to realise a worthy goal, he or she overcomes great danger or difficulty – whether afraid or not

(Walton, 1986: 14). Actions are thus courageous when persons have good reasons for believing the actions are substantially dangerous and also the means to achieving a significantly valuable goal. As with most important concepts, it is impossible to state precise, necessary, and sufficient conditions for courage. Courage seems the most public of virtues, the subject of social admiration and awards. It is also a personal virtue whose requirements depend on individual ideals and commitments within intimate relationships.

Clearly in Aristotle, the military is a standard bearer for the virtue of courage and this virtue requires a special kind of education. Aristotle does not emphasize the difference between military and society as did Plato. But we still find that at least for courage, a special kind of disposition is required, and it is a higher standard that the citizen may not often meet, nor does a mere professional who excels only in equipment and training. Aristotle's treatment of moral virtues is useful in analysing virtues. Courage defined as a mean allows one to distinguish it, through analysis from pseudo-courageous acts. Also, his insistence that the mean is a "relative mean" and that it cannot be objectively calculated mathematically shows his bent towards practicality and empiricism. Courage is for example, neither boldness, nor cool foresight. It is a synthesis of the two, and it is this synthesis which prevents the virtue of courage from lapsing into unrestrained boldness or cowardice. This is not only discerning, but it also attests to the influence wielded by the Greek aesthetic.

Aristotle also sees the ways in which specific virtues are responses to particular challenges in life. Courage, for example, is the strength of character needed to face danger and the possibility of death. Similarly, the question can be posed as to what strengths of character are required to prosper in life. As Aristotle puts it: *"For we aim not to know what courage is but to be courageous, not to know what justice is but to be just, just as we aim to be healthy rather than to know what health is, and to be in a good condition rather than to know what good condition is".* Eudemian Ethics (1216b22-25 in Aristotle, 1970). Aristotle can indeed maintain that a fulfilled life is noble, in many ways satisfying, enjoyable and pleasant. But it is not always so. Plainly in the case of courage and I suggest, in other cases as well, the most he can argue, is that the good person will willingly choose what is noble, however painful or costly or difficult it might be. But there is an enormous difference between acting willingly and enjoying what one is doing. Ultimately Aristotle wishes to say both that the key element in living a fulfilled life is the performance of virtuous actions, and that true fulfilment is to some extent at the mercy of chance events beyond human control. To some extent, then, living well requires good fortune as coincidence can rob even the most excellent human beings of happiness. Nonetheless, Aristotle insists, the highest good, virtuous activity, is not something that comes to us

by chance. In the context of courage although we must be fortunate enough to have parents and fellow citizens who help us get hold of "andreia", we ourselves share much of the responsibility for acquiring this virtue.

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