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A NEW LOOK AT COURAGE

**An Original Research Paper
Presented in partial fulfillment
Of the requirements of the degree of
Master of Arts in Philosophy
Teaching Ethics Option
The University of Montana
Summer 2001**

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Introduction

Courage has a place both in philosophical ethics and in contemporary moral life. Regarding the former, for the majority of the twentieth century virtues in general and courage in particular were not standard topics in the philosophic literature. Martha Nussbaum writes: “[Thirty] years ago, just two varieties of ethical theory were being seriously considered in Anglo-American moral philosophy: Utilitarianism and Kantianism” (9). However, she notes, since then there has been “a revival of interest in the notion of virtue, and to a type of ethical theory in which the notion of virtue plays a central role” (Nussbaum 10).

Virtue theory has a conservative and a liberal approach. The liberal approach embraces the Enlightenment, universality, and the importance of reflection. The conservative approach is anti-Enlightenment, communitarian, and critical of the need for reflection. Nussbaum cites Alasdair MacIntyre as representative of this latter camp and says, “MacIntyre rejects as incoherent the Enlightenment’s aspiration to universally justifiable principles, and argues that moral justification is always internal to, and relative to the norms of some tradition or other” (10). She further states that under his approach “hierarchy” and “a large role for authority” are valued and that, “correct habits make reflection unnecessary, and reflection may well poison habit” (Nussbaum 10). Nussbaum however, believes that the liberal approach should be taken, and she grounds this claim primarily in the belief that the ancient virtue theorists held reflection as “one of the highest virtues” and that in their view, “a correct account of the virtues will be one that answers to the needs of all human beings, and can be defended as good for all” (10-11). However, in regards to universality, she does cite the need to attack the “prejudicial

applications” of ancient theorists who “left many human beings, such as women and slaves, outside their account of the fully human” (11).

Defending either view in its entirety is beyond the scope of this paper, but in regards to courage I would defend the liberal view for three reasons. First, in my approach to courage, I am universalizing it. I am not limiting courage to certain groups, but rather I show how it can and should be viewed as a virtue needed by and accessible to all. Second, in doing this and in modifying the conception of courage, I go against the conservative tradition where courage is primarily found in the physical realm and primarily accessible to military members and males. Third, since courage is essential to obtaining one’s goals and defending one’s convictions, and since reflection best allows humans to determine their goals and convictions, reflection is necessary if the virtue of courage is to be used in its ideal form. Lack of reflection is likely to lead to behavior where people act recklessly, or use their courage for evil ends.

Courage in the conduct of one’s life has been valued as a crucial component of moral excellence since Plato and Aristotle. In contemporary society however, our conception of courage must be updated from what the ancients began with. I will start by analyzing the importance of courage in general. Next I will explore the effect contemporary culture has on courage. After this, I will analyze the possibility of cultivating courage today with particular attention to military training. Finally, I will look at some of the liabilities of courage.

What is Courage and Why is it Important?

Most people have some idea as to what courage is and can give an example of a courageous act. Many would probably come up with an example that involved someone

risking their life for a noble purpose such as saving the life of another. In such a case, what is gained by courage, and why is it important? Surely what is gained is that a person's life is saved. What makes courage remarkable in this case is that in order to save that life, the rescuer has to overcome the fear of risking one's own life. Courage then, is significant in overcoming fear in order to gain something important.

In "Courage as a Management Virtue", Howard Harris "links courage with the path from thought to action" (28). Later he calls courage "an executive virtue" (Harris 32). Courage is the basis for executing those tasks that we otherwise would not be able to. In a sense courage becomes the currency by which we back up our commitments. Without any currency, our commitments are only words.

For Aristotle, a crucial element of courage is the reflection that allows one to find the balance between extreme dispositions: "In the field of Fear and Confidence the mean is courage; ... the one who exceeds in confidence is called Rash, and the one who shows as excess of fear is called Cowardly" (1107a33-1107b4). Thus, courage is a mean between the extremes of rashness and cowardice. Aristotle's paradigmatic example of courage is risking one's life in defense of the country (1115a28-30).

Although Aristotle limits courage primarily to physical courage, Harris's definition allows for a wider range of actions. In his recent book *The Mystery of Courage*, William Ian Miller takes a middle ground in that he "mistrust[s] the philosophic tradition that seeks to link courage too closely with reason" and that would deny courage to "the average soldier who charges ahead assisted, but only in part by his tot of rum" (Miller 281). But, neither does he want to be "too generous in conferring courage" (Miller 282). Miller writes:

There must be danger and hardship to overcome, real danger and hardship, publicly discernible, properly appreciated. We should not declare every achievement that demanded great commitments of labor, energy, and devotion a matter of courage. Most self-realization is not about courage, nor do all the obstacles that stand in our way require courage in their overcoming. (282)

He chides those who make it too easy to join the ranks of the courageous saying that some standards “are so absurdly soft on admission to the club that just about anyone who sticks to a diet qualifies” (Miller 5).

The importance of courage can also be seen by considering its role in human achievement. The best musicians choose to perform the most difficult compositions. The best athletes choose to attempt the most difficult athletic feats. In the same way, the best people will choose to attempt the most difficult acts. These most difficult acts are often those that require courage. Thus, courage is the virtue that allows us as humans to achieve our highest potential.

Miller notes the importance of courage through history: “The earliest discussions of courage ... unambivalently place it either first among virtues or no lower than third among the four cardinal virtues that include also prudence, justice and temperance” (5). Samuel Johnson says: “Courage is reckoned the greatest of all virtues; because unless a man has that virtue, he has no security for preserving any other” (Quoted in Miller 5). This shows that courage is at least necessary for moral excellence. However, regardless of whether one wants to say it is the most important virtue, its necessity proves its importance.

Before I proceed, a note on terminology is needed. Some words that are used as synonyms for *courage* are *fortitude* and *bravery*. In some cases these meanings are distinct, as they are for Miller who uses fortitude as follows: “The virtues of endurance and constancy that collectively are designated fortitude...” (118). To the contrary, different translations of the Nichomachean Ethics use *courage* and *fortitude* as the translation of the same Greek word *andreia*. For the purpose of this paper, I primarily use *courage*, and I will modify it with terms to be explained later such as large and small, or moral and physical. It should be pointed out already, however, that the concept of fortitude seems to match closely contemporary examples of small courage and moral courage. In this sense, Harris’s executive virtue is more strictly an example of fortitude.

While the virtue of courage is certainly part of virtue theory, courage can be viewed independently of virtue theory as well. I write this paper not to explore virtue theory in general, but primarily to explore the virtue of courage. As I have come to understand the virtue of courage, it is valuable regardless of the ethical camp that one belongs to. Certainly those who subscribe to virtue theory would incorporate the virtue of courage. However, courage is just as necessary if one is a Kantian or a utilitarian. Courage is what is needed to turn one’s beliefs into actions in difficult circumstances, regardless of the theoretical basis.

Courage in Contemporary Society

Contemporary American society is a kinder, gentler society compared with societies of the past. Very few things threaten us. We do not fear the plague. We do not fear marauding bands. We do not fear starvation. Chances are that the longest any of us has gone without eating is 24 hours. We do not fear freezing to death. There is no fear of

our being taken over by our neighbors. Instead of every person being ready to become a member of a militia to defend against foreign enemies or part of a citizen police force to defend against criminals, we rely on a professional military and a professional police force. In the event of fire, people no longer go to put out the fire on their own, but instead call the fire department. In pioneer days, if one's fire went out, someone had to go get a coal from a neighbor's fire. Often, this may have been a trip made hazardous by animals, weather, terrain, and other people. Nowadays, when one's electricity goes out, we simply call the power company. Technology and specialization have erased the need for individuals to display acts of physical courage as a matter of daily life. We expect soldiers, police, and firefighters to be courageous, but we presume courage is something special that the rest of us no longer need to have.

Miller appreciates the effect of contemporary culture on the virtue of courage. He writes:

The civilizing process, commercial culture, and more effective government and law all combine to pacify the public order. Civility and public order are good things. But some worry that courage would get rarer when noncontention, tolerance, and polite accommodation replaced a most punctiliously sensitive and aggressive honor. (263-264)

It does in fact seem that courage has gotten more rare. One no longer has to back up honor with the threat of a duel. High noon showdowns are no longer commonplace.

Miller calls this kind of courage "offensive courage":

Offense's courage seems ineffably martial, confrontational; it means working oneself up by boasts, rebel yells, or rum rations; the disposition for it may be of

some use in civil life, but civil life would soon become very uncivil should
courage of this style find too many excuses to express itself. (118)

Not only, Miller says, has the need for this type of courage decreased but, the presence of it goes against the norms of contemporary society.

To summarize the effect of contemporary culture on courage, we need to consider the effect on the supply for courage and the effect on the demand for courage.

Contemporary society places less of a demand on the classical connotation of physical courage, at least for the average citizen. With this decrease in demand and its corresponding decrease in supply, a concern is that if large outpourings of physical courage are once again needed, the supply of courage will be found lacking since it has not been continually replenished.

Despite the fact that in contemporary society there is less of a need for physical courage, courage in general should not be abandoned. Instead, our conception of courage should be expanded beyond that of combat and beyond physical courage in general. The chief distinction that must be made to account for appropriate advancements in our conceptions of courage is that between physical and moral courage. Miller says this distinction came about in the nineteenth century when “the upper and middle classes had become secure enough in their persons that people could undertake to support unpopular causes, to stand up against injustice, and not die or be imprisoned” (263).

The wages of courage are no longer death, but instead people now risk jobs, social position, and they earn the scorn of those who may disagree. Miller says, “Moral courage is *lonely* courage. It often requires making a stand, calling attention to yourself, or running the risk of being singled out in an unpleasant and painful way” (255). Consider

the example of a whistle blower who places his career on the line to bring to light unethical practices in his company. This is an act of courage as is the act of a person who tells an acquaintance that their racist views are not appreciated. While physical risk is limited in these acts of courage, reputations and livelihoods are at risk; it takes courage to stick out one's neck. It is interesting to note that phrases such as stick out one's neck, or place oneself on the line have their origin in physical courage, but now are used to describe acts of moral courage as well.

It is necessary, moreover, to view courage as a continuum. On one end of the spectrum is large courage, which refers to those acts of courage Miller wants to label as truly courageous, acts that involve "real danger" or "real hardship" (282). At the other end of the continuum is small courage which refers to those acts that are impeded by fear and require courage in overcoming apprehension, but that don't really place one in any danger or hardship, or have devastating effects such as loss of job or social standing.

While situations demanding large courage are rare, small courage is needed throughout the day simply to act with decency and competence. A few examples of it are making a phone call about which we are feeling apprehensive, visiting the dentist, and meeting new people. At certain times in our lives, we will be tested for large courage; in the meantime, however, we will have to be satisfied (and perhaps relieved) with acts of small courage.

How does this new distinction fit in with the past one? The difference between moral and physical courage is the quality of the risk. The difference between large and small courage is the quantity of the risk. As a matter of quality, the possible loss of life that is involved in physical courage is more dear than the losses associated with moral

courage. Because of this, physical courage is greater. In some forums of physical courage such as in sports, death is a rare occurrence, but physical injury is a regular concern, so in these cases the physical courage involved does not quite amount to large courage. Moral courage can sometimes be an example of large courage, but for the most part, it is a case of small courage. A large act of moral courage would be corporate whistle blowing or some action that entails large costs other than physical ones. Despite the fact that large and small courage can be seen in both physical and moral terms, small courage will most often be moral in nature, and large courage will most often be physical.

Here are some examples of small courage and moral courage which also demonstrate the type of courage that is needed in today's society. They come from Judith Viorst's article, "Are You a Moral Wimp?" One example is the courage needed to confront others who go against our convictions. She asks, "Have you ever sat in silence while somebody at a social gathering used the word 'nigger' or 'kike' or 'dyke' or 'wop'?" (73). Another example of the failure to take action is this: A couple driving home sees a teenage girl's car "bumped from behind by a carful [sic] of rowdy looking guys". The girl begins to slow down in preparation to get out, and although the couple is worried about her safety in this rough neighborhood, they fail to stop to help. We don't know what became of the girl, but the courage to stop may have prevented some harm (Viorst 74). In both cases we can see how courage is needed to defend one's convictions and to stand up for what one considers to be right.

Viorst also gives an example of someone who did demonstrate the type of courage that is needed in contemporary society. She was on a crowded bus in New York City as it traveled through a rainstorm and rush-hour traffic. A man ran into the street

and was hit by a car. The bus driver called for an ambulance and then continued driving. However, the bus driver “wrestled aloud with his conscience” saying, “They’re going to nail that poor guy for, hitting that man, and it wasn’t his fault. ... I should stop and give my name as a witness because it isn’t fair—they’ll blame him, and it wasn’t his fault.” (Viorst 74). Viorst relates, “He finally made his decision, pulling that jam packed bus to the curb, and saying, ‘Folks, I’ll be back in a couple of minutes.’ He ran a block and a half in the rain to give his name as a witness—to do the right thing” (74).

These examples don’t make headlines or form the substance for movies or novels about courage. However, these are examples of how courage is still needed in today’s society. These acts are not grand, exciting, or any of the other adjectives we often use to describe courage, but they are indeed acts of courage or demonstrations of the lack thereof. One way of summarizing the change in the character of courage is to say that in the past, courage was primarily needed to defend oneself or one’s loved ones in the narrow physical realm. Now, courage is needed to defend oneself in the broader sense of defending one’s convictions.

This is not the only reason for the need of contemporary courage however. Other benefits of courage have been noted by Scott Peck who writes: “Courage is the capacity to go ahead in spite of the fear, or in spite of the pain. When you do that, you will find that overcoming that fear will not only make you stronger but will be a big step forward toward maturity” (Peck 23). Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn says, “Even biology knows that habitual safety and well-being are not advantageous for a living organism” (3). As much as people want to feel safe, we all know that it is when we have taken some risk and made ourselves vulnerable that we have grown the most as persons. Thus, in addition to

making us able to defend our bodies and our convictions, the fruits of courage are strength, maturity, and growth.

A major obstacle to the exercise of courage in contemporary society is the life of consumption made possible by modern technology. Consider the person who comes home and places a TV dinner in the microwave, and then sits down with a six-pack of beer to eat, drink, and watch the nightly TV shows. Such a life appears sad to many of us, and we want to tell the person to get off the couch. Here, courage comes into play because it is needed to go outside one's comfort zone and to get off the couch. There are alternatives to such a lifestyle, but they require effort and force one to face a fair amount of fear and uncertainty. Yes, courage is needed to get off the couch, courage is needed to turn off the TV, albeit small and moral courage. In the past these attractions did not exist, so courage was not needed to overcome them. Microwave dinners were not an option, and instead a meal was something that was prepared and eaten by an entire family. TV and computers were not there for entertainment, so to entertain themselves, people had to interact with other people. To return to these practices requires courage. To avoid them obviates courage, effort, and interaction. It causes a person to wither away. Courage is needed to provide the strength, maturity, and growth that contemporary society has allowed to diminish in the pursuit of consumption. Courage flourishes in activity and engagement, and the consumptive lifestyle with its lack of both is poison to courage.

Technology has also been conducive to the decline in the overall physical capacity of people. In tougher times, people were in better physical shape. Necessity forced them to walk large distances and to engage in heavy labor. Now exercise is something that we have to seek out. The lack of physical endurance may also have a

bearing on physical courage. If we know our physical strength is low, having little confidence in our ability or endurance, we may be less likely to act courageously.

Ironically, contemporary society has also created the need for the courage to engage in technology. Some people are afraid of technology, and avoiding it can cause many hardships in their life. Examples would be people who are afraid of flying or driving. In contemporary society, these tasks are almost essential to fully engage in life's activities. Other examples may be a professional who refuses to use a computer even though all his colleagues are doing so, or maybe a librarian who insists on using only a card catalog.

Contemporary society has had many effects on courage, but it has not erased its importance. With this in mind, let us consider how to go about cultivating it.

The Cultivation of Courage

While many contemporary authors have added comments and reflections on courage, few offer more than Aristotle when it comes to cultivating courage. Aristotle says this in the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

Anything we have to learn to do we learn by the actual doing of it: people become builders by building and instrumentalists by playing instruments.

Similarly we become just by performing just acts, temperate by performing temperate ones, brave by performing brave ones. (1103a25-1103b2)

Hence, if we want to cultivate courage, we must do so by performing courageous acts. However, courageous acts in the large and physical sense are not easy to come by, and when situations that require such courage come up, we should be prepared for them. If we simply wait for acts that require courage to materialize, we may never get the chance

to develop courage in the first place. Aristotle gives us no guidelines as to how much practice is needed to cultivate a virtue, but it can be seen from music and athletics that up to the point where one begins to over train, more practice is better than less.

The distinction between large and small courage is important regarding cultivating courage. Small courage provides us with the opportunity to practice for acts of large courage. The need for acts of small courage arises simply in the course of life. However, there are acts of small courage one can purposely pursue, such as purposely placing oneself in situations that will demand physical or moral courage. An example would be performance in a choir or band. An instrumentalist or vocalist faces the potential of embarrassment while performing and because of this experiences fear. Overcoming this fear is an act of courage, and the practice of it cultivates moral courage.

In the realm of physical courage, one can engage in athletic events to cultivate courage. On this topic, Miller writes:

The remark attributed to Wellington that Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton is probably as good a social and cultural explanation of the virtue of the English officer corps as any. When Robert Graves, while recovering from wounds, was assigned to training replacement officers, he sorted the men by how they played games, “principally Rugger and soccer. Those who played rough but not dirty, and had quick reactions, were the sort needed.” (161)

General Douglas MacArthur similarly recognized the relationship between athletics and warfare by saying, “On the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that, upon other fields, on other days will bear the fruits of victory” (quoted in Spetman 78). All cadets at the United States Air Force Academy memorize this quote, and to expand on how an

individual can develop courage, I will look at how courage is developed at that institution.

Based on my experience as a cadet at the United States Air Force Academy, I summarize the philosophy of developing courage this way: Place cadets in situations that demand physical and moral courage but for the most part do not have large costs. Prepare future officers for larger acts of courage through practice in smaller acts of courage.

A few examples of activities that fit the above philosophy are parachuting, soloing in a glider, jumping off a ten-meter platform in water survival class, taking a combative physical education class (such as boxing), basic cadet training, and survival training. These things all involve varying levels of fear depending on the individual, and all are examples of building physical courage. While accidents sometimes occur, these activities are essentially safe, and many measures are taken to ensure safety, such as extensive prior training, safety equipment, specially trained cadre, and special procedures. In none of these cases is the possibility of death or grievous injury likely. However, one of the purposes of these activities is to cultivate courage for situations in which death and grievous injury will be likely. Thus to train for large acts of physical courage, smaller acts of physical courage are practiced.

In the realm of moral courage, the principal area of cultivation is living under the honor code as when a cadet has to confront another about an apparent violation of the honor code. Doing this often involves much apprehension, and it is very difficult. Cadets who confront others bear a cost in that they are sometimes labeled with derogatory terms, and there can be a potential loss in social standing. Practice in moral

courage with the honor code helps to ensure that in future situations human lives will not be wasted for want of moral courage. Again, training for large acts of moral courage, is done through the practice of smaller acts of moral courage.

The quest to gain the benefits of courage in essentially safe situations is not a recent one. William James, in his essay "The Moral Equivalent of War", seeks to determine how to provide some of the benefits of warfare without the huge costs. He writes: "Militarism is the great preserver of our ideals of hardihood, and human life with no use for hardihood would be contemptible" (James 317). Among these ideals he would certainly include courage. He wants society to have this courage but he also realizes this: "In modern eyes, precious though wars may be, they must not be waged solely for the sake of an ideal harvest" (James 311-312). Instead, he proposes "a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of the army enlisted against nature" (James 325).

William James lived at the turn of the century, so he could not know how far we have gone in combating nature, or imagine that success in combating nature aids consumption and can make people soft. He did not realize that now, instead of an enemy to be fought, nature is something for which we must care. Yes there are times where nature can deliver cruel blows to humankind, but in the main humankind is delivering cruel blows to nature. So, a war against nature is no longer sensible. However, similar challenges still exist in the world. I imagine that those who engage in religious missions, join the Peace Corps, enter seminary, or any number of other tasks that seek to serve humankind, are also showing a sort of courage William James would be pleased with.

In the cases above, practice in actual courage is needed to cultivate courage. Another method to make it more likely that one will be courageous when needed is not to practice actual courage, but rather to practice the skills that will be used in exercising that courage. Courage follows confidence. Hence one needs practice in situations that mimic reality. Firemen practice putting out fires, but in this training, citizens are not placed inside the fires to increase the verisimilitude. Military personnel do not train by shooting live ammunition at their comrades, but instead weapons modified to fire laser beams. While this training may increase the skill of a soldier, it is not necessarily training in courage since the primary dangers have been eliminated. However, it allows the skill to be gained, and confidence in the skill will make it that much easier to exercise courage in real situations.

In the same way, practice is used before engaging in small acts of courage. Prior to performing before a large audience, an instrumentalist would have practiced a part hundreds of times on his own, and maybe also played for smaller audiences in less formal settings. Likewise, before making a phone call about which one is apprehensive, one will most likely prepare for the conversation by rehearsing possible scenarios.

Without gainsaying what has been said about the cultivation of moral courage, we're still left with those problems. It is after all one of the outstanding problems of contemporary life and of moral excellence. Moral courage is the willingness to get involved when it is easier not to. Some previously mentioned examples were standing up to others who spout racist views or defying the unethical practices of a company. However, moral courage is found not just in examples of countering an outside enemy. Frequently the enemy lies within and can be found in one's own selfishness and pursuit

of comfort. Moral courage is the antidote to these and it allows us to achieve vigor instead of comfort and generosity instead of selfishness.

Opportunities to cultivate moral courage are numerous, but too often we fail to notice them or fully engage them. One example could be that when a friend loses a loved one we often send a card or give a call of condolence, but with that duty completed we shy away. Instead of giving the friend the attention that they need and deserve, we retreat to ourselves because we aren't sure what to say or how to act. Or, we might be asked to support a cause that we say we strongly believe in, but we withhold our money and time giving a number of seemingly legitimate excuses. Maybe there is a new person in our office, but instead of making the extra effort to make him feel welcome, we simply continue business as usual. In similar situations our selfishness; our desire for comfort; and our fears of embarrassment, lacking skill, or failure prevent us from getting involved with others and doing the things that we know are right. The risks in such circumstances are small, but still despite this we often fail to take them. By taking these small risks, one cultivates moral courage and achieves excellence as a human being.

In summary, preparation for larger acts of courage can be done through cultivating smaller acts of courage, and by practicing the skills that will be needed in demonstrating that courage. Although I have selected many examples from the military, I strongly believe the cultivation of courage is something that is available to all. We can all develop courage by performing courageous acts. Just as one can overcome a fear of water by swimming, and a fear of heights by hiking in the mountains, in the realm of moral courage one learns to overcome the fear of being uncomfortable by placing oneself

in situations that cause discomfort, and the fear of failure by placing oneself in situations in which one might fail.

For those who are not satisfied with such acts though, there is also the possibility of seeking out large acts of courage. There are countries throughout the world in which one could still go and display courage in battle. There are many countries in the midst of revolution, and even afterwards, as we see in the case of Poland following the collapse of Communism, a new kind of courage is needed in determining and implementing how the nation is to run in a new era (Weschler).

Limits and Liabilities of Courage

While it is important to cultivate courage, is there a possibility that in doing so one may go to far? Is it foolish to invent games that will require large courage? Where does the line get crossed? Take, for example, parachuting. It is a method by which courage is developed at the United States Air Force Academy. However, is it a method of developing courage that everyone should pursue? It is basically a safe program, but there are some risks involved, and the same margin of safety that is found within the Air Force may not be present in all parachuting. Should average citizens be encouraged or allowed to parachute?

By engaging in activities such as boxing, skydiving, and kayaking, one can overcome fear. What must be weighed against the gains in courage and pleasure are the costs in terms of life and injury. Only then can one determine if the activities are courageous or rash. Aristotle's advice in this matter is that "virtue is a purposive disposition, lying in a mean that is relative to us and determined by a rational principle, and by that which a prudent man would use to determine it" (1107a1).

Certainly there are extreme cases in sports that are easy to label as rash. Boxing too many bouts may result in becoming punch drunk. It would be impossible to imagine a situation where the goods gained by boxing for so long would outweigh the loss of one's faculties, so we must conclude that boxing until one becomes punch drunk is certainly rash. In the same way, a beginning kayaker who attempts to navigate a body of water that experienced kayakers shy away from must be considered rash. The skill of the kayaker, the difficulty of the course, the equipment used, the weather, and other factors will have to be considered when considering whether it is rash. In boxing, the length of the bout, the boxer's skill, the safety equipment worn, and the weight of the gloves used will be factors in determining whether boxing is rash or courageous. Amateur boxing, which features headgear and has shorter bouts, is clearly much safer than professional fighting, and thus it is possible to think of amateur boxing as courageous and of professional boxing as rash.

One of the drawbacks of courage is that attempts to cultivate it may result in cultivating rashness. To prevent such abuse, practical wisdom is needed. From an Aristotelian point of view, without practical wisdom there can be no courage since it is practical wisdom that weighs the gains and losses and determines where the mean falls. Unfortunately, some fail to realize that practical wisdom is important and compete to show ever-increasing amounts of courage that amount to recklessness. Education and laws can help to prevent this, but the vice of rashness existed long before Aristotle wrote about it, and it undoubtedly would continue to exist even if Aristotle's works were more widely known.

Rashness is not the only drawback related to courage. Another is that courage can be used for achieving bad ends. Amelie Rorty says: "Unlike the virtue of justice, or a sense of proportion, traditional courage does not itself determine what is to be done, let alone assure that it is worth doing" (151). A criminal has a use for courage just as a police officer does. For this reason, raw courage must be tempered by something else. For those who do not subscribe to any specific ethical theory, this will be done by individual or community conscience. Aristotle sets courage in the context of other virtues and of practical wisdom to prevent the harms of raw courage. If one subscribes to ethical theories other than virtue theory, courage is useful in following those theories, and it is the theories that give direction to the courage. Courage in isolation looks good and helps achieve what one wants, but if one wants to be truly ethical more than courage is needed. Courage gives us the how in ethics, not the why or the what. It tells us how to defend our convictions, but what our convictions should be or why we should have those convictions cannot be answered by courage alone.

Conclusion

The more one faces situations that are unfamiliar, dangerous, or scary, the more courage is needed. In the time of Aristotle, those situations were principally those of warfare, and other conceptions of physical courage have grown from this starting point. However, as society changes, the courage needed changes as well. Today, physical courage has decreased in importance, but the importance of moral courage has increased. Today average workers use fewer physical skills in their day-to-day work than workers in the past. It makes sense then that, since less physical skill and labor is required, less physical courage will be required as well.

However, whether courage is demonstrated in the physical realm, moral realm, or simply as an executive virtue, it is still indispensable in modern society. Because of this importance, it should be cultivated, but at the same time we should be careful not to let its cultivation result in rashness or to cultivate and use courage to bad ends. Our current conception of courage has evolved from past conceptions, and most likely conceptions will continue to evolve as our setting evolves. The fact that thousands of years have changed the scope of courage, but not erased it, shows that it is enduring, though not unchanging.

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