Rediscovering the *Alcibiades Major*

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Samuel Oliveira

SORGE UND SORGEN: ZUR ZENTRIERTEN UND DEZENTRIERTEN ἐπιμέλεια IM *ALCIBIADES MAJOR*

FOREWORD

Modo maxima rerum,

Tot generis, natisque potens (…)

Nunc trahor exul, inops.[1]

It is a well-known fact that Kant used the lament of the Trojan queen, Hecuba, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to describe the fate of metaphysics. But these words could equally be used to describe the peculiar fate of the *Alcibiades Major*. There was a time when this small dialogue was held in high regard and enjoyed much authority.[2] The *Alcibiades Maj*or was unreservedly attributed to Plato. It was much read, quoted and alluded to. And it is no exaggeration to say that it was one of the key works of the *corpus platonicum*. The contrast with the present could hardly be more striking.

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The prominence given to the *Alcibiades Major* begins to loom in Albinus' *Isagoge*.[3] According to Albinus there is no simple answer to the question as to what is the best way to start reading Plato, for everything depends on each person's characteristics.[4] But in ideal

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[1] XIII 508ff. The English verse translation in Dryden's and Garth's collaborative edition runs as follows:
"I, who so late had power, and wealth, and ease,
Bless'd with my husband, and a large encrease,
Must now in poverty an exile mourn;"
Cf. *Ovid's Metamorphoses* in Fifteen Books, Translated by the Most Eminent Hands, London, J. Tonson, 1717, 459.

[2] This 'boom time' or this 'finest hour' for the *Alcibiades Major* started in the early centuries of the Common Era, notably in the second century A.D. Needless to say that it achieved this prominence mainly in Neoplatonic circles.

[3] ALBINUS, Introductio in Platonem, in: K. F. HERMANN (ed.), *Platonis dialogi secundum Thrasylli tetralogias dispositi*, vol. 6, Leipzig, Teubner, 1853, 147-151, O. NÜSSER, *Albins Prolog und die Dialogtheorie des Platonismus*, Stuttgart, Teubner, 1991, 30ff., B. REIS (ed.), *Der Platoniker Albinos und sein sogenannter Prologos*: Prolegomena, Überlieferungsgeschichte, kritische Edition und Übersetzung, Wiesbaden, L. Reichert, 1999, and R. C. FOWLER (ed.), *Imperial Plato*. Albinus, Maximus, Apuleius. Text and Translation, with an Introduction and Commentary, Las Vegas/ Zurich/ Athens, Parmenides Pub., 2016.

[4] *Op. cit.*, 5.1-11: "οὐ μὴν διὰ τοῦτο ὁπωσοῦν ὡς ἔτυχεν ἐντευξόμεθα αὐτῷ· οὐδὲ γὰρ εἰ δέοι κύκλον γράφειν, ἀφ᾽ οὑτινοσοῦν σημείου ἀρχόμενός τις γράφει τὸν κύκλον· ἀλλ᾽ ἀφ᾽ ἧς ἂν ἕκαστος ἡμῶν σχέσεως ἔχῃ πρὸς τὸν λόγον ἀρχόμενος ἐντεύξεται τοῖς διαλόγοις. σχέσεις δὲ πλείους καὶ διάφοροί εἰσιν ἡμῶν πρὸς τὸν λόγον. ἡ μὲν

conditions (if someone is well born, if he is of the right age to philosophize, if he proceeds towards reason for the sake of practising excellence, if he was previously initiated or instructed in the sciences and has been released from political affairs), the *Alcibiades Major* is the right starting point. And the reason is that this dialogue makes us "change direction, turn inwards, and recognize what it is that one should be caring for (πρὸς τὸ τραπῆναι καὶ ἐπιστραφῆναι καὶ γνῶναι οὗ δεῖ τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ποιεῖσθαι)."[5]

Iamblichus, as Proclus tells us, took up Albinus' suggestion and placed the *Alcibiades Major* at the head of a Platonic educational curriculum. Or to be more precise, Iamblichus allotted the *Alcibiades Major* "the first place among the ten dialogues in which he conceives the whole philosophy of Plato to be contained, their entire subsequent development being anticipated as it were in seminal form in this dialogue."[6]

Proclus, too, follows this tradition. First, he points out that "the starting-point both for all philosophy and for Plato's philosophical doctrine can be none other than a clear and unadulterated knowledge of ourselves".[7] We therefore "must enquire in which dialogue especially Plato has this aim in mind, viz. the consideration of our being, in order that therefrom we may make our very first start upon the works of Plato".[8]

And then he makes his case thus:

"Now could we name any other prior to the Alcibiades and the conversation of Socrates related therein? Where else shall we say that the nature of our being is similarly demonstrated; or enquiry made into man and his nature; or the meaning of the Delphic inscription thoroughly investigated? Or how, before this, could we

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γὰρ ἐστι κατὰ φύσιν, οἷον εὐφυὴς ἀφυής· ἡ δὲ κατὰ τὴν ἡλικίαν οἷον ὥραν ἔχων τοῦ φιλοοφεῖν ἤ παρεβηκώς· ἡ δὲ κατὰ προαίρεσιν οἷον φιλοσοφίας ἤ ἱστορίας ἕνεκα· ἡ δὲ κατὰ ἕξιν, οἷον προτετελεσμένος ἤ ἀμαθής· ἡ δὲ κατὰ τὴν ὕλην οἷον ἐνασχολῶν φιλοοφίᾳ ἤ περιελκόμενος ὑπὸ τῶν περιστάσεων."

[5] *Op. cit.*, 5.11-17: "ὁ μὲν οὖν κατὰ φύσιν εὖ πεφυκώς, καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἡλικίαν ὥραν ἔχων τοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν, καὶ κατὰ τὴν προαίρεσιν ἕνεκα τοῦ ἀρετὴν ἀσκῆσαι προσιὼν τῷ λόγῳ, καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἕξιν προτετελεσμένος τοῖς μαθήμασιν, καὶ ἀφειμένος ἀπὸ τῶν πολιτικῶν περιστάσεων, ἄρξεται ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἀλκιβιάδου πρὸς τὸ τραπῆναι καὶ ἐπιστραφῆναι καὶ γνῶναι οὗ δεῖ τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ποιεῖσθαι."

[6] In Alcibiadem, Fr. 1, in: J. M. DILLON (ed.), *Iamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta*, Leiden, Brill, 1973, 72: "καί μοι δοκεῖ καὶ διὰ ταύτην τὴν αἰτίαν ὁ θεῖος Ἰάμβλιχος τὴν πρώτην αὐτῷ διδόναι τάξιν ἐν τοῖς δέκα διαλόγοις ἐν οἷς οἴεται τὴν ὅλην τοῦ Πλάτωνος περιέχεσθαι φιλοσοφίαν, ὥσπερ ἐν σπέρματι τούτῳ τῆς συμπάσης ἐκείνων διεξόδου προειλημμένης". Cf. PROCLUS, *In Alcibiadem* 11.11-15. Translation borrowed from J. M. DILLON, *op. cit.,* 73.

[7] L. G. WESTERINK (ed.), *Proclus Diadochus. Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, Amsterdam, North-Holland, 1954, 4.19-21: "Ὥστε καὶ φιλοσοφίας ἁπάσης καὶ τῆς τοῦ Πλάτωνος πραγματείας ταύτην ἂν ἀρχὴν κυριωτάτην νομίζοιμεν, ὅπερ εἴπομεν, τὴν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν καθαρὰν καὶ ἀκίβδηλον εἴδησιν ἐν ὅροις ἐπιστημονικοῖς περιγεγραμμένην καὶ τθοῖς τῆς αἰτίας λογισνμοῖς βεβαίως καταδεθεῖσαν." See also 5.15-16: "Αὕτη τοίνυν ἔστω καὶ φιλοσοφίας ἀρχὴ καὶ τῇ Πλάτωνος διδασκαλίας, ἡ ἑαυτῶν γνῶσις". Cf. A. P. SEGONDS (ed.), *Proclus Sur le Premier Alcibiade de Platon*, Paris, Belles Lettres, 1985, 3-4 and W. O'NEILL (ed.), *Proclus: Alcibiades I*. A Translation and Commentary, Dordrecht, Springer, 1971.

[8] *Op. cit.*, 6.4-8: "καὶ ζητητέον, ἐν τίνι μάλιστα τῶν διαλόγων ὁ Πλάτων τοῦτον ἔχει σκοπόν, τὴν θεωρίαν τῆς οὐσίας ἡμῶν, ἵνα ἐκεῖθεν ποιησώμεθα καὶ τὴν τῶν Πλατωνικῶν συγγραμμάτων πρωτίστην ἀρχήν."

examine anything else, either of the things that are or come to be when we have heard Socrates himself say: 'It seems ridiculous to me to consider the properties of other beings, when I do not know myself'?"[9]

Further down he adds:

"This dialogue is the beginning of all philosophy (ἀρχὴ ἁπάσης φιλοσοφίας), as indeed is the knowledge of ourselves (ἡ ἑαυτῶν γνῶσις) ; and for this reason scattered throughout it is the exposition of many considerations of logic, the elucidation of many points of ethics and such matters as contribute to our general investigation concerning happiness, and the outline of many doctrines leading us to the study of natural phenomena or even to the truth concerning divine matters themselves, in order that as it were in outline in this dialogue the one, common and complete plan of all philosophy (πάσης φιλοσοφίας ἡ κοινὴ καὶ μία καὶ ὁλοσχερὴς ὑπογραφή) may be comprised, being revealed through our actual first turning towards ourselves (δι' αὐτῆς τῆς πρώτης ἡμῖν εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἐπιστροφῆς ἀναφαινομένη)."[10]

Olympiodorus sings from the same hymn sheet. For him, too, the *Alcibiades Major* is, as it were, the ideal introduction to Plato and "must come first in order of all the Platonic works".[11] In the second lecture of his Commentary on the *Alcibiades Major* he claims that this dialogue can be likened to *Propylaea*: to the *front gates* of a temple – viz. to the monumental entrance or gateway to the 'sacred complex', namely Plato's philosophical work.[12]

The very same view on the *Alcibiades Major* as the best introduction to Plato's philosophy is taken in the anonymous *Prolegomena Platonicae Philosophiae*. And the explanation is pretty much the same: the *Alcibiades Major* is key to knowing ourselves, and

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[9] *Op. cit.*, 6.8-17 : "Ἆρ' οὖν ἄλλον τινὰ ἂν ἔχοιμεν εἰπεῖν πρὸ τοῦ Ἀλκιβιάδου καὶ τῆς ἐν τούτῳ παραδεδομένης τοῦ Σωκράτους συνουσίας; Καὶ ποῦ φήσομεν οὕτως ἀλλαχοῦ δείκνυσθαι ἣν οὐσίαν ἡμῶν ἥτις ἐστί; Ποῦ δὲ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐζητῆσθαι καὶ τὴν ἀνθρώπου φύσιν; Ποῦ δὲ τὸ γράμμα τὸ Δελφικὸν ὅ τι ποοτὲ νοεῖ, τελέως βεβασανίσθαι; Ἢ πῶς δ' ἂν πρὸ τούτων ἄλλο τι τῶν ὄντων ζητήσαιμεν εἴτε τῶν ὄντων εἴτε τῶν γινομένων, αὐτοῦ Σωκράτους ἀκούσαντος λέγοντος· γελοῖον δή μοι φαίνεται ἐμαυτὸν ἀγνοοῦντα τὰ τῶν ἄλλων σκοπεῖν;"

[10] *Op. cit.,* 11.3-13 : "Ἀρχὴ δέ ἐστιν οὗτος ὁ διάλογος ἁπάσης φιλοσοφίας, ὥσπερ δὴ καὶ ἡ ἑαυτῶν γνῶσις· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο πολλῶν μέν ἐστι λογικῶν ἐν αὐτῷ θεωρημάτων κατεσπαρμένη παράδοσις, πολλῶν δὲ ἠθικῶν καὶ τῶν πρὸς ὅλην ἡμῖν τὴν περὶ εὐδαιμονίας ἐπίσκεψιν συντελούνων ἀνακάθαρσις, πολλῶν δὲ εἰς φυσιολογίαν ἤ καὶ τὴν περὶ αὐτῶν τῶν θείων ἀλήθειαν ἡμᾶς ποδηγούντων δογμάτων ὑποτύπωσις, ἵν' ὥσπερ ἐν <τύπῳ> τούτῳ τῷ διαλόγῳ πάσης φιλοσοφίας ἡ κοινὴ καὶ μία καὶ ὁλοσχερὴς ὑπογραφὴ περιλαμβάνηται, δι' αὐτῆς τῆς πρώτης ἡμῖν εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἐπιστροφῆς ἀναφαινομένη."

[11] L. G. WESTERINK (ed.), *Olympiodorus, Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, Amsterdam, Hakkert, 1956, repr. 1982, and M. GRIFFIN (ed*.), Life of Plato and Olympiodorus: On Plato First Alcibiades 1--9*, London/ New Delhi/ N.Y./ Sydney, Bloomsbury, 2015, 10.18-19: "Περὶ δὲ τῆς τάξεως ῥητέον ὅτι πρῶτον αὐτὸν δεῖ τάττειν τῶν Πλατονικῶν ἁπάντων."

[12] *Op. cit.*, 11.3-6: "ἄλλως τε δεῖ νομίζειν ὅτι Προπυλαίοις ἔοικειν οὗτος ὁ διάλογος, καὶ ὥσπερ ἐκεῖνα τῶν ἀδύτων προηγοῦνται οὕτως καὶ τὸν Ἀλκιβιάδην προπυλαίοις δεῖ ἀπεικάζειν, ἀδύτοις δὲ τὸν Παρμενίδην."

self-knowledge precedes all other forms of knowledge (πρῶτον τοίνυν δεῖ τὸν Ἀλκιβιάδην πράττειν, διότι ἐν αὐτῷ γιγνώσκομεν ἑαυτούς, ἄξιον δ᾽ ἐστὶν πρὶν ἢ τὰ ἔξω γνῶναι ἑαυτοὺς γνῶναι· πῶς γὰρ ἔχομεν ἐκεῖνα γνῶναι ἑαυτοὺς ἀγνοοῦντες;).[13]

The last offshoots of this past grandeur are to be found in al-Fārābī's *De Platonis philosophia*, where – following the said tradition – the *Alcibiades Major* is mentioned as the ideal introductory piece to the *corpus platonicum*.[14]

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[13] L. G. WESTERINK (ed.), *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy,* Amsterdam, North Holland, 1962, 26, 18-20. Cf. L. G. WESTERINK/J. TROUILLARD/A. P. SEGONDS (ed.), *Prolégomènes à la philosophie de Platon*, Paris, Belles Lettres, 1990 and A. MOTTA (ed.), *Prolegomeni alla filosofia di Platone*, Roma, Armando Editore, 2014. On Albinus', Iamblichus', Proclus', Olympiodorus' and the Anonymous' views on the order in which Plato's writings should be read, see notably A. CARLINI, Studi sulla tradizione antica della quarta tetralogia platonica, *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica* 34 (1962), 169-89, A.-H. CHROUST, The Organization of the Corpus Platonicum in Antiquity, *Hermes* 93 (1965), 34-46, A.-J. FESTUGIÈRE, L'ordre de lecture des dialogues de Platon aux Ve/VIe siècles, *Museum Helveticum* 26 (1969), 281-296, in particular 282f. (=IDEM, *Études de philosophie grecque*, Paris, Vrin, 1971, 535-550, in particular 535f.), R. F. HATHAWAY, The Neoplatonist Interpretation of Plato: Remarks on Its Decisive Characteristics, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 7 (1969), 19-26, M. DUNN, Iamblichus, Thrasyllus and the Reading Order of the Platonic Dialogues, in: R. B. HARRIS (ed.), *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, Norfolk, Va, International Society for Neoplatonic Studies, Old Dominion University, 1976, 59-80, G. INVERNIZZI, Il prologo di Albino, Introduzione, traduzine e note, *Rivista di filosofia neoscolastica* 71 (1979), 352-361, P. HADOT, Les divisions des parties de la philosophie dans l'Antiquité, *Museum Helveticum* 36 (1979), 202-223, in particular 221 (=IDEM, *Discours et mode de vie philosophique*, Paris, Belles Lettres, 2014, 25-53, in particular 51), P. L. DONINI, *Le scuole, l'anima, l'impero*: La filosofia antica da Antioco a Plotino, Torino, Roenberg & Sellier, 1982, 57f., A. P. SEGONDS (ed.), *Proclus Sur le Premier Alcibiade de Platon*, Paris, Belles Lettres, 1985, xiiif., A. B. NESCHKE-HENTSCHKE, La transformation de la philosophie de Platon dans le «Prologos» d'Albinus, *Revue Philosophique de Louvain* 82 (1991), 165-184, H. TARRANT, *Thrasyllan Platonism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1993, 32ff., O. NÜSSER, *Albins Prolog und die Dialogtheorie des Platonismus*, Stuttgart, Teubner, 1991, in particular 169ff., J. MANSFELD, *Prolegomena*: Questions to Be Settled Before the Study of an Author or a Text, Leiden/N.Y./Köln, Brill, 1994, 58ff., 88, B. REIS, The Circle Smile in the Platonic Curriculum of Albinus, in: J. J. CLEARY (ed.), *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1997, 237-268, B. REIS (ed.), *Der Platoniker Albinos und sein sogenannter Prologos*: Prolegomena, Überlieferungsgeschichte, kritische Edition und Übersetzung, Wiesbaden, L. Reichert, 1999, H. TARRANT, *The First Plato Interpreters*, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 2000, 118f., L. G. WESTERINK et al. (ed.), *Prolégomènes à la Philosophie de Platon*, Paris, Belles Lettres, 2003, lxvii--lxxiv, M. GRIFFIN, Hypostasizing Socrates, in: D. A. LAYNE/H. TARRANT (ed.), *The Neoplatonic Socrates,* Philadelphia, Pa, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014, 97-108, H. TARRANT, Platonist Curricula and their Influence, in: S. S.-GRIFFIN/P. REMES (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Neoplatonism*, London/N.Y., Routledge, 2014, 15-29, F. RENAUD/H. TARRANT, *The Platonic Alcibiades* I: The Dialogue and its Ancient Reception, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, in particular 164ff., 177ff., and 190ff., H. TARRANT, From Fringe Reading to Core Curriculum. Commentary, Introduction, and Doctrinal Summary, in: IDEM/ F. RENAUD/D. BALTZLY/D. A. LAYNE (ed.), *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Plato in Antiquity*, Boston, Brill, 2018, 101-114, in particular 105ff., D. A. LAYNE, The Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy, *ibi*, 533-554, M. GRIFFIN, Olympiodorus of Alexandria, *ibi*, 555–568, in particular 558f., J. DILLON, Paideia Platonikê: Does the Later Platonist Programme of Education Retain any Validity Today?, *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 50 (2018), 597-604. It goes without saying that the prominence given to the *Alcibiades Major* as the ideal starting point for studying Plato was not unchallenged. See, for example, T. DORANDI (ed.), *Diogenes Laertius Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Cambridge/N.Y., Cambridge University Press, 2013, 3.62: "ἄρχονται δὲ οἱ μέν, ὡς προείρηται, ἀπὸ τῆς Πολιτείας· οἱ δ᾽ ἀπὸ Ἀλκιβιάδου τοῦ μείζονος· οἱ δ᾽ ἀπὸ Θεάγους· ἔνιοι δὲ Εὐθύφρονος· ἄλλοι Κλειτοφῶντος· τινὲς Τιμαίου· οἱ δ᾽ ἀπὸ Φαίδρου· ἕτεροι Θεαιτήτου· πολλοὶ δὲ Ἀπολογίαν τὴν ἀρχὴν ποιοῦνται." and ALBINUS, *Introductio in Platonem*, 4.1ff.

[14] F. ROSENTHAL/R. WALZER (ed.), *Alfarabius de Platonis philosophia* (Corpus Platonicum Medii Aevi, Plato arabus II), Londinii, in aedibus Instituti Warburgiani 1943, I,2. Cf. The Philosophy of Plato, its Parts, and the Order of its Parts, from the Beginning to the End, in: M. MAHDI (ed.), *Al Farabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle,* N.Y., Free Press of Glencoe, 1962, 54. See also H. TARRANT, *Thrasyllan Platonism*, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1993, 32ff. and C. CONNELLY, New Evidence for the Source of al-Fārābī's Philosophy

None of this means that in ancient times there was a universal consensus on the importance of the *Alcibiades Major,* or that this dialogue played a leading part for long. As a matter of fact, there were many times and circumstances when it did not draw much attention. And in some cases, even if it did, it was not as highly valued as in the above-mentioned Neoplatonic circles. For instance, in the second century AD Aelius Aristides expressed a far less positive view of the *Alcibiades Major*. Even a cursory glance at his *Πρὸς Πλάτωνα ὑπὲρ τῶν τεττάρων* shows that this is the case.[15] First, Aristides' remarks highlight the fact that there were other ways of looking at this dialogue. He frames the *Alcibiades Major* against the background of what might be described as a 'literary sub-genre': the 'sub-genre' of the *Alcibiades-Socrates*-related texts viz. of the *Alcibiades-dialogues* that flourished among 'Socratic' authors.[16] Secondly, Aristides does not hide his view that the *Alcibiades Major* is far

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of Plato, in: J. A. STOVER (ed.), *A New Work by Apuleius:* The Lost Third Book of the *De Platone*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, 182–97.

[15] *Aristides*, ex recensione Guilielmi Dindorfii, vol. 2, Leipzig, Weidmann/Reimer, 1829, repr. Hildesheim, Olms 1964, 156-414.

[16] On this particular 'literary sub-genre' see notably I. BRUNS, *Das literarische Porträt der Griechen* im vierten und fünften Jahrhundert vor Christi Geburt, Berlin, W. Hertz, 1896, 509ff., K. JOËL, *Der echte und der xenophontische Sokrates* II, Berlin, R. Gaertner, 1901, 719ff., H. DITTMAR, *Aischines von Sphettos*. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte der Sokratiker. Untersuchungen und Fragmente, Berlin, Weidmann, 1912, repr. Berlin, Weidmann, 2001, 65ff., 68ff., 97ff.,120ff., H. BRÜNNECKE, *De Alcibiade II qui fertur Platonis*, Diss. Göttingen, 1912, B. P. GREENFELL/A. J. HUNT et al. (ed.), *The Oxyrrhincus Papyri* XIII, London, Egypt Exploration Society, 1919, 88ff., E. DUPRÉEL, *La légende socratique et les sources de Platon*, Bruxelles, Sand, 1922, 283, A. E. TAYLOR, *Philosophical Studies*, London, Macmillan, 1934, 1-27, R. APPLEGATE, *The Alcibiades of Aeschines of Sphettus*, Diss. Princeton, 1949, E. G. BERRY, The Oxyrhynchus Fragments of Aeschines of Sphettus, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 81 (1950), 1-8, A.-H. CHROUST, *Socrates Man and Myth*. The Two Socratic Apologies of Xenophon, 1957, 59, 147ff., 154, 174ff., 181, 198ff., K. GAISER, *Protreptik und Paränese bei Platon*. Untersuchungen zur Form des platonischen Dialogs, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1959, 77-100, B. EHLERS, *Eine vorplatonische Deutung des sokratischen Eros*. Der Dialog Aspasia des Sokratikers Aischines, München, Beck, 1966, 10ff., G. C. FIELD, *Plato and his Contemporaries*. A Study in Fourth-century Life and Thought, London, Methuen, 1967, 147ff., J. HUMBERT, *Socrate et les Petits Socratiques*, Paris, P.U.F., 1967, 223ff., A. MOMIGLIANO, *The Development of Greek Biography*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1971, 47, C. W. MÜLLER, *Die Kurzdialoge der Appendix Platonica*. Philologische Beiträge zur nachplatonischen Sokratik, München, Fink, 1975, 17ff., 150ff., O. GIGON, *Sokrates*. Sein Bild in Dichtung und Geschichte, Bern, Francke, 1947, repr. München, Francke, 1979, 196ff., K. DÖRING, Der Sokrates des Aeschines von Sphettos und die Frage nach dem historischen Sokrates, *Hermes* 112 (1984), 16-30 (=K. DÖRING, *Kleine Schriften zur antiken Philosophie und ihrer Nachwirkung*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 2010, 195-208, H. D. RANKIN, *Antisthenes Sokratikos*, Amsterdam, Hakkert, 1986, 8ff., 123ff., M. A. JOYAL, The Conclusion of Aechines' 'Alcibiades', *Rheinisches Museum* N. F. 136 (1993), 263-268, D. CLAY, The Origins of the Socratic Dialogue, in: P. A. VANDER WAERDT (ed.), *The Socratic Movement*, Ithaca/London, Cornell University Press, 1994, 23-47, in particular 29, L. M. SEGOLONI, *Socrate a banchetto*. Il Simposio di Platone e i Banchettanti di Aristofane, Roma, Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale, 1994, 75f., C. KAHN, Aeschines on Socratic Eros, *ibi*, 87-106, J. de ROMILLY, *Alcibiade ou les dangers de l'ambition*, Paris, Éditions de Fallois, 1995, 227ff., C. H. KAHN, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*. The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form, Cambridge/N.Y./Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 1-36, G. GIANNANTONI, L'*Alcibiade* die Eschine e la letteratura socratica su Alcibiade, in: IDEM/M. NARCY (ed.), *Lezioni Socratiche*, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 1997, 349-373, V. J. GRAY, *The Framing of Socrates*. The Literary Interpretation of Xenophon's Memorabilia, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 1998, 41ff., 60ff., K. DÖRING, Sokrates, die Sokratiker und die von ihnen begründeten Traditionen, in: H. FLASHAR (ed.), *Die Philosophie der Antike* 2.1, Basel, Schwabe, 1998, 139-364, D. GRIBBLE, *Alcibiades and Athens*. A Study in Literary Presentation, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1999, 36, 214ff., S. R. SLINGS (ed.), *Plato Clitophon*, Cambridge/N.Y./Melbourne, Cambridge University Press,

from being the absolute *non plus ultra* in this 'literary sub-genre' – and notably that in some respects the comparison with Aeschines of Sphettus' *Alcibiades* turns unambiguously in favour of the latter.[17] But the point is that, even when it was not considered to be a bright star in the philosophical firmament, the *Alcibiades Major* was also very far from being the 'literary outcast' or the 'philosophical underdog' it was to become.

Like a significant part of Plato's work, the *Alcibiades Major* had, of course, its centuries-long hibernation till it emerged from it in the Renaissance. But it speaks volumes that Marsilio Ficino could still refer to it in such glowing terms as these: "*Candidissimus Platonis nostri liber, qui Alcibiades primus inscribitur, Alcibiade ipso venustior, et omni carior auro.*"[18]

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Then the tide changed. And in this respect Schleiermacher marks a turning point. To be sure the star of the *Alcibiades Major* had paled long before Schleiermacher published his edition of it.[19] The dialogue had lost its prominence. It was little read. It had become just another writing

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1999, 71f., 80ff., 121ff., D. M. JOHNSON (ed.), *Socrates and Alcibiades*: Four Texts: Plato's Alcibiades I & II, Symposium (212c-223a), Aeschines' Alcibiades, Newburyport, Mass., Focus, 2003, H. NEUHAUSEN, Der Pseudoplatonische Alkibiades II und die sokratischen Alkibiadesdialoge, in: K. DÖRING/M. ERLER/S. SCHORN (ed.), *Pseudoplatonica*, Akten des Kongresses zu den Pseudoplatonica vom 6. zum 9. Juli 2003 in Bamberg, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 2005, 175-184, H. NEUHAUSEN, *Der „zweite Alkbiades"*. Untersuchungen zu einem pseudoplatonischen Dialog, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2010, K. DÖRING, The Students of Socrates, in: D. R. MORRISON (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, 24--47, R. RAMSEY, Plato's Oblique Response to Issues of Socrates' Influence on Alcibiades: An Examination of the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias*, in: M. JOHNSON/H. TARRANT (ed.), *Alcibiades and the Socratic Lover--Educator*, Bristol Classical Press, 2012, 61-76, H. TARRANT, Improvement by Love. From Aeschines to the Old Academy, *ibi*, 147-163, O. ALIEVA, Protreptic in the Socratics: In Search of a Genre, in: F. de LUISE/A. STAVRU (ed.), *Socratica III*: Studies on Socrates, the Socratics, and the Ancient Socratic Literature (Papers Presented at 'Socratica III – a Conference on Socrates, the Socratics, and the Ancient Socratic Literature, Trento), St. Augustin, Akademia, 2013, 128-139, S. PRINCE, *Antisthenes of Athens*: Texts, Translations, and Commentary, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2015, 162, 166, 326, 341, 414ff., 678ff., J. WILBURN, The Problem of Alcibiades. Plato on Moral Education and the Many, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 49 (2015), 1-36, in particular 2, K. DÖRING (ed.), *Plato Werke* Übersetzung und Kommentar IV 1, Erster Alkibiades, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015, 149ff., W. J. KENNEDY (ed.), *Antisthenes' Literary Fragments*, Diss. University of Sydney, 2107, 99ff., 124ff., 144, 177f., 184ff., 188ff., 195ff., J. M. REDFIELD, The Origins of the Socratic Dialogue: Plato, Xenophon, and the Others, in: A. TAVRU/C. MOORE (ed.), *Socrates and the Socratic Dialogue*, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2018, 125-138, in particular 130, A. BRANCACCI, Socratism and Eleaticism in Euclides of Megara, *ibi*, 161-178, in particular 164, and C. MÁRSICO, Shock, Erotics, Plagiarism, and Fraud: Aspects of Aeschines of Sphettus' Philosophy, *ibi,* 202-220, in particular 203ff.

[17] See notably *op. cit.*, 292ff. and 369.

[18] M. FICINO, In Alcibiadem I argumentum, in: IDEM (ed), *Platonis opera omnia quae exstant* Marsilio Ficino interprete, Lugduni, Le Preux, 1590, 755.

[19] F. SCHLEIERMACHER (ed.), *Platons Werke* ii 3., Berlin, Realschulbuchhandlung, 1809. Seven years later, Ast published his book on Plato, which shares Schleiermacher's negative evaluation of the *Alcibiades Major*. Cf. F. AST, *Platons Leben und Schriften*: ein Versuch, im Leben wie in den Schriften des Platon das Wahre und Aechte vom Erdichteten und Untergeschobenen zu scheiden, und die Zeitfolge ächten Gespräche zu bestimmen, Leipzig, Weidmann, 1816, in particular 436f.

among many others in the thicket of the *corpus platonicum*. But Schleiermacher made things dramatically worse and destroyed the last remnants of its former glory. Not only did he question the authenticity of the dialogue and claimed that it is not Plato's work, but he tried to substantiate this claim by showing that the *Alcibiades Major* lacks both literary quality and philosophical depth.[20]

Schleiermacher's criticism ignited a long tradition of negative views on the *Alcibiades Major*. This tradition is defined by two main features: a) doubts about the text's authenticity (viz. the claim that it is almost certainly not from Plato's pen), and b) an unfavourable view – sometimes even a devastating judgment – on the worth of this work. A harsher critic did not mince his words and went as far as to describe the *Alcibiades Major* as the work of a "half--witted hack writer" (*imbeziller Skribent*).[21]

In 1853, just a few decades after Schleiermacher's first attack on the *Alcibiades Major*, Stallbaum described the *fatum libelli* in the following terms:

> *Singularis fuit eius libri, qui Alcibiadis priori nomen in fronte gerit, fortuna,*
> *siquidem a summae auctoritatis fastigio, quae olim apud philosophiae Platonicae*
> *amicos obtinuit, nuper repente in eam conditionem detrusus est, ut iam multis vix*
> *lectione dignus videatur*.[22]

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[20] The following quotes provide a sample of Schleiermacher's negative assessment of the *Alcibiades Major*: "Und so sei es denn noch einmal unternommen und gesagt, dass dieses kleine Werk, welches von denen, die in Pausch und Bogen zu bewundern pflegen, von je her gewaltig gepriesen worden, uns ziemlich geringfügig und schlecht erscheint, und zwar auf eine solche Weise, dass wir es dem Platon nicht zuschreiben können, und wenn auch noch so viele, die seinen Geist beschwören zu können glauben, ihn hier aufs deutlichste wollen vernommen haben." (*op. laud.*, 292). "Einzelne sehr schöne und ächt platonische Stellen findet er [der Leser] sparsam zerstreut in einer schlechten Masse schwimmend, welche theils aus klein zerhaktem um nichts sich abeilendem Dialog besteht, theils aus langen Reden. Von diesen ist die erste so langweilig, dass wenn der Gott das mündliche Zusammentreffen des Sokrates und Alkibiades, wie es scheint, ausdrüklich aufsparen wollte, bis die Gelegenheit diese Rede zu halten da war, er keinem von beiden einen grossen Dienst geleistet hat. Die zweite rühmt unter Auskramung wunderlicher statistischer Notizen persische und lakedämonische Tugenden und Reichthümer, auch die Tugenden schon mehr Xenophontisch als Platonisch, die Reichthümer aber und die weichliche Pracht durchaus unsokratisch. Demnächst wird er sich auch ganz unbefriedigt fühlen, und beklagen dass er sich habe durchschlagen müssen durch unnüze Weitläufigkeiten, welche erhoben werden über die leichtesten Dinge, und dass dagegen über das Bedeutendste oberflächlich sei hingegangen, oder es ihm so zu sagen ganz kurz vor dem Munde sei abgebrochen worden. Will er dann, nachdem dieser erste Eindruk überwunden ist, näher untersuchen, was doch das Gespräch eigentlich will: so wird er nicht recht wissen, wohin er sich wenden soll, zuerst aber gewiss eingestehen, dass es von dem, was die zweite Ueberschrift verheisst, dass es nemlich von des Menschen Natur handeln soll, blutwenig enthält". Quotations retain the original spelling and punctuation.

[21] G. JACHMANN, Der Platontext, *Nachrichten von der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*: Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 11 (1941), 225-389, in particular 308ff. The intellectual and philosophical quality of the dialogue is a controversial subject on which the most diverse views are held. At the opposite end of the spectrum none other than Johannes von Müller writes the following: "Ce Platon est un grand maître de l'art de dialoguer. Chacun a son caractère et le soutient : rien de plus charmant, que le 1[mier] dialogue d'Alcibiade ; je l'appellerois presque le plus beau morceau de la langue. Il a de plus une subtilité d'esprit, une finesse, qui exige une très-grande attention". Cf. *Johannes von Müllers Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Johann Georg Müller. 35. Theil: Johannes von Müllers Briefe an Carl Victor von Bonstetten geschrieben vom Jahr 1773 bis 1809, ed. F. geb. Münter, II. Theil, Stuttgart/Tübingen, Cotta, 1835, Nr. 206 (Cassel, 1.1. 1782), 245.

[22] G. STALLBAUM (ed.), *Platonis opera omnia* V1, Gothae/Erfordiae, Hennings, 1857, 193.

This sobering balance has lost none of its topicality.

There is, of course, another side to the story: successive attempts have been made to curb this tendency. But they have not managed to restore the *Alcibiades Major* to its former glory (or to anything even vaguely resembling it). The arguments for its authenticity do not convince its detractors. And pretty much the same applies the other way around. In other words, the last two hundred years of discussion have been the stage for a long series of moves and countermoves that proved unable to settle the matter either by delivering the *coup de grace* or by some kind of consensual 'rehabilitation'.

The whole thing is like a never-ending chess match that is most likely to end with a draw.

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We mention all this not because the papers in this volume address these issues, but because it is important to stress from the outset that they *do not*. By and large they all bracket the questions concerning the authenticity of the *Alcibiades Major*, whether it was written in the 4th Century B.C. or at a later date, whether it does or does not have a handbook-like nature, whether it lacks Plato's characteristic touch of irony, whether it is true that all its main ideas are much better presented in other texts (namely in Plato's 'real writings') – and, if the dialogue is authentic, whether it belongs to the early, middle or late period of Plato's life, etc.

The bracketing of the said issues can have various reasons. As editors, it is only fitting that we should state our own. And these can be expressed by the words of Richard Griffith[23]which were borrowed by Goethe in his *Aus Makariens Archiv*.[24] Griffith writes:

> Among the many curious impertinences of the schools, there is none that appears
> to me so truly ridiculous, as the strife about the authority of the works of the
> ancients. Is it the author, or the writing, we admire or criticise? But it is still the
> authors we have before us, no matter for their names, when we are commenting
> upon any work of genius. I do not care one farthing whether Pisander's or Virgil's

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[23] The Koran: or Essays, Sentiments, Characters and Callimachies, of tria juncta in uno, M. N. or Master of No Arts: Three Volumes complete in One, in: *The Posthumous Works of a Late, Celebrated Genius, Deceased*, vol. I, Dublin, J. Exshaw/H. Saunders/W. Sleater/D. Chamberlaine/J. Potts/J. Willimas & C. Ingham, 1770, 195-196. The work was published two years after Sterne's death, and the wording of the title was intended to suggest Sterne's authorship. The trick worked: for a considerable period of time (and indeed for decades) Griffith's *The Koran* was generally attributed to Sterne.

[24] Aus Makariens Archiv, 134 and 135, in: J. W. GOETHE, *Werke* (Hamburger Ausgabe), vol 8, München, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998, 481.

manuscript – Macrobius affirms the first – was the original of the second Aeneid – or Apollonius of Rhodes the author of the fourth. – Whether one Homer, or seven cities, framed the Iliad and the Odyssey entire, or only tacked a parcel of old ballads together, and sung them about the streets of Smyrna, Rhodes, Colophon, Salamis, Chios, Argos, or Athens, to the title of "The blind beggar-man's garland."

I do not pretend to say that we have Virgil or Homer before us, when we read those words imputed to them. But we have certainly the writers of them – which is all we need contend for. And I really think that those scholars, who affect a precision in this very immaterial matter, are not a bit wiser than a very pretty woman, who asked me once, with the sweetest smile imaginable, "Who was the author of Shakespear's plays?"[25]

The point in quoting these words is not to claim that all discussions concerning authenticity and the like are intrinsically nonsensical, but to emphasize that they are less decisive than it might appear. To be sure, if taken literally, Griffith seems to go a little bit too

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[25] These remarks were translated into German. Goethe read and excerpted them. And by mistake they ended up published – with no quotation marks and without mention of the source – in his *Aus Makariens Archiv* (the appendix to *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*). In other words, the intentional Sterne-forgery gave rise to an unintentional Goethe-forgery. And the irony of things is that these rather sceptical remarks on authenticity and authorship – N.B.: Griffith's, not Sterne's remarks – were thought by many to come *from Goethe's pen.* For the German translation, see *Der Koran*, oder Leben und Meynungen des Tria Juncta in uno, oder Meisters keiner Künste e. hinterlassenes Werk von d. Verf. D. Tristram Shandy, Hamburg, Herold, 1778, 113-114. The German version reads as follows: "Unter so vielen Ungereimtheiten der Schulgelehrsamkeit, scheint mir keine so wahrhaftig lächerlich, als der Zank und Streit, wer der Autor dieses und jenes Werkes sey. Ist es der Autor oder das Buch, was wir bewundern, was wir prüfen wollen. Wir haben immer die wahrhaften Autoren vor uns; – an den Namen ist uns nicht gelegen, wenn wir über ein Werk des Genies commentiren wollen.

Ich wollte nicht einen Groschen drum schuldig seyn, um zu wissen, ob Pisanders oder Virgils Manuscript (Macrobius hälts mit dem ersten) – das Original des zweyten Buchs der Aeneade war – oder ob Apollonius von Rhodes der Autor des vierten war – Ob der siebenfach gebohrne Homer die Iliade oder Odyssee vom Anfange bis zu Ende verfertigt, oder nun ein Haufen alter Balladen zusammenschmelzte, und sie auf den Gassen von Smyrna, Rhodes, Kolophon, Salamis, Chios, Argos oder Athen absang, kann mir eben so gleichgültig seyn.

Ich wollte nicht behaupten, daß wir denVirgil und Homer wahrhaftig vor uns haben, wenn wir die Worte lesen, die ihnen zugeschrieben werden.

Aber wir haben sicher die Verfasser derselben vor uns – und weiter braucht es nichts. Und ich halte diejenigen Gelehrten, die in dieser unbedeutenden Sache alles so genau bestimmt haben wollen, nicht viel klüger, als jene artige Dame, die mich einst mit der freundlichsten Miene von der Welt fragte: "Wer mag der Verfasser von Shakespears Kömodien seyn."

On the question of Goethe's 'plagiarism' of Sterne (viz. Griffith), see notably A. BÜCHNER, Sterne's Coran und Makariens Archiv. Goethe ein Plagiator?, *Morgenblatt für gebildete Leser* 24.9.1863, 922-923, R. SPRINGER, Ist Goethe ein Plagiator Laurence Sterne's?, *Deutsches Museum* 48 (1867), 690-695, H. W. THAYER, *Laurence Sterne in German*y. A Contribution to the Study of the Literary Relations of England and Germany in the Eighteenth Century, N.Y./London, The Columbia University Press/Macmillan & Co, 1905, 103f., W. R.R. PINGER, *Lawrence Sterne and Goethe*, Berkeley, Cal., University of California Press, 1920, 47ff., J. K. BROWN, *Goethe's Cyclical Narratives*: *Die Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten* and *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, Chapel Hill, NC, The University of North Carolina Press, 1975, 119f., E. BAHR, *The Novel as Archive.* The Genesis, Reception and Criticism of Goethe's Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre, Columbia SC, Camden House, 1988, 47ff., J. BOYD, *Goethe's Knowledge of English Literature*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1932, J. RYAN, 'Pfeile mit Widerhaken': On the Aphorisms in Goethe's *Wahlverwandschaften* und *Wanderjahre*, *Goethe Yearbook* 16 (2009), 1-11.

far. But his remarks should be taken *cum grano salis*. There is something hyperbolic and ironical about them. And he is not necessarily advocating a wholesale rejection of the authenticity and historical issues he refers to. He is perhaps just saying we should relativize their importance.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Griffith's (and Goethe's) point is worth heeding. At any rate, we have before us the *Alcibiades Major*. And, as Griffith emphasizes, we have before us its writer (we are no doubt dealing *with him*). Most importantly, we have before us the *knowledge claims* made in the dialogue. In a way, they are, as Griffith puts it, "all we need contend for". From a philosophical perspective – regardless of whether the *Alcibiades Major* is or is not authentic, regardless of whether the author is A or B, regardless of whether it was written in this or that century, etc. – they should play the *leading* role.

In other words, there is more to the *Alcibiades Major* than the said historical issues. The above-mentioned negative tradition (and indeed both detractors and advocates of the text) places too much emphasis on them, as if they were the key question and everything had to revolve around them. But it is not so. The dialogue can be viewed from other angles. This does not mean that these other ways of looking at it are the only ones that matter. It simply means that there are, as it were, "many mansions in the house of the" *Alcibiades Major*.

Our task is to deal with *one* of them: to give the *Alcibiades Major* a chance not as a historical document or a museum exhibit, but as a *piece of philosophy* – to take it seriously *as a philosophical work*. Hence, we concentrate on one main question: what *knowledge claims* are made in the *Alcibiades Major*? Is it only about Socrates or Alcibiades or ancient Greek conceptions of the soul, of care of oneself, of the γνῶθι σεαυτόν, etc? Or is Proclus right when he claims that each one of us is more or less clearly subject to the very same παθήματα or affections as the son of Cleinias ("καὶ γὰρ ἡμῶν ἕκαστος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων ἐναργέστερον ἢ ἀμυδρότερον τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἔνοχος παθήμασιν οἷσπερ δὴ καὶ ὁ Κλεινίειός ἐστι")?[26] And if this is so, what *universal* knowledge claims – what picture *of each one of us* viz. of our παθήματα – is the *Alcibiades Major* all about?

In the realm of *knowledge claims*, temporal distance, authorship, etc. do not matter so much. All knowledge claims have their rightful place in the great assemblage (or assembly) of

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[26] L. G. WESTERINK (ed.), *Proclus Diadochus. Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, Amsterdam, North-Holland, 1954, I, 7.1-3.

contributions Aristotle refers to in *Metaphysica α*[27] and Kant once described in the following terms:

> Die Denkende Köpfe gehören zu einer Gelehrten welt, die in ununterbrochnem Zusammenhange steht (es mögen auch einige Jahrhunderte einen Traum (schlaf) dazwischen ausmachen). Auf diese weise gehören die Alte zur jungen Gelehrten oder denkenden Welt, die neuen zur Alten, wohl zu verstehen, wenn sie sich der Einsichten der iüngeren Welt zu Nutze machen.[28]

This is one of the particular features of being in this world: among many other things, one finds oneself in the middle of a great, century-old (or indeed millennium-old) discussion on what being here is all about. The *Alcibiades Major* adds its mite to this discussion. And this is the main reason why it deserves our attention.

<div align="center">*</div>

To complete this brief account of what the reader can expect to find in this volume, it should be added that all its papers deal mainly with the *first* and *middle* part of the *Alcibiades Major* – not with the final part of the dialogue. For this reason, *si nihil inciderit quod impediat*, a second volume will follow.

We wish to express warm thanks to Prof. Mário Santiago de Carvalho and to the *Institute for Philosophical Studies* (University of Coimbra) for their support. We are also very grateful to Bernardo Ferro and Robert Junqueira for their help.

<div align="center">M. Jorge de Carvalho   Samuel Oliveira</div>

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[27] *Metaphyic*a, 993a30-b3: "ἡ περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας θεωρία τῇ μὲν χαλεπὴ τῇ δὲ ῥαδία. σημεῖον δὲ τὸ μήτ᾽ ἀξίως μηδένα δύνασθαι θιγεῖν αὐτῆς μήτε πάντας ἀποτυγχάνειν, ἀλλ᾽ ἕκαστον λέγειν τι περὶ τῆς φύσεως, καὶ καθ᾽ ἕνα μὲν ἢ μηθὲν ἢ μικρὸν ἐπιβάλλειν αὐτῇ, ἐκ πάντων δὲ συναθροιζομένων γίγνεσθαί τι μέγεθος."

[28] *Refl.* 1448a, *Kant's gesammelte Schriften,* ed. Königl. Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, vol. XV, Berlin/Leipzig, de Grutyter, 1928, 632-633.

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CARE OF THE SELF AND ALCIBIADES' LIFE PROJECT

Fábio Serranito

It is difficult to talk about the *Alcibiades* without talking about *the* Alcibiades. The dialogue is about its eponymous character in a more blatant way than most others in the *corpus platonicum*. This is clear not only from the lengthy passages of the text used to characterise Alcibiades (both to commend and to censure him), but also on account of the fact that what is at stake from the very beginning of the dialogue is Alcibiades himself – his present condition, his desires and aspirations, his qualities and shortcomings, and his fate. More importantly, perhaps, the dialogue makes us look at what Alcibiades is in a different way, by showing us how a human being can be put face to face with himself in a visceral and sometimes devastating way and be forced to ask: "what is this thing that I am, and what am I to do with it?".

But talking about *the* Alcibiades – even in the brief and cursory way in which he will be talked about in this text – is far from an easy task. The first question we stumble upon is *what* Alcibiades we will be talking about. In fact, there seems to have been a multiplicity of Alcibiadeses in antiquity: multiple presentations and versions of the same historical character turned into literary figure, into exemplary character, into legend. Even during his lifetime, Alcibiades seems to have been a deeply ambiguous, divisive and inconstant figure – going from spoiled aristocrat to leader of the people to blasphemer and traitor and scourge of the Athenians to champion of democracy and hammer of the Spartans and so on and on and on. This is a deeply complicated figure who was loved and hated and has attracted controversy, admiration and hatred for centuries. [1]

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[1] Alcibiades seems to have been the object of endless fascination for his contemporaries and a literary tradition developed around his life and legend. Authors like Thucydides, Aristophanes, Xenophon, Lysias, Isocrates and Plutarch have given us suggestive and complex portrayal of Alcibiades in a variety of genres. Alcibiades also features heavily in Plato's dialogues, such *First Alcibiades*, (the likely spurious) *Second Alcibiades*, *Symposium* and *Protagoras*, as well as in the eponymous dialogues of Antisthenes and Aeschinus Socraticus (of which only a few fragments survive). See S. FORDE, *The Ambition to Rule: Alcibiades and the Politics of Imperialism in Thucydides*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1989; J. ROMILLY, *Alcibiade ou les dangers de l'ambition*, Paris, Éd. de Fallois, 1995; D. GRIBBLE, *Alcibiades and Athens: a Study in Literary Presentation*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1999. Cf. XENOPHON, *Memorabilia*, I.2.24: Ἀλκιβιάδης δ᾽ αὖ διὰ μὲν κάλλος ὑπὸ πολλῶν καὶ σεμνῶν γυναικῶν θηρώμενος, διὰ δύναμιν δὲ τὴν ἐν τῇ πόλει καὶ τοῖς συμμάχοις ὑπὸ πολλῶν καὶ δυνατῶν κολακεύειν ἀνθρώπων διαθρυπτόμενος, ὑπὸ δὲ τοῦ δήμου τιμώμενος καὶ ῥαδίως πρωτεύων, ὥσπερ οἱ τῶν γυμνικῶν ἀγώνων ἀθληταὶ ῥαδίως πρωτεύοντες ἀμελοῦσι τῆς ἀσκήσεως, οὕτω κἀκεῖνος ἠμέλησεν αὑτοῦ.

The Alcibiades who we come across in the *First Alcibiades* is the young Alcibiades, the Alcibiades in the cusp of manhood. He has just come of age and is about to start his political career. He is in a liminal stage of his life, a stage in which his fate will be decided. He is also at that stage in his life in which, to quote Xenophon, one needs care the most.[2] It is at this critical juncture that his path crosses with Socrates. What we witness in the *First Alcibiades* is an imagined version of the first conversation between these two legendary figures of Greek history and culture, whose images were, for better and worse, intertwined. For Socrates, the association with Alcibiades would come to be used as an article of impeachment against his character. Behind the vague accusation of corrupting the youth that led to his death sentence lies the more concrete association with some of the most disreputable figures in contemporary Athenian politics: Critias and Alcibiades. If these two were co-authors of Athens' defeat and ruin, then Socrates, as their nominal teacher and associate, would share part of the blame.[3]

The subtext of the accusation was made text by ancient authors like Polycrates (and maybe also others) who contributed to the growing genre of Socratic literature by producing an accusation against the dead philosopher.[4] The idea that Socrates was somehow guilty of the

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[2] XENOPHON, *Cyropaedia* 1.2.9.: δοκεῖ γὰρ αὕτη ἡ ἡλικία μάλιστα ἐπιμελείας δεῖσθαι.

[3] Behind many Platonic dialogues lurk two decisive and traumatic historical events: the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War and the trial and execution of Socrates. These two events are associated inasmuch as one of the reasons for the hostility towards Socrates lied in his association with Alcibiades and Critias, two men associated with the ruin of Athens (albeit for different reasons). The association of Socrates with Alcibiades and Critias is one of the accusations mentioned by Xenophon in the *Memorabilia* (I.2.12ff.). This, however, is more than mere guilt-by-association. Many would have assumed that the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades was a teacher-student relationship. As such, the wrongdoings of the student could be attributed in part to the teacher, especially if what the teacher was supposed to be teaching was ἀρετή. See K. DOVER, The Freedom of the Intellectual in Greek Society, *Talanta* 6 (1976), 24-54, especially 51: "[…] [T]he Athenians of the fifth century were accustomed to regard the relation between teacher and pupil or between master and apprentice as the transmission of techniques, not as the development of abilities which might issue in independent critical thought. It was therefore assumed that the principles and attitudes of the teacher were embodied in the pupil; this, after all, was the purpose of Athenian education." Cf. *Laches* 186a-b. See also N. DENYER, *Plato: Alcibiades*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, 3: "Even in their lifetimes, Socrates and Alcibiades were already becoming the material of legend. It is therefore unsurprising that we have no detailed and reliable record of their association. We can however be sure that it was far more than a superficial acquaintance. For the defenders of Socrates never dared to deny that he and Alcibiades had been associates. Instead, their writings attempted to show that, in spite of his association with Alcibiades, Socrates was nevertheless not to blame for the misdeeds of Alcibiades' dizzying career." On the association between Socrates and Critias and the accusation of corruption of the youth, see T. TUOZZO, *Plato's* Charmides: *Positive Elenchus in a "Socratic" Dialogue*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011, 52ff.

[4] We know of Polycrates' accusation of Socrates from Isocrates (*Busiris*, 4ff.). Polycrates' reputation as an author of paradoxical encomia, of e.g. of pebbles, mice and cooking pots [cf. T. BURGESS, *Epideictic Literature*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1902, 166; A. PEASE, Things Without Honor, *Classical Philology* 21 (1926), 27-42; A. NIGHTINGALE, *Genres in Dialogue*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, 100] may suggest that in writing an accusation of Socrates he was deliberately going against the grain of an already established tradition of Socratic literature, whose main cultivators were Socrates' philosophical disciples. Beyond the actual extant "apologies" or defences of Socrates written by Plato and Xenophon, we could consider that a large part of the Socratic literature is, to a certain extent, apologetic, as it presents the figure of Socrates in heroic and exemplary terms – as opposed to the substance of the actual accusation against him at his trial in Athens. See C. KAHN, *Plato*

crimes he was accused of, or, to be more accurate, that his influence on Athens was so pernicious that it warranted the extreme penalty of the law is a shadow that hangs over his legacy, and one that even we who do not share that idea need to consider. Ancient authors of Socratic literature who admired, defended and even lionised the figure of Socrates certainly did, and produced several examples of apologetic literature to counter the accusation. However, in accusing and defending Socrates there is a lot more at stake than simply the justice of a court sentence and the reputation of one man. Socrates was the founder and tutelary figure of the philosophical tradition that came after him. His entire life seems to have been dedicated to something we recognise as philosophy to such an extent that an impeachment of Socrates becomes also an impeachment of philosophy at large, and a defence of Socrates requires a defence of the activity that defined his whole life.

Against this general backdrop, portraying an encounter between Socrates and Alcibiades in which the former begins to exert influence over the latter is a somewhat bold move by the author of the *First Alcibiades*.[5] From the point of view of Socrates' accusers, what we are witnessing in this dialogue is a kind of origin story of the great villain Alcibiades – the moment in which he went from being an extraordinary and promising young man and started on his path to evil. But in this dialogue Plato is portraying this encounter in a completely different light and showing how Socrates' influence could have contributed to the improvement of Alcibiades. It suggests something akin to an exercise in alternative history – had Alcibiades stuck with Socrates, and things might have been very different. But the fact remains that Alcibiades did not stick with Socrates, that Alcibiades became what he became – one of the architects of Athens' demise. And so the question we are left with is: what failed? If Socrates was not, as his accusers argue, a corrupting influence on Alcibiades, and Alcibiades nonetheless contributed decisively for the disaster that struck Athens, then somehow at some point Socrates' attempt to improve Alcibiades must have gone wrong.

And so what we are confronted with in the *First Alcibiades* is a portrait of the beginning of a relationship of care – ἐπιμέλεια – between two of the most significant figures in Athenian history. But this is a failed ἐπιμέλεια. We know that Alcibiades will turn away from philosophy

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and the Socratic Dialogue, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 1-35; GRIBBLE, *op. cit.*, 224ff.; DENYER, *op. cit.*, 2-5.

[5] The Platonic authorship of the *First Alcibiades* has been disputed since the early nineteenth century. There were no doubts about its authenticity in Antiquity. For a good summary of the arguments against authenticity, see GRIBBLE, *op. cit.*, 260ff. For a good summary of the arguments for authenticity, see DENYER, *op. cit.*, 14ff. See also J. ANNAS, Self-Knowledge in Early Plato, in: D. O'MEARA (ed.), *Platonic Investigations*, Washington D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 1985, 112-115. I find the arguments for authenticity more persuasive.

and become what he became and be partly responsible for the disaster that engulfed Athens.[6] Socrates' ἐπιμέλεια will not have the effect that every form of ἐπιμέλεια aims at: improving its object.[7] In this regard, philosophy is held up to the standards it tries to impose on other intellectual disciplines and forms of education with which it is trying to compete in the already flooded market of Ancient Greek culture. Other forms of education – be it traditional ones provided by poetry or political practices, or more novel ones, provided by sophists and rhetoricians – are examined by philosophy and found wanting. Their claim to knowledge are found to be unjustified and they fail to provide what they claim, either explicitly or implicitly: to make their charges better, to instil and foster ἀρετή.[8] The case of Alcibiades provides both a case-study and test for the ability of philosophy to overcome the shortcomings it identifies in its competitors and achieve different outcomes. If, indeed, Alcibiades is one of the co-authors of the undoing of Athens, and if Socrates was unable to help him achieve ἀρετή and avert that disaster, then what is the point of this new-fangled intellectual discipline and educational practice? At the very least, philosophy is shown to be no better than its competitors, and perhaps even worse.

Therefore, the problem we are immediately confronted with by the very setting of this dialogue is one that echoes the accusations against Socrates, but at the same time changes their terms in a very significant way. Socrates may not have corrupted Alcibiades as such, but the failure of his care represents a path not taken, the possibility of a better outcome that was not to be. Socrates may not have been a corrupting influence, but he proposed to improve this young man, and he failed. And in his failure he might have been partly to blame himself for what was to come. This failure may perhaps show that the kind of ἐπιμέλεια he is practicing is incapable

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[6] In *Symposium*, 216a-c, we find an older Alcibiades, at a point in his life in which he has abandoned philosophy and fled Socrates – even though he still feels attraction to them. On the other hand, the rowdiness of the drunk Alcibiades of the *Symposium* is probably supposed to invoke the irresponsible and careless attitude that may have led to the (alleged) mutilation of the Herms and profanation of the Eleusinian Mysteries. See GRIBBLE, *op. cit.*, 216, 251-252. Some scholars also glimpse a reference to the character and fate of Alcibiades in the discussion of the corruption of those who possess a philosophical nature in *Republic* VI, 489dff. See J. ADAM, *The Republic of Plato*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1902, ad 494c; L. ROBIN, *Platon, le Banquet* (œuvres complètes, iv, pt. 2), Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1929, C-CI; GRIBBLE, *op. cit.*, 219. In *Parmenides*, 126bff., we are introduced to another example of a character who was previously fond of philosophy and then turned his back on it, but to far less ruinous consequences for Athens: Plato's own half-brother Antiphon.

[7] *First Alcibiades* 128b: **Σωκ.** τί δέ, ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη; ὀρθῶς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι καλεῖς τι ὁτουοῦν πράγματος; / **Ἀλκ.** ἔγωγε. / **Σωκ.** ἆρ᾽ οὖν ὅταν τίς τι βέλτιον ποιῇ, τότε ὀρθὴν λέγεις ἐπιμέλειαν; / **Ἀλκ.** ναί.

[8] Operating in a crowded field, philosophy partly defined itself against other forms of education and sources of moral and cognitive authority – both traditional, like poetry and politics, and novel, like sophistry and other intellectual disciplines. In this context, accepting the need for philosophy becomes, to a certain extent, a recognition of the deficient nature of those other forms of education and sources of authority. A common strategy adopted in the *corpus platonicum* is to show how those other forms of education and sources of authority lack the ability to provide what they claim to be able to provide. Cf. NIGHTINGALE, *op. cit.*, 14ff.

of doing what it proposes to do. In other words, what this dialogue questions and problematizes is the viability of philosophy as a project of care.

But any consideration of this matter will need first to consider the peculiar nature of the kind of ἐπιμέλεια that is the main focus of the *First Alcibiades*: ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ. Unlike other forms of care, in which the agent and the object or the target are two different beings, in the case of ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ, the agent and the object are one and the same: oneself. This, as we will see, will present some additional problems that we will have to discuss. However, we should also keep in mind that in spite of this peculiarity, ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ is still a form of ἐπιμέλεια. So, unless we were to find out that ἐπιμέλεια is a πολλαχῶς λεγόμενον and that the connection between, say, the care of others or the care of things, on the one hand, and the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ, on the other, is one of simple homonymy, we will take the view that at the heart of all these cases lies one single phenomenon: ἐπιμέλεια or care.

That being said, this peculiar form of care, ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ, is introduced in the context of a variety of other forms of ἐπιμέλεια. One of them we have already touched upon briefly: the specific kind of care Socrates is supposed to exercise over Alcibiades and others, i.e., the negative of the charge of corruption of the youth that doomed him. But there are others, and one of the tasks of this paper will be to illustrate how ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ is articulated with different instances of ἐπιμέλεια, not only of other human beings, but also of others kinds of being.

1. EROTIC ἐπιμέλεια

The kind of ἐπιμέλεια of others Socrates is set to apply to Alcibiades in this dialogue does not appear out of the blue. Rather, it is presented within the cultural context of παιδεραστία and the specific practices of care associated with it. In other words, the dialogue portrays Socrates as Alcibiades' ἐραστής and frames the project of ἐπιμέλεια Socrates is the bearer of within the confines what would be expected in a pederastic relationship. However, as we shall see, the unconventional nature of both Socrates as an ἐραστής and Alcibiades as an ἐρώμενος leads to a subversion of the conventions of παιδεραστία and creates the space for the peculiar kind of ἐπιμέλεια Socrates proposes to Alcibiades.

This is first expressed through Socrates' convoluted and sophisticated wooing strategy. The need for such an unconventional wooing strategy is clear. From a conventional point of

view, Socrates makes for a poor ἐραστής: he is ugly, poor, and is neither powerful nor politically influential. Whatever wisdom he may possess seems to be of little use for the practically--minded and career-focused young man. To know that one does not know, in and of itself, would not take you very far in most careers people would normally want to pursue. So what can Socrates offer Alcibiades?

This problem is compounded by the fact that Alcibiades seems to have been a particularly difficult ἐρώμενος, accepting the advances of none of his many suitors. He is unyielding because there is nothing that he lacks that a normal ἐραστής can offer him. As Socrates points out in his initial speech, Alcibiades possesses an uncommon combination of superlative attributes: his beauty, his wealth, his family origins and connections alone place him in an unrivalled position within Athens.[9] Alcibiades, due in part to the genetic lottery, in part to external circumstances and good-luck is poised and set up for greatness, just by being what and who he is. So if a normal ἐραστής, a wealthy, influential citizen well-versed in the matters of the city, cannot persuade Alcibiades, how could Socrates?

At the heart of this problem lies an important characteristic of Ancient Greek παιδεραστία, and indeed of the erotic phenomenon in general. The fact that ἔρως is a form of desire is undeniable, but together with the obsessive, passionate and painful desire one feels for the beloved, lies another fundamental determination of ἔρως: beneficence. I want the one I love to be happy. Additionally, it is a common assumption of the event of being in love with someone that one's presence in the beloved's life will result in a significant good not only for the lover but also for the beloved. The life of the one I love will be improved significantly, if not superlatively so, by my being part of it. Not only is the beloved the key to my own happiness, my loving him or her will contribute to his or her happiness as well. This means that at the heart of the erotic phenomenon lies an instance of ἐπιμέλεια, as it is defined in the *First Alcibides*

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[9] *First Alcibiades*, 104aff. provides us with a catalogue of the many superlative positive attributes of Alcibiades. This passage seems to follow the traditional pattern of an ἐγκώμιον, focusing on the subject's progeny, wealth, strength, physical beauty, etc. Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Rhetoric*, I.1360bff.; V. BUCHHEIT, *Untersuchungen zur Theorie des Genos Epideiktikon von Gorgias bis Aristoteles*, München, Max Hueber Verlag, 1960, 15ff.; NIGHTINGALE, *op. cit.*, 94ff. However, this ἐγκώμιον is going to be subverted, as Socrates will spend a long time showing all the ways in which Alcibiades is lacking – creating a kind of dialectical ψόγος. More importantly, this ἐγκώμιον is framed in a very specific way. Socrates does not present these superlative positive attributes as matters of fact (though they may well be so too), but rather as the opinion Alcibiades has of himself. This is suggested by the repeated references to Alcibiades' own perspective throughout the text: οὐδενὸς φῂς ἀνθρώπων ἐνδεὴς εἶναι εἰς οὐδέν (104a); οἴει γὰρ δὴ (104a); συμπάντων δὲ ὧν εἶπον μείζω οἴει σοι (104b); κατὰ πάντα δὴ ταῦτα σύ τε μεγαλαυχούμενος (104c). In a way, the ἐγκώμιον of Alcibiades is the ἐγκώμιον of Alcibiades both as subject and object. What Socrates makes explicit is Alcibiades' tacit praise of himself.

itself: the right ἐπιμέλεια is to make something better.[10] To care for and improve the life of the beloved is an integral part of being in love.

This beneficent project that lies at the heart of the erotic phenomenon is particularly evident in παιδεραστία. The asymmetric and heterogenous nature of the two people involved – the ἐραστής and the ἐρώμενος – creates a constitutive problem that for "modern" erotic relationships is merely accidental. In modern erotic relationships, the aspiration for reciprocity is a given. If I am in love with someone, my greatest desire is that that person be in love with me, in similar terms and in a similar way. What one desires is to be loved back. In ancient παιδεραστία, and indeed in general in the ancient Greek understanding of ἔρως, this is not so. One may indeed desire to fulfil the craving that is ἔρως, but this fulfilment does not imply the idea that the ἐρώμενος will love the ἐραστής in the same terms and in the same way as the ἐραστής loves the ἐρώμενος. In the person of the ἐρώμενος beauty, splendour and everything that is marvellous has been imbued by ἔρως. What the ἐραστής has to offer the ἐρώμενος is not of the same kind. Rather, in a pederastic relationship, the ἐραστής, being older, wiser and more influential, can provide the ἐρώμενος with the tools that will enable the latter to attain his proper position within the πόλις.[11]

In this regard, Socrates behaves as a perfectly normal ἐραστής. His is a beneficent project – he wishes to improve the life of Alcibiades. Furthermore, he assumes (as would be normal within the economy of παιδεραστία), that any chances of success would be dependent on him being able to contribute to the improvement in the life of his ἐρώμενος. Erotic success is closely related to the ability to provide the right ἐπιμέλεια, that is to say, to make a positive contribution to the life of the ἐρώμενος. In other words, Socratic ἐπιμέλεια first appears in the dialogue in the guise of erotic ἐπιμέλεια.

However, in many other ways, Socrates is a very unusual ἐραστής. For one, all previous ἐρασταί have now given up on Alcibiades; not because he keeps rejecting them, but because Alcibiades, with his mature twenty years old, is now a fading beauty. Within the logic of παιδεραστία, the idea that love is ephemeral could have a very concrete meaning. The charm that causes ἔρως inhabits the ἐρώμενος while he is in that brief moment between boyhood and

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[10] *First Alcibiades*, 128b.
[11] In other words, παιδεραστία is justified by its proponents by invoking its didactic benefits to the beloved. The *locus classicus* of this justification is Pausanias' speech in Plato's *Symposium* (184cff.). See also, e.g. PSEUDO-DEMOSTHENES, *Erotiko*s. Cf. M. FOUCAULT, *Histoire de la sexualité* II: l'usage des plaisirs, Paris, Gallimard, 1984, 254ff.; W. PERCY, *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Archaic Greece*, Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1996; B. THORNTON, *Eros: The Myth of Ancient Greek Sexuality*, Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press, 1997, 193ff.

manhood, and for that reason the ἐρώμενος comes with a "use by" date, or, to be more accurate, a "best before" date.[12] But Socrates pays no mind to this and continues to pursue Alcibiades.

Later on in the dialogue he will explain why and point out that whereas Alcibiades' other ἐρασταί were enamoured of a variety of attributes that were not Alcibiades himself, Socrates alone among the whole lot is, was and will continue to be in love with what constitutes Alcibiades himself.[13] Retrospectively, this reveals that the problem of "Alcibiades himself", of what and who is Alcibiades (and by extension, each and every one of us), was already being touched upon from the very beginning of the dialogue. The correlate and target of the ἔρως affecting Socrates is this himself that is Alcibiades. This allows us to understand that a significant part of the dialogue amounts to a deconstruction of what appears to constitute the entity "Alcibiades", along with a separation of the wheat from the chaff, so to speak, that reveals what in fact is Alcibiades and what is not. In a way, by searching for that thing which Alcibiades should care for – the correlate of the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ – Socrates is also showing what in fact is the correlate of his erotic desire and of his own ἐπιμέλεια for Alcibiades (an instance of ἐπιμέλεια of others). Erotic ἐπιμέλεια – as a kind of ἐπιμέλεια of others – shares a target with ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ.

However, this does not mean that Socrates is unique in desiring and caring for Alcibiades himself. I would venture to say that most, if not all of Alcibiades' ἐρασταί, in one way or another, cared for and desired Alcibiades himself. The difference between them and Socrates lies rather in the fact that the other ἐρασταί were mistaken in the identification of what constitutes Alcibiades himself. Their desire was aimed at Alcibiades himself, but they continuously missed the target, because the identity and nature of this "himself" eluded them. And so, like Ixion, they continuously mistook the cloud for Hera, or, in this case, Alcibiades' beauty for Alcibiades himself, Alcibiades' wealth and noble lineage for Alcibiades himself, and so on. Alcibiades is none of these things, as Socrates will show, and yet he is mistaken for them and appears to the ἐρασταί as if he were these things.

Now, the process of deconstruction of Alcibiades as a target of erotic desire – and, by implication, of ἐπιμέλεια – seems to be entirely negative. By this I mean that it is relatively easy to point out what Alcibiades *is not*. What Alcibiades *actually is* is a much more complicated matter. This, by the end of the deconstruction process, will be identified as the ψυχή.[14] Later on

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[12] See FOUCAULT, *op. cit.*, 285ff.
[13] *First Alcibiades*, 131c-132a.
[14] *First Alcibiades*, 130c: **Σωκ**. ἐπειδὴ δ᾽ οὔτε σῶμα οὔτε τὸ συναμφότερόν ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος, λείπεται οἶμαι ἢ μηδὲν αὐτ᾽ εἶναι, ἢ εἴπερ τί ἐστι, μηδὲν ἄλλο τὸν ἄνθρωπον συμβαίνειν ἢ ψυχήν.

we will have the opportunity to consider in more detail what this ψυχή might be, and indeed what kind of positive attributes can be identified under this designation. But from a formal standpoint, ψυχή appears as a negative attribute. It is what is left when we exclude other possibilities: Alcibiades' bodily beauty, Alcibiades' belongings, Alcibiades' family and social connections, and so on. In short, most of the attributes that Alcibiades was proud of and relied upon and made him believe he was self-sufficient – and therefore emboldened him to reject the aid of his ἐρασταί – are shown to be something different from Alcibiades himself.

2. ALCIBIADES' LIFE PROJECT

However, there is something that seems to survive the deconstruction process. This is something that is present from the very start of the dialogue: Alcibiades' life project. I will try to show how this aspect of Alcibiades' identity is crucial not only for the structure of the dialogue, but also for understanding what is at stake in the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ Alcibiades is urged to engage in.

It is clear from Socrates' own description (and from Alcibiades' acceptance of it) that Alcibiades' life project is one of power and prestige.[15] What Alcibiades wants for himself more than anything is to exercise power and to be admired by others. It is also clear from Socrates' description that this a project with undetermined bounds. It is not enough for Alcibiades to have power over Athens but not in the rest of the Greek World, or over Europe but not in Asia, and so on.[16] This is a project of power and prestige that is universal in scope. Alcibiades wants to rule all and everywhere, to be admired by all and everyone.

But this project also has an important temporal component. By this I mean that Alcibiades does not expect the project to be completed immediately and once and for all. This is a life project – not only in the sense that it is the project that determines the course of his life, but a project that occupies his whole life. It takes time to come to rule over everything and everyone and the continuation and meaning of the project lies to a large extent in the expectation of success. Alcibiades would rather die than to carry on living knowing that he could not fulfil his universal ambitions.[17] But he would not choose to die *at the present moment* knowing that

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[15] To use the terminology adopted in *Republic* IX, 580dff., Alcibiades is a character determined mainly by his superlative attachment to honour and victory – φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία.

[16] *First Alcibiades*, 105b-c.

[17] *First Alcibiades*, 105a: "δοκεῖς γάρ μοι, εἴ τίς σοι εἴποι θεῶν· 'ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη, πότερον βούλει ζῆν ἔχων ἃ νῦν ἔχεις, ἢ αὐτίκα τεθνάναι εἰ μή σοι ἐξέσται μείζω κτήσασθαι;' δοκεῖς ἄν μοι ἑλέσθαι τεθνάναι·"

his ambitions cannot be fulfilled *immediately and all at once.* That means that implicit in Alcibiades' project is the idea that it is staggered, that it has stages, that it progresses. In fact, even a regress could be compatible with the project as long there remained the expectation of future progress. This is therefore a project that unfolds and whose "logic" is based on the idea of change through time – improvement or progress.

Alcibiades therefore wants to dedicate his life to this particular project of power and prestige. In fact, Alcibiades would prefer to die than to continue living if this project had no chance of being fulfilled in its maximalist form. This project entails a superlative degree of ambition, on the one hand, and an inability to compromise in regards to its ends, on the other. Life is not worth living without the expectation of success. This means that being alive, at least for Alcibiades, is only valuable inasmuch as it provides the setting and opportunity for the fulfilment of the project. He loves his project of power and prestige more than life itself, or, to be more accurate, he loves his life because he needs to live in order to fulfil his project and only so far as living is compatible with the fulfilment of the project. Attaining power and prestige is not a mere filler, something to while away the days until his inevitable demise, but rather that very thing that gives meaning and value to the time allotted to him to live.

In a way, the project defines Alcibiades as Alcibiades – it determines his actions, his decisions, his reactions, his outlook on life and on others. It determines his perspective, and, ultimately, himself. His attachment to this project makes what Socrates engages in during the first half of the dialogue all the more painful. He shows that all the attributes that puffed up Alcibiades and made him so confident of the success of his project were either not there at all, or were meaningless, irrelevant or insufficient for the realisation of his project. More than that, Socrates shows that Alcibiades lacked the cognitive abilities to pull it off, and, worse perhaps still, that he lacked the awareness of his own insufficiency.[18] In other words, there is an enormous disproportion between the project and the ability to carry it out. Alcibiades wants far more than he can attain. If this conclusion had no restrictive clauses, then Alcibiades would perhaps have no other choice but to jump into the nearest well. But, at the same time, Socrates puts himself forward as Alcibiades' only chance to fulfil his ambitions. Socrates will help Alcibiades do what he needs to do: to take care of himself. What this might mean is still left undetermined, but it is a necessary condition for the realisation of the project.[19]

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[18] *First Alcibiades*, 118b: **Σωκ.** βαβαῖ ἄρα, ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη, οἷον πάθος πέπονθας· ὃ ἐγὼ ὀνομάζειν μὲν ὀκνῶ, ὅμως δέ, ἐπειδὴ μόνω ἐσμέν, ῥητέον. ἀμαθίᾳ γὰρ συνοικεῖς, ὦ βέλτιστε, τῇ ἐσχάτῃ, ὡς ὁ λόγος σου κατηγορεῖ καὶ σὺ σαυτοῦ· διὸ καὶ ᾄττεις ἄρα πρὸς τὰ πολιτικὰ πρὶν παιδευθῆναι.

[19] *First Alcibiades*, 124b-d. Cf. M. FOUCAULT, *L'Hermeneutique du sujet: Cours au Collège de France. 1981-1982*, Paris, Seuil/Gallimard, 2001, 73ff.

Now, it should be noted that this process of deconstruction provides an opening for Socrates' ἐπιμέλεια. There is room for Socrates' beneficial actions in the life of Alcibiades because there is still much to improve in his life, unlike what seemed to be the case at the start of the dialogue. Thankfully, the thing Alcibiades lacks the most, and the most necessary for the attainment of his goals, is something that Socrates can help with. Socrates has something to offer to Alcibiades, and that something is of an immense value to him: the conditions to fulfil what gives meaning and value to his life. The process of deconstruction, by revealing what Alcibiades is not and by showing that he lacks what is needed, creates the initial condition for the resolution of this problem. That is to say that one of the major obstacles in the fulfilment of Alcibiades' project was his mistaken conviction that he had all it took to fulfil it.[20] By now becoming aware of his shortcomings, Alcibiades can take steps to overcome them. In other words, this process impresses on him the need for an ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ. This is the very first step, and it is a step taken by undergoing the examination Socrates has subjected Alcibiades to.[21]

But there is an important element that survives all of this: the project itself. Socrates has shown that Alcibiades lacks the conditions to fulfil the project. He has not shown that the project is not worthwhile, or that it should be rejected. The apparent validity, value and importance of the project, and, by implication, Alcibiades' attachment to it, remain intact. In fact, the wooing strategy and indeed the whole dialogue depend on its remaining intact. What Socrates has to offer (at least at first) is the conditions to fulfil the project – and this implies and requires a continued pursuit of the project. Socrates offers himself up to Alcibiades as the key to power and prestige – and that is to say, in this case, as the key to happiness.

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[20] This is particularly evident regarding Alcibiades' cognitive insufficiencies. Cf. *First Alcibiades*, 117b-118b. What we find here is an instance of a recurring theme in the *corpus platonicum*: οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι. Alcibiades assumes that he knows what he needs to know in order to achieve his goal. Socrates shows him that he does not. As many other characters in the *corpus platonicum*, Alcibiades is prisoner of wrong or unfounded knowledge claims that prevent him from acquiring actual knowledge. This is an ignorance that ignores itself and passes as knowledge, what Socrates will designate as ἀμαθία – stupidity. Cf. *Sophist*, 229c. See Y. KURIHARA, Socratic Ignorance, or the Place of the Alcibiades I in Plato's Early Works, in: M. JOHNSON and H. TARRANT (ed.), *Alcibiades and the Socratic Lover-Educator*, London, Bloomsbury, 2012, 77-89.

[21] This whole process, however, makes for an unconventional wooing strategy. The normal rhetorical strategy would be to praise the beloved – following the pattern of the ἐγκώμιον – and at the same time impress on him the good the ἐραστής could bring to his already charmed existence. See, e.g., PSEUDO-DEMOSTHENES, *Erotikos*. This particular strategy is explicitly criticized and mocked in the *Lysis* as being particularly counterproductive (*Lysis*, 205aff.). Cf. NIGHTINGALE, *op. cit.*, 107ff. By praising the young man in hyperbolic terms, by emphasizing all his superlative positive attributes, the ἐραστής is making him harder to get. More importantly, excessive praise is actually corrupting, as it makes the young man over-proud and boastful, and less open to the need for improvement. It is clear how these arguments are echoed in the *First Alcibiades*. Alcibiades is the perfect example of a young man in possession of an impressive array of superlative positive attributes – and that makes him unyielding to the advances of his ἐρασταί. On the other hand, by doing the opposite of what a normal ἐραστής would do, Socrates reveals how detrimental the normal approach would be for the improvement of Alcibiades. The praise the ἐρώμενος receives masks his shortcomings and makes them even harder to correct.

At first sight, it would perhaps appear that all that Socrates has to offer is a way to achieve success. The ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ would in this case be no more than a set of practical steps to achieve one's goals and Socrates little more than a modern life coach or a peddler of self-help guides, or, at best, a career adviser. But what Socrates does is very different. In the first place, the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ appears as a problem to be solved – not as a recipe for success. To be sure, the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ is necessary and indispensable for the fulfilment of the project, but it is not at all clear what in fact that will consist in. Socrates does not claim for himself a positive knowledge of what ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ may be, but is rather willing and eager to engage in a search for it together with Alcibiades.[22] On the other hand, an important possibility remains open: the possibility of questioning the very meaning and validity of Alcibiades' life project. It is possible that the life project of power and prestige – and indeed any life project with the same or even different characteristics – may be revealed to be contrary to, difficult to conciliate with or even entirely incompatible with the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ.

3. TAKING CARE OF OTHERS, TAKING CARE OF ONESELF

In seeking power and prestige in the way he does, in the context of the Athenian πόλις, Alcibiades is embarking in a project that necessary entails taking care of something – namely of the πόλις itself. To lead the Athenians – and especially in matters as crucial as war and peace – is to be responsible for the welfare and security of the Athenians.[23] If he does it correctly, he will improve the city, by making it more powerful, wealthier, perhaps even (though this is far less likely) more just. There is within Alcibiades' life project of power and prestige a hint of a beneficial project, at least inasmuch as in improving the city he will be expanding his own power and prestige. The benefit given to Athens under Alcibiades translates into a benefit to

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[22] *First Alcibiades*, 124b-c: **Ἀλκ**. τίνα οὖν χρὴ τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν, ὦ Σώκρατες, ποιεῖσθαι; ἔχεις ἐξηγήσασθαι; παντὸς γὰρ μᾶλλον ἔοικας ἀληθῆ εἰρηκότι. / **Σωκ**. Ναί· ἀλλὰ γὰρ κοινὴ βουλὴ ᾧτινι τρόπῳ ἂν ὅτι βέλτιστοι γενοίμεθα. ἐγὼ γάρ τοι οὐ περὶ μὲν σοῦ λέγω ὡς χρὴ παιδευθῆναι, περὶ ἐμοῦ δὲ οὔ· οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ᾽ ὅτῳ σου διαφέρω πλήν γ᾽ ἑνί. See also *ibidem*, 124d: **Σωκ**. [...] λέγω μέντοι ἀληθῆ, ὅτι ἐπιμελείας δεόμεθα, μᾶλλον μὲν πάντες ἄνθρωποι, ἀτὰρ νώ γε καὶ μάλα σφόδρα.

[23] There is a terminological connection between ἐπιμέλεια and political office. The verb ἐπιμελεῖσθαι is often used to designate the work of officials in charge of specific civic duties; those same officials can sometimes be designated with the noun ἐπιμελητής and their purview can be designated as their ἐπιμέλεια. See, e.g., ARISTOTLE, *Politics* VI, 1322a20ff. A particular magistrate or official's job is, after all, to take care of a specific thing on behalf of the πόλις and so the connection is more than natural. But the connection between political office and making people better – fostering ἀρετή – is something Socrates insists on frequently throughout the *corpus platonicum*, usually as he criticizes specific political leaders' inability to do so. See *Meno*, 93aff.; *Gorgias*, 503bff.; *First Alcibiades*, 119a.

Alcibiades himself, in the form of power and prestige. In this regard at least, the ἐπιμέλεια of the πόλις is also at the same time an ἐπιμέλεια of Alcibiades, since it is through taking care of the πόλις that Alcibiades will potentially be able to fulfil the project that gives meaning and value to his life. The ἐπιμέλεια of the πόλις is, for Alcibiades, already a certain form of ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ.[24]

However, this connection between the ἐπιμέλεια of the πόλις and the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ of Alcibiades already implies a specific identification of the "αὐτός" the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ refers back to. What is this "αὐτός"? The implied answer is: someone who is superlatively attached to the power and prestige that correctly taking care of the πόλις entails. If this identification of the "αὐτός" is right, then Alcibiades' problem is one of mere competence. He lacks the skills and knowledge to take care of the city correctly, to make it better, and this lack translates into a failure of execution of his life project. Socrates' contribution would then be entirely instrumental. He would help Alcibiades acquire the means to exercise his ἐπιμέλεια of the πόλις correctly and thereby executing his life project.

And yet the dialogue does not present the ἐπιμέλεια of the πόλις as a condition for the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ – which in this case would be identified with the successful execution of the life project. Rather, the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ is presented as a necessary preliminary condition for the ἐπιμέλεια of the πόλις, and by extension, of the successful execution of the project. The ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ has priority over the rest. Without it, the rest cannot be done. One needs to start with the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ. As we will see later, the identification of the project might determine the exact nature of the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ, as it influences one's understanding of the αὐτός. But the possibility remains that not all projects are equally valid and suitable for the αὐτός. It is possible that the nature of the αὐτός is such that it demands a specific kind of project – or at least that some projects would be unsuitable for it, and that they are only adopted on account of a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the αὐτός. But we will leave this question aside for the moment.

The precedence of ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ makes the problem of the identification of the "αὐτός" particularly urgent. The success of Alcibiades' life project – and therefore of his whole

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[24] This, of course, implies a conception of political leadership that requires a kind of symbiotic relationship between the leader and the led. This relationship does not require the leader to renounce his or her personal interests. Rather, the leader's personal interests are aligned with the interests of the led or can only be properly fulfilled through the fulfilment of their interests. This contrasts with the predatory and exploitative conception of political leadership most notoriously illustrated in Socrates' conversations with Polus and Callicles in the *Gorgias* and with Thrasymachus in *Republic* I. Clearly, such a conception of political leadership would be incompatible with the democratic ethos that prevailed in Athens, and so no aspiring political leader could hold such a conception – or at least not openly.

life as such – is dependent on this identification. The most immediate and serious danger, therefore, is not lack of competence, but rather the danger of failing the proper target of ἐπιμέλεια. We have already had a hint of a failure of this kind when we briefly considered the misguided erotic ἐπιμέλεια of Alcibiades' other ἐρασταί. Even though, formally, their desire was for Alcibiades himself – that which makes Alcibiades be the Alcibiades that he is – through their lack of knowledge and their inability to properly identify what this "himself" is, they ended up directing their desire at a variety of attributes that Alcibiades is not, for example, his physical beauty. And so when Alcibiades reaches the ripe old age of twenty and his beauty fades, his following of ἐρασταί dwindles until there is only Socrates left. Of course, this assumes that there is a difference between Alcibiades himself and his beauty and other attributes of Alcibiades that may be intermittent, change over time, or entirely disappear. But regardless of the exact connection between the beauty of Alcibiades and Alcibiades himself, the fact remains that the desire of the ἐρασταί was based on a supposed identification of what this "himself" is as the object of this desire.

One of the aspects ἔρως and ἐπιμέλεια have in common is that both these phenomena are intrinsically relational. Any ἔρως is always necessarily an ἔρως of something.[25] Any instance of ἐπιμέλεια is likewise always necessarily an ἐπιμέλεια of something. The something of the ἐπιμέλεια is decisive in determining the nature of that ἐπιμέλεια: an ἐπιμέλεια of the πόλις will be different from an ἐπιμέλεια of a field, of a horse, of a child, and so on. The actions and procedures that constitute a particular instance of ἐπιμέλεια depend on the particular nature of this "something", of its object or point of application.[26] The identification of the correct procedure is contingent on the agent of ἐπιμέλεια having a correct understanding of the object or point of application. At the same time, the agent needs to understand what needs to be done – what kind of procedure is demanded by the specific needs of the object. A misidentification of the object or a lack of knowledge of the procedure will lead to a failed ἐπιμέλεια – that is, the object of ἐπιμέλεια will not become better.

But any ἐπιμέλεια of something is integrated into a wider context. Taking care of something implies an end, a purpose. I take care of something in order to produce something, to get a result. This result could be described, in very generic terms, as "making something better". But this "making better" is a formal determination whose content only becomes

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[25] See *Symposium*, 199dff.

[26] *First Alcibiades*, 128e: **Σωκ.** ἦ οὖν ἔγνωμεν ἄν ποτε τίς τέχνη ὑπόδημα βέλτιον ποιεῖ, μὴ εἰδότες ὑπόδημα; / **Ἀλκ.** ἀδύνατον. / **Σωκ.** οὐδέ γε τίς τέχνη δακτυλίους βελτίους ποιεῖ, ἀγνοοῦντες δακτύλιον; / **Ἀλκ.** ἀληθῆ.

apparent within the wider context of a system of ends. I take care of the plant in order to have a nice garden. I take care of the horse in order to win the race, and so on.

The example of the other ἐρασταί of Alcibiades is illustrative of this. Even if they had been successful in convincing Alcibiades to yield to their advances, the other ἐρασταί would still have failed. Because they do not know what Alcibiades really is, they would have failed in the beneficial component that is claimed by the official discourse of παιδεραστία. Their ἐπιμέλεια would have been misinformed and misled by a misidentification of what Alcibiades is in two ways: they would have adopted the wrong procedures of care, and they would have misunderstood the ends and goals that are appropriate for the kind of being that Alcibiades is. In spite of their best intentions and care, Alcibiades would not have improved.[27]

The teleological component of ἐπιμέλεια usually refers back to the agent: I take care of something in order to produce a result, which is a good for me. This makes what we have seen in the case of Alcibiades' ἐπιμέλεια of the πόλις clearer: the ἐπιμέλεια of something is also at the same time a form of ἐπιμέλεια of the agent. One engages in the ἐπιμέλεια of something because it is part of the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ. The reason for Alcibiades' interest in taking care of the city is that it is associated with an understanding of the care of himself that identifies it with his life project of power and prestige. In the same way, the interest of the other ἐρασταί in taking care of Alcibiades will lie in its connection with what they identify as the good for themselves: the enjoyment of the company and sexual favours of the most desirable young man in Athens.

However, the nexus between taking care of something and taking care of myself by taking care of something is vague and unclear. The possibility of error, of misidentifying the target and of entirely failing in making both targets better is always present. All this is dependent on the identification of what is "myself".[28] Of course, the problem is not that one might mistake oneself for someone else – this is a not a comedy of errors. The problem, as we have seen in the instance of the ἐπιμέλεια of others that is at the core of ἔρως, is that there is a confusion of attributes. One takes accidental, secondary characteristics of the target of ἐπιμέλεια for the real things. Now, this is only so because any instance of ἐπιμέλεια is dependent

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[27] If we are assessing this from the point of view of the results, Socrates' ultimately failure in taking care of Alcibiades could suggest that he was also somehow mistaken. However, this does not mean that he was mistaken in the identification of the αὐτός of Alcibiades. In a complex process like the kind of ἐπιμέλεια hinted at in this dialogue, there are plenty of opportunities for serious mistakes to creep in.

[28] *First Alcibiades*, 128e-129b: **Σωκ.** τί δέ; τίς τέχνη βελτίω ποιεῖ αὐτόν, ἆρ᾽ ἄν ποτε γνοῖμεν ἀγνοοῦντες τί ποτ᾽ ἐσμὲν αὐτοί; / **Ἀλκ.** ἀδύνατον. / **Σωκ.** πότερον οὖν δὴ ῥᾴδιον τυγχάνει τὸ γνῶναι ἑαυτόν, καί τις ἦν φαῦλος ὁ τοῦτο ἀναθεὶς εἰς τὸν ἐν Πυθοῖ νεών, ἢ χαλεπόν τι καὶ οὐχὶ παντός; / **Ἀλκ.** ἐμοὶ μέν, ὦ Σώκρατες, πολλάκις μὲν ἔδοξε παντὸς εἶναι, πολλάκις δὲ παγχάλεπον. / **Σωκ.** ἀλλ᾽, ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη, εἴτε ῥᾴδιον εἴτε μή ἐστιν, ὅμως γε ἡμῖν ὧδ᾽ ἔχει: γνόντες μὲν αὐτὸ τάχ᾽ ἂν γνοῖμεν τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν, ἀγνοοῦντες δὲ οὐκ ἄν ποτε. / **Ἀλκ.** ἔστι ταῦτα.

on a series of knowledge claims: regarding the target, regarding the procedure, regarding the ends to be achieved, regarding the articulation between all these elements. In particular, the confusion of attributes occurs as a result of an unfounded knowledge claim regarding the identity of the target of ἐπιμέλεια. The other ἐρασταί of Alcibiades do not doubt that they know what and who Alcibiades is. *A fortiori*, Alcibiades himself does not doubt that he knows who and what Alcibiades himself is. The very possibility of there being some mistake or of one becoming entirely perplexed in this matter would never have occurred to them. Any kind of effective ἐπιμέλεια, including (and in fact most crucially) the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ, already includes some kind of knowledge claim regarding the αὐτός.

The question regarding ἐπιμέλεια makes the correct identification of the target – myself – all the more crucial. In taking care of something in order to benefit myself, without, however, having a clear perspective on what "myself" is, I run the risk of wasting my time, my efforts and of actually neglecting myself. The same kind of mistake that we can fall into regarding our understanding of other beings as objects of care can affect even our understanding of ourselves as objects of an ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ. So in the same way that I need to understand what something is in order to know what to do to take care of it, I need to understand the being that I am in order to ascertain what procedures have to be followed in taking care of myself. But this extends even to the care of other things, since, as we have seen, the care of other things always refers back to the care of myself. And so I also need to understand the nexus between myself and those other objects of care. In other words, I need to understand in what way taking care of something is also at the same time taking care of myself – how the care of something is integrated into the care of myself.

Now, of course, this is not something that we normally do. Normally we do as Alcibiades and his other ἐρασταί do: we assume that we know and go about our business – or, to be more accurate, we go about what we assume is our business. And in fact our current concern is precisely what our business might be. By this I mean that the connection we have already discussed between the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ (still understood simply as a formal operator) and the other instances of ἐπιμέλεια that make up our lives has shown us at least that the identification of the correlate of the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ (and by implication of what this ἐπιμέλεια may in fact entail) is absolutely essential for the determination of what we ought to do with our lives. Every action that I take and every event in my life is integrated into this vaster horizon: the meaning of the totality of my life. It is judged against and integrated into a more or less unified perspective over the whole of my existence – usually defined by the more or less clear life project. In the same way that what Alcibiades does is judged against his life project of

power and prestige (what leads to or away from the achievement of the goal), it is necessary to understand what and who I am – and consequently what kind of ἐπιμέλεια is suitable for me.

4. IN SEARCH OF THE αὐτός

Identifying the αὐτός requires a change in perspective – the adoption, to begin with, of an interrogative, dubitative, examinative perspective. This is what Socrates triggers through his deconstruction of the superlative attributes of Alcibiades. By showing that Alcibiades lacks what he needs to execute his life project, Socrates makes searching for the "himself" of Alcibiades – and for its correct ἐπιμέλεια – an urgent matter. However, as we have already seen, the process begins by showing what Alcibiades is not. It excludes possibilities that are often mistaken for what Alcibiades and Socrates are looking for. In doing so, they progressively recalibrate the scope of the inquiry, reaching the final answer by stages or degrees, zooming in on what this "himself" could be. At the same time, the line of inquiry adopted by Socrates and Alcibiades does not put aside the connection between this "himself" and the excluded possibilities. Quite the opposite. As we shall see, in the process of approximation to the "himself", Socrates and Alcibiades outline the ways in which the different possibilities connect with each other to form a complex whole.

This process starts in earnest after what seems to be the final collapse of most of Alcibiades' knowledge claims. At this point, Alcibiades recognises the ugliness of his condition. All his apparent superlative attributes have turned to dust. He does not know what he is, and, by extension, does not know what his business is, what he ought to do, and in what way he ought to direct the πόλις and execute his life project.[29]

It is at this moment that Socrates outlines the different levels of ἐπιμέλεια that characterise human life. These levels form a hierarchized complex of types of ἐπιμέλεια, with

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[29] *First Alcibiades*, 127d: Ἀλκ. ἀλλὰ μὰ τοὺς θεούς, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐδ᾽ αὐτὸς οἶδ᾽ ὅτι λέγω, κινδυνεύω δὲ καὶ πάλαι λεληθέναι ἐμαυτὸν αἴσχιστα ἔχων. This is just the final of several similar admissions by Alcibiades, usually followed by a reinstatement of his claims to knowledge and competence in another form. Cf. 116e, 118a-b, 124b. Alcibiades' unfounded claims are not defeated once and for all, in one fell swoop. Rather, they need to be worn down from a variety of different angles and in several attempts. This suggests Alcibiades' flakiness regarding the philosophical journey Socrates wants to lead him into, and anticipates his turning his back on it later on in his life. See also *Symposium*, 215e-216a: ὅταν γὰρ ἀκούω, πολύ μοι μᾶλλον ἢ τῶν κορυβαντιώντων ἥ τε καρδία πηδᾷ καὶ δάκρυα ἐκχεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων τῶν τούτου, ὁρῶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλους παμπόλλους τὰ αὐτὰ πάσχοντας· Περικλέους δὲ ἀκούων καὶ ἄλλων ἀγαθῶν ῥητόρων εὖ μὲν ἡγούμην λέγειν, τοιοῦτον δ᾽ οὐδὲν ἔπασχον, οὐδ᾽ ἐτεθορύβητό μου ἡ ψυχὴ οὐδ᾽ ἠγανάκτει ὡς ἀνδραποδωδῶς διακειμένου, ἀλλ᾽ ὑπὸ τουτουῒ τοῦ Μαρσύου πολλάκις δὴ οὕτω διετέθην ὥστε μοι δόξαι μὴ βιωτὸν εἶναι ἔχοντι ὡς ἔχω. (…) ἀναγκάζει γάρ με ὁμολογεῖν ὅτι πολλοῦ ἐνδεὴς ὢν αὐτὸς ἔτι ἐμαυτοῦ μὲν ἀμελῶ, τὰ δ᾽ Ἀθηναίων πράττω. Cf. Aeschines Socraticus, frag. 7 Dittmar; GRIBBLE, *op. cit.*, 222.

the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ at the centre. There is an ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ (the kind of ἐπιμέλεια that is being sought in the inquiry), an ἐπιμέλεια of τὰ ἑαυτοῦ – the ἐπιμέλεια of the things that belong to the "αὐτός", and an ἐπιμέλεια of τὰ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ – the ἐπιμέλεια of the things that belong to the things that belong to the "αὐτός".[30] Now, we must first of all notice that the direction of the inquiry is the opposite of the one we have just outlined: not from the centre to the periphery, but from the periphery to the centre. What is first explored is the connection between ἐπιμέλεια of τὰ ἑαυτοῦ and ἐπιμέλεια of τὰ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ.

The examples Socrates provides make this clearer. There are things that belong or are directly related to the hand or the feet or other parts of one's body: shoes and rings and clothing and other things of the same kind. The shoe is *of* the feet in a very concrete way. The shoe has a specific function or functions and that determines not only the way in which the shoe is made (its shape, its material, its size, etc.), but also its relation to the person who wears it. The primary function of a shoe is to protect the wearer's foot and the way in which this function is achieved determines the value of the shoe. An uncomfortable shoe that hurts the wearer's foot, or a shoe that failed to protect from the cold in cold weather, and so on, would be deemed a bad shoe. A shoe that fulfilled its proper function would be a good shoe. And so the shoe is *of* the foot not in the sense of ownership, but in the sense that the very being of the shoe relates to and is dependent on the foot.

But the focus of the analysis is firstly on the matter of ἐπιμέλεια. By this I mean that the way in which Socrates approaches the nature of what is designated as τὰ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ and its connection to τὰ ἑαυτοῦ is through ἐπιμέλεια. The question is about the care of the foot – as opposed to the care of the shoe. These are two different points of application of ἐπιμέλεια, requiring two different kinds of procedures – two different τέχναι.[31] This is enough to make them two distinct instances of ἐπιμέλεια, and, consequently, to mark the distance between two different categories of beings in relation to the "αὐτός". The possibility that our discussion so far has already sketched out, namely that there is a second target of ἐπιμέλεια beyond its immediate point of application, and that consequently the ἐπιμέλεια of something can be part of the ἐπιμέλεια of myself, is not envisaged at this point.

And yet, even though there is a distinction between taking care of shoes and taking care of feet, it is clear that by taking care of the shoes one may also be taking care of the feet. Each instance of ἐπιμέλεια is not a whole enclosed within itself. Rather, there is a transitivity that characterises ἐπιμέλεια, since specific forms of ἐπιμέλεια may contribute to others, as means to

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[30] *First Alcibiades*, 127eff.
[31] *First Alcibiades*, 128b-d.

an end. And so even if taking care of the feet is a job for the doctor or the physical trainer, armed with their respective τέχναι, the cobbler, in taking care of the feet, might also contribute – especially so if its τέχνη is directed by the τέχναι that focus on the feet.[32] This, as we have seen, would fit perfectly the particular mode of being of the shoe as something that is *of* the feet. To make the shoe better – and so to exercise the correct ἐπιμέλεια of the shoe – is to make it so that it fulfils its proper function better. As the function of the shoe is related to the good of the feet, then the care of the shoe will also have to keep in sight the good of the feet. The correct ἐπιμέλεια of the shoe might at the same time be part of the ἐπιμέλεια of the feet.[33] But we will leave this matter aside for now.

Socrates' strategy does not focus explicitly on the transitivity of ἐπιμέλεια. In order to pinpoint what the αὐτός that one needs to know in order to exercise the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ may be, he explores a different but not entirely unrelated phenomenon: χρῆσις.[34] Socrates zooms in on this phenomenon through a series of examples: the use of language, cutting leather and playing a musical instrument. Each of these examples emphasizes the distinction between the user and the used. Socrates and Alcibiades are not the language they use to talk to each other; the leather cutter is not the tool he uses to cut leather; the cithara player is not the plectrum with which he plucks the strings.

From here, Socrates extends this distinction to the body: the craftsman does not only use the tools, he uses his body to use the tools. The analogy is clear, and explicitly used elsewhere in the *corpus platonicum*, as Denyer remarks in his commentary: the body is itself a tool or set of tools – ὄργανον.[35] And if there is a tool being used, there must be a user. In the case of the tools in the first sense (i.e. not the body or part of the body), the distinction between user and used is clear. It is not so clear in the case of the metaphorical use of tool to designate the body or parts of the body. To say that, for example, the cithara player uses his hands in the same way that he uses the plectrum suggests a distinction between the cithara player and his hands analogous to the distinction between the cithara player and the plectrum. Notice that we do not say that the hands of the cithara player use the plectrum – the user is the cithara player. Likewise, it would be absurd to say that the hands of the cithara player or, even more absurd,

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[32] The idea that certain τέχναι are subordinate and directed by others is not present in the *First Alcibiades*. However, we can find in other Platonic dialogues the idea of a possible hierarchy among τέχναι, although details vary widely from dialogue to dialogue. This is especially clear in those dialogues where a ruling, directive or master τέχνη is being sought. See, e.g., *Charmides*, 171dff.; *Euthydemus*, 289bff.

[33] But there is another possibility: that the correct ἐπιμέλεια of the feet would have no role for the shoe, that the shoe could be superfluous or even detrimental to the correct ἐπιμέλεια of the feet.

[34] *First Alcibiades*, 129cff. Cf. FOUCAULT (2001), 55-56

[35] See DENYER, *op. cit.*, 213-214. Cf. *Theaetetus* 184d; *Republic* VI, 508b.

the plectrum, use the cithara to produce music. What all this suggests is, in fact, a succession of tools that are used by a user (in this example, the cithara player) to use other tools that are used to use other tools and so on. He uses his hands to use the plectrum to use the musical instrument.

The conclusion seems obvious: the user is something that is distinct both from the tool and from that with which the tool is used (in itself a kind of "secondary tool", as it were) – the body. This is what is identified with the "αὐτός" Socrates and Alcibiades are looking for as the primary and most important target of ἐπιμέλεια. The implicit analogy between body and tool is therefore used to exclude the body from the possible candidates for targets of the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ.

This point is driven home by coming back to the use of language.[36] When Socrates is talking to Alcibiades, he is not talking with Alcibiades' face, but rather with Alcibiades himself. The act of speaking with someone is directed at the "himself" or "herself" of the person one is speaking with, which is distinct from that person's body. Socrates might be looking at Alcibiades' face while he speaks to him, but it is not the face that Socrates expects to be listening, but rather something else, to which the face belongs and by which the face is used. He is speaking to Alcibiades himself. This "himself" needs to be able to understand language, to think, to judge, to have memory, wants and desires, eventually even to reply so that communication can occur. The act of speaking with Alcibiades is directed at Alcibiades himself and assumes that Alcibiades is a sentient, intelligent creature capable of language. These are all characteristics that whatever is identified as the "αὐτός" must have. At the same time, the use analogy also assumes a set of characteristics for the user identified as the "αὐτός". The user has to be capable of using what is used, and so it has to be sentient and intelligent as well, capable of understanding ends and the ways and means to achieve them. It has, in short, to be capable of exercising rule – to be the determining principle of a course of action.

This "αὐτός" is identified as the ψυχή.[37] When Socrates speaks to Alcibiades, it is his ψυχή that Socrates is addressing. When the cithara player plays his instrument, or when the leather-cutter cuts leather, it is the ψυχή that directs the body to do this or that. The ψυχή is the seat of knowledge and the seat of action. The ψυχή knows and the ψυχή acts, and it is that which knows and that which acts that constitutes the "himself" of Alcibiades. It is also that which

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[36] *First Alcibiades*, 130e: **Σωκ.** τοῦτ᾽ ἄρα ἦν ὃ καὶ ὀλίγῳ ἔμπροσθεν εἴπομεν, ὅτι Σωκράτης Ἀλκιβιάδῃ διαλέγεται λόγῳ χρώμενος, οὐ πρὸς τὸ σὸν πρόσωπον, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν Ἀλκιβιάδην ποιούμενος τοὺς λόγους· τοῦτο δέ ἐστιν ἡ ψυχή.
[37] *First Alcibiades*, 130b-c.

Socrates loves – not Alcibiades' beauty, wealth, power, influence or any other characteristic of the same sort, but Alcibiades' ψυχή, i.e. that entity that is Alcibiades who knows and Alcibiades who acts.

This brief description could lead us to believe that what matters in this case is a conception of the self that is wholly abstract and repeatable. In search for the self of Alcibiades, I would find a disembodied, alien self, and lose sight of what we thought we were looking for (and what we thought was the target of Socrates' erotic ἐπιμέλεια), the, so to speak, "Alcibiadeness" of Alcibiades. One could generalise this concern by remarking that the same kind of inquiry could be applied to each and every one of us, and that the end result would miss what we could describe as the "meness" of "me", and so on. This raises the disturbing possibility that what determines me as "me" is a set of entirely contingent attributes and circumstances (some of them perhaps even random), that are also anonymous and whose connection with me is merely up to chance or to conditions that I cannot produce or control. This is not just a matter of the course of my life being influenced and even determined by forces and circumstances beyond my control. Rather, the things that I think constitute the "me" that I am are revealed as being accidental to myself. Were I someone completely different, I would still be "me" – in the same way that, even though you are different from me, you are still for each of you "me". That this is somehow implicated in that which makes each of us be the "me" that each of us is, is implied in the confused presentation each of us has of other people. The other is for his or herself a "myself", in the same way that I am a "myself" for me. But, at the same time, this "myself" – the myself of the other – is another. And so at the same time we can represent that which seems the most particular and individual thing there is, the thing that is mine more than anything else – myself – as similar, as something of the same kind as that which belongs to each and every human being that has lived and ever will. It is perplexing, then, that this "myself" can be the most personal and individual thing there is and at the same time the most generic and widely shared.

The spontaneous way we try to solve this problem is to push this uncomfortable reality into the background. But, when we are forced in some way to face this, we tend to resolve it by putting emphasis on what makes each of us unique or special or individual: the specific circumstances, personal history, kinks and quirks that are attached to this "me" and the stuff we have to deal with on a daily basis. In other words, faced with this problem, we invoke the same kind of determination that was set aside by Socrates and Alcibiades during their examination of what makes up Alcibiades himself and constitutes the correlate of the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ.

However, the impression that the "himself" that results from the analysis Socrates and Alcibiades conduct in this dialogue is too abstract to account for the experience that we have of our own individualities may have more to do with misplaced expectations than anything else. In fact, Alcibiades discovers that there is a core of what he himself is – a core characterised fundamentally by its cognitive nature and its capability to act. It is from this core that all the rest derives and it is on this core that he must focus in order to improve himself and his life. But that core lacks all the specific characteristics and individuality that seem to constitute the Alcibiades that we know and so many loved. Alcibiades is reduced to a being that knows and acts – in that regard, indistinguishable from other beings that know and act, i.e., human beings in general. The picture of Alcibiades himself that emerges from the process of elimination is one in which he is placed under the light of human nature, the set of characteristics that define human beings in general.[38] This creates the perplexing situation of Alcibiades being more himself the more he evidently displays what he has in common with every other human being. What Alcibiades really is, after all, is not the set of superlative positive attributes that set him aside and above others.[39] Rather, he is just like everyone else – a human being, an ἄνθρωπος.[40]

By anchoring the "self" of Alcibiades on the idea of human nature, the case of Alcibiades is given a universal scope. The dialogue is more than about Alcibiades the man, with his peculiar life story and individual characteristics. The dialogue is even more than about philosophy as a project of care, as embodied in the interaction between Socrates and Alcibiades. It is about what every single human being is in spite of their quirks and peculiarities, and about the kind of care that may be more appropriate for each of us as humans. It raises the possibility that, beyond its employment for the furtherance of a specific life project (such as Alcibiades', which we have considered in some detail), the care we must take of ourselves is one and the same for all. It raises the possibility that the kind of care that we need is defined not by our

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[38] See ANNAS, *op cit.*, 120ff.

[39] However blessed he may have been with positive attributes, the dialogue shows how Alcibiades is not above *all* others. At 120a-124b, Socrates shows how Alcibiades misjudges his own worth by rescaling his terms of reference in proportion with the universal and maximalist scope of his life project. Alcibiades is like the proverbial big fish in a small pond and even if he is able to surpass his more direct Athenian rivals, his attributes pale in comparison with the kings of Sparta and the Great King.

[40] Or perhaps still this conception is even more circumscribed, dependent on the social and cultural setting. And so what is envisaged by this search for the "himself" of Alcibiades is not his nature as a human being in general, but as a specific kind of human being, within a certain culture, social community, conformed by specific social norms and expectations. As Julia Annas puts it, regarding the ancient conception of self-knowledge: "What is relevant is knowing myself in the sense of knowing my place in society, knowing who I am and where I stand in relation to others." See ANNAS, *op. cit.*, 121ff. Hence, Annas explains, the importance of justice and σωφροσύνη in this context. The value and meaning of Alcibiades himself as a member of the πόλις is correlated with the enactment of these fundamental social values.

individual characteristics, but by the kind of being that we are: human. The question turns from how to take care of a specific person, to how to take care of human beings.

This is far from an abstract notion of the self based on self-reflexivity.[41] What is at stake here is something other than self-knowledge in the modern sense: the discovery of the self as that being that is capable of knowing and thinking itself. Rather, this αὐτός is anchored on the general nature of all human beings, and as such is determined by a set of characteristics that define what it is and what it needs in the context of its concrete existence.[42] Furthermore, the description of what we are that we find in the dialogue suggests that there is something else at stake besides knowledge. And that something is care.

We have already mentioned how the distinction between αὐτός, τὰ ἑαυτοῦ and τὰ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ is introduced through the angle of ἐπιμέλεια. To take care of the shoes is not the same as taking care of the feet. This, however, leads to a brief discussion of τέχναι and to the introduction of χρῆσις as a more decisive distinctive criterion. The ψυχή is then presented as the ruling principle – as that which uses the body and, through the body, the tools.[43] We could extend this scheme to encompass everything: through the body, we interact and "use" everything, not only those things that, *stricto sensu*, we would designate as tools. It is through the body that we act upon the world. But we must not lose sight of ἐπιμέλεια, and especially the already mentioned transitivity of ἐπιμέλεια. We have already observed that taking care of something entails to a certain degree an element of taking care of oneself. It is to benefit oneself that one exercises ἐπιμέλεια over something else. In the case of the shoes, by taking care of the shoes one could very well be taking care of the feet. The τέχναι that take care of the feet might use the τέχναι that take care of the shoes in an ancillary capacity. And so the τέχνη of the cobbler, if subordinated to the direction of the τέχνη of the medical doctor or the physical trainer, is integrated into a wider network of ἐπιμέλεια.

The distinction between taking care of the shoes (taking care of τὰ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ) and taking care of the feet (taking care of τὰ ἑαυτοῦ) is presented as analogous to the distinction between taking care of the body (τὰ ἑαυτοῦ) and taking care of oneself, the long sought-after

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[41] Interpretations of the *First Alcibiades* often focus on the idea of knowledge of the self as a kind of self-reflexivity and find in this dialogue a precursor to many of the ideas on the self that are characteristic of modern philosophy. See, e.g., FOUCAULT (2001), 52ff.; R. SORABJI, *Self. Ancient and Modern Insights into Individuality*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, 115-116. Cf. C. GILL, *The Structured Self in Hellenistic and Roman Thought*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, 344ff.; IDEM, Self-Knowledge in Plato's *Alcibiades*, in: S. STERN-GILLET and K. CORRIGAN (ed.), *Reading Ancient Texts: Volume I: Presocratics and Plato. Essays in Honour of Denis O'Brien*, Leiden, Boston, Brill, 2007, 97ff.

[42] This could even involve a connection to a normative dimension of human nature, i.e., the aspiration and effort to become what a human being ought to become. See GILL, *op. cit.*, 357ff.; P. REIMES, Reason to Care: The Object and Structure of Self-Knowledge in the Alcibiades I, *Apeiron* 46 (2013) 270-301, especially 294ff.

[43] *First Alcibiades*, 130a. See also 130d.

ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ. In isolating that which constitutes the αὐτός, Socrates is directing the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ to its proper target. The conclusion is that by taking care of one's possessions, one's wealth and the like, or even by taking care of one's body, e.g. one's beauty and one's health, one is not in fact taking care of oneself, but rather of something that belongs to oneself or even of something that belongs to something that belongs to oneself. A life focused in taking care of those more distant things risks losing sight of what really matter: oneself. It is, in fact, a life that neglects that which it ought to take care of: the ψυχή.

From what we have seen so far, we could perhaps conclude that the care of the ψυχή can be taken in isolation from the care of whatever else there is. In fact, as the care of τὰ ἑαυτοῦ and the care of τὰ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ are presented as distractions from and obstacles to the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ, it would seem that to take care of oneself one must stop taking care of the rest. This, however, is not what the dialogue tells us. To begin with, the search for the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ is introduced within the context of instances of ἐπιμέλεια of other people, namely the erotic ἐπιμέλεια of Socrates towards Alcibiades, and the ἐπιμέλεια of the πόλις that is an integral component of Alcibiades' life project of power and prestige.[44] On the other hand, we must take into account what we have observed regarding the transitivity of ἐπιμέλεια. In the same way that the care of the shoes might be part of the care of the feet, the care of the body might contribute to the care of the ψυχή.

This possibility becomes clearer when we consider the way in which we experience the ψυχή as the seat of knowledge and action. We do not experience ourselves as pure cognitive beings, nor are we limited to exercising power and control only over that part of ourselves that is identified as we ourselves: the ψυχή. Rather, as the ruling principle, the ψυχή is intrinsically connected with, in the first place, the body, and through the body, with everything else. The very nature of the ψυχή as the seat of knowledge and as the seat of action requires this intrinsic connection. That is to say that that which makes each of us be his or her self necessarily implies an openness to that which is not his or her self, both as objects of knowledge and as points of application of power. And so to take care of the ψυχή entails to take care of it as both the seat of knowledge and the seat of action. That means that the potential objects of knowledge and the potential points of application of the acting power of the ψυχή will be embraced by this care.[45]

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[44] Socrates puts this this point across near the end of the dialogue (133dff.), when he states that one cannot know τὰ ἑαυτοῦ and τὰ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ without knowing the αὐτός. Likewise, if one does not know τὰ ἑαυτοῦ, one cannot know what is of others – and will not be able to take care of the city.

[45] This, I believe, is why the concrete instances of the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ – as ἐπιμέλεια of the ψυχή – are related to ἀρεταί such as σωφροσύνη and διακαιοσύνη. See *First Alcibiades*, 133cff. Not only, as it is also the case, because of the connection between the question regarding the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ and Alcibiades' life project, but also because any form of ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ will entail the ways in which the αὐτός relates to and interacts with

But if this is the case, what in fact changes with the examination Alcibiades is subjected to in this dialogue, apart from the recognition that Alcibiades does not yet have what it takes to execute his life project? If the search for the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ leads us to conclude that to take care of oneself one also has to take care of one's body and of that which belongs to one's body, would this not amount to, in general terms, leaving everything as it were before? If this is the case, then focusing, say, on one's financial assets or one's physical beauty could easily be justified with a reference to the transitive property of ἐπιμέλεια, and by identifying the ultimate target as the ψυχή. Virtually any instance of ἐπιμέλεια could be justified using this kind of language, making the possibility of one neglecting oneself meaningless. Alcibiades' problem would be reduced to one of temporary incompetence, easily corrected with the suitable training. A few courses on the nature of justice, and he would be on his way to becoming all-powerful and all-admired.

And yet, the examination leads to a significant change. It reveals ignorance. In normal circumstances, the connection between most instances of ἐπιμέλεια and the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ is implied, but never focused on. It is something that is an integral but silent part of the very structure of ἐπιμέλεια. However, by ignoring what is the αὐτός for whose benefit every instance of ἐπιμέλεια is applied, one is easily misled into applying one's ἐπιμέλεια wrongly. Furthermore, by ignoring that one ignores the αὐτός, any possibility of correction is automatically thwarted. Only by a very lucky coincidence would one strike the target. As a result, one can very well be applying one's ἐπιμέλεια in such a way that does not benefit oneself, even though self-benefit is the nominal final purpose of any instance of ἐπιμέλεια. The focus of the examination is therefore in identifying the αὐτός, as it is from the αὐτός that the meaning and value of the rest derives.

Furthermore, the process of elimination of what is not the αὐτός that led us to the identification of the ψυχή as the αὐτός is an exegetic tool. It allows us to isolate the fundamental component of our individual nature; it does not sever the connection between that component and the rest. The ψυχή, as we have seen, is not experienced alone and isolated, in and of itself. More than that, the ψυχή is by its very nature open to and in relation with what is not itself. The change in perspective introduced in the dialogue is one that recognises the priority or primacy

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that which is not itself. The ἀρεταί correspond to the achievement of the normative dimension of human nature: human being in its most excellent form. It is in the execution of those ἀρεταί that the proper ἐπιμέλεια of the ψυχή is enacted in the lived reality of the individual at stake. In other words, the αὐτός is not just reflexive, in relation to and in connection with the self – it is already always engaged in relation to and in connection with what is not itself: other things and other people.

of the ψυχή in the network of relationships of ἐπιμέλεια. The ψυχή is recognised as the true centre of this network, unlike other decentred possible ways of organizing this complex whole.

And so one's actions and one's way of life might change radically once one focuses on the problem of ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ – and in identifying the αὐτός. This might lead to significant changes in the way one applies one's ἐπιμέλεια. One might abandon certain activities and pursuits, take up others, or even still execute them in different ways and with different weights and significances. As this is an integrated system whose principle derives from the αὐτός, whatever is found regarding the αὐτός can change everything completely, with its effects rippling out from the centre to the periphery. Ultimately, one may even find that the life project is incompatible with the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ, that one's αὐτός is not benefitted, but rather damaged by the pursuit of one's project.

This integration between the different strands of ἐπιμέλεια and its harmonization and direction towards the execution of the life project is only possible through a process of self--knowledge. It is only by knowing oneself that one can hope to find the correct ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ; as the other forms of ἐπιμέλεια depend on the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ, it is only by knowing oneself that any form of ἐπιμέλεια can be correctly applied. This implies, to a certain degree, that one is capable of understanding what the αὐτός is and what that ἐπιμέλεια entails.

But the priority, nonetheless, stays firmly with ἐπιμέλεια. My self is my self because of the type of care it demands and deserves – because it is the centre of a complex network of care that extends from the self to the other beings with which it relates. However, as the exemplary situation of Alcibiades illustrates, the cognitive component is essential and is intertwined with this structure of care.[46] One needs to know and understand what this αὐτός is and where it lies and how it ought to connect with the other beings in order to take proper care of it. The care component is intimately connected with the cognitive component. To know oneself is absolutely essential not because the knowledge of the self is the foundation of other forms of knowledge, but rather because one cannot take proper care of something one does not know.

We may eventually find out that knowledge is a fundamental component of this proper care, inasmuch as the ψυχή – the kind of being that is our self – is intrinsically philosophical

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[46] Cf. FOUCAULT (2001), 67: "Vous avez un enchevêtrement dynamique, un appel réciproque du *gnôthi seauton* et de l'*epimeleia heautou* (connaissance de soi et souci de soi)." My reading, however, diverges from Foucault's in that I do not see in this dialogue a reduction of the care of the self to self-knowledge, precisely because I believe we cannot set aside the practical dimension of the ψυχή. So the intertwinement between knowledge and care I describe in this text is of a very different nature from the one described by Foucault. See also M. FOUCAULT, *Le courage de verité: Cours au Collège de France. 1984*, Paris, Seuil/Gallimard, 117ff. Cf. A. JOOSSE, Foucault's subject and Plato's mind: A dialectical model of self-constitution in the Alcibiades, *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 41 (2015), 159-177.

and that the good that it aspires to is, to a large extent, of a cognitive nature. There is much in the *corpus platonicum* that suggests that. However, this knowledge is not the knowledge of oneself as an individual, but rather a knowledge of the universal and repeatable determinations that define and constitute every being – including myself. And so self-knowledge is found both at the beginning of the project of care of the self and at the end. It is found at the beginning as an important condition for the proper execution of the project – I need to know what kind of being I am in order to apply the appropriate care. It is found at the end as an implied effect: by knowing the universal and repeatable determinations, I will have a better knowledge of all beings in general, myself included. But – and it is important to be aware of this – at neither end does the knowledge of the self appear as the end goal of the care of the self. I do not take care of myself to get to know myself – I get to know myself to take care of myself. And if taking care of myself means dedicating my life to the pursuit of the truth – it is the truth in general, the truth of every being, not exclusively or primarily the truth that pertains to myself as an individual.[47]

But the examination we witness in the *First Alcibiades* is not concluded. Rather, it is propaedeutic, it has to carry on. It is an introduction to the inquiry, to the pursuit of wisdom – the beginning of a process of self-knowledge and self-care.[48] This means that, regardless of whatever project one may have, there is another project that needs to be executed – even if only as a preparation. This is a project of discovery – a philosophical project. One needs to attain knowledge in order to correctly execute any other project. This is not to say necessarily that the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ is the same as a project of knowledge – and even less to say that it is a project of self-knowledge (self-knowledge being only part of it). Rather, it is at the very least a fundamental and necessary step towards the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ, and towards the execution of one's life project.

But the role of knowledge can be even more extensive and crucial than this. We have already alluded to the fact that, throughout the examination of Alcibiades, one thing survives:

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[47] In this regard, I must disagree with Joosse's reading, which reduces the ἐπιμέλεια at stake in the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ to self-knowledge – albeit through a dialectical connection with another soul. See A. JOOSSE, Dialectic and Who We Are in the *Alcibiades*, *Phronesis* 59 (2014), 1-21. On the one hand, the ψυχή is not merely the seat of knowledge; it acts upon other beings. A focus on the ψυχή must therefore also take into account its "practical" dimension. On the other hand, the vocation of the ψυχή in its cognitive dimension is the truth – not just nor predominantly the truth about itself. Knowing oneself is the necessary condition to taking care of oneself; but taking care of oneself (even if we were to agree that this could be reduced to the acquisition and enjoyment of knowledge) will entail more than knowing oneself. Knowing oneself may very well be the starting point of a philosophical project of care of the self, but it is doubtful that it is its goal.

[48] The propaedeutic nature of the philosophical discussions in the *First Alcibiades* is mirrored by the use of this dialogue as a pedagogical tool in later Antiquity as an introduction to philosophical studies, as suggested, e.g., by the Neoplatonists Proclus, Iamblichus and Olympiodorus. See ANNAS, *op. cit.*, 113.

his life project. His maximalist life project of attaining power and prestige at a global scale remains undented. The only changes that we witness have to do with its execution, the realisation that he lacks the means to execute it, and the sketching out of a propaedeutic project to acquire those same means. But the validity and ultimate worthwhileness of this project is not explicitly questioned, and Alcibiades leaves the conversation as committed to it and far better equipped to execute it. And yet, as we have already suggested throughout this paper, this life project is only one among a multiplicity of other possible life projects. That is to say that there is an alternative, or, in fact, a multiplicity of alternatives to a project of power and prestige. These alternatives may be as valid and worthwhile as the one adopted by Alcibiades – or even more so. This, in fact, is one of the blind-spots of the examination we witness in the dialogue, and ultimately the question of the compatibility between the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ and the life project of power and prestige remains unaddressed.

5. CONCLUSION

Early on in this paper I suggested the possibility that Alcibiades' life project may constitute, in fact, his "himself" – the very core of his identity that survives the process of elimination of attributes he is subjected to by Socrates. The inquiry, however, yielded a different result: Alcibiades' self is actually his ψυχή, the seat of knowledge and action. It is the ψυχή that makes use of the body and other beings to act in such a way as to benefit itself, based on its cognitive patrimony. But as this applies to individual actions and individual instances of ἐπιμέλεια, it also applies to life as a whole – to the overall path that one follows throughout one's life. In other words, the ψυχή is the bearer of the life project. This life project is based on the perspective the ψυχή has on itself and on what constitutes the good for itself, as well on its diagnosis on the means and circumstances in which it is to be executed. It is this link between the identification of the αὐτός and the way in which the αὐτός, as the bearer of a project, interacts and relates to, on the one hand, the good, and, on the other, its own circumstances that would need to be examined in order to ascertain the validity and worthwhileness of a particular life project. This examination, however, is not done in the *First Alcibiades*. And this, I believe, is what opens the door to the eventual failure of Socrates' attempt to improve Alcibiades.

As we know, whatever ἐπιμέλεια Socrates may have tried to exercise over Alcibiades seems to have failed – that is, if we put aside the possibility that Alcibiades was somehow corrupted by Socrates. If the *First Alcibiades* is showing us a version of the beginning of that

relationship in a way that tries to clear Socrates of the accusations against him, then an explanation has to be provided for Alcibiades' future failures, abuses and corruption. If Socrates' intention (as it clearly is portrayed in this dialogue) was indeed to improve Alcibiades, then one cannot but conclude that he will failed. But what is the meaning of this failure-to-be within the framework of this dialogue? Does it show the inadequacy of Socratic ἐπιμέλεια? Or does it tease out the possibility of such an ἐπιμέλεια having a multiplicity of stages? Or does it reveal that Socratic ἐπιμέλεια is just the beginning, the first stage of a more complete and complex process that would eventually culminate in improvement, if only it were to be followed through? The suggestion is that what is needed for an effective ἐπιμέλεια of this kind is a life--long commitment. It cannot be just a moment in one's life to be abandoned as one matures.

I believe the key to this problem is the fact that what the *First Alcibiades* portrays is precisely a *beginning*, a propaedeutic moment in a longer and more complex process of care.[49] The ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ includes a preliminary propaedeutic project of examination – and there is no apparent reason for the life project to be exempt from examination. Therefore, what we see in this dialogue is but a very incomplete and potentially fatally flawed version of the ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ it seeks to define and portray. The dialogue shows a possible direction of travel for Alcibiades, which he then abandons. Within the framework of this dialogue, such an abandonment is possible precisely because the discussion with Socrates does not openly and clearly undermine the validity of Alcibiades' life project. That is why Alcibiades can then go back to executing it, without having been properly cured of his bad tendencies, in spite of Socrates' influence.

But the very nature of the propaedeutic project of examination suggests an alternative to the life project of power and prestige adopted by Alcibiades. This would be a life project dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge – a philosophical life project. Socrates himself could be seen as the embodiment and personification of such a project. If that is the case, then the philosophical life project could potentially share many of the maximalist traits of Alcibiades' life project of power and prestige, as illustrated by Socrates' own constant and unflinching commitment to philosophical examination. A different life project, potentially more attuned with the needs of ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ, would lead to different ways of dealing with τὰ ἑαυτοῦ and τὰ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ. Socrates is, after all, the barefoot philosopher – he rarely has any use for shoes.

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[49] The final words of the dialogue (135d-e) suggest that much, echoing the ending of the *Charmides* (176b-d). Socrates, however, finishes with a note of fear for Alcibiades' fate, prospectively blaming the seductive power of the city for leading him astray. Cf. 132a, where Socrates fears that Alcibiades will become a δημεραστής. Cf. also *Republic* VI, 490eff. for the influences that often corrupt even those who display a philosophical nature.

How this different life project could be conciliated with an ἐπιμέλεια of the πόλις is a question we will leave unanswered. However, the specific form of erotic ἐπιμέλεια of Socrates towards Alcibiades might give us a clue of how this could work. Throughout the dialogue, we saw how Socrates attempted to guide Alcibiades towards ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ, self-knowledge, and towards the cultivation of ἀρεταί such as σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη. This, perhaps, is the ultimate ἐπιμέλεια of others, and, if somehow applied to the whole πόλις, the best form of ἐπιμέλεια of the πόλις.

CHECKMATE IN A FEW MOVES.

Φιλοτιμία AND ITS UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS IN THE

ALCIBIADES MAJOR

M. Jorge de Carvalho & Duarte Fontes

1. SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS BEFORE THE GAME

That the *Alcibiades Major* has to do with φιλοτιμία follows immediately from the fact that the leading character is Alcibiades – and that, from an ancient Greek (and above all from an Athenian) perspective Alcibiades was a widely recognized symbol of φιλοτιμία.[1] But the fact that Alcibiades is the main character also means that this dialogue is not simply about the philotimic project *tout court*, but about the philotimic project in its *utmost form*. To establish an analogy using modern figures, we could say that the same way Mother Teresa does not merely represent charity, but supreme charity, and Bill Gates is not merely a symbol of richness, but of utmost richness, so Alcibiades represented, in ancient Greek (or Athenian) eyes, not simply φιλοτιμία, but the *maximum exponent* of φιλοτιμία.

But what exactly is φιλοτιμία? Before addressing the question, we should bear in mind that φιλοτιμία is one of the three forms of non-indifference that are highlighted in the *corpus platonicum*. And although several elements may act as guiding principles for reading the *Alcibiades Major* (elements that cannot be analysed at length here), there is one which, as far as we can see, assumes a central role in it: the fact that the dialogue has to do with the more comprehensive framework of the three forms of non-indifference the *Corpus Platonicum* refers to. So much so that, as we hope to show, the *Alcibiades Major* is not so much about φιλοτιμία itself as about the more general picture (the overarching framework) of which φιλοτιμία is a part. To be sure, the *Alcibiades Major* deals with the particular case of φιλοτιμία. But the point is that the analysis of this particular case highlights the fundamental structure of all three tensions (namely a) φιλοτιμία-φιλονικία, b) φιλοκέρδεια and c) φιλοσοφία), so that, at the end

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[1] See M. Jorge de CARVALHO, Ἐπιμελεῖσθαι and ἄττειν in the *Alcibiades Major* (in this volume, pp. 146ff.).

of the day, this fundamental structure (or some of its main features) is what the *Alcibiades Major* is all about.

To clarify all this, let us take a brief look at each of the three tensions we are talking about:

1) φιλοκέρδεια stands for being keen on *possessions* and trying to improve our lives via *possessions*. In the eyes of φιλοκέρδεια, the fulfilment of the self stems from an *increase in our assets*. Or, more simply, one improves oneself by *having* more.

2) the tension which has to do with *being present in other people's minds* and having them *perceive our superiority*. It can happen in two ways: 2.1 φιλονικία, a concern that *others submit to ourselves* (a need to *beat* and *overpower* everyone else) and 2.2 φιλοτιμία (the case which especially interests us here): the need to be *recognized*, *respected*, *admired* and *honoured* by others (the desire to *be always more than all the others,* the love for *prominence* and *prestige*, the need to be *famous, envied,* etc).[2]

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[2] For the semantic field of φιλοτιμία and the ancient views on this subject, see notably L. SCHMIDT, *Die Ethik der alten Griechen*, vol. I, Berlin, W. Hertz, 1882, 188ff., C. E. S. HEADLAM (ed.), *The Iphigeneia at Aulis of Euripides*, Cambridge, University Pres, 1889, on 22, 342,3, 527, T. G. TUCKER (ed.), *The 'Supplices' of Aeschylus,* London, Macmillan, 1889, repr. N. Y./London, Garland, 1987, on 637, E. B. ENGLAND (ed.), *The Iphigeneia at Aulis of Euripides*, London, Macmillan, 1891, on 342, 385, J. BURNET (ed.), *Plato' Phaedo*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1911, on 68c2, F. M. CORNFORD, Psychology and Social Structure in the Republic of Plato, *The Classical Quarterly* 6 (1912), 246-265, U. von WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF, *Sappho und Simonides*, Untersuchungen über griechische Lyriker, Berlin, Weidmann, 1913, 185ff., U. von WILAMOWITZ- -MOELLENDORFF, *Aeschylos Interpretationen*, Berlin, Weidmann, 1914, 38, N. TERZAGHI, La scelta della vita, *Studi italiani di filologia classica* N.S. 1 (1920), 364-400 (=IDEM, *Studia graeca et Latina (1901-1956)*, Torino, Bottega d'Erasmo, 1963), D. F. W. van LENNEP, *Euripides ΠΟΙΗΤΗΣ ΣΟΦΟΣ*, Amsterdam, Swets Zeitlinger, 1935, 187, G. STEINKOPF, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Ruhmes bei den Griechen*, Würzburg, Triltsch, 1937, 67, 80, 93, W. VENSKE, *Platon und der Ruhm*. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der griechischen Ruhmesidee, Würzburg, Triltsch 1938, H. BOLKENSTEIN, *Wohltätigkeit und Armenpflege im vorchristlichen Altertum*. Ein Beitrag zum Problem „Moral und Gesellschaft", Utrecht, A. Oothoek, 1939, repr. N.Y., Arno Press, 1979, 86, 104, 152ff., W. SCHMID/O. STÄHLIN, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur* I. IV. Die griechische Literatur zur Zeit der attischen Hegemonie nach dem Eingreifen der Sophistik. Zweite Hälfte, Erster Abschnitt, München, Biederstein, 1946, 556, J. De ROMILLY, *Thucydide et l'impérialisme Athénien*, Paris, Belles Lettres, 1947, 72ff., 280, W. SCHMID/O. STÄHLIN, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*. I. Teil, V: Die griechische Literatur zur Zeit der attischen Hegemonie nach dem Eingreifen der Sophistik Zweite Hälfte, Zweiter Abschnitt, München, Biederstein, 1948, 80f., 109, 118f., 126, O. GIGON, *Kommentar zum ersten Buch von Xenophons Memorabilien*, Basel, Reinhardt, 1953, 41f., 66, F. M. WASSERMANN, Thucydides and the Disintegration of the Polis, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 85, 1954, 46-54, G. GROSMANN, *Politische Schlagwörter aus der Zeit des Peloponnesischen Krieges,* Zürich, Leemann, 1950, 55, O. GIGON, *Kommentar zum zweiten Buch von Xenophons Memorabilien*, Basel, Reinhardt, 1956, 115, 135, 186, R. JOLY, *Le thème philosophique des genres de vie dans l'Antiquité classique* (Académie Royale de Belgique Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques L I, 3), Bruxelles, P. des Académie, 1956, 80ff., 84ff., W. B. STANFORD (ed.), *Aristophanes The Frogs*, London, Macmillan, 1958, on 280-1, 679, A.-J. FESTUGIÈRE, Les trois vies, in: C. HØEG (ed.), *Acta Congressus Madvigiani*. Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Classical Studies. The Classical Pattern of Modern Western Civilization, vol. II Formation of the Mind, Forms of Thought, Moral Ideas, Copenhagen, Munksgaard, 1958, 131-178 (= A.- J. FESTUGIÈRE, *Études de philosophie grecque*, Paris, Vrin, 1971, 117-156), A. W. H. ADKINS, *Merit and Responsibility*. A Study in Greek Values, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1960, 155f., V. BUCHHEIT, *Untersuchungen zur Theorie des Genos Epideiktikon von Gorgias bis Aristoteles,* München, Hueber, 1960, 41ff., M. TREU, Neues zu Simonides (P. Ox. 2432), *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* N. F. 103 (1960), 319-336, in particular 327ff., F. MUTHMANN, *Untersuchungen zur "Einkleidung" einiger platonischer Dialoge,* Diss. Bonn, 1961, 18f., H. KEHL, *Die Monarchie im politischen*

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3) φιλοσοφία, that is, on the one hand, the need for knowledge viz. truth, and on the other hand, the need to *become better* (N.B. to *really* become better and improve oneself).[3]

In order to understand this threefold structure, some background should be given (we just want to sketch the Platonic background viz. some of its main claims, without stating the sources or discussing the claims in question).

First, Plato claims that all three tensions (φιλοτιμία-φιλονικία, φιλοκέρδεια and φιλοσοφία) are *inherent* to the human being, so that the only possible variation concerns change in their *relative strength*. According to him, φιλοτιμία-φιλονικία, φιλοκέρδεια and φιλοσοφία are by no means unrelated and independent tensions: they are intrinsically interconnected and play an important role in everything else. On the other hand, they are far more than conceptual labels one uses to describe very different things. The point is that they underlie *all our needs and cravings*, so that *all* non-indifference results either from φιλοτιμία-φιλονικία, from φιλοκέρδεια or from φιλοσοφία. This means a) that the very *basis* of all our non-indifference

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THUMIGER/C. CAREY/N.J. LOWE (ed.), *Erôs in Ancient Greece*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, 95--110, M. DEENE, Seeking for Honour(s)? The Exploitation of philotimia and Citizen Benefactors in Classical Athens, *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 91 (2013), 69-87, O. RENAUT, La fonction du thumos dans la République de Platon, in: N. NOTOMI/L. BRION (ed.), *Dialogues on Plato's Politeia* (Republic), Sankt Augustin, Academia Verlag, 2013, 179-188, J. VANDIVER, Xenophon contra Plato: Citizen Motivation and Socratic Biography, *Polis* 31(2014), 74–102, B. D. KEIM, Honour and the Art of Xenophontic Leadership, *Histos Supplement* 5 (2016) 121-62, P. LIDDEL, The Honorific Decrees of Fourth-century Athens: Trends, Perceptions, Controversies, in: C. TIERSCH (ed.), *Die Athenische Demokratie im 4. Jahrhundert* – zwischen Modernisierung und Tradition / Athenian Democracy in the 4th Century. Between Modernisation and Tradition, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner, 2016, 335-358, M. CANEVARO (ed.), *Demostene, "Contro Leptine"*: Introduzione, Traduzione e Commento Storico, Berlin/Boston, de Gruyter, 2016, 78f., J. MIKALSON, *New Aspects of Religion in Ancient Athens*: Honors, Authorities, Esthetics, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2017, 249ff., P. RUCH, *Ehre und Rache*. Eine Gefühlsgeschichte des antiken Rechts, Frankfurt/N.Y., Campus, 2017, M. ALOUMPI, Shifting Boundaries: Philotimia in Democratic Athens and in Plutarch's Lives, in: A. GEORGIADOU/K. OIKONOMOPOULOU (ed.), *Space, Time and Language in Plutarch*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2017, 191-202, M. LUCCHESI, Philotimia and Philonikia at Sparta, in: V. BROUMA/K. HEYDON (ed.), *Conflict in the Peloponnese.* Social, Military and Intellectual. Proceedings of the Second CSPS PG and Early Career Conference, University of Nottingham 22-24 March 2013, CSPS Online Publications, 2018, 40-69, E. SANDERS, *Envy and Jealousy in Classical Athens*. A Socio-psychological Approach, Oxford/N.Y., Oxford University Press, 2014, 54ff.

[3] About φιλοσοφία, two remarks are in order. The first is that the nature of φιλοσοφία should not be confused a) with its objects or b) with knowledge viz. knowledge claims. Φιλοσοφία is a *tension* (namely *non-indifference* to knowledge, *being unable to manage without it*). It is not a set of knowledge claims. It has to do with the *need* for knowledge, i.e., with the *need* for truth (for *well-founded knowledge claims* viz. for an *adequate assessment* of the situation one finds oneself in). In other words, though it is intrinsically related to knowledge, φιλοσοφία itself consists of something else, namely a) *having a relation to knowledge as such* (having the idea of knowledge) and b) *being shaped* by it and having *the need to be guided* by it. Hence, one could have knowledge (and indeed an extraordinary volume of knowledge) without φιλοσοφία – without even a shred of φιλοσοφία. And, conversely, one can have φιλοσοφία without being in possession of knowledge. The second remark is that all three – φιλοκέρδεια, φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία and φιλοσοφία – are intrinsically *related to the 'self'*. They are all about *improving* the 'self' (and indeed all three *for the sake of the 'self'*). But the point is that both φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία and φιλοκέρδεια are related to *it in a blurred way*. In short, these two kinds of non-indifference are not properly concerned with an improvement of the 'self'; they *presuppose* the 'self' and do so in such a manner that they *lose sight of it* – the result being that they *miss the 'self' proper* and improve just its '*outskirts*', as it were. See M. Jorge de CARVALHO, Ἐπιμελεῖσθαι and ἄττειν in the *Alcibiades Major* (in this volume, pp. 151ff.) and S. OLIVEIRA, Sorge und Sorgen: zur zentrierten und dezentrierten ἐπιμέλεια im Alcibiades Major (in this volume, pp. 203ff.).

is *tripartite*, b) that human non-indifference always unfolds *in three main directions*, and c) that any particular tension (need, craving, etc.) is a *deformalization* or *specification* of one of the said three basic tensions. Moreover, according to Plato, none of these basic directions of non--indifference can be deleted – and human non-indifference resembles a stream viz. a water flow: water can be diverted from it to different channels, but the total flow is constant and must be divided between them. In other words, the constant total flow of human non-indifference must be divided between φιλοτιμία-φιλονικία, φιλοκέρδεια and φιλοσοφία. If one of them becomes stronger, one of the other two (or, for that matter, both of them) must become weaker.[4]

But this is not all. According to Plato, these three major components of human non-indifference *combine* with each other and *affect* each other. In other words, they are *interwoven* with each other, and there is no such thing as *pure* φιλοτιμία-φιλονικία, *pure* φιλοκέρδεια or *pure* φιλοσοφία. The key word is *blending* or '*crossbreeding*' – *mixed* or *hybrid* tension. On the one hand, even if one is sensitive to φιλοσοφία and has one's life based on knowledge viz. knowledge claims, on closer inspection it turns out that a considerable part of one's knowledge claims are cognitively ill-founded and function as a cognitive 'fig leaf' to mask the real determining factor behind them: one's φιλοκέρδεια or φιλοτιμία-φιλονικία. And on the other hand, the inverse is also true. For φιλοκέρδεια or φιλοτιμία-φιλονικία do not dominate us as *pure pulsion* (as pure *impulses* and *blind* desires): they take the form of *knowledge claims* (or alleged self-evidences) – e.g. the claim that they are what really matters, that life is all about them, etc. In addition, as far as human beings are concerned, there is no such a thing as *merely bipartite* non-indifference (just φιλοκέρδεια × φιλοσοφία or just φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία × φιλοσοφία). Plato's view is that in our case all φιλοκέρδεια has at least a tinge of φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία and vice-versa. So that in the final analysis, every human being – and all human behaviour – depends on the 'quantity' of these three 'fixed ingredients': on their *relative strength* viz. on the variable '*relation of forces*' between them.[5]

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[4] Cf. *Respublica* 485d6-e1: "τὸν ἄρα τῷ ὄντι φιλομαθῆ πάσης ἀληθείας δεῖ εὐθὺς ἐκ νέου ὅτι μάλιστα ὀρέγεσθαι. παντελῶς γε. ἀλλὰ μὴν ὅτῳ γε εἰς ἕν τι αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι σφόδρα ῥέπουσιν, ἴσμεν που ὅτι εἰς τἆλλα τούτῳ ἀσθενέστεραι, ὥσπερ ῥεῦμα ἐκεῖσε ἀπωχετευμένον. τί μήν; ᾧ δὴ πρὸς τὰ μαθήματα καὶ πᾶν τὸ τοιοῦτον ἐρρυήκασιν, περὶ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς οἶμαι ἡδονὴν αὐτῆς καθ᾽ αὑτὴν εἶεν ἄν, τὰς δὲ διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἐκλείποιεν, εἰ μὴ πεπλασμένως ἀλλ᾽ ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφός τις εἴη."

[5] In other words, Plato's view is that human behaviour has the kind of complex structure Lichtenberg tries to depict when he writes: "Die Bewegungs-Gründe, woraus man etwas tut, könnten so wie die 32 Winde geordnet werden, und die Namen auf ähnliche Art formiert werden. Brod Brod Ruhm, oder Ruhm Ruhm Brod Furcht, Lust" ("The motives that lead us to do anything might be arranged like the thirty-two winds and their names might be formed in a similar manner: "bread-bread-fame" or "fame-fame-bread-fear-pleasure."). Cf. G. C. LICHTENBERG, *Schriften und Briefe*, éd. Wolfgang Promies, vol. I, *Sudelbücher* I, München, Hanser, 1971, Sudelbücher D 370, p. 287. Like many other editors, Promies reads "Luft". But even if this reading is correct, "Luft" does not make any sense in this context – it is most likely a *lapsus calami.*

This brief and rough sketch enables us to understand what the *Alcibiades Major* is all about. In general, it is about Alcibiades' φιλοτιμία and his philotimic life-project. More specifically, it is about realising that Alcibiades' whole philotimic project rests on a cognitive basis: on a set of cognitive claims or assumptions. In other words, it is about the *φιλοσοφία-related substructure* of Alcibiades' philotimic life-project.

In this regard, Socrates' approach is twofold. The first part of the dialogue (106-116) presents a clear sample of his modus operandi.

First, he shows, step by step, that Alcibiades' philotimic project has a cognitive basis, and that this cognitive basis encompasses much more than a handful of relatively simple assumptions. As it turns out, it is a very *complex* and indeed a *multi-layered* set of knowledge claims. Little by little, Socrates tries to pinpoint the knowledge claims which tacitly – but effectively – provide the basis for Alcibiades' philotimic project.

Secondly, Socrates focuses on Alcibiades' tacit knowledge claims and evinces that, contrary to Alcibiades' assumption, they are rather ill-founded; the only reason why they usually play their role and provide the cognitive basis for Alcibiades' philotimic project is that they remain *undetected* and therefore *unexamined*. Once put under scrutiny, they simply *collapse*. But on the other hand, as soon as Alcibiades is forced to acknowledge that one of his knowledge claims (N.B.: one of the knowledge claims providing the cognitive basis for his philotimic project) is unsound, he defends himself by resorting to another knowledge claim. Socrates, for his part, launches a counter-attack (or rather a *fresh attack*): he evinces that the *new* knowledge claim in question is as unsound as the previous one(s).

This sequence of events is repeated several times. By and large, it is the form of the *Alcibiades Major*.

There is, of course, a significant difference between Lichtenberg's aphorism and Plato's views. For the latter stress the fact that *all three components* (φιλοκέρδεια, φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία and φιλοσοφία) *are always present*: different behaviours stem from nothing but *different relations of forces* between the three components in question. But the fact is that Lichtenberg, too, emphasizes the role played by the relation of forces between the various factors (the various "winds") in question. He expresses it by the *order* in which they are mentioned and by *repetition* (viz. the *lack thereof*) – so that, for instance, "bread-fame" is not the same as "fame-bread", and "bread-bread-fame" expresses an even stronger prevalence of "bread" over "fame" than simple "bread-fame". In short, one could use 'Lichtenberg's method' to express the kind of contrasts Plato seems to have in mind. First, one could speak of "φιλοκέρδεια × φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία × φιλοσοφία" as opposed both to "φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία × φιλοκέρδεια × φιλοσοφία" and to "φιλοσοφία × φιλοκέρδεια × φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία", etc. Secondly, one could also speak of "*φιλοκέρδεια × φιλοκέρδεια ×* φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία × φιλοσοφία" to express an even stronger prevalence of φιλοκέρδεια over everything else, etc. In the final analysis, this complex structure is what both the well-known *biga*-metaphor (the charioteer, the two horses and the variable relation of forces between them) and Plato's twofold πολιτεῖαι-theory (that is, his views on the variable relation of forces between different "classes" both in the framework of the ψυχή as a micro-πόλις and in the framework of the πόλις as a mega-ψυχή) are all about.

Hence, Alcibiades and Socrates act like *chess players*. Socrates plays *offensively*. Alcibiades is on the *defensive*. And he is forced to sacrifice one 'piece' (one cognitive claim) after another. For a while, he manages to resist (or rather his philotimic project manages to resist with the remaining 'pieces'). But eventually the whole thing collapses, and he is forced to concede defeat and surrender before Socrates, who finally *checkmates him*.[6]

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A final word on the *apologetic character* of the *Alcibiades Major*. Besides being the symbol of the utmost form of φιλοτιμία, Alcibiades was also known either as a great *traitor* or at least as a "*might-have-been*": a case of *unfulfilled potential*. His adult life was anything but the 'triumphal march' his gifts and ambition led to expect. He fell into disrepute and became a rather controversial figure.[7] The dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades is supposed to take place immediately before Alcibiades launched his political career and tried to implement the philotimic life-project we have been talking about. And it should be noted that the reader has the benefit of hindsight. He or she knows what has become of Alcibiades.

But this is not all. The fact that Alcibiades had been a member of Socrates' circle (and was generally perceived as one of his pupils) was used against Socrates. Throughout the entire dialogue, Socrates is presented as someone who is trying to guide Alcibiades – and taking pains to prevent him from following the path of the 'historic' Alcibiades. In short, the *Alcibiades Major* has an *apologetic* function. Among other things, it tries to exonerate Socrates. The message it tries to convey is that, if only Alcibiades had followed Socrates' advice, he would have been spared his 'catastrophic' ending (and Athens would have been spared considerable disasters). This exonerative character of the dialogue is all the more significant as Socrates himself was a rather *controversial* figure, not least because he was held responsible for Alcibiades' negative influence in Athenian politics, for his betrayal, etc., but also in general.

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[6] In order to avoid misunderstandings, let us add the following: we are not claiming that the *chess game comparison* played a role in the writing of the *Alcibiades Major*. Of course it did not. The point is just that this comparison can *enhance the picture* and help us perceive its features.

[7] On this topic, see notably M. Jorge de CARVALHO, Ἐπιμελεῖσθαι and ἥττειν in the *Alcibiades Major* (in this volume, pp. 147f.).

2. OPENING MOVES – ON ALCIBIADES' ATTITUDE TO LIFE

Let us start by identifying the key 'pieces' and the role they play in the opening moves.

First of all, παιδεραστία. Socrates says that he has been following Alcibiades closely in recent years, yet without speaking a word to him.[8] He adds that, throughout all these years, Alcibiades has had a number of admirers, but he has driven them away, as he was convinced that he needed no one, i.e., that there was nothing he could gain from someone else.[9] Thus the idea of αὐτάρκεια (self-sufficiency) comes into play, to describe how Alcibiades is convinced of his own absolute superiority.[10] Socrates enumerates the different reasons why Alcibiades has such a high opinion of himself: his handsomeness, his fine ancestry, all the money he owns, etc.[11]

But this is not the main point. The main point is that, despite all these qualities and assets, Alcibiades feels *unsatisfied*; and not moderately unsatisfied, but extremely so. This is expressed in 105a, when Socrates contends that, if Alcibiades was given the option between continuing to live with what he already has and dying, he would no doubt choose the latter.[12]

This is what is so particular about Alcibiades: the way he relates with what is still to come (the *extreme* way in which he is *future-oriented*). Every human being is related to his or her future, and indeed in such a way that one's future is anything but indifferent. What is more, human life is a constant non-indifferent relationship with what is still to come. But in Alcibiades' case this inherent relationship (and tension) takes an *extreme form*. For Alcibiades has a '*take it or lose it*' mentality. He follows a straightforward '*all or nothing*' approach: either he can attain the absolute totality of what interests him, or whatever he possesses appears to him as absolutely worthless (and as good as *nothing*). In other words, in Alcibiades' case everything (literally *everything*) hinges on *what is still to come*. To paraphrase Hölderlin,

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[8] Cf. 103a.

[9] Cf. 103b, 104a.

[10] Cf. 104a: "τὸν δὲ λόγον, ᾧ ὑπερπεφρόνηκας, ἐθέλω διελθεῖν. οὐδενὸς φὴς ἀνθρώπων ἐνδεὴς εἶναι εἰς οὐδέν." Socrates interprets Alcibiades' aloofness as the result of nothing less than "μηδενὸς δεῖσθαι": that he has no need of anything or anybody else. See M. Jorge de CARVALHO, Ἐπιμελεῖσθαι and ἅττειν in the *Alcibiades Major* (in this volume, pp. 141ff.).

[11] Cf. 104a, 104b. Because of his high opinion of himself παιδεραστία does not work with Alcibiades – for παιδεραστία hinges precisely upon the assumption that the ἐρώμενος (the younger man) can benefit from being together with the ἐραστής.

[12] Cf. 105a: "νῦν δ᾽ ἕτερ᾽ αὖ κατηγορήσω διανοήματα σὰ πρὸς αὐτὸν σέ, ᾧ καὶ γνώσῃ ὅτι προσέχων γέ σοι τὸν νοῦν διατετέλεκα. δοκεῖς γάρ μοι, εἴ τίς σοι εἴποι θεῶν: ‛ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη, πότερον βούλει ζῆν ἔχων ἃ νῦν ἔχεις, ἢ αὐτίκα τεθνάναι εἰ μή σοι ἐξέσται μείζω κτήσασθαι;᾽ δοκεῖς ἄν μοι ἑλέσθαι τεθνάναι.

Alcibiades is *nothing* (that is, in his own eyes, he is nothing); what he searches for is *everything*.[13]

This point is all the more surprising as Alcibiades has *all kinds of assets*, as we just saw: family, prestige, connections, money, etc. In other words, he is not a miserable human being who would rather die than continue to live in misery. No, it is the exact opposite: one could almost say that he has *everything under the sun*. And despite all this, he takes the above-mentioned "all or nothing" approach. In his own eyes, all his assets are "weighed on the scales and found wanting". In his eyes, everything he has is *as good as nothing*, because it falls far short of being really *everything* (the *everything* he craves for, the *everything* he hopes to attain). For him, life is simply not worth living unless he achieves this 'everything' – the 'absolute target', the 'jackpot' – he longs for.

It is not long before Socrates reveals the 'concrete identity' of the absolute target (the absolute "jackpot") in question. He starts by stating that Alcibiades lives on behalf of an expectation. He is a case of ἐπ᾽ ἐλπίδι ζῆν.[14] However, it should be borne in mind that here ἐλπίς does not convey just the idea of *expectation*. It stands for an expectation of *improvement* or *increase*. It is not just an expectation: it is *hope*. More specifically, it means nothing less than the expectation of (viz. the hope for) something *superlative* – and therefore of a *superlative increase*. But this is not all. Socrates also stresses that the increase or improvement in question has nothing to do with material possessions or the like. As a matter of fact, the latter do not seem to play a significant role in Alcibiades' life. To him, power and fame *are the only things that matter*. He wants to have *absolute power* and to be absolutely admired, honoured and respected.

This is the particular kind of 'everything' – the particular kind of 'absolute target' or jackpot – he is aiming at: *being maximally honoured and admired by others* (and indeed by as *many people as possible*). As it turns out, this 'absolute' or jackpot is none other than the *philotimic* project in its extreme form: the *philotimic 'jackpot'*. Socrates expresses this in 105a/b, when he points out that Alcibiades will try, on the one hand, to convince the Athenians that he is worthy of honours and, on the other hand, to achieve the utmost power, not only in Athens, but pretty much everywhere.[15] The extreme nature of Alcibiades' philotimic project is

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[13] "Wir sind nichts: was wir suchen ist alles." F. HÖLDERLIN, Fragment von Hyperion, *Sämtliche Werke*, Stuttgarter Hölderlin-Ausgabe, vol. III, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1957, 163-184, in particular 184.

[14] Cf. 105a: ἀλλὰ νῦν ἐπὶ τίνι δή ποτε ἐλπίδι ζῆς, ἐγὼ φράσω.

[15] Cf. 105a-c: ἀλλὰ νῦν ἐπὶ τίνι δή ποτε ἐλπίδι ζῆς, ἐγὼ φράσω. ἡγῆ, ἐὰν θᾶττον εἰς τὸν Ἀθηναίων δῆμον παρέλθῃς—τοῦτο δ᾽ ἔσεσθαι μάλα ὀλίγων ἡμερῶν— παρελθὼν οὖν ἐνδείξεσθαι Ἀθηναίοις ὅτι ἄξιος εἶ τιμᾶσθαι ὡς οὔτε Περικλῆς οὔτ᾽ ἄλλος οὐδεὶς τῶν πώποτε γενομένων, καὶ τοῦτ᾽ ἐνδειξάμενος μέγιστον δυνήσεσθαι ἐν τῇ πόλει, ἐὰν δ᾽ ἐνθάδε μέγιστος ἦς, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις Ἕλλησι, καὶ οὐ μόνον ἐν Ἕλλησιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τοῖς

very clearly expressed when Socrates describes his interlocutor's project in the following terms – that Alcibiades is not willing to live

> "εἰ μὴ *ἐμπλήσεις* τοῦ σοῦ *ὀνόματος* καὶ τῆς σῆς *δυνάμεως πάντας ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἀνθρώπους*" (if you cannot fill, so to say, the whole world with your name and your power).[16]

In a word, Alcibiades lives on behalf of a philotimic project – in its utmost form. This is the project that guides his life (and indeed the one thing keeping him alive).

This sketch of Alcibiades' relation to his own life paves the way for Socrates discussion with Alcibiades. Immediately after identifying Alcibiades' life-project, Socrates claims to be the key to it (as a *sine qua non* condition of its implementation).[17] He starts by suggesting that, if Alcibiades goes to the assembly in order to speak before the Athenian people – which, according to Socrates, is what Alcibiades is about to do[18] – and if he happens to find someone like Socrates (i.e someone able to cross examine him), he will be publicly humiliated (and will therefore fail in his philotimic project).[19]

There is, of course, something ambiguous about this claim. On the one hand, it is only natural to assume that Socrates is the key to implementing Alcibiades' project in the sense that, by asking questions, he will help Alcibiades to be better prepared to speak in the assembly, so that Alcibiades can accomplish the goal of his philotimic project. But on the other hand, this is definitely not what happens in the *Alcibiades Major*. Socrates will not turn out to play the said key role in the most obvious manner – namely by helping Alcibiades achieve everything he craves for. In fact, what Socrates will do is to show that a) there is a complex set of knowledge claims that, whether Alcibiades realizes it or not, are essential to his project and b) such knowledge claims are – whether Alcibiades realizes it or not – absolutely *ill-founded*. And it is precisely because he will show this that Socrates claims for himself a key role in helping Alcibiades.

βαρβάροις, ὅσοι ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμῖν οἰκοῦσιν ἠπείρῳ. καὶ εἰ αὖ σοι εἴποι ὁ αὐτὸς οὗτος θεὸς ὅτι αὐτοῦ σε δεῖ δυναστεύειν ἐν τῇ Εὐρώπῃ, διαβῆναι δὲ εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν οὐκ ἐξέσται σοι οὐδὲ ἐπιθέσθαι τοῖς ἐκεῖ πράγμασιν, οὐκ ἂν αὖ μοι δοκεῖς ἐθέλειν οὐδ᾽ ἐπὶ τούτοις μόνοις ζῆν, εἰ μὴ ἐμπλήσεις τοῦ σοῦ ὀνόματος καὶ τῆς σῆς δυνάμεως πάντας ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἀνθρώπους.

[16] 105c (emphasis added). Translations borrowed from W. R. M. LAMB (ed.), *Plato with an English Translation,* vol. VIII, Charmides Alcibiades I and II Hipparchus The Lovers Theages Minos Epinomis, London/Cambridge, Mass., W. Heinemann/Harvard University Press, 1914, with slight changes.

[17] Cf. 105e: (…) οὕτω κἀγὼ παρὰ σοὶ ἐλπίζω μέγιστον δυνήσεσθαι ἐνδειξάμενος ὅτι παντὸς ἄξιός εἰμί σοι καὶ οὔτε ἐπίτροπος οὔτε συγγενὴς οὔτ᾽ ἄλλος οὐδεὶς ἱκανὸς παραδοῦναι τὴν δύναμιν ἧς ἐπιθυμεῖς πλὴν ἐμοῦ, μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ μέντοι.

[18] Cf. 105a.

[19] Cf. 106c (where Socrates describes the situation in which he appears to Alcibiades as the latter is heading towards the assembly), and 109a (where the first elements of shame and embarrassment emerge).

3. MOVES AND COUNTERMOVES – THE 'CHESS MATCH' TAKES SHAPE

First of all, we should consider Socrates' initial question in 106c. He asks Alcibiades what questions the Athenian assembly deliberates on. With this question, he is highlighting two points. First, that intervening in the Athenian assembly presupposes some kind of knowledge: one does not simply go and talk in the assembly, without being versed in the subjects under discussion there. So, the emphasis is put on *knowledge*, and on the fact that Alcibiades' philotimic project cannot be fulfilled without a minimum of *knowledge* or *cognitive equipment*. Secondly and more importantly, Socrates implicitly shows that Alcibiades *believes he is in possession* of the required knowledge. This follows from what we have just seen. Speaking in the Athenian assembly requires a minimum of knowledge of the subjects under discussion. Alcibiades is, of course, aware of this; and he is about to go there and make his maiden speech. Alcibiades, therefore, believes he has the knowledge required to do so – otherwise, he would not feel ready. In short, Socrates is implying that behind Alcibiades' readiness to speak before the Athenians there is a *knowledge claim* supporting and shaping his resolve.

But the question then is: what knowledge claim?

First, we are dealing with what might be described as an *overarching* knowledge claim. Alcibiades believes that he has all it takes to assert himself in the Athenian assembly – that he is cognitively well equipped (has the cognitive ability and indeed proficiency) needed to fulfil this task. We are talking, of course, of a *tacit* assumption – of something so obvious that it does not need to be considered and plays its role without drawing attention to itself.

Secondly, this goes hand in hand with the fact that the overarching assumption we are talking about *does not include any inventory of the cognitive skills* in question. In other words, Alcibiades thinks that he knows all that is needed to prevail in the Athenian assembly. But the point is that this assumption also has an overarching character in the sense that it *does not include any distinct view on what enables him to fulfil this task*. In other words, Alcibiades' overarching knowledge claim is *summary*, *vague* and *hazy*.

The first moves in Socrates' dialogue with Alcibiades revolve around this vague and hazy 'overarching claim'. Socrates puts it *under pressure*, and forces it to 'explain' itself and to *go into detail*. From 106 to 119 several subjects are examined – all of which are connected with Alcibiades' alleged ability to assert himself in the Athenian assembly. Alcibiades pulls several rabbits out of his 'magician's hat' – namely the 'magician's hat' of his 'overarching claim'. And the latter unfolds itself and gives way to a series of more particular knowledge

claims. As a result, a list of Alcibiades' knowledge claims (a list of what Alcibiades knows or believes he knows) gradually takes shape.

The reason why the subject of the discussion keeps changing is that Socrates' offensive moves manage to dislodge Alcibiades by evincing that his knowledge claims are ill-founded. As for Alcibiades' countermoves, he follows two strategies: first he tries to substantiate and defend the knowledge claim under attack; once this attempt fails, he pulls out another knowledge claim and takes a new defensive position around the latter. Hence, from 106 to 119 Alcibiades tries to hold a succession of defensive positions, the point being that each and every one of them is called to substantiate and justify the overarching claim (let us call it the '*cognitive suitability claim*')

And this is why the course of the dialogue between 106 and 119 is something of a *zigzag*. First, Alcibiades argues that in their assembly the Athenians discuss περὶ τῶν ἑαυτῶν πραγμάτων.[20] Then he is forced to clarify his answer and argues that the discussions in the Athenian assembly are all about τὸ δίκαιον.[21] But Socrates' attacks force him to change his position and claim that the Athenian assembly deliberates about τὰ συμφέροντα viz. τὸ συμφέρον.[22]

At first glance, it seems Socrates and Alcibiades are talking about the Athenian assembly viz. Athenian politics and the said three specific claims on this subject. But on closer inspection it emerges that what we are dealing with here is a series of three *twofold* claims – in each case both α) a claim about what Athenian politics is all about and β) Alcibiades' claim that he *is cognitively suited* to discuss what Athenian politics is all about. In each case (and in particular both with regard to τὸ δίκαιον and to τὸ συμφέρον, Socrates undermines both claims and tries to show that Alcibiades is not cognitively suited, and indeed that he is so ill-suited that he does not even know what Athenian politics is all about.

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This leads to what might be described as Alcibiades' first *confession of ignorance* (his first "concession of defeat" or his first "capitulation") in 116e:

ἀλλὰ μὰ τοὺς θεούς, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐκ οἶδ᾽ ἔγωγε οὐδ᾽ ὅτι λέγω, ἀλλ᾽ ἀτεχνῶς ἔοικα ἀτόπως ἔχοντι· τοτὲ μὲν γάρ μοι ἕτερα δοκεῖ σοῦ ἐρωτῶντος, τοτὲ δ᾽ ἄλλα. (But

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[20] 107c.
[21] 109cff.
[22] 113d.

by Heaven, Socrates, I do not even know what I am saying, I feel altogether in such a strange state! For from moment to moment I change my view under your questioning.)

On the one hand, 116e – that is, the said "capitulation" – marks a *turning point*. Alcibiades is forced to *throw in the towel*. But on the other hand, he manages to find a way out. He pulls out a new knowledge claim (this time the claim that, even if he has proved to be cognitively unprepared, his rivals are no better suited than him). And he takes a new defensive position around this other claim.[23]

As a matter of fact, Alcibiades' new claim is more complex: on the one hand, he acknowledges that, as far as παιδεία is concerned, he is no better than his rivals; but, on the other hand, he claims that his *natural* powers and gifts (his *φύσις*) alone will give him an easy victory over them. That is, Alcibiades resorts to the traditional contrast between φύσις (and what one is and has φύσει) and παιδεία (μάθησις, μελέτη, ἄσκησις and the like) – i.e. what can be acquired through *effort*, *exercise*, *education*, etc.[24]

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[23] 119b-c: εἰ μέν που ἦσαν πεπαιδευμένοι, ἔδει ἂν τὸν ἐπιχειροῦντα αὐτοῖς ἀνταγωνίζεσθαι μαθόντα καὶ ἀσκήσαντα ἰέναι ὡς ἐπ᾽ ἀθλητάς· νῦν δ᾽ ἐπειδὴ καὶ οὗτοι ἰδιωτικῶς ἔχοντες ἐληλύθασιν ἐπὶ τὰ τῆς πόλεως, τί δεῖ ἀσκεῖν καὶ μανθάνοντα πράγματα ἔχειν; ἐγὼ γὰρ εὖ οἶδ᾽ ὅτι τούτων τῇ γε φύσει πάνυ πολὺ περιέσομαι.

[24] On the contrast between φύσις and παιδεία (viz. μάθησις, μελέτη, ἄσκησις, etc.) and its tradition, see notably C. J. BRAND, *Quaestiones in Socratis sententiam de Deo, et de ejus καλοκαγαθία*, Lugduni Batavorum, Herdingh, 1820, 17, L. SPENGEL, Isokrates und Platon, *Abhandlungen der königlichen bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* I. Klasse VII. Bd., III Abteilung (1855), 729-79, in particular 745, E. S. THOMPSON (ed.), *The Meno of Plato*, London, Macmillan, 1901, 57f., W. NESTLE, *Euripides*. Der Dichter der griechischen Aufklärung, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1901, 178ff., H. GOMPERZ, Isokrates und die Sokratik I, *Wiener Studien* 27 (1905), 163--207, in particular 168f., E. JAKOBY, *De Antiphontis sophistae ΠΕΡΙ ΟΜΟΝΟΙΑΣ libro*, Berolini, Reimer, 1908, 41ff., P. SHOREY, Φύσις, Μελέτη, Ἐπιστήμη, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 40 (1909), 185-201, W. SÜSS, *Ethos*. Studien zur älteren griechieschen Rhetorik, Leipzig/Berlin, Teubner, 1910, 27ff., W. NESTLE, Spuren der Sophistik bei Isokrates, *Philologus* 70 (1911), 1-51 (=IDEM, *Griechische Studien*. Untersuchungen zur Religion, Dichtung und Philosophie der Griechen, Stuttgart, H. F. C. Hansmann, 1948, repr. Aalen, Scientia Verlag, 1965, 451-501, in particular 470f.), H. GOMPERZ, *Sophistik und Rhetorik*. Das Bildungsideal des EY ΛΕΓΕΙΝ in seinem Verhältnis zur Philosophie des V. Jahrhunderts, Leipzig/Berlin, Teubner, 1912, repr.: Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965, 81, H. DITTMAR, *Aischines von Sphettos*. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte der Sokratiker. Untersuchungen und Fragmente, Belin, Weidmann, 1912, repr. 2001, 19f., 124, 134f., M. POHLENZ, *Aus Platos Werdezeit*. Philologische Untersuchungen, Berlin, Weidmann, 1913, 85ff, 346, C. P. GUNNING, *De Sophistis Graeciae praeceptoribus*, Amstelodami, A. H. Kruyt, 1915, 132ff., J. W. BEARDSLEE JR, *The Use of ΦΥΣΙΣ in Fifth-Century Greek Literature*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1918, 17ff., 20ff, W. JAEGER, *Paideia*. Die Formung des griechischen Menschen, Leipzig, de Gruyter, 1934, repr. Berlin/N.Y., de Gruyter, 1973, 259ff., 271ff., 386ff., O. THIMME, *Φύσις τρόπος ἦθος*. Semasiologische Untersuchungen über die Auffassung des menschlichen Wesens (Charakters) in der älteren griechischen Literatur, Diss. Göttingen, 1935, 49ff., H. GUNDERT, *Pindar und sein Dichterberuf*, Frankfurt a. M., Klostermann, 1935, 15ff., W. HAEDICKE, *Die Gedanken der Griechen über Familienherkunft und Vererbung*, Halle, Akademie Verlag, 1937, 50ff., O. BECKER, *Das Bild des Weges und verwandte Vorstellungen im frühgriechischen Denken*, Berlin, Weidmann, 1937, 63ff., W. MARG, *Der Charakter in der Sprache der frühgriechischen Dichtung* (Semonides Homer Pindar), Würzburg, Triltsch, 1938, repr. N. Y., Arno Press, 1979, 93ff., A. LESKY, Erbe und Erziehung im griechischen Denken des 5. Jahrhunderts, *Neue Jahrbücher für Antike und deutsche Bildung* 2 (1939), 361-381, F. HEINIMANN, *Nomos und Physis*. Herkunft und Bedeutung einer Antithese im griechischen Denken des 5. Jahrhunderts, Basel, Reinhardt, 1945, repr. Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987, 36f, 98ff., 128, D. HOLWERDA, *Commentatio de vocis quae est φύσις vi atque usu praesertim in Graecitate Aristoteli anteriore,* Groningen, Wolters, 1955, 26f., 31, 34ff., G. GROSMANN, *Politische Schlagwörter aus der Zeit des Peloponnesischen Krieges*, Zürich, Leemann, 1950, 153, 160ff., K. GAISER *Protreptik und Paränese bei Platon*. Untersuchungen zur Form des platonischen Dialogs,

To put it in military terms, he shortens (and thereby strengthens) his 'frontline' (the 'frontline' of his cognitive claims): he simply claims that, as far as *natural* cognitive powers are concerned, he is better equipped than his rivals. This enables him to reaffirm his main claim – so that, in the final analysis, Alcibiades' stance after 116e is simply *more of the same*: being forced to acknowledge that his previous knowledge claim concerning τὸ συμφέρον is ill--founded, he drops this particular claim and performs, as it were, a *castling move* – he lets a new claim (namely the claim concerning his rivals) take the place of the former and perform the essential task of substantiating and justifying the 'overarching claim' (i.e. what we have termed the '*cognitive suitability claim*').

A few remarks are in order. First, the dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades focuses not just on *one* cognitive claim (the above-mentioned overarching 'cognitive suitability claim'), but on what might be described as a *set of cognitive claims*. Secondly, there is a connection between the various components of this set: each of them is required to substantiate and justify the *overarching* cognitive claim (the 'cognitive suitability claim'). In other words, each of them is required to provide the overarching claim with a concrete content. Thirdly, there is a very particular connection between the overarching '*cognitive suitability claim*' and all the others. For, on the one hand, the former does not include the others in the sense that it explicitly refers

Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1959, 55ff., 62ff., 78ff., 101, 104, 115, 134ff., K. RIES, *Isokrates und Plato im Ringen um die Philosophia,* Diss. München, 1959, 116ff, 158, W. SCHMID/O. STÄHLIN, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, I, I Die griechische Literatur vor der attischen Hegemonie, München, Beck, 1959, 513, 554, 587f., R. G. HOERBER, Plato's Meno, *Phronesis* 5 (1960), 78-102, in particular 83f, R. S. BLUCK (ed.), *Plato' Meno*, Cambridge, University Press, 1964, 40ff. and on 70a, pp. 199ff., on 89a, pp. 336f., J. KLEIN, *A Commentary on Plato' Meno*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1965, 38f., M. J. O'BRIEN, *The Socratic Paradoxes and the Greek Mind*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1967, 92f., 144ff., P. HUART, *Le vocabulaire de l'analyse psychologique dans l'œuvre de Thucydide*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1968, 283, 312, 423f., J. KUBE, *TEXNH und APETH*. Sophistisches und Platoniches Tugendwissen, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1969, 48ff., D. MANNSPERGER, *Physis bei Platon*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1969, 219ff., W. K. C. GUTHRIE, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. III, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969, 250f, F. HIERONYMUS, *MEΛETH*. Uebung, Lernen und angrenzende Begriffe, Basel, Küng u. Ochsé, 1970, C. W. MÜLLER, *Die Kurzdialoge der Appendix Platonica*. Philologische Beiträge zur nachplatonischen Sokratik, München, Fink, 1975, 220-248, P. W. ROSE, Sophocles' Philoctetes and the Teachings of the Sophists, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 80 (1976). 49-105, J. De ROMILLY, *Les grands sophistes dans l'Athènes de Périclès*, Paris, Éd. de Fallois, 1988, 64ff., J. BARNES, Enseigner la vertu ?, *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 116 (1991), 571-589, J. BRUNSCHWIG, Pouvoir enseigner la vertu ?, *ibi*, 591-602, E. HEITSCH (ed.), *Platon Phaidros*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993, 163f., H. PATZER, *Physis*. Grundlegung einer Geschichte des Wortes (Sitzungsberichte der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft an der Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main, Bd. 30, Nr. 6), Stuttgart, Steiner, 1993, 247f., 250ff., J. de ROMILLY, L'actualité intellectuelle du Vᵉ siècle: le Philoctète de Sophocle, in : EADEM, *Tragédie grecques au fil des ans*, Paris, Belles Lettres, 1995, 97-109, EADEM, Nature et éducation dans le théâtre d'Euripide, *ibi,* 171-184, W. DONLAN, *The Aristocratic Ideal and Selected Papers*, Wauconda, Ill., Bolchazy-Carducci, 1999, 97f., S. R. SLINGS (ed.), *Plato Clitophon*, Cambridge/N.Y., Cambridge University Press, 1999, 106ff., M. THEUNISSEN, *Pindar*. Menschenlos und Wende der Zeit, München, Beck, 2000, 70ff, 99, 167f., 532, 539, N. DENYER (ed.), *Plato Alcibiades*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, on 119c1, O. HALLICH, *Platon Menon*, Darmstadt, Wissenchaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2013, 20ff., N. Le MEUR-WEISSMANN, Sens et emplois des termes φύσις et φυά chez Pindare, *Étude platoniciennes* 12 (2015), S. HENZE, *Adel im antiken Drama*: Eugeneia bei Aischylos, Sophokles und Euripides, Tübingen, Narr, 2015.

to them and is directly aware of any of them. As pointed out above, the overarching cognitive claim is *vague* and *cursory* – it does not include any concrete survey of the knowledge skills or knowledge claims it refers to. But, on the other hand, the fact remains that the concrete claims Alcibiades resorts to in the course of his discussion with Socrates belong to the stock of cognitive resources and tools the overarching 'cognitive suitability claim' is already (albeit vaguely) referring to. In other words, the cognitive claims Alcibiades resorts to in the course of his discussion with Socrates between 106 and 119 provide a glimpse into some of the components of the said stock of cognitive resources and tools. It is as if a) the overarching 'cognitive suitability claim' were *the tip of an iceberg* (of an iceberg of cognitive claims), and b) at least some components of the 'submerged part of the iceberg' were brought to the surface through Socrates' and Alcibiades' moves and countermoves.

We could also express this by saying that the overarching 'cognitive suitability claim' resembles the *resultant force* of a *system of forces* (in this case a set of cognitive claims). The various forces/cognitive claims are combined in such a manner that Alcibiades is confusedly aware just of the '*resultant force*' – not of the 'system' itself (i.e. not of the various forces and their interplay).

Strictly speaking, as pointed out above, Alcibiades is not even distinctly aware of the overarching 'cognitive suitability claim' underlying his decision to start a 'political career'. In the final analysis, he is distinctly aware just of his decision to start a 'political career'. It is Socrates who forces Alcibiades to become aware of the 'overarching cognitive suitability claim'. But the fact remains that the latter, too, resembles the resultant force of a complex set of cognitive claims. In other words: strictly speaking, the real 'tip of the iceberg' – the true 'resultant force' – is Alcibiades' resolve to start a political career. So that the overarching 'cognitive suitability claim' is part of the 'system of forces' underlying that decision. But this does not prevent the overarching 'cognitive suitability claim' from being itself the 'tip of an iceberg' viz. the 'resultant force' of a complex 'system of forces' (namely the set of cognitive claims underlying Alcibiades' resolve). It is therefore possible to be aware of the overarching 'cognitive suitability claim' (let us call it the *cognitive* 'resultant force') without being aware of the 'system of forces' (the *concrete* cognitive claims) in question. This is precisely what happens after Socrates' first move: Alcibiades is forced to acknowledge that there is some kind of underlying cognitive claim, but without being able to tell its content. As pointed out above, the discussion between 106 and 116 forces him to pull out several cognitive claims from his 'magician's hat' (i.e. from the set of cognitive claims underlying his overarching 'cognitive suitability claim'). As a result, the whole discussion between 106 and 116 might be described

as a gradual identification of what is hidden in the said 'magician's hat' – or as an 'archaeological exploration' of the 'iceberg' of cognitive claims (viz. of the 'system of forces') underlying the 'resultant force': Alcibiades' firm resolve and eagerness to start his political career.

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But a further point should be expanded upon here – namely a point concerning the various ways in which any two cognitive claims can combine and play the role of a 'system of forces' with a 'resultant force'.

All in all, knowledge claims can either a) combine in such a manner that they are *coordinated* with each other, or b) combine in such a manner that one of them is *subordinated* to the other. *Coordination* means that the two knowledge claims in question are completely *independent* from one another, but *concur* with each other and thereby give rise to a common result (to a third knowledge claim, which is both different from either of them and supported by both). *Subordination* means that the two knowledge claims in question are such that one of them depends on the other or relies upon the other. For instance, if two knowledge claims are coordinated with each other, the third knowledge claim playing the role of a 'resultant force' is *subordinated* to them both.

The complexity increases if, instead of comprising just *two*, the set of knowledge claims in question has a *higher number of components*. This increase in complexity is due to three main reasons (or can take three main forms). First, a given knowledge claim can have different types of links with other knowledge claims (A can be *coordinated* with B, but *subordinated* to C). Secondly, there can be *various levels of subordination* (A is subordinated to C, C to D, and D in turn to E, and so on and so forth). Thirdly, two different knowledge claims coordinated with each other can depend upon the very same set of underlying knowledge claims (A is subordinated to C, D, E, etc., but so is B).

As a result, if a given knowledge claim acts as the 'resultant force' of a complex set of other knowledge claims, it can suffer, as it were, from a *twofold opacity* (viz. from a *twofold lack of awareness*). First, it (viz. the person concerned) can remain completely unaware of *all* the underlying knowledge claims – that is, both a) of the fact that it relies on other knowledge claims and b) of the concrete knowledge claims it depends upon. Secondly, it (viz. the person concerned) can also remain unaware of the complex connections between the various knowledge claims it depends upon. This double opacity is what the moves and counter-moves

in Socrates' dialogue with Alcibiades between 106 and 119 are all about: the dialogue unveils both some of Alcibiades' underlying assumptions and a *particular kind of connection* between them.

Let us take a closer look at this topic.

On the one hand, as pointed out above, what we have termed the overarching 'cognitive suitability claim' is constituted in such a way that a) it refers to other cognitive claims, but b) without being directly aware of their concrete content. In addition, c) the concrete knowledge claims Alcibiades is forced to put forward in the course of his dialogue with Socrates substantiate the 'overarching knowledge claim' and play the role of underlying claims upon which the latter relies. But, on the other hand, it should be noted that in this case the overarching claim (the 'resultant force') does not depend exclusively on any of the concrete claims in question (the claim about τὸ δίκαιον, the claim about τὸ συμφέρον or the claim about the relation of forces between Alcibiades and his rivals). As a matter of fact, even if each of these claims belongs to the stock of cognitive resources and tools the overarching 'cognitive suitability claim' is already referring to, they are called upon to perform this role *as substitutes of each other*: each of them plays a leading role once the other fails to substantiate the overarching 'knowledge suitability claim'. In other words, they *take turns* in performing *the very same role*. And this means both a) that they are *coordinated* with – *not subordinated* to – each other, and b) that, even if the 'overarching claim' confusedly refers to all of them, they are *independent* of each other and *do not need each other* in order to provide the basis (viz. to give the impression of providing the basis) for the 'overarching cognitive claim'.

Seen in this light, the dialogue between 106 and 119 – and this means both Socrates' moves and Alcibiades' counter-moves – becomes somewhat clearer.

Let us start with Socrates' attacks.

Socrates' offensive strategy is intrinsically related to the said structural features of Alcibiades' underlying cognitive claims. What is at stake between 106 and 119 is Alcibiades' resolve to start his political career by taking the floor in the Athenian assembly. This first step is intended to play a key role in Alcibiades' rise to power – and therefore in his whole philotimic life-project. But the fact is that Socrates does not discuss Alcibiades' *whole* life-project (and the cognitive claims underlying his *whole* life- project). He takes a *step by step* approach: he focuses his attention on the very first step and concentrates on its underlying assumptions. And this holds true for the whole discussion from 106 to 116.

Furthermore, Socrates proceeds as follows. First, he draws attention to the 'overarching cognitive claim' and forces Alcibiades a) to realize that his own resolve relies on an overarching

cognitive claim, and b) to focus on the cognitive claim in question. Once a cognitive claim is centre stage and Alcibiades (and the reader) become aware that it plays a significant role in the son of Cleinias' resolve to take the floor in the Athenian assembly, Socrates forces both his interlocutor and the reader to change from a *glimpsed view* of Athenian τὰ ἑαυτῶν πράγματα (τὰ Ἀθηναίων)[25], τὸ δίκαιον and τὸ συμφέρον (or, for that matter, of Alcibiades' rivals) to a *closer analysis* of the issues at stake. The result being that Alcibiades' knowledge claims do not withstand scrutiny and eventually collapse. As pointed out above, once he finds himself trapped, Alcibiades resorts to a second and a third knowledge claim and takes a new defensive position around the latter. But it should be noted that Socrates does not object to this: he accepts the change, attacks Alcibiades' new defensive position and repeats the whole procedure one more time. As a result, his offensive moves are, as it were, *coordinated* with one another in the sense that they follow each other, do not presuppose each other and are completely independent from one another. He concentrates on each particular knowledge claim and discusses it without taking into account anything else beyond its specific sphere.

And pretty much the same applies to Alcibiades' *resistance* viz. to his *defensive* strategy. At the end of the day, the *complexity* of his knowledge claims and the fact that some of them are *coordinated* with each other and *independent from each other* is what enables him to put up resistance to Socrates' attacks. If he did not have more than just the overarching 'cognitive suitability claim', if he did not have more than the δίκαιον-related or the συμφέρον-related knowledge claims and if the new knowledge claims he resorts to in his 'castling' moves were not independent from the ones previously at stake, he would have been forced to admit defeat much sooner. In other words, Alcibiades is able to resist Socrates' attacks because the overarching 'cognitive suitability claim' – and, for that matter, the knowledge claim concerning τὸ δίκαιον or the knowledge claim concerning τὸ συμφέρον – is by no means the only 'arrow' in his 'cognitive quiver'. He has more – and none of them seems to be impaired by the failure of the others. The very fact that Alcibiades is able to help himself even when his συμφέρον- -related knowledge claim has collapsed and he is forced to admit his ignorance seems to confirm his *cognitive adroitness* (a cognitive adroitness that asserts itself despite his failure with τὸ δίκαιον and τὸ συμφέρον). In short, Alcibiades' resistance is due both a) to the fact that he has several knowledge claims at his disposal and b) to the absence of a *domino effect* between them when they start to collapse.

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[25] Cf. *Symposium* 216a6.

4. THE 'GNOSEOLOGICAL' INTERMEZZO: ALCIBIADES' 'FALSE CHESS PIECES'

Which brings us to the gnoseological intermezzo between 116 and 119. After forcing Alcibiades to acknowledge his ignorance, Socrates, the 'chess master', presents his own account of the first few moves and countermoves and of his partial success.

To be sure, the fact that Socrates presents an account of what has happened in his dialogue with Alcibiades might suggest that our chess-game-comparison is somewhat flawed. Chess players do not make comments on their moves while a match is in progress. But on closer inspection it emerges that the comparison is apt. The point of it is not just that Socrates' and Alcibiades' moves and countermoves bear some similarity to a *chess match*. The point is that the 'chess game' Socrates is playing with Alcibiades is the chess game *of Alcibiades life*: an *anticipation* of the 'real thing' – a *rehearsal*, as it were, or *a mock chess game* (a *pre--enactment* of the real match: the one Alcibiades will have to play in the course of his life viz. the one he will have to play with 'life itself').

Hence, the dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades simultaneously presents *two* 'chess matches': a) the *mock* 'chess match' (the pre-enactment of Alcibiades' future life) and b) the *real* 'chess match' of Alcibiades' life – the former being intrinsically related to the latter. Or to be more precise, the *Alcibiades Major* presents a *mock 'chess match'* of Alcibiades' philotimic life-project (anticipating what may happen – or what is bound to happen – if Alcibiades insists on playing the 'real game' without the necessary preparation).

In short, the *Alcibiades Major* is at the same time a *chess game* and a *chess lesson*, preparing Alcibiades for the 'real chess' of 'life itself'. And so, Socrates' comments on the game are by no means out of place: they are exactly what one would expect from a chess coach during a chess lesson.

With that said, let u now turn our attention to the content of Socrates' 'chess lesson'.

The *leading character* in this gnoseological intermezzo is what Socrates terms οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι: to *think* – or to *believe* – *that one knows*. On close examination this expression turns out to have two meanings.

The first has to do with the fact that knowledge itself must take the form of a knowledge *claim*: it must *take itself to be* knowledge (one must think that one knows) – otherwise there is no knowledge as such. In short, whether explicitly or implicitly knowledge must *claim to be knowledge*. And, as Socrates points out, when someone acts or does something (when someone conducts himself or herself), he or she *thinks he or she knows what he or she is doing* –

otherwise he or she would ask someone else to guide him or her.[26] In short, *self-conducted action* is intrinsically knowledge-related and rooted in some kind of knowledge *claim*.

Hence, this first meaning of *οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι* stands for a common feature of all knowledge claims as such, regardless of whether they are well-founded or ill-founded (that is, regardless of whether the knowledge claims in question are *real knowledge* or not). In summary, *οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι* in this sense is what makes a *knowledge claim* as such. For this reason, we can speak of *οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι* in a *neuter* sense: there is *nothing pejorative* about this first meaning of the expression. This kind of *οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι* has nothing to do with lack of knowledge. In fact, it is an *inherent* and *indispensable* component of all knowledge as such.

But the real protagonist in Socrates' gnoseological intermezzo is *οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι* in a *pejorative* sense: what he terms οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*.[27] This second meaning of the expression stands for the fact that one *thinks one knows* something, *but does not really know it*. In other words, Socrates' 'gnoseological intermezzo' is all about what might be described as a *third possibility* between 'simple' *knowledge* (viz. *real knowledge*), on the one hand, and 'simple' *ignorance*, on the other – namely *ignorance posing as knowledge* (*ignorance impersonating knowledge* or *ignorance in the guise of knowledge*). What characterizes this particular kind of ignorance is the fact a) that it is *real ignorance* and by no means real knowledge, but in such a manner that b) it nevertheless *gives the impression of being knowledge* (*real* knowledge), and indeed so much so that c) it is *prima facie* indiscernible from real knowledge. Only a careful examination forces it to 'drop the mask' and reveal its 'true colours' – namely that it simply has no real knowledge of its subject. According to Socrates, that is precisely what has happened in his dialogue with Alcibiades between 106 and 116 (Alcibiades' knowledge claims turn out to be just οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*).

Now, this leading character in Socrates' 'gnoseological intermezzo' changes the whole picture considerably. If there were only two possibilities (a simple either/or between knowledge and ignorance), even the most ignorant man would be able to discern the realm of his knowledge from the realm of his ignorance and to know where one ends and the other begins. But if there is the *third possibility* Socrates is referring to the whole thing acquires a new complexion. For it is possible that part of what seems to belong to one's stock of knowledge

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[26] 117d-e: {Σωκράτης} τότε που ἐπιχειροῦμεν πράττειν, ὅταν οἰώμεθα εἰδέναι ὅτι πράττομεν; {Ἀλκιβιάδης} ναί. {Σωκράτης} ὅταν δέ γέ πού τινες μὴ οἴωνται εἰδέναι, ἄλλοις παραδιδόασι; {Ἀλκιβιάδης} πῶς δ᾽ οὔ;"

[27] 118b1. Cf. M. Jorge de CARVALHO, Ἐπιμελεῖσθαι and ἅττειν in the *Alcibiades Major* (in this volume, pp. 151ff.).

– and indeed a very significant part of it – on closer examination turns out to be nothing but οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*.

Socrates highlights the fact that both Alcibiades' initial self-confidence and his countermoves between 106 and 116 are undermined by this: they turn out to be nothing but οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*. In Socrates' account of what happened, this is why Alcibiades did not prevail against him. But the point is that the discussion between Socrates and Alcibiades anticipates what might happen in the Athenian assembly. In short, the leading character in Socrates' 'gnoseological intermezzo' is the reason why the son of Cleinias runs a serious risk of disgrace if he persists in launching his political career by taking the floor in the Athenian assembly: he is exposed to the danger of facing someone like Socrates and therefore of having his οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* exposed to public scorn.

But this is not all. By highlighting the fact that Alcibiades is not free from οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* and has a number of *cognitive weak spots* that make him vulnerable if he has to face his rivals and defend his views in the Athenian assembly, Socrates is not just pointing out that Alcibiades' ability to assert himself in a discussion is undermined by οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*. He is also highlighting the fact that Alcibiades' whole philotimic life-project is cognitively flawed in the sense that, at least in part, it rests on ill-founded cognitive claims (on nothing more than οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*). This point cannot be too strongly emphasized. Socrates' view is that at least part of Alcibiades' cognitive claims (that is, at least part of the claims underlying and supporting his whole philotimic life-project) is nothing but οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*. In the final analysis, he is drawing our attention to the fact that one's own *life-project* can, at least in part, rest on nothing but οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*.

We can also express this important point by saying that Socrates' gnoseological intermezzo changes the picture of the kind of 'chess game' the *Alcibiades Major* is all about. Alcibiades' failure between 106 and 116 is due to more than just 'bad countermoves' (viz. to the fact that he does not prove to be a very skilful player). The root of the problem is deeper: Alcibiades is playing, as it were, with 'bad chess pieces' – i. e. that at least some of the 'chess pieces' he is playing with are quite simply *an illusion*. He relies on them, but then when push comes to shove, they collapse and fail to perform their role. In other words, at least some of Alcibiades' 'chess pieces' prove unable to do what was expected from them – and it turns out that they were not reliable. In short, because of οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* Alcibiades is playing a very particular kind of chess: an *unstable* and *bewildering* 'chess', where one's 'pawns', 'rooks', 'knights', etc. can turn out to be just *would-be* pawns, *would-be* rooks, *would-be* knights, etc. That is, Socrates is describing a 'chess game' in which at least some of one's 'chess

pieces' seem to be there and perfectly ready to play their role in the game, but then, when one least expects, they turn out to be but 'semblances' of real 'chess pieces'.

And the bottom line is that this applies to the two 'chess games' the *Alcibiades Major* is all about. First, it applies to Alcibiades' discussion with Socrates from 106 to 116. Alcibiades makes the unpleasant discovery that he is playing the awkward 'chess' we have referred to: that at least some of the 'chess pieces' to which he has entrusted his chances of standing his ground against Socrates are just like this – they collapse and let him down. Secondly and more importantly, the purpose of Socrates' initiative (and of the whole 'mock match' between 106 and 116) is to advert Alcibiades that if he does not do something about it – if he does not check his 'chess pieces' and repair or replace the faulty ones – the very same thing might happen (nay, the very same thing *is bound* to happen) in the 'real match' – that is in 'real life': once he tries to implement his philotimic life-project.

5. ON THE WAY TO 124B: THE FIRST BIG MENACE TO ALCIBIADES' 'KING' AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

It is now time to turn once again to what we have termed Alcibiades' '*castling move*' in 119.

First, it should be borne in mind that 119 combines two important developments. On the one hand, Alcibiades realizes both a) that he is cognitively unprepared to assert himself in the Athenian assembly, and b) that there is a link between this cognitive insufficiency and ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ (taking care of himself, trying to better himself – in this case, doing something to overcome his lack of knowledge and improve his cognitive skills). This link between his awareness of his ignorance and his willingness to improve himself (viz. his willingness to ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ) stems, of course, from Alcibiades' philotomic life-project. In 119 at least for a moment he realizes that if he lacks the necessary cognitive equipment the whole project can derail in the bud. Since he is utterly committed to the philotimic life-project in question, he must do something about his cognitive shortcomings. But secondly this important insight does not last long. It is immediately dismissed by the new knowledge claim concerning Alcibiades' rivals. The latter acts as a *makeshift solution* and leaves *everything pretty much as it was*.

Let us take a closer look at this 'castling' move.

At first it may seem that it has to do with a single claim concerning the alleged fact that Alcibiades' rivals in the Athenian assembly are no better equipped than he is. But on closer inspection it emerges that what we are dealing with here is rather a complex set of cognitive claims; a) the claim about who his rivals are, b) the claim concerning their cognitive unpreparedness as far as παιδεία is concerned (viz. the claim that, as far as παιδεία is concerned, they are no better suited than Alcibiades), c) the claim concerning the difference between φύσις and παιδεία, d) the claim concerning Alcibiades' alleged superiority τῇ φύσει, e) the claim that the latter is more than enough to meet all applicable cognitive requirements and to substantiate the overarching 'cognitive suitability claim'.

Socrates' attack on Alcibiades' new defensive position (his offensive moves from 119 to 124) goes straight to the heart of the whole set: the first claim, namely the claim on *who Alcibiades' rivals are* – which is, as it were, the basis upon which everything else depends and without which it loses its relevance

At first glance it may seem that the discussion continues to revolve around the very same key question: whether Alcibiades is cognitively equipped to make a good impression on his fellow citizens and assert himself in the Athenian assembly. But on closer inspection it emerges that Socrates *broadens the scope* of their discussion, and indeed in such a way that everything appears in a new light. In other words, there is a difference between Alcibiades' and Socrates' understanding of what is at stake in the question concerning Alcibiades' rivals. Alcibiades' new defensive position is devised to substantiate his overarching 'cognitive suitability claim' with regard to the Athenian assembly. In his eyes the point is still the cognitive requirement *for the first step* of his philotimic endeavour, i.e. for successfully launching a political career and ensuring his rise to power. But Socrates' new attack (his offensive moves from 119 onwards) shifts the emphasis to *another essential component of Alcibiades' philotimic life-project*. It is no longer just a question of Alcibiades' *rise to power*. Socrates focuses on Alcibiades' *exercise of power*. And this is why the question is no longer just the relation of forces between Alcibiades and his *Athenian* rivals (his *domestic* rivals, so to speak), but rather the relation of forces between him and his *foreign* rivals. In short, for Socrates the point at issue is no longer just *part* of the political game (Athenian *inner* politics and in particular what is required for a person to become a leader in democratic Athens), but *both inner and foreign* politics – that is, the *indivisible whole* (*rising to power × exercising it*) Alcibiades philotimic life-project is intrinsically related to and directed towards.

In order to understand this part of the dialogue, four things need to be kept in mind. First, from 119 onwards it is still all about the very same key issue: whether Alcibiades is

cognitively equipped to fulfil his philotimic life-project. But secondly, there is a difference between the *general* question concerning Alcibiades' cognitive suitability to fulfil his philotimic life-project and the *specific* question as to whether he is cognitively well equipped to prevail *in the Athenian assembly*. The latter differs from a *further specific* question, namely whether Alcibiades is cognitively well equipped to *exercise the power* he craves for (these two specific questions being ramifications of the general one). Fourthly, from 119 onwards Socrates' assault on Alcibiades' claim concerning his rivals stresses Alcibiades' future role as a statesman (that is, the further implementation of his philotmic life-project after coming to power)[28]

We can also express this by saying that up to 116 what is at stake is simply *the first step* (or the *preliminary step*) of Alcibiades' philotimic life-project, while from 119 onwards what is at stake is, as it were, a *second step* (his role as the leader of a world power, Athens). On the one hand, the new development we are talking about repeats, *mutatis mutandis*, the very same *modus operandi* (identifying Alcibiades' underlying cognitive claims and ascertaining whether they prove to be well-founded or are nothing but οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς). But on the other hand, there is a decisive change: all emphasis is now put *not* on the *first* step, but on the *second* viz. on the continuation of Alcibiades philotimic life-project.

But this is not all. If we consider the link between the two said segments of the discussion between Socrates and Alcibiades (up to 116 and from 119 onwards), two things stand out. First, they are *successive* and *consecutive*: they follow *one after the other*, and they follow *one from the other*. The whole point is that the first step *paves the way* for the second, and that the latter *brings the former to fulfilment*. But secondly this does not mean that what is at stake from 119 onwards does not play a significant role in Alcibiades' *first* step. To be sure, from 106 to 116 the whole discussion between Alcibiades and Socrates is focussed on the *first step* and *nothing but the first step*. It seems to have forgotten everything else and to view things from a narrow and blinkered angle, *as if* Alcibiades' self-confidence about his ability to prevail in the Athenian assembly were the sole cognitive claim playing a significant role in his philotimic project. But on closer inspection it emerges that from the very beginning what we have termed the *first* step is *intrinsically related to and directed towards* the *second*, and indeed so much so that it is *already all about the second* (the first step only matters *because of the second* viz. *for the sake of the second* – otherwise it would be totally pointless). Hence, even if

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[28] And this means: the very thing upon which proving able to achieve the utmost success ("filling the whole world with his name and his power" and compelling the universal respect and admiration he seeks) ultimately depends.

the discussion between 106 and 116 seems to forget everything else, the fact of the matter is that the *second* step is already there as something *presupposed* (and upon which the first step depends).

In short, the second step is, as it were, the '*real spring*' of the first (the *trigger* and *driving force* behind it) – and therefore a *sine qua non* of the first. And this in turn means that, whether one is aware of it or not, the second step is an *underlying* or *tacit component of the first*.

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This enables us to better understand Socrates' discussion with Alcibiades from 119 onwards. Socrates' new offensive highlights the fact a) that the second component of Alcibiades' philotimic life-project (the underlying or tacit component of the first step) relies on cognitive claims too, but also b) that the latter are no less ill-founded and indeed nothing but further instances of οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*.

Which brings us to another crucial point.

Above we mentioned the fact that cognitive claims – and in particular *underlying* cognitive claims – can be linked either by *coordination* or by *subordination*, and we pointed out that the various cognitive claims at stake between 106 and 116 are merely *coordinated* with each other. But now the point is that the connection between the two steps of Alcibiades' philotimic life-project we are talking about – viz. the connection between the corresponding knowledge claims – turns out to be *subordination*, not *coordination*. Or put another way: Alcibiades' resolve to launch his political career (the first step) is, as it were, *a means to an end*, namely achieving power. And the latter is in turn *a means to an end*, namely the *exercise* of power (the second step) –, which is itself *a means to an end*, namely the philotimic aim (as Socrates puts it: to "fill the whole world with one's name and power"). And the fact that the first step is intrinsically relative to and directed towards the second (and therefore that the latter is a *sine qua non* of the former) means that the first step is by its nature *subordinate* to the second.

As a result, from 119 onwards Socrates focusses a) on what might be described as a *deeper level* of Alcibiades' philotimic life-project and in particular b) on the cognitive claims *underlying this deeper level* (and therefore on a *deeper level of the cognitive claims underlying Alcibiades' resolve to take the floor in the Athenian assembly* and thereby launch his political career). That is, the set of knowledge claims underlying Alcibiades' resolve to intervene in the

Athenian assembly is *multi-layered* in the sense that those that have to do with his performance in the Athenian assembly are in turn embedded in deeper knowledge claims concerning the further steps for the sake of which Alcibiades is determined to assert himself in the Athenian assembly. And Socrates' new offensive dives deeper into this multi-layered set of cognitive claims underlying Alcibiades' resolve to take the floor in the Athenian assembly.

Hence, if one asks whether 119-124 concerns *new* cognitive claims, there is no simple answer to this question. What is at stake from 119 to 124 are *new* claims in the sense that up until now they have remained completely *undetected*. But strictly speaking, they are not really new, for they were *already there* and, what is more, they were already playing a pivotal role and shaping Alcibiades' resolve (viz. his whole philotimic life-project) from the very beginning.

<div align="center">*</div>

This is not the place to examine 119-124 in any detail. Our purpose is just to highlight the basic line of thought and its main inflection points, and in particular the fact that this part of the *Alcibiades Major* contains something of an *archaeological excavation* in the sense that it *unearths* and *brings to light* some *deeper* levels of the multi-layered set of cognitive claims underlying Alcibiades' first step viz. his resolve to take the floor in the Athenian assembly. And it cannot be emphasized too often that the *deeper-level* knowledge claims now at stake are as much *part and parcel* of the *first step* as the more immediate cognitive claims 106-116 is all about.

Hence, Socrates' and Alcibiades' dialogue between 119 and 124 leaves us with a clearer picture of Alcibiades' philotimic life-project and its complex structure. The most striking features of this complex structure are the following:

a) The set of cognitive claims underlying Alcibiades' philotimic life-project and his resolve to start a political career comprises at least two layers; one of which is specifically relative to the first and most immediate step in his philotimic agenda (taking the floor in the Athenian assembly), while the deeper level has to do with Alcibiades' tacit understanding of his further course of action.[29]

b) All specifically *first-step-related* cognitive claims underlying Alcibiades' resolve to take the floor in the Athenian assembly can remain

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[29] See the diagram in Appendix I.

completely *undetected* and out of sight *for Alcibiades himself*, even if he is, of course, fully aware of his resolve to launch his political career (and even if the underlying cognitive claims in question play a decisive role as *tacit components of the latter*).

c) Pretty much the same holds true for the specifically *second-step-related* cognitive claims 119-124 is all about: they, too, can remain completely *undetected* and out of sight *for Alcibiades himself*, even if he is, of course, fully aware of his resolve to launch his political career (and the underlying cognitive claims in question play a decisive role as tacit components of the latter).

d) *Second-step*-related underlying claims can remain completely undetected and out of sight even when Alcibiades (and, for that matter, the reader) has become fully aware of the more immediate superficial knowledge claims concerning the *first step*.

e) At least some of the *first-step*-related underlying knowledge claims (and indeed all those that come under scrutiny between 106 and 116) turn out to be nothing but οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*.

f) Pretty much the same applies to the deeper knowledge claims: at least some of the *second-step*-related claims (and indeed all those that come under scrutiny between 119 and 124) turn out to be as ill-founded as their first-step- related counterparts. They, too, are riddled with οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*. And the οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* undermining this deeper level is such that if Alcibiades insists on becoming leader of Athens, he runs the risk of harvesting the very opposite of the supreme glory he craves for, namely *superlative opprobrium and shame*.

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This brief outline enables us to better understand the outcome of Socrates' assault on Alcibiades' third line of defence (the one he builds around the claim that his Athenian rivals are no better equipped than him).

The most obvious result of Socrates' new offensive is that he manages to undermine the claim owing to which Alcibiades thought he was able to dismiss the need for ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ – namely the claim that, even though in terms of παιδεία or μάθησις he is no better than his rivals, in terms of his *natural* gifts (φύσει) he excels them. Socrates shows that this claim does not stand up to scrutiny. Alcibiades' real rivals are by no means his Athenian competitors, but

rather the foreign leaders he will have to face as a statesman. And in terms of φύσις – viz. of their natural abilities and potential (of everything that does not depend on παιδεία/μάθησις or on ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ) – Alcibiades' real rivals turn out to be incomparably superior to him. Alcibiades is doubly mistaken. He fails to realize the real nature of the 'chess game' he will have to play with the foreign leaders Socrates refers to; and he has no clue about the real relation of forces between him and them. Alcibiades is trapped in a blinkered perspective and fails to realize that in terms of φύσις he will be swamped by his rivals, and that his only chance of excelling them rests on παιδεία and μάθησις (that is precisely on what he has acknowledged he lacks and has dismissed as unnecessary because of his alleged natural gifts).

Socrates' dialogue with Alcibiades from 119 to 124 can, of course, be interpreted this way – so that the point is just that Alcibiades is forced to recant his previous dismissal of the need for cognitive ἐπιμέλεια and finally realizes that he must do something about his cognitive skills (i.e., that he has some serious *cognitive homework to do* before trying to implement his philotimic life-project and sailing on the high seas of Athenian and world politics).

The problem with this kind of interpretation is that it is *unidimensional*. It sees 119-124 just as a set of arguments against Alcibiades' dismissal of the need for ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ, *as if the scope had not changed*. But the fact is that *it has changed*. Socrates highlights both a) that Alcibiades' philotimic life-project is intrinsically related to the 'chess game' he will have to play with foreign leaders, and b) that Alcibiades' understanding of the latter rests on a specific 'suitability claim' (and in particular on a further '*cognitive* suitability claim'), but also c) that the latter turns out to be as summary, vague and hazy (and indeed as riddled with οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς) as Alcibiades' self-confidence with regard to his performance in the Athenian assembly.

In other words, 119-124 is all about a *stratified* viz. a *multi-level structure*. In order to undermine Alcibiades' new line of defence Socrates *changes the terrain*. He *digs down deeper* into Alcibiades philotimic life-project and shows that the son of Cleinias is no better equipped for the *use of power* and for *world politics* (that is, for the further fulfilment of his philotimic life-project: the aim for the sake of which he is absolutely determined to enter the political arena in Athens) than for the preliminary and most immediate step he is about to take.

6. ON THE WAY TO SOCRATES' CHECKMATE (124B-127D) – ALCIBIADES' 'REAL KING'

As pointed out above, 124 marks a turning point. Alcibiades is finally forced to acknowledge that ἐπιμέλεια is key to his philotimic life-project and asks Socrates for guidance in this respect:

τίνα οὖν χρὴ τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν, ὦ Σώκρατες, ποιεῖσθαι; ἔχεις ἐξηγήσασθαι; παντὸς γὰρ μᾶλλον ἔοικας ἀληθῆ εἰρηκότι. (Well then, what sort of self-improvement [diligence or care] is required, Socrates? Can you enlighten me? For I must say your words are remarkably like the truth.)[30]

But this begs the question: is the 'chess match' between Alcibiades and Socrates already over? And if this is the case, why does the *Alcibiades Major* continue beyond 124?

If we are not mistaken, the reason why the dialogue continues beyond 124 is that the 'chess match' between Socrates and Alcibiades – i.e. Socrates' *pre-enactment* of the 'real match' Alcibiades will have to play in the course of his life, if he persists on his philotimic life--project – is *still not over*. And the 'chess game' is not over because, contrary to what may seem to be the case, Alcibiades is *not yet checkmated*.

But in order to realize this, we must take a closer look at 124.

This passage is more complex than it might appear. On the one hand, Alcibiades seems to *throw in the towel* and to *commit himself to Socrates' guidance*. He finally loses confidence in his unsound knowledge claims. The latter give way to ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ, and he is willing to take steps and to better himself by doing something about his lack of real knowledge. And this in turn seems to mean *complete capitulation* to Socrates – i.e. Alcibiades' full awareness a) that he lacks the indispensable cognitive equipment, b) that he does not even know how to acquire it, and c) that he therefore has no alternative but to let himself be guided by Socrates. In short, 124 seems to show that Alcibiades is completely freed from all οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς with regard to the knowledge claims underlying his philotimic life-project. But on the other hand, regardless of the fact that he is not aware of it, Alcibiades' avowal of ignorance is far from being *complete*. There is still what might be described as an overlooked '*pocket of resistance*'. Or rather there is still an overlooked *stronghold of resistance* at the very heart of Alcibiades' seemingly total capitulation: a stronghold not only of undetected and unquestioned but indeed of ill-founded knowledge claims – of nothing less than οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς.

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[30] 124b7-9.

Alcibiades (and for that matter, the reader) may overlook this. But Socrates knows better. At the end of the day, the most important thing about 124 (viz. about the whole development from 124 to 127) is not so much Alcibiades' seemingly complete avowal of ignorance as the fact that this seemingly complete avowal of ignorance coexists with a *remaining core* both a) of overlooked underlying knowledge claims and b) of οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* (for the underlying knowledge claims in question are riddled with οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*).

And this is the reason why the 'chess game' between Socrates and Alcibiades – i.e., Socrates *pre-enactment* of the 'real match' Alcibiades will have to play with 'life itself'– continues beyond 124.

But the question is not only a) how we can talk of resistance, when Alcibiades seems simply to throw in the towel, but also b) what undetected knowledge claims we are talking about and c) what enables us to say that Alcibiades' seemingly complete avowal of ignorance coexists with an overlooked core of undetected knowledge claims and indeed of οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*.

The answer to these three questions lies in Socrates' new offensive from 124 onwards and especially in the fact that his new attack is directed against Alcibiades' understanding of ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ (i.e. his understanding of his own willingness to better himself in order to fulfil his philotimic life-project).

Socrates' focus on ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ from 124 onwards draws attention to the fact that Alcibiades' acknowledgement of the need for ἐπιμέλεια rests on a certain understanding of what the latter is all about. The fact that from 124 onwards Alcibiades offers no resistance to the idea of ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ and seems to be open to whatever it takes to get rid of the damaging οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* and better himself, can fool us into thinking that, as far as his philotimic life-project is concerned, he could not be more open-minded and receptive than he is. But Socrates highlights the fact that Alcibiades' own willingness and resolve to better himself entails an underlying understanding of what the latter stands for.

The point is threefold: a) that the underlying understanding in question amounts to a *remaining knowledge claim*, b) that this specific knowledge claim (the one concerning ἐπιμέλεια) does not draw attention to itself, so that c) it is *overlooked* and *skipped* when Alcibiades agrees to better himself by replacing his ill-founded knowledge claims with real knowledge. Put another way: as far as his philotimic life-project is concerned, Alcibiades is resolved to get rid of all damaging οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*; but he has made no exhaustive inventory of the knowledge claims shaping his view; hence, when he decides to get rid of all

damaging οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς,* part of the remaining knowledge claims – and notably the ones shaping his own resolve to get rid of οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* – remain *undetected* and are left out of his own understanding of what getting rid of all damaging οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* is all about.

But this is not all. The point in Socrates' assault on Alcibiades' understanding of ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ is also the fact that here, too, the underlying knowledge claims (N.B.: the knowledge claims shaping Alcibiades resolve to take steps and better himself) turn out to be ill-founded and riddled with οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς.* Showing this is what 124-127 is all about. And the fact is that this puts the whole thing in a new light. Alcibiades is open to cognitive ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ, but at the very heart of his new resolve is an overlooked residue of 'more of the same', for his willingness to get rid of οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* is contaminated with (and shaped by) οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* – and therefore secretly undermined by it.

But there is more. For here too, the point is not so much that the two components we are talking about – namely a) being aware of οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* and genuinely determined to get rid of it, and b) continuing to fall prey to οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* – *coexist* with each other. The point is rather that the connection between these two components is *subordination*, not *coordination*. Whether he is aware of it or not, in Alcibiades' eyes the ἐπιμέλεια he is willing to put in (and for which he commits himself to Socrates' guidance) is just a *means to a predefined end* (namely his philotimic life-project). In other words, whether he is aware of it or not, Alcibiades' willingness to learn (his openness and receptiveness to Socrates' teaching) is, as it were, a mere cog in the wheel of the same old philotimic life-project. To use the biblical metaphor, Alcibiades puts the 'new wine' of his willingness to put in ἐπιμέλεια (viz. the 'new wine' of whatever Socrates may teach him) in the 'old skins' of his philotimic life-project. The new element – his cognitive ἐπιμέλεια – is simply a new *instrument* in the framework of *the very same resolve and the very same outlook on life* that up to 124 did not see the need for any ἐπιμέλεια. Alcibiades' openness to new knowledge is subordinated to his initial resolve (i.e. to an *absolutely settled matter* or an *irreversible 'done-deal'*), namely his ambition to rule. And this also means: it remains subordinated to all the undetected and unquestioned knowledge claims underlying the said resolve.

In short, the *new* is just a new *specification* of the *old*: all awareness and openness is just a cog in the wheel of the very opposite; and all willingness to get rid of οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* is just a cog in the wheel of οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς.*

We could also say that Alcibiades' change of heart is *subordinated* to *everything remaining pretty much the same* in his relation to his own life. In 124 he surrenders an 'exterior

rampart', as it were – not the 'bulwark', the 'main tower', of his fortress. The centrepiece remains safe. And this is why it makes sense to speak of a remaining *pocket of resistance* – or rather of a *stronghold of resistance* – even after Alcibiades' seeming capitulation in 124.

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This brings us to an important point concerning the link between the 'bastion of resistance' remaining after 124 (i.e. the 'bastion of resistance' Socrates successfully tries to storm between 124 and 127) and Alcibiades' philotimic life-project. For Alcibiades "ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ" means acquiring the cognitive instruments he lacks in order to fulfil his ambition to rule. It is only a question of filling a gap in the middle of his philotimic endeavour. But Socrates does not give him what he wants. Instead of supplying the cognitive instruments Alcibiades is now willing to acquire (i.e. instead of fixing the 'cog' in the 'machine' of Alcibiades' ambition to rule), Socrates forces Alcibiades to focus *on ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ as such* – or rather on what lies at the very heart of ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ, namely *ἄριστος γενέσθαι*[31] (the very meaning of ἀγαθός, βέλτιον and the corresponding superlative). In short, in 124 there is a mismatch between what Alcibiades expects from Socrates and the direction things take between 124 and 127.

A detailed survey of their discussion between 124 and 127 would go far beyond the scope of this paper. But it is important to highlight some of the main points.

First, cognitive *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ* is something *new* in the sense that up to 124 Alcibiades was not willing to better his cognitive equipment. But on the other hand, *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ* is by no means something new in Alcibiades' life. As a matter of fact, it is what his philotimic life-project is all about from the very beginning. In other words, Alcibiades' whole endeavour revolves around *ἄριστος γενέσθαι* (ἀγαθός, βέλτιον and the corresponding superlative) – in such a manner that a) it is intrinsically directed towards *ἄριστος γενέσθαι* (ἀγαθός, βέλτιον and the corresponding superlative), and b) it is tacitly shaped by a philotimic understanding of it (and this means by a set of underlying knowledge claims concerning it). Alcibiades' cognitive *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ* is just a branch of his overarching *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ* (that is, of his *philotimic* understanding of ἀγαθός, βέλτιον and the corresponding superlative). Hence, the *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ* Alcibiades is forced to examine from 124 onwards was *already there from the very beginning*. It was an essential component of the *first* step

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[31] 124e.

(taking the floor in the Athenian assembly). It is also what the *second* step (playing the role of an Athenian leader) is all about. Last but not least, it is the driving force of Alcibiades' *cognitive* ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ (viz. of his willingness to do something about his lack of knowledge).

But this is not all. Secondly, the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ Socrates is talking about extends *beyond* what we have termed the *first* and the *second* steps of Alcibiades' philotimic endeavour (namely taking the floor in the Athenian assembly and playing the role of an Athenian leader). For what we have termed the *second* step is by no means Alcibiades' final aim. It is itself a *means* to an end. And Socrates' point is that the thing for the sake of which Alcibiades is so eager to become an Athenian leader (or rather the Athenian leader) is no other than ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ – viz. his drive towards *ἄριστος γενέσθαι* (the goal of *ἄριστος γενέσθαι*, shaped by a certain understanding of ἀγαθός, βέλτιον and the corresponding superlative).

In other words, 124-127 focuses on what might be termed the *third step* of Alcibiades' philotimic endeavour: what lies *beyond its second step* viz. the aim *towards which* the second step is essentially directed.

But thirdly this must be understood with two caveats in mind.

One caveat has to do with the fact that Socrates does not limit himself to examining a third step (as if there could be a *fourth*, a *fifth*, etc. beyond the *third* step in question). The point in 124-127 is precisely the fact that Socrates forces Alcibiades to leave the realm of whatever is still just an *instrument* (just a *means* to an end). He goes directly to the *aim* itself – to the very thing for the sake of which everything else matters. In short, we can speak of a third step, but it should be borne in mind that it is *no longer something for the sake of something else*: it is rather the *final goal* or the 'vanishing point' of Alcibiades' whole life-project.

The other caveat has to do with the fact that this third component, although a) it is something to be achieved by means of the first and second steps (so that it comes only after them), and although b) it is examined only after Socrates' and Alcibiades' discussion of the first and the second steps, is in fact of such a nature that it was *already presupposed* by the first two steps. This is absolutely crucial. What we have termed the *third step* is, as it were, the '*real spring*' both of the first and of the second steps (the *trigger* and *driving force* behind them) – and therefore a *sine qua non* of the whole thing from the very beginning. That is, in a way the third step *precedes* everything else. And this in turn means that, whether one is aware of it or not, the third step is an *underlying* or *tacit component of both the first and the second*.

In short, Socrates' dialogue with Alcibiades from 124 to 127 carries on the above-mentioned 'archaeological' work. It lays bare *deeper layers* of the underlying cognitive claims behind the 'resultant force': Alcibiades' firm resolve and eagerness to start his political career.

We can also say that this part of the dialogue goes deeper in exploring the *'under-water portion'* of the said '*iceberg*'.

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Finally, this provides an insight into the connection between α) 106-119, β) 119-124, and γ) 124-127. As we have seen, the three segments of the dialogue differ from each other in significant aspects. But this does not prevent them from bearing a striking resemblance to each other, and indeed so much so that it is no stretch to speak of *structural isomorphism* between them.

First, if we consider the knowledge claims at stake in β), it emerges that they remained completely *undetected* in α); but the fact is that they were *already shaping* it as an *underlying* component. As a result, β) amounts, in fact, to a rediscovery and deeper understanding of α) – i.e. to a much closer awareness of what α) is all about.

Secondly, if we consider the knowledge claims at stake in γ), two things emerge: on the one hand, they remained completely undetected in β), but the fact is that they were *already shaping* it as an *underlying* component; the result being that γ) amounts in fact to a rediscovery and deeper understanding of β). But on the other hand, pretty much the same holds true for the relation between γ) and α): the knowledge claims at stake in γ) remained completely *undetected* in α); but, they were *already shaping* it as an *underlying* component; as a result, γ), too, amounts in fact to a rediscovery and deeper understanding of α).[32]

Hence, the *Alcibiades Major* presents a *three-layered* set of cognitive claims. Or, putting this another way: Alcibiades' philotimic resolve viz. his philotimic life-project rests upon a *three-layered framework of presuppositions or assumptions*. Furthermore, from 106 to 127 the 'chess match' between Socrates and Alcibiades unfolds in three major stages, corresponding to the three layers in question.

But the crucial point is the connection between these two aspects. *Time* and *differences of depth* play a major role. On the one hand, the three *successive* stages in Socrates' dialogue with Alcibiades stand for what might be described as a *successive awareness* (*gradually unfolding* awareness) of something essentially *simultaneous* (of three essentially *simultaneous*

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[32] Hence, the relation between what is brought to light between 124-127 and the *terminus a quo* in 124 resembles the relation between what is brought to light between 119-124 and the *terminus a quo* in 119. In both cases we are dealing with a similar mechanism: on the one hand, there has been a change in perspective; but on the other hand, there is a *deeper* level – and at this deeper level *nothing has changed*.

layers of assumptions). On the other hand, the reason for this *gradually unfolding* awareness (viz. for this *delayed awareness*) of something essentially *simultaneous* (and which is *uno tenore* already there from the very beginning) is none other than the above-mentioned multi-layered structure: the gradually unfolding awareness we are talking about *mirrors various degrees of depth* and the fact that *deeper* assumptions are *more difficult to detect*.

To put it in a nutshell: in the *Alcibiades Major succession* stands for *depth* (for various degrees of depth).

As a result, the whole dialogue is both about the possibility of *complete unawareness* of all underlying cognitive claims (complete unawareness of the 'under-water portion' of the 'iceberg') and about the possibility of *partial* or *incomplete awareness* of the underlying cognitive claims. The former is, as the dialogue shows, Alcibiades predicament at the beginning of the *Alcibiades Major*. The latter is what happens in the course of the dialogue up to 127. Both 106-119 and 119-124 highlight various degrees of an incomplete 'archaeological excavation' of the underlying knowledge claims: one that fails to go deeper than a certain level.[33]

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But this is only half the story. The other half is that Socrates' frontal assault on the *deepest level* of Alcibiades' philotimic life-project manages to pull the carpet from under Alcibiades' feet.

If we look closer at this frontal assault, two things catch our attention. First, Socrates shows that Alcibiades' understanding of what we have termed the *third* step of his philotimic life-project – i.e., his underlying understanding of ἐπιμελεῖθαι ἑαυτοῦ: of ἄριστος γενέσθαι (ἀγαθός, βέλτιον and the corresponding superlative) – is as *summary*, *vague* and *hazy* as his understanding of the first two steps. But this is not the more important point. As mentioned before, the decisive factor is that in this case, too, Alcibiades' underlying cognitive claims turn out to be οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς and nothing but* οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς.

This means, of course, that the undermining presence of οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* in Alcibiades' philotimic life-project turns out to be *more extensive* than it seemed before 124. But this is not all. For it is not just a question of *quantity*. It is rather a question of *depth*. The undermining presence of οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* penetrates *deeper* into the framework of

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[33] See the diagram in Appendix II.

Alcibiades' underlying assumptions and extends *right down to the deepest level* – that is, to the *core.*

In other words, the *Alcibiades Major* shows two things. First, it shows that there is a *hierarchical connection* between the various levels of knowledge claims it is all about. And in particular it shows that the *third*-step-related knowledge claims – i.e. the *deepest* knowledge claims concerning the ἐπιμελεῖθαι ἑαυτοῦ and ἄριστος γενέσθαι (the meaning of ἀγαθός, βέλτιον and the corresponding superlative) – are the most important of all. And secondly it shows that the fact that they, too, turn out to be riddled with οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* has an *undermining domino-effect on everything else* – and indeed so much so that eventually it turns Alcibiades' philotimic life-project *off its hinges*.

Or, more precisely, in addition to everything else the *Alcibiades Major* shows that a) being aware of the fact that the *second*-level knowledge claims are riddled with οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* has an *undermining domino-effect* on the first level*, but *not the other way around,* and b) being aware of the fact that *third*-level knowledge claims are riddled with οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς* has an *undermining domino-effect* both on the *first* and on the *second* levels*, but not the other way around.

The third level is, as it were, the *centrepiece* of it all.

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Now, this is one of the reasons why the comparison between the *Alcibiades Major* and a *chess match* turns out to be apt. Chess pieces differ from each other in their *functions* and *degree of importance* – and one of them, the *king*, is the most important of all and the one upon which the whole game depends (all other pieces are able to perform their functions only as long as the king is safe). In Alcibiades' philotimic life-project the *third* level – his understanding of ἐπιμελεῖθαι-ἑαυτοῦ and the ἐπιμελεῖθαι-ἑαυτοῦ-related knowledge claims at stake between 124 and 127 – is, as it were, the 'king': the underlying knowledge claim (viz. the specific set of underlying knowledge claims) upon which everything else depends. 124-127 is particularly important because it evinces that this key piece, too, is riddled with οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*: it, too, turns out to be something of a *mirage*. Once put under scrutiny, it simply *collapses*. When it does (and Alcibiades proves unable to resist Socrates' attack and save the 'king' of his philotimic assumptions), Alcibiades' whole philotimic life-project finds itself *checkmated*.

In short, the following picture emerges: in 127 Alcibiades' philotimic life-project suffers the *checkmate* it could not receive before – i.e., the checkmate it could not receive from

the discussions of the *first* or *second* layers (and this for a very simple reason: because the real 'king' of Alcibiades' philotimic life-project lies *deeper*, in the *third* layer).

Finally, this brings us to a last remark concerning Alcibiades' and Socrates' 'chess match'. As pointed out above in section 3, the *Alcibiades Major* presents a *very particular kind of chess game*: an *unstable* and *bewildering* 'chess', in which at least some of one's 'chess pieces' seem to be there and perfectly ready to play their role in the game, but then, when one least expects, collapse, fail to perform their role and turn out to be but 'semblances' of real 'chess pieces'. But now it becomes clear that the 'chess game' in question is particular for yet another reason, namely because *the real 'king' is hidden*. In normal chess the players know their chess pieces, they have an overview of the entire chess board, there is no doubt about the 'identity' of each piece and about where the king is, etc. But the 'chess game' the *Alcibiades Major* is all about is not like this. Alcibiades has a *blinkered* view of the game he is playing: he does not see the whole chess board; he has a very imperfect knowledge of his own 'pieces' and he is at least in part unaware of their presence and of their functions. In other words, in this particular 'chess' everything is changed by a *second kind of opacity*: the fact that at least a part of Alcibiades' set of 'chess pieces' (a very significant part of the knowledge claims underlying his philotomic life-project) is hidden from his sight and resembles an *iceberg*. The result being that Alcibiades plays the 'chess' game in question a) *without knowing his real 'king'* and b) in such a manner that he can *mistake other pieces for the 'king'*.

At the end of the day, this is what Socrates' 'chess lesson' is all about: it tries to help Alcibiades figure out 'who is who' ('what is what') in the set of 'chess pieces' he is using to play life's game. Put another way, one of the main points in 106-127 is realizing that the 'real king' among Alcibiades' 'chess pieces' is none of the knowledge claims at stake between 106 and 119 or between 119 and 124, but rather a *deeper level* (namely the one that comes into sight after 124) – and that all previous moves and countermoves have to do, as it were, with '*lesser chess pieces*'.

And all this holds true both

a) for the 'mock chess match' Socrates is playing with Alcibiades, and

b) for the 'real match' of Alcibiades' life: the one he will play with life itself, if he insists on playing it without the necessary preparation, but also

c) for the real match κατ' ἐξοχήν (we could also say: for the '*really* real' match), namely *one's own*: the one *each of us* has to play with 'life itself', if we do not learn our lesson (Alcibiades' lesson) and insist on playing life's game without the necessary preparation.

In the final analysis, the latter is what the *Alcibiades Major* is all about. And one of its merits is that it draws attention to the fact that one's life resembles this doubly opaque kind of game.

7. Two final remarks

We would like to add just two remarks before concluding.

The first remark concerns what we have termed the "hidden king" of Alcibiades' philotomic life-project. To examine it in any detail would require a thorough survey of the last part of the dialogue (from 127 to the end) – and this would go far beyond the scope of this paper. We must therefore limit ourselves to briefly highlighting just a point: its *complexity*. The fact of the matter is that the deepest level of Alcibiades' philotomic life-project does not comprise only *one* – it comprises *several* underlying assumptions; so that there is not just one possible focus of οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*, but several.

Above we emphasized that the third and deepest level of Alcibiades' underlying assumptions concerns the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ (viz. the *ἄριστος γενέσθαι*: a certain understanding of ἀγαθός, βέλτιον and the corresponding superlative). In other words, the deepest layer of Alcibiades' life-project has to do with a certain understanding of *what really matters*. But even a cursory reading of the last part of the *Alcibiades Major* draws our attention to the fact that the deepest layer we are talking about – the 'hidden king' of Alcibiades' philotimic life-project – also includes a certain *relation to the 'self'* (and this means: an underlying understanding of the 'self' as such, a set of knowledge claims in this regard). And, what is more, it also calls our attention to the fact that, contrary to what might seem to be the case, here, too, there is room for *ill-founded* assumptions (*ill-founded* knowledge claims) and indeed for οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*.

But this is not all. The introductory dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades provides some clues in this regard. As a matter of fact, in 105 Socrates highlights the fact that Alcibiades' life rests on an underlying *ἐλέσθαι ζῆν* (as opposed to a possible ἐλέσθαι τεθνάναι) – that is, it rests on an *underlying choice to live rather than to die* (and on the corresponding knowledge claims). If you ask what the place of this within the said multi-layered structure is, it becomes obvious a) that this, too, is part and parcel of what we have termed the *third* and *deepest* level of Alcibiades life-project, b) that this particular kind of assumption – the ἐλέσθαι ζῆν – is closely related to (and shaped by) Alcibiades' understanding of *what matters* (i.e.

his *philotimic* assumption that the sole important thing is to be powerful, admired and respected by everybody, etc – so that we can speak of a *philotimic* ἑλέσθαι ζῆν). It also becomes obvious that this choice, too – viz. the underlying knowledge claims – can be ill-founded and indeed nothing but οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*.

This very brief overview provides some insight into the complexity of the deepest level – i.e. it allows us to perceive *that it is complex*. But it is not enough to grant us an insight into the *various components* or into *how they relate to one another*. In a word, it provides but a first glimpse at a difficult subject and shows the need for further research.

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The second remark has to do with the significance and scope of the *Alcibiades Major*. As mentioned before, Alcibiades was an extraordinary personality. Among other things, he was φιλότιμος in an *unusual* degree – he did not stand just for φιλοτιμία, but for the philotimic project in its *utmost form*. This cannot be emphasized too much. And, as we have seen, the preliminary dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades takes pains to stress this point.

But this begs the question as to whether a) the *Alcibiades Major* addresses the special case of Alcibiades, and has nothing to say in the case of more moderate (less extreme) φιλοτιμία or b) it is quite the opposite: the dialogue turns out to have a *wider meaning*, notably because it also finds application in less virulent forms of φιλοτιμία.

We submit that the latter is the case.

To be sure, the *Alcibiades Major* discusses Alcibiades' case and his particular philotimic life-project; it speaks of Athenian institutions and Athenian Politics, of the 'world powers' in the 5th century BC, etc. But this does not prevent this dialogue from having a clear-cut *exemplary* significance, so that any φιλότιμος can profit from Socrates' 'chess lesson' and learn to perceive the intricate structure of his or her philotimic life-project (the multi-layered underlying knowledge claims, their ill-foundedness, etc.). In short, the *Alcibiades Major* presents, as it were, an *identikit picture* of φιλοτιμία and its complex structure. And the author of the *Prolegomena philosophiae Platonicae* is absolutely right in contending that the dialogue is not just about Alcibiades, but about φιλοτιμία in general:

> Ἐκ τῆς ὕλης οὐ δεῖ ποιεῖσθαι, ὥσπερ τινὲς ποιοῦσιν, τὸν Ἀλκιβιάδην λέγοντες σκοπὸν ἔχειν περὶ τῆς ἐν Ἀλκιβιάδῃ φιλοτιμίας, ἐκ τῆς ὕλης λέγοντες τὸν σκοπὸν κακῶς, οὐ γὰρ δεῖ τοῦτο ποιεῖν. ὕλην δ' ἐλέγομεν τῶν διαλόγων τὰ πρόσωπα. Οὐδὲ γὰρ διὰ τὸ ἐλέγξαι τὴν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ Ἀλκιβιάδου φιλοτιμίαν ὁ σκοπὸς αὐτῷ ἐστίν, ἐπεὶ

συνεμπεσούμεθα τῷ ἀτόπῳ τοῦ δευτέρου κανόνος, τὸ μερικὸν ἀντὶ τοῦ καθόλου εἰσάγοντες. Ἄμεινον οὖν καθόλου λέγειν ὅτι περὶ τῆς ἐν ἑκάστῃ ψυχῇ φιλοτιμίας σκοπὸν ἔχει τοῦ ἐλέγξαι. Ἔστι γὰρ ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν οἷον Ἀλκιβιάδειος φιλοτιμία, ἥν δεῖ ῥυθμίζειν καὶ κοσμεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον.[34]

But this is not all. The 'chess lesson' and the 'identikit picture' we are talking about have a still *wider* scope.

The fact that much in them has specifically to do with φιλοτιμία might suggest that the *Alcibiades Major* has no bearing on other life-projects and notably on the sphere of what Plato terms φιλοκέρδεια and φιλοσοφία. But on closer inspection it emerges that this is not so. To be sure, the *Alcibiades Major* deals with φιλοτιμία, with a distinctly *philotomic* life-project, with specifically *philotimic* knowledge claims, etc. But none of this prevents this dialogue from having an *exemplary significance* for other forms of non-indifference and notably for φιλοκέρδεια-related and φιλοσοφία-related life-projects.

But how can this be?

The key to answering this question is the *formal structure* – the opacity, the multi-layered 'iceberg structure', the particular kind of *unstable* and '*blinkered*' 'chess game' – we have tried to highlight in this paper. The *Alcibiades Major* presents this formal structure in the context of an examination of Alcibiades' philotimic life-project. But this does not mean that the structure in question is specific to this particular context. In fact, nothing prevents it from playing a similar role in *other* cases – and indeed in *all* cases. In other words, nothing prevents it from being an *overarching* viz. a *common* structure of human life, so that both φιλοκέρδεια-related and φιλοσοφία-related life-projects can turn out to be undermined by it.[35]

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[34] L. G. WESTERINK (ed), *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, Amsterdam, North-Holland Publishing Co., 1962, 23.

[35] It could, of course, be objected that a φιλοσοφία-directed life-project must have a very different structure. For a) it must be free from the kind of *opacity* the *Alcibiades Major* is all about, and b) it cannot rely on *ill-founded* knowledge claims, etc. But Plato's *Theaetetus* shows that this is not necessarily so: a φιλοσοφία-oriented life-project can be as *opaque* and *cognitively flawed* (as undermined by ill-founded assumptions and riddled with οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς) as any other. To be sure, this means that the φιλοσοφία-oriented life-project in question is far from living up to what φιλοσοφία is really all about. But the point is precisely that this can be the case – and indeed that a φιλοσοφία-oriented life-project only lives up to what φιλοσοφία is all about (and therefore becomes really "philosophical") if and when it deals with the said structure – that is, if and when it penetrates *deeper* into the framework of one's underlying assumptions and extends *right down to the deepest level* (i.e, to the 'hidden king': to the *core*).

Finally, a brief glance at Tolstoy's *Father Sergius* (Отец Сергий) can help us understand another important feature of the formal structure we are talking about – namely the fact that it is not just an inner component of φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία, φιλοκέρδεια or φιλοσοφία, but rather an *overarching structure* in which φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία, φιλοκέρδεια and φιλοσοφία are themselves embedded.

The leading character in Tosltoy's short story – Prince Kasatsky, officer of the Cuirassier Life Guards, a proud and ambitious aristocrat – belongs to the *crème de la crème* of Russian society. After finding out that his beloved countess Korotkowa has 'a past', he retreats from the world and becomes a monk. He pursues a path of holiness and soon enjoys a wide reputation for sanctity. Until one day, after giving into temptation, he realizes that the

Hence, there is a good chance that Proclus is right: each one of us is more or less clearly subject to the very same παθήματα or affections as the son of Cleinias ("καὶ γὰρ ἡμῶν ἕκαστος καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων ἐναργέστερον ἢ ἀμυδρότερον τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἔνοχος παθήμασιν οἷσπερ δὴ καὶ ὁ Κλεινίειός ἐστι")?[36]
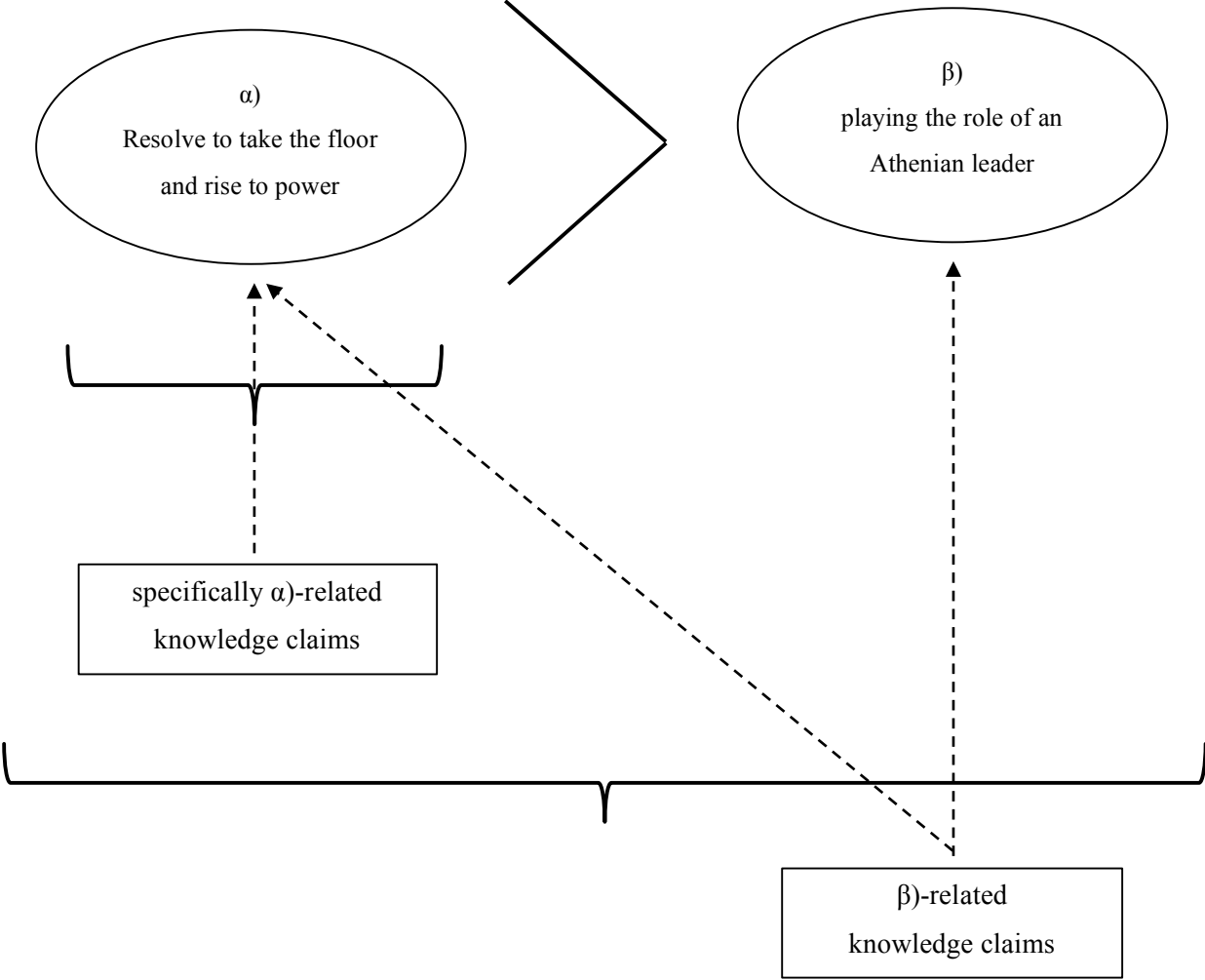
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driving force behind his pursuit of holiness is nothing but *ambition* and *pride*: his pursuit of holiness, his life of seclusion, etc. are but *a new way of trying to be admired and respected by everybody else* (a new way of being 'on the A-list'). Only then does he change his way of life and cease to be a pawn of his blind pride and ambition.
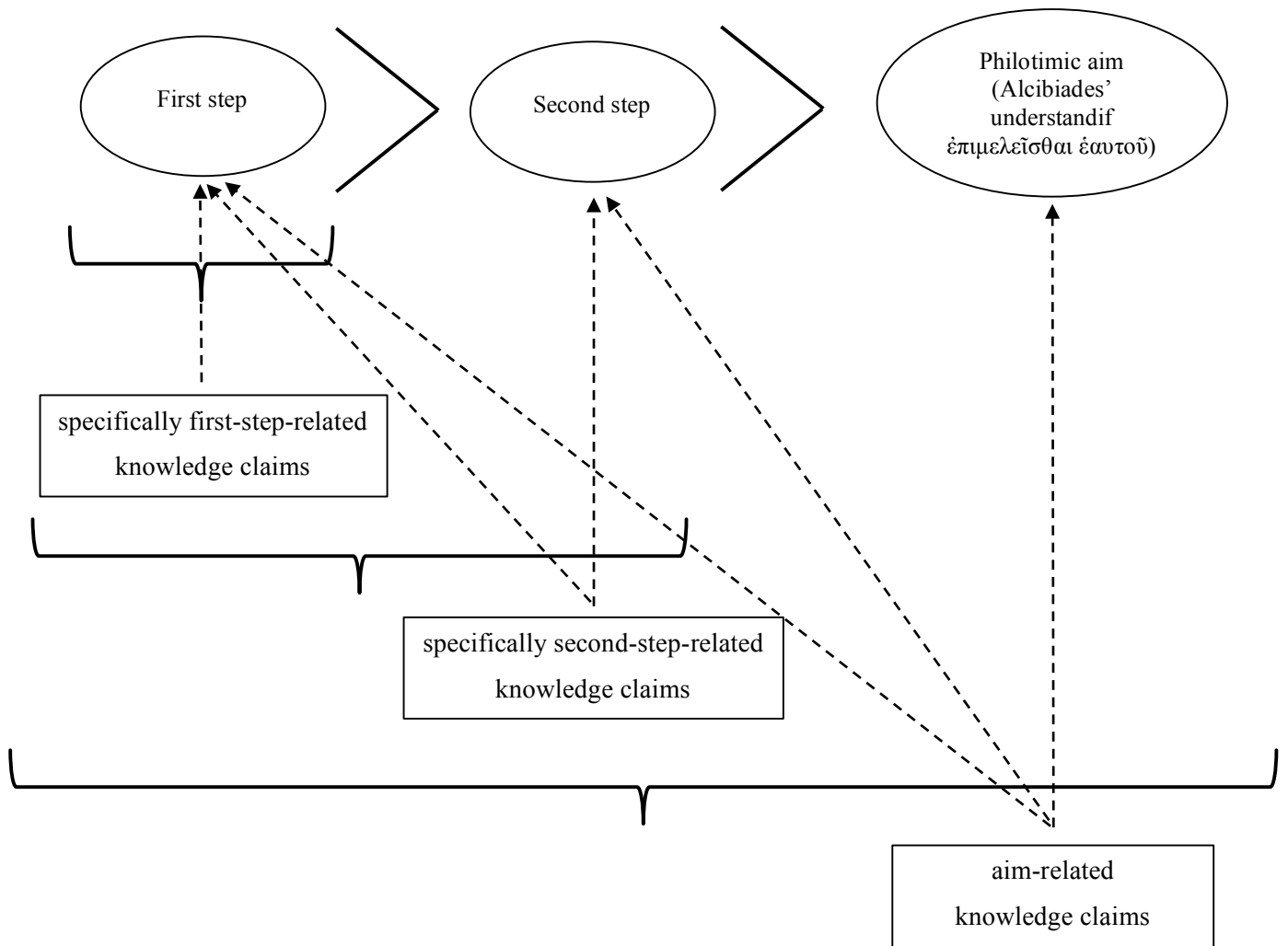
    All in all, this short story substantiates the very same multi-layered structure the *Alcibiades Major* is all about. On the one hand, father Sergius falls prey to the same kind of opacity as Alcibiades. In his case, too, the philotimic life-project comprises less deep and deeper layers of underlying assumptions. In his case, too, the less deep layers are specifications embedded in the framework of the deeper ones. In his case, too, the latter provide the basis for the former. And in his case, too, the latter can remain completely *undetected* and *unchanged* even when the former are already detected and changed. But on the other hand (and this is the point we would like to emphasize here), Tolstoy's short story highlights the connection between this whole *tree-shaped* structure and the 'crossroad' between φιλοτιμία and all alternatives to a philotimic life-project. *Father Sergius* highlights a) the fact that the tree-shaped multi-layered structure in question is not a specific feature of φιλοτιμία, but rather an *overarching* structure of human life, in which both φιλοτιμία and the alternatives to φιλοτιμία are embedded, and indeed so much so that b) at a deeper level (and only at a deeper level) there can be a change from a philotimic life-project to something else (to something really different from a philotimic life-project).

[36] L. G. WESTERINK (ed.), *Proclus Diadochus. Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato*, Amsterdam, North-Holland, 1954, I, 7.1-3

APPENDIX I

APPENDIX II

First step

Second step

Philotimic aim
(Alcibiades'
understandif
ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ)

specifically first-step-related
knowledge claims

specifically second-step-related
knowledge claims

aim-related
knowledge claims

PLATO PLAYING THE READER: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF RESISTANCE IN PLATO'S *FIRST ALCIBIADES*

Tomaz Fidalgo

1. INTRODUCTION

I must start by saying that this text is only a part — a small part — in a much bigger picture.

Let me explain why:

After many years studying Plato, I became very interested in the idea of resistance. More to the point, the idea that philosophy *is* a form of resistance started to creep up on me, demanding my attention, luring me closer and closer. Socrates had by then the face of resistance; his dramatic moves and his lines appeared increasingly a challenge to my life and to the way I tend to look at things.

Furthermore, the way Socrates lead his life — at least as portrayed by Plato — was clearly seen by his contemporaries as a form of resistance. Socrates is in many respects the antithesis of the powerful Athenian man. And if these powerful and influential men in a way embody what that society uncritically saw as normal, typical, natural, and even as right and good, Socrates emerges as the man who *questioned — i.e.* who *resisted —* all notions of what is normal, typical, natural and, especially, of what is right and good.

The breakthrough moment then came when I realized that both these kinds of resistance — *i.e.* the "historical" resistance Socrates offered to his Athenian opponents and the resistance the platonic Socrates still offers to each of his readers — are rooted in the same fundamental form of *good* resistance.

But this deeper concept of good resistance can only be grasped if we adopt a philosophical standpoint and consider how — *mutatis mutandis* — all Socratic dialogues *still apply* to our daily lives. In other words: we can only see this fundamental and profound type of resistance if we grasp how the historical and cultural aspects contained in each dialogue serve a philosophical purpose.

Seen from this perspective, Plato's goal with the *First Alcibiades* is not to simply tell the cautionary tale of Alcibiades. Instead, he wants to create a play in which the reader is

portrayed by Alcibiades and stands to learn from him. Plato's goal is hence to show that, despite all the factual differences between Alcibiades and every single one of his readers, there is something that these share with Alcibiades. By making Socrates *resist* this thing in Alcibiades, Plato is fighting it in his readers.

In this sense, all the truly historical aspects of Alcibiades' character are used by Plato to *play* with the reader's interpretation of the dialogue, and not just to tell a story about a young man with political aspirations within his specific historical context.

A text about Alcibiades is therefore not merely about the historical Alcibiades, but also — and especially — about how Alcibiades is a character in *my* life.[1]

When we look at Plato's work from this angle, the idea of resistance starts to become clear. For only then do we grasp how each play is asking us to resist our presuppositions in the same way Socrates challenged his own and his opponents'. Or, put briefly: it is only then that we realize how each play is a call to activate our inner Socrates — a call to lead a philosophical life. In fact, by activating our inner Socrates, we are playing the role Socrates (mostly) plays in the dialogues — and that is what *good resistance* is all about.

In the end, Socrates, good resistance and philosophy are one and the same.

Conversely, when we resist Socrates, generally by behaving like his opponents — *i.e.* by letting several unanalysed presuppositions cloud our judgment — we are resisting him in a *bad* way. In this case, we are resisting philosophy.

We can hence see that the "good resistance" I alluded to at the beginning is only a part of what I mean by "resistance". For the truth is that, just like Socrates resists seeing things as his opponents do, his opponents also resist adopting Socrates' way of thinking about things. Furthermore, since each of us also resists Socrates in the same way as his fellow Athenians did,[2] it becomes clear that the resistance offered to Socrates by his opponents serves to mimic the reader's resistance. This resistance is resistance to philosophy. And this is what *bad resistance* is all about.

We all know what this bad resistance leads to. Neither the *Apology* nor history leave much room for error. What we tend to miss is that, just as the Athenians killed Socrates for his continuous resistance, we also kill him every day of our lives. For, just like them, we find his resistance rather inconvenient. So we silence it every chance we have.

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[1] Just as the *Gorgias* is not about how some Sophists defined rhetoric in the fifth century B.C., but about what *I* truly believe to be good.

[2] As any earnest attempt to read any dialogue will show.

Now, the bigger picture to which I alluded at the beginning is a comprehensive study of the role played by resistance in Plato's body of work (which comes under different shapes and forms).[3] This text is a very small part of it: small because it focuses on Plato's *First Alcibiades*; very small because it does not even correspond to the full history of resistance in Plato's *First Alcibiades*, but to an introduction to this history.[4]

In this introduction I will consider three things:

1) How resistance is present in Plato's *First Alcibiades*;

2) How it appears mostly in the dramatic sphere and hence needs to be found in between the lines;[5]

3) What it means to *resist* Socrates.[6]

2. IDENTITY AND RESISTANCE IN PLATO'S *FIRST ALCIBIADES*

If one had to choose a single word to describe Plato's *First Alcibiades*, what would it be? Well, I would be split between "identity" and "resistance".

My difficulty in choosing has to do with the fact that, in this dialogue, identity and resistance are *not* two different problems. In fact, Alcibiades' continuous resistance to Socrates

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[3] This bigger picture will require me to consider the different ways in which resistance appears in all of Plato's plays. I have started with the *Gorgias*, where this idea first came to mind. An article derived from that study can be found in FIDALGO, T., Plato Playing the Reader: A History of Resistance in Plato's *Gorgias*, in: CARVALHO, M. J./FIDALGO, *T., Plato's Gorgias – Labyrinth and Threads*, Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, July 2016, pp. 187-229. As said in this article, a History of Resistance consists mostly of an angle from which one can study Plato's work. It can therefore be applied to different dialogues, always producing different results. Obviously, one will find similar structures and strategies used by Plato in different works. However, one of the most interesting things about Plato's work is precisely the vast amount of resources he has and the creativity with which he puts them to use. For this reason, I believe that looking at different dialogues from this angle requires a new analysis every time, which instead of finding the same formula repeated over and over again, allows one to discover new ways to read Plato and to understand him. The result is a more complete, creative and critical way of reading Plato's dialogues. Having said this, it is my belief that, if one were to study all of Plato's dialogues from this perspective, it would be possible to identify the role played by resistance in his thought (*i.e.* to find a common thread which allows one a) to understand what resistance is, b) to articulate the various forms of resistance and c) to understand how deeply resistance influences all of Plato's thought). Just like irony, resistance is a crucial — albeit often hidden — "character" in Plato's work.

[4] A second part would then consist in writing this history. Or, in other words, it would amount to studying how resistance keeps on appearing in the dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades. The second part will however not be featured in this article.

[5] This is something I learned from the *Gorgias*: the fact that the *dramatic* aspects of the text transform its content and bring it to life. This revelation has ever since opened my eyes to a whole new dimension in Plato's work. For the importance of the dramatic aspects of the *play* stands true for all his? other dialogues: one can never truly understand what is being said if one neglects the structural and dramatic aspects. This is important to stress because Plato cunningly presents most of what I call resistance in a dramatic — and not strictly textual — way.

[6] This is hence a preparatory paper, which will allow me to later write the history of resistance, where it will be possible to see a) *how and why both Alcibiades and the reader resist Socrates* (both in a positive and negative way)*, and b) *how and why Socrates resists both Alcibiades and the reader* (also in a positive and negative way).

is nothing but a resistance to seeing his own identity — *i.e.* to seeing who he really is. Likewise, the problem of resistance is always a problem of identity, of failing to properly re-*identify* who we are and what we are dealing with. Therefore, without grasping one, we are doomed to lose the other.

Let us take a closer look at this:

First of all, it is fair to say that the beginning of the dialogue amounts to a description of Alcibiades. In it, there is a clear effort to render a more or less accurate picture of the young man: who his parents and relatives are, where he sits in the social environment he is in, what he looks like, how everyone else sees him, what his ambitions are, how able he is to achieve them, etc.

But it is equally fair to say that, during the remainder of the text, Socrates breaks down these attributes and deconstructs the idea Alcibiades has of himself. Given the flattering description, it is no wonder that Alcibiades *resists* seeing how, after all, he is not what he puffs himself up to be.

In order to understand the role resistance plays in Plato's *Alcibiades*, we have to herefore, start by asking a very simple question: who is Alcibiades?

The answer, however, is not as simple. For the Alcibiades *character* is rather complex. And — just like with every person and every dramatic *persona* — this complexity can be read quite differently depending on the angle one chooses to look from. Each angle highlights different traits, which, taken to the extreme, represent different perspectives on Alcibiades' identity.

My claim is that Plato wants us to see these various aspects of Alcibiades' identity. Deep down, he wants all these perspectives to converge and to form a single yet complex character — the one around which the whole dialogue is built. Furthermore, in typical platonic fashion, Plato highlights different traits in different ways, making sure the reader has his work cut out for him.[7] He does so to create a complex *persona* we want to get to know. And, just like in real life, some subtleties are only recognized when we make an effort to get to know Alcibiades.

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[7] In a way, this is what makes platonic dialogues so interesting: Plato is always playing with multiple layers of meaning — he is always playing several inter-related chessboards simultaneously. It is up to each of us to be either his worthy opponent or just one of his pawns. And — just as pointed out in the previous note — I believe Plato wants each of us to play *against him*, *to resist him*. Actively standing up to him is often *a good* form of resistance. He plays us, but he does not want us to be played. As we will later see, here lies one of the fundamental distinctions between a good and a bad kind of resistance.

But, in order to grasp Alcibiades'[8] different traits, it must also be borne in mind that we are not dealing with a normal text. As always happens with platonic dialogues, at stake there is a *play*: a play in which there are characters, which are meant to portray their own life, yes, but also to resonate with the audience — and, in this sense, to portray each member of the audience. In addition, precisely because we are dealing with a play, the context in which it takes place is just as important as the lines said by each character. One can even say that the actual lines lose their meaning if detached from the grander scheme of things.

In other words: when dealing with Platonic dialogues we are not dealing with an academic paper. Plato is rather *playing* the reader: attacking him from several angles, embedding levels upon levels of complexity, challenging him to grasp all that is involved — and doing so without *ever* handing out a final answer.

But what has this to do with either Alcibiades' identity or the problem of resistance?

It is related to Alcibiades identity for two reasons: the first is that by creating this complex persona Plato is giving depth to his character and hence creating the necessary conditions for that character not to know itself. Indeed, if Plato wants to prove that Alcibiades does not know who he himself is and what he wants in life, then he needs to create a character who is complex enough to believe he knows who he is and what he wants without actually knowing it. The second is that by creating a complex character Plato is also challenging the reader to grasp who Alcibiades really is.

It is related to resistance because both the reader and Alcibiades resist seeing who Alcibiades really is. In fact, his initial description is meant to describe Alcibiades in such a way that the reader thinks he is getting acquainted with who he truly is, and at the same time Alcibiades sees himself well portrayed by this account. The history of the text is then the story of how Alcibiades is not who he thought he was. Furthermore, this is done in such a way that it leads the reader to ask the same question regarding himself: do I really know who I am?

3. ALCIBIADES' IDENTITY

Having made these preliminary remarks, let us then get back to the text and consider how this pans out.

We can start by presenting several possible answers to the question "who is Alcibiades?".

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[8] Alcibiades as in the platonic character that appears in this dialogue.

1) The first possible answer to the identity question is simple: Alcibiades is Socrates' *opponent* in this chess-game called a dialogue. He is the man who disagrees with Socrates — who opposes and *resists* him — as regards what is important in life and how he should lead it.

2) The second possible answer is the "historical one": Alcibiades is a well-known man from ancient Athens, who crossed paths with Socrates and had a public relationship with him.

This answer has several nuances:

First and foremost, Alcibiades should be seen as a politically ambitious young man, who represents a well-established and dominant perspective on life in the fifth century B.C. — a side against which Socrates fought and lost.

Secondly, Plato is clearly playing with Alcibiades' personal history, for he was the promising young man who would lead Athens to glory, but ended up a traitor. By doing so, he came to be well known in Athens and in all of Greece — as the dialogue says he desires —, but for all the wrong reasons. He became famous, yes, but instead of being seen as the greatest and most powerful, he was considered a traitor and a man who did not have the power he tried to convince others he had.[9]

Thirdly, it should be borne in mind that Alcibiades' betrayal was used against Socrates in court. It was presented as the paradigmatic case of the corruption Socrates was accused of producing in the young. One can thus sense an apologetic tone in this dialogue. In fact, it tries to show that Socrates is trying to fight a sort of "internal corruption" already present in the young Alcibiades.

Fourthly, Plato is clearly playing with a sort of "historical irony". This "historical irony" is present in at least two ways: A) Plato is showing how Socrates tried to fight the very things that led Alcibiades to betray Athens, but ended up being sentenced to death for his efforts;[10] B) Plato is also trying to evince that Alcibiades *did* become famous — by renouncing the things Socrates tried to instil in him —, but as exactly the opposite of what he wished to be famous for.

3) The third possible answer to the identity question is the political or "anti--philosophical" one. Alcibiades is the political man, the man of action, as opposed to the introspective man, the philosophical man (Socrates).[11]

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[9] As his attempt to return from Persia to Athens confirms.

[10] And it is especially ironical that Socrates is sentenced by men who fit Alcibiades' description.

[11] The theme is recurrent in ancient literature, in Plato's dialogues and in scholarly research: the apparent opposition between action and thought, and the need for knowledge to do what one wants to do. I do not mean to say that politics and philosophy are mutually exclusive, but rather say that we tend to contrast them, even if unconsciously. The perfect example of this — and not by chance — is Plato's *Gorgias*. The problem is at stake

As is easy to see, this answer shares a lot in common with the previous one. In fact, this was a known reproach made to philosophers at that time. However, this answer focuses more on the contrast between a practical and useful life and a more contemplative and thought-oriented life. The emphasis here is therefore not so much on how people in the fifth-century B.C. saw the contrast between a practical and a theoretical life, but rather on the core distinction that supports this opposition: the vague and blurry difference between *practical know-how* and *theoretical knowledge*.[12]

Seen from this angle, Alcibiades is the man who gets things done — the man with practical know-how —, whereas Socrates is the man who wants to consider the theoretical foundations of everything, without being able to actually *do* anything.

4) The fourth answer consists in seeing Alcibiades as the embodiment of the *philotimic* way of life. He is the man whose goal in life is to be known and admired by everyone, everywhere, both now and by future generations.

5) The fifth answer is the dramatic one: Alcibiades is whoever fits the role, and hence every reader who takes the dialogue seriously (*i.e.* every reader who can relate to the part here played by Alcibiades and who sees in the young politician a mirror-like image of himself).[13]

Despite carrying different weights, all these takes on Alcibiades' identity can be found within the text. My goal in the following pages is to show how they are deeply intertwined and form a complex *persona*.

4. THE DRAMATIC ANSWER: ALCIBIADES AND THE READER

Let us start with the dramatic answer. To grasp it, the first question one should ask is simple: am I in any way similar to Alcibiades?

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from the beginning of the text. Socrates is trying to prove that there are some things we need to know in order to rule our own life. Polus, on the other hand, is trying to show that the only necessary thing to know is how to manipulate people, so that they do what we want them to do, and that rhetoric gives you that power, which will give you control over the city. One of the crucial moments in Polus' refutation — the one that gives the rest of the dialogue its framework — is 462e to 466b. Here, Socrates proceeds to the identification of different τέχναι, each of them corresponding to knowledge and control over certain domains of life. The political τέχνη and philosophy are here suggested to be the same, something that the text will try to confirm time and time again. To further study this problem, see OLIVEIRA, S., In the Labyrinth of Masks: The Land of Make-believe in *Gorgias*, 461b-466a, in: CARVALHO, M. J./FIDALGO, T., *Plato's Gorgias – Labyrinth and Threads*, *op cit.* 7-44.

[12] The "anti-philosophical" or anti-theoretical stigma is actually far from resolved. Indeed, the distinction between a practical know-how and theoretical knowledge has accompanied the course of philosophical history and is still largely unresolved.

[13] These five answers could be further nuanced, in the sense that they could be multiplied further if one were to separate all the details contained in each of them. However, the goal here is just to sketch the fundamental lines at stake, so that we can see how resistance emerges as a key factor in the text — and indeed as a key factor in all of these answers.

Well, the truth is that, at first, Plato seems to make it impossible for any of his readers to relate to Alcibiades. Indeed, the young man is portrayed not only in an incredibly flattering manner, but also in a way that all his attributes *seem* to be factual and beyond any doubt.[14] And who can honestly consider himself the most handsome, rich and well-born man in his city[15], lacking nothing either with regard to his soul (ψυχή) or his body (σῶμα), being also the most admired by everyone, the most well connected and powerful, able to solve all his problems, so that he needs no help from anyone? [104a-d]

Surely not that many people fit this description.

Yet, my claim is that Plato is asking every single one of his readers to put himself in Alcibiades' shoes. What is more, I believe Plato constructs Alcibiades' character so that, deep down, *he is just like every one of us.*

But how?

It is almost impossible to relate to Alcibiades. Plato had to know that even if there were someone who could roughly fit the description, that man would be the ultimate exception.

Then how can I claim that Plato is trying to compare everyday men to the extraordinary Alcibiades? If Plato really wanted to address the problems we all face, would he not have chosen a less exceptional man?[16]

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[14] Sure, Socrates presents himself as a lover of Alcibiades, thus giving up a neutral standpoint. But he also says that everyone else is in that same condition, *i.e.* that everyone has the same take on Alcibiades. With this subterfuge, Plato puts Socrates in a very handy position: he can *describe* — from what shrewdly insinuates itself as an "objective" point of view — all the things that make Alcibiades such a singular and special young man, but, at the same time, there is always room to say that this is not a *truly* objective perspective (*i.e.* he can always say — with a textual account or dramatic resources — that he got carried away and that, upon closer inspection, Alcibiades is not all that he seemed to be at the beginning). Further along in the text, this will be extremely important, for this strategy allows Plato to build a credible and strong image of Alcibiades, while giving it an "Achilles heel". He can then deconstruct all the power granted to Alcibiades in this early description without contradicting himself.

[15] Or in his country, which would be the nowadays equivalent.

[16] I am here overlooking two objections to this interpretation:1) the first would consist in arguing that Plato did write this dialogue just for the very few men in Greece (and in history) who could be in such position. Indeed, it could be argued that Plato wrote this dialogue for young men who are destined to assume powerful positions. If this were the case, there would be no need for every one of us to put himself in Alcibiades' shoes, since we are not like him and the challenges he will go through in life are not like ours. 2) Furthermore, one could also argue that the dialogue is important for everyone to read, even if it does not force the reader into Alcibiades' shoes. Indeed, despite portraying someone in an extraordinary position, which the ordinary-man cannot relate to, this dialogue is important for the average person to consider, since the latter will be ruled by someone who is in Alcibiades' privileged position. In this case, I don't need to put myself in Alcibiades' shoes — unless in a very loose manner —; I just need to understand what is important for *him* to know in order to rule the place where *I* live. The text would then be seen as a sort of "manual for political instruction", in which only those with political aspirations (and capacities) are portrayed and meant. The rest of us mere mortals should read it as something that indirectly affects our lives: I will never be in Alcibiades' position, but someone will, and the decisions that person makes will affect my life, and hence I am interested in his education and his ability to make good decisions (*i.e.* to make decisions that will favour my city/country and myself). Both these arguments can be related to the "historical" and "political" answers. At stake is also the fact that, in a democracy, each man (*i.e.* free man) has a say in what is going on, and this makes him participate in political life. He is therefore interested in the education

My answer is no. In fact, I will go as far as claiming that this is the very reason why Alcibiades is the main character in this dialogue: to show that not even he escapes the problem of knowledge, and more specifically of believing he knows what he does not really know.

In this regard — and, as we will see, in many others — Alcibiades is just like everyone of us.

Failing to see this is actually a form of *resisting* Socrates.[17]

This is hence where we find the first signs of resistance *from the reader*: resisting seeing ourselves involved in what is being said by Plato, and thus failing to commit ourselves to the discussion at stake — *i.e.* failing to put ourselves on the line and re-evaluating what is going on in our lives. Indeed, this is one of the key forms of resistance to Socrates, and the one Plato fights the most. As I will try to show later on, Alcibiades often resists Socrates in this way. By fighting this form of resistance in Alcibiades, Plato is trying to fight it in his reader.

5. THE "OPPONENT ANSWER" AND THE "DRAMATIC ANSWER": A COMPARISON BETWEEN ALCIBIADES' ACTUAL "LIVING SITUATION" AND THE READER'S OWN "LIVING SITUATION"

Now, this leads us back to the first answer we gave to the question "who is Alcibiades?": he is, first and foremost, Socrates' opponent.

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and attributes of his rulers because a) it affects his life and also because b) he has a say in it (he has power to change things). I would like to stress that this interest in the welfare of one's city/country already points to an important aspect that the dialogue will focus on: one's non-indifference towards oneself (and accordingly towards all the variables of the situation one is in, such as the political dimension one inhabits). However, as I will try to argue, both these ways of looking at the *First Alcibiades* leave out the fundamental aspects at stake in it. And the main argument that supports my position is the fact that the remainder of the dialogue focuses much more on Alcibiades' pretence of knowledge and on his need to embark on philosophical training than on how he is to rule the city (should he actually reach that powerful position). In a way, something similar to this happens in Plato's *Republic*, where there is a comparison between each man's ψυχή and a city. There, we are also invited to read the dialogue not only as citizens who are interested in the welfare of the city, but also as people directly involved in and portrayed by what is being said: in short, we are invited to see the description of the city as a description of our ψυχή. For this reason, if we consider the *Republic* and the *Alcibiades* (and the *Gorgias,* for that matter) from a strictly political point of view, we lose track of what is really at stake in them. I would also like to add that all this in no way denies that we should be interested in the political dimensions of life or that these texts (*sc.* the *Alcibiades*, the *Republic* and the *Gorgias*) have nothing to do with politics. It is obvious that Plato would want someone in Alcibiades' position to read the text, and it is obvious that all these texts deal with the preparation of people that actively and influentially participate in political life *de facto*. Yet, Plato is trying to dig way deeper than that: what he prescribes in these dialogues is meant to be applied to *everyone* — and for this reason, to the people who are in these special circumstances too (but not especially to them).

[17] This time around, it is a *bad* form of resistance — a way of not standing up to Socrates and Plato. This might imply that a good resistance consists in resisting Socrates by fighting him, whereas a bad resistance would consist in letting things roll without putting up a fight. However, things are not so simple. As we will see at the end of the first section, the difference between good and bad resistance is a bit more difficult to explain.

It is important to note that this is a *formal* description. In this sense, it can fit anyone resisting Socrates as Alcibiades does. Alcibiades — as Socrates' opponent — can be *whoever fits Alcibiades' shoes*. His resistance to Socrates can thus be meant to portray the reader's resistance to Socrates (be it either a good or bad resistance). Nevertheless, in order to prove that this is the case, we need to answer the unresolved question: how can I put myself in Alcibiades' shoes?

The answer to this question remains hidden if we keep on looking for any possible similarities between what is cleverly presented as Alcibiades' "factual" position and our own "factual" position. Conversely, it starts to shape up once we consider things from a different angle — that is, if we compare what can be termed Alcibiades' "living situation" *as seen by himself* to our own "living situation" *as seen by ourselves*.[18]

Let us start by considering the young politician's situation as *he* sees it.

The first thing to notice is that Alcibiades does not present himself. He is instead introduced by Socrates. However, Socrates portrays Alcibiades in such a way that he seems to be describing *what Alcibiades considers himself to be*, while at the same time validating *Alcibiades' own* perspective with the fact that everyone else agrees with it[19]. A double perspective is hence created, but in such a way that both what Alcibiades believes himself to be and what everyone else thinks of him seem to coincide.

At the same time, Socrates hints that he does not share everyone else's point of view. It is hard to shake the feeling that he does not buy Alcibiades' glorious picture. His tone is too sarcastic; his flattering words loaded with poison. The difference between Socrates and the rest of Alcibiades' admirers is also brought to the surface by the fact that he is the only one of Alcibiades' lovers who has not left him [103a].

Plato is hence suggesting that Socrates loves Alcibiades for different reasons than everyone else. Socrates does not love Alcibiades for any of the magnificent attributes

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[18] As is easy to anticipate, there is a connection between what I have enigmatically termed one's "living situation" and the problem of identity. It should also be noticed that this angle involves the consideration of B) the deconstruction/destruction of what Alcibiades thinks his "living situation" is and the deconstruction/destruction of what we believe our own "living situation" to be. This destruction is mostly done by Plato with the help of dramatic resources (and hence needs to be found in between the lines). The first task (A) consists in the analysis undertaken up to the end of the first part. It depicts a formal structure common to both Alcibiades and the reader, and then demonstrates that the image Alcibiades has of himself (and the image we have of ourselves) is based on unfounded presuppositions (*i.e.* that the deformalization of this formal structure is unsound). The second part — which roughly equates to B) — then dismantles these presuppositions and the consequences derived from them. It consists in an analysis of the unfolding of the text and the part resistance plays in it.

[19] 104a: "οἴει γὰρ δὴ εἶναι πρῶτον μὲν κάλλιστός τε καὶ μέγιστος—καὶ τοῦτο μὲν δὴ παντὶ δῆλον ἰδεῖν ὅτι οὐ ψεύδῃ—ἔπειτα νεανικωτάτου γένους ἐν τῇ σεαυτοῦ πόλει, οὔσῃ μεγίστῃ τῶν Ἑλληνίδων", etc.

previously described, but because of something else. This is why he stays when everyone is leaving. And this implies that there is still a *third take* on Alcibiades' identity.

It does not take long for Plato to start revealing whom Socrates considers Alcibiades to be — and, in this sense, to explain why Socrates loves Alcibiades.

Let us see how this happens:

It all starts when Socrates cunningly portrays the young man in such a way that he is praised. The fact that Alcibiades agrees with the flattering description without complaining shows that he thinks much of himself.

This is especially interesting when we think about the elements Alcibiades is unwilling to acknowledge in public. The description is so finely put together that the flattering traits are connected to the ones he might be afraid to admit in front of an audience. This is a *dramatic* way Plato finds to a) describe Alcibiades as a vain man, while b) using this vanity to put words in Alcibiades' mouth, which he cannot openly say.

The prime example of this is then found when Socrates tells Alcibiades that one of his best traits — *indeed the cause of Socrates' unconditional love and the reason why he does not abandon Alcibiades* — rests in the fact that Alcibiades is never satisfied. This is presented as a great compliment and, being the vain man that he is, Alcibiades cannot deny such praise. At the same time, Alcibiades knows that this cannot be said out loud, and this is why he does not accept it openly. But, at the end, his reluctance to accept this compliment is only a *performative* way of saying something like "I can neither confirm nor deny it" [106a]. This hence amounts to Alcibiades admitting that he will never settle for anything other than what he believes to be the best.

Thus, by using this cunning strategy, Plato conveys the idea that Alcibiades agrees with the portrait Socrates paints of him.

But, in doing so, Plato achieves two things:

First, he ends up showing why Socrates really admires Alcibiades — to wit, because he will never settle for anything but the best. This in turn gives the reader a new insight into Alcibiades' identity: Alcibiades is the man who will not stop short of his ultimate goal.

Secondly, Plato ends up telling us one of the reasons that makes Socrates stay when everyone else is leaving. In fact, it is said that everyone is leaving Alcibiades because his prime is over, but the text also suggests that many Athenians might also be abandoning him because of his insatiable appetite — a trait that many other Athenians surely did not admire, especially

his rivals.[20] And this means that, after all, this third take on Alcibiades' identity is not only seen by Plato, but also by other lovers of Alcibiades. The different is then that most of Alcibiades' lovers want to leave him, whereas Socrates wants to stay with him precisely because of this trait.

In addition to all this, there is still another cunning aspect of Socrates' description, to wit, the fact that Socrates starts by highlighting everything that *seems* good about Alcibiades, but then proceeds to say that all these amazing things are still nothing compared to what he really wants, and, what is more, to *what he could indeed have* [105a-e]. All of Alcibiades' lovers seem to love him for what he already has/is. But Socrates loves him because he is not content with that — which is one of the reasons all others leave. Consequently, when Plato later says that all the other lovers are lovers of Alcibiades' things and not of Alcibiades' himself, whereas Socrates is the only one who truly loves,[21] he implies that Alcibiades' true identity is not defined by the things he has/is, but by this unstoppable desire to go after what he truly wants.

It is as if Socrates told Alcibiades: you have X, and X is great, but what you want is Y. Now, the distance between X and Y is great — for to conquer all of Greece, all of Asia and also to be known in every corner of the world is no small task —, but you *can* overcome that gap. Being such a great young man as you are, you know that there is a long way to go, but your strong foundations and all those lovely attributes of yours seem to make the journey feasible. And despite the fact that all the others may forsake you because of your ambitions, I am willing to stay and love you for this very reason.

This is how Socrates lures Alcibiades — by playing with his vanity. He is telling the young man that he can conquer the whole world. And, because Alcibiades thinks much of himself, he is ready to believe Socrates. However, such compliments are clearly backhanded: they focus on the positive attributes in such a fashion that the distance between where Alcibiades stands and where he wants to be appears to be minimal. His goal lies a stone's throw away. This obviously interests Alcibiades and pulls him closer and closer, to the point where, when Socrates tells him that he can only reach his full potential and acquire all he desires with Socrates' help, Alcibiades is really interested in hearing from the strange old fellow what lies between him and all his hopes and dreams.

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[20] And it is not by chance that this trait probably led to his downfall in Athens).
[21] 131e.

Now, if we focus on the complex *formal* structure that is being portrayed as being Alcibiades' position *as seen by him — i.e. Alcibiades' "living situation" as he sees it —*, it is not hard to draw a comparison with our own lives.

The similarity rests in the distance between "where one sits" and "where one would rather be". The key words are *disproportion* and *tension*.

When describing Alcibiades' situation, it is hard for the reader not to sense how far away he is from Alcibiades' position. What is more, it is very hard for the reader not to wish he were in such a privileged situation. By doing this, Plato creates in the reader a *disproportion* and a *tension* between his current situation and a different one (*i.e.* Alcibiades' position), which is seen as *better* and hence as *desirable*[22].

Now, if we strip Alcibiades' position down to its formal structure, the same exact thing is happening with him. He sees himself as being in X, but sees X as insufficient, because he would rather be in Y.

It is hard not to admire Plato's shrewdness: by implicitly creating a gap between the reader's "living situation" and Alcibiades' "living situation", he ends up putting us in the young man's shoes. For, just as in his case, there is also disproportion and this tension in our lives.

Nevertheless, it must be added that *this formal similarity does not erase Alcibiades' exceptional character*.

For even if, on the one hand, it can be argued that by praising Alcibiades' unquenchable thirst Socrates means to highlight the disproportion and this tension we all have, on the other hand, the fact that the young man is *never* satisfied with what he has and *will not stop* until he gets what he wants does seem to point to an exceptional trait. It is even said that Alcibiades would prefer not to live than to settle for less than what he truly wishes.[23] In this sense, Alcibiades embodies the unconditional refusal of any form of "ἀγαπᾶν" with what is not his supreme goal in life, whereas most of us would prefer to compromise than to give up living.

Or, in other words, Alcibiades exceptional character comes from the fact that he does not bargain for happiness — he is in an *all-in* situation — whereas most of us are willing to settle for the best we can get. Yes, we would like to have more than we have — and this is why

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[22] Thus implicitly creating a connection between being better and being desirable. As we will see, this is one of the dialogue's most crucial aspects (it is explicitly dealt with between 113d and 116e, especially from 115a till 116e). I would like to stress that this connection, as well as the implicit comparison between the reader and Alcibiades are not textual elements. They are rather dramatic aspects, which are just as present and important as the textual ones.

[23] 105a.

we can somehow relate to Alcibiades' situation —, but our thirst for more than we have does not seem to be as extreme as Alcibiades'.

So, at first glance, the difference between Alcibiades' and the reader's positions is obvious: he will not compromise, and we will.

But I believe that, on a deeper level, Plato wants us to question this. In fact, I will claim that he builds the text in a way that leads us to *suspect* that perhaps the biggest difference between Alcibiades and the reader is not necessarily the fact that he is uncapable of compromising, but the fact that he believes he will not have to — whereas we think we have to.

The reason why I think this *might be* the case is easy to explain: by presenting Alcibiades as a man so promising and powerful, Plato creates the idea that he is in the uncanny position of being able to actually get all he desires. And in this sense, he truly is unlike most of us, who did not have such an amazing start in life, and are from early on forced to recognize the need to compromise.

There are two important ramifications to this argument:

One of them is that, if I am correct, this then forces me, the reader, to recognize that deep down, I am more like Alcibiades than I expected, because just like him I also have an insatiable thirst for more; it just so happens that it is hidden behind some defensive calculation of what I can actually get. This is why I would like to be in his shoes: because his position would give me access to more than my current one. It is not a matter of not having big dreams, just a matter of, unlike Alcibiades, not having high expectations. Plato's insistence in the young man's unquenchable thirst can hence just be a means to stress a "feature" that everyone can recognize as a personal trait (even though most would shy away from admitting it, just like Alcibiades). Still*, it is not clear that*, if I were to be in his position, I would have the same all-in attitude towards life — it is just a possibility that cannot be excluded.[24]

The other reason why this is important to stress is because it brings us back to the *formal* and *actual* differences between the reader and Alcibiades. For we see that, even if Alcibiades' position is *formally* similar to the reader's — in the sense that both want more that what they have[25] — Alcibiades' *factual* position is very different from the reader's situation. This *factual* difference then explains why we think we are so different from Alcibiades, and also why we tend to envy him and his powerful position.

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[24] I believe the text does not allow for a final answer regarding this matter.
[25] And leaving aside whether or not both are willing or unwilling to compromise.

6. THE TENSION TOWARDS A SUPERLATIVE POSITION

Things are obviously more complicated than this. One of the reasons being that Plato is playing with the idea of lacking nothing (μηδενὸς δεῖσθαι).[26] And he is playing with this idea in two different senses: 1) he says that Alcibiades' position is one of lacking nothing in terms of the conditions or *means* he was born with; 2) he says that Alcibiades wants to be in a position in which he lacks absolutely nothing, *i.e.* a position in which he has acquired (κτάομαι) everything he desires (which is not the position he is currently in). He plays with both these ideas with the help of the double perspective mentioned above: seen from everyone else's perspective, his position seems to be one of lacking nothing (he has all the things everyone else could desire); seen from his perspective, he still does not have the things he wants.

Now, by focusing on the fact that Alcibiades will never be content with what he has, Plato is stressing that Alcibiades will not settle for second best. He is saying that Alcibiades will never settle until he is in a position in which he himself sees as lacking absolutely nothing (μηδενὸς δεῖσθαι).

But, as stated above, it can be argued that, if the reader had the same means as Alcibiades — and if he saw himself as having the same *potential* as Alcibiades —, he would perhaps be less inclined to compromise.

Nevertheless, it is easy to refute this. Because it might very well be that Plato is indeed stressing Alcibiades' exceptional character and that, even if Alcibiades' were to have been born in a less privileged situation, he would still have this unwillingness to compromise.

Be that as it may, the relationship between Alcibiades' superior means and his otherworldly goal is clearly meant to raise the problem of *power*.

In fact, it is legitimate to claim that (at least) one of the reasons why Alcibiades will not settle is because he thinks he has enough power to overcome his obstacles — and even if does not have that power yet, he has enough power to get the power he lacks. On the other hand, most of us are so far removed from any such sort of power that we soon learn to limit our goals according to our means (and therefore never truly wonder what would happen if we had no restrictions in that department).

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[26] The expression appears first in 104a, where it is used to describe Alcibiades' position as he sees it, *i.e.* it is used to say that he has all the worldly conditions one could ask for. In this sense, the expression μηδενὸς δεῖσθαι is used there to described a situation of lacking nothing, and, to be more specific, a situation in which Alcibiades lacks no means to achieve his ends — *i.e.* lacks no *power*.

In this sense, even though Alcibiades is not satisfied with what he has, he is still clearly aware that his position is a privileged one. And it is based on this position that he intends to take control of the city and of the whole world. But this only happens because Alcibiades is convinced that the power and the knowledge he possesses suffice to get him to where he wants to be.[27] In this sense, we can say that, in some aspects of his life, he has compromised, whereas in some others he is not yet content. Alcibiades hence represents the man who, despite being unsatisfied, is still willing to acknowledge that, in some respects, he has everything he needs. Accordingly, there is a form of "ἀγαπᾶν" imbedded in a project that is supposed to be the complete refusal of "ἀγαπᾶν".

Similarly, each one of us tends to be convinced that he has enough as regards something in his life and to be content with what he has in that department. I am not yet where I would like to be, but I can be content with the house I have.

So both in our case and in Alcibiades' situation, there seems to be an overall *mapping out* of *where one is* and *where one wishes to be*, a mapping which includes A) the identification of what has to be improved in order to get what we want and B) the identification of what already suffices (*i.e.* what does not require any *care*).

As the dialogue will show, this mapping out — this *identification* — of one's living situation is the very first thing Socrates attacks. The history of resistance is therefore also the history of how we refuse to re-identify who we are, where we sit, and, accordingly, which things require our care and devotion.[28]

Let us then focus on one of the things Alcibiades thinks he has enough of: power.[29]

If there is one thing the dialogue is very clear about, it is that Alcibiades' position is very different from the average man in terms of power. Indeed, what makes him stand out is the fact that he does seem to have all the conditions to acquire what he lacks and desires, whereas most of us do not.

But, at the same time as Alcibiades' extreme power accentuates the differences between him and the reader, it also involves another similarity. For it shows that the disproportion and the tension we alluded to above pose, both in us and in Alcibiades, the same problem: how can we get what we desire? How can we bridge the gap between our "living situation" and the

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[27] And this might happen because the power he already has will allow him by itself to get more and more power, which in turn will lead him to what he wants, or because he already has the power, but just lacks the opportunity to use it — which is conveniently right around the corner.

[28] That is, which things require our ἐπιμέλεια.

[29] The other being knowledge.

situation in which we would rather be? In other words: both in Alcibiades' and in everyone else's case, this disproportion and this tension *intrinsically* pose a problem of *power*.

This in turn allows us to find yet another similarity between our position and Alcibiades' position: for, just as we lack the power to be in Alcibiades' position, he too lacks the power to get where he wants to be. In fact, even though he does not seem to understand this for now, the dialogue puts him *de facto* in a position where he still cannot get what he wants — *i.e.* in a powerless position. And, in this sense, his position *as seen by himself* is in a way similar to my position as seen *from my perspective*: we both lack something we desire, and we both still lack the means to acquire that (otherwise we would both already have it).

Yet, despite all the similarities we just noted, there still seem to be some undeniable differences between each one of us and Alcibiades:

The first discrepancy lies in the power Alcibiades seems to have *ab* initio. Even though he is not in a position where he can effectively get all he wants, he is still in a position that enables him to get more things than the common mortal. He does not have an absolute power, but he does have more power than the average man — and allegedly this power is exponential: the more he has, the more likely he is to get more of it.

The second difference has to do with Alcibiades' unwillingness to settle (which, as we have seen, might not be a real difference).[30]

The third difference is related to Alcibiades' insatiable appetite for fame and glory, which the reader probably does not share.

It is important to note that all of these differences concern the relationship each man has with a superlative goal in life: the first difference has to do with the fact that different people seem to have different capabilities to reach what they want the most in life; the second with one's willingness to relinquish that superlative goal; the third difference has to do with the fact that different people want different things in life, and what might seem the best for one is not the best for another.

And this once more reveals Plato's genius: he is again putting us in the same formal position as Alcibiades by accentuating our differences.

Now, because all these difference concern Alcibiades' relationship with his supreme goal in life, it becomes easy to see that, by focusing on the blurry connection Alcibiades has with this supreme goal, Plato is trying to force the reader to reconsider his own relation with what he considers to be the best thing in life.

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[30] An hypothesis corroborated by Alcibiades' historical fate.

It is thus wise to take a closer look at these differences.

We can start by recapitulating what we said above:

If we think about where we stand in terms of power, the initial description of Alcibiades clearly aims at creating some kind of distance between him and the common man (the reader). Socrates tries very hard to give the impression that we are not quite like Alcibiades. But upon closer inspection we realize that the emphasis is neither on the several amazing things Alcibiades *has* — which we probably do not have —, nor on the several remarkable things he *is* — which we probably are not. Instead, the text seems to focus on the fact that Alcibiades' attributes and possessions *give him an abnormal capability to attain what he still lacks*. That is why Alcibiades is so different from most people: *because he has an uncanny potential to actually get what he really wants in life*. And that is also why we tend to envy him. For we normally consider ourselves to be in a position so far removed from those things we desire that, despite wishing to get them, we are forced to settle for approximations. On the contrary, Alcibiades is put in a position where *he does not have to compromise*.

From this recapitulation we learn that the major difference Socrates is trying to establish between the reader and Alcibiades is anchored in the presupposition that, given the opportunity, Alcibiades is capable of exercising his abnormal power.

In Alcibiades' case there is disproportion and tension, yes, but the disproportion seems possible to overcome and the tension likely to be satisfied. In our case, the gap appears too big, the thirst impossible to quench. And so, unlike him, we have to settle for second grade versions of what we want: instead of ruling the world, we rule the house (or the city council); instead of a fortune, we have some moderate savings; etc.

Put in a nutshell: we are like a weak wannabe version of Alcibiades.[31]

Now, there is an obvious objection to this: it can be argued that some people are perfectly content with what they have — *and not just in regional aspects* of life.

This is related to what has just been said about the disproportion and tension between where one is and where one wishes to be. At stake here is hence the possibility of there not being any disproportion between the "living situation" one is in and the situation one considers to be the best possible. In this case, because there is no disproportion, there is also no tension. This absence of tension would then correspond to one being perfectly content with what one has. It would be a position of "lacking nothing", at least nothing one really wants.

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[31] Conversely, he is just like us, only on steroids and — maybe because of this — a little less afraid to admit to his desires.

However, Plato seems to suggest that this does not really happen to anyone. Instead, when we settle for something, we settle for approximations. These approximations correspond to a circumstantial diagnosis in which we measure our effective power and, in accordance with that, define attainable goals. This does not mean that these goals — the ones we are effectively after — are our supreme goals; it just means that they are the ones we deem ourselves capable of attaining. And the proof is that, as soon as we reach them, the bar is immediately set a bit higher — or set in a completely different place.

But how does Plato suggest this?

He does it in the dramatic way we have just considered: by making us envious of Alcibiades. When we are faced with Alcibiades' powerful position, we end up inevitably realizing that this position is not our own position, and that, if we had that kind of power, we would certainly be able to change a lot of things in our lives. In short: we are led to think that, if we were to have Alcibiades' power, we would be better off than we are now. And this means that we do want more than what we now have.

Perhaps a lottery-related example helps to grasp this: it often happens that, despite being very happy with my life, I still wonder what it would be like to have a house with a garden, or the ability to travel wherever I wanted, whenever I wanted. These are just two commonplace desires, but they serve to show my main point: even if one admits one is content with what one has, one still often dreams of the things that are beyond one's grasp. Maybe for someone who is really rich the problem is different (albeit the same): he might be able to travel whenever he wants and to have an amazing house, but is still unable to conquer the woman he loves. Or perhaps he is one of the richest men in the world, but wants to be *the* richest. There are infinite examples of this, but the point is always the same: we tend to wish for more than what we have. And when — and *if* — we settle for what we have, this usually happens because we realize that our ideal goal is out of our reach. It is this understanding of our inability to acquire absolutely everything we desire that then leads us to either a) settle for what we have or b) to fight for a smaller or different goal (one which is within our reach). Both things that Alcibiades will not (allegedly) do.

We will get back to this in a while.

The second difference between Alcibiades and the reader is connected to the former's extravagant goal. For one's supreme goal in life can be very different from Alcibiades' goal. This difference has hence to do with the fact that different people have different views on what *the best* thing in life is.

This is brought up whenever a serious reader realizes that he — or anyone else — might not share Alcibiades' extravagant goal. For even when I admit that there is something I want more than anything in life — and that, if I could have that thing, I would not settle for what I currently have — this does not force me to identify my ultimate goal with being known and having power all over the world.

Now, I have to concede that there is something tempting about having power all over the world — for, as we will see, power is what enables one to get what one wants. But fame is certainly not something I would like to have. In fact, being know by everyone as a powerful man is much closer to being my worst nightmare than my biggest dream. In this sense, Alcibiades is also unique, since he has a particular desire (being known by everyone, everywhere, for ever and ever).

Personal preferences aside, it is easy to grasp that, by putting so much emphasis on Alcibiades' superlative goal in life, Plato is also suggesting that, just like there is something Alcibiades wishes above all other things, the reader must also have something that he wants more than everything else. It might happen that the reader has never considered it thematically — for he has probably never considered his life in terms of unlimited potential —, but it is still very likely that he/she leads his or her life by striving towards a position that is closer to what he or she considers to be the best.

There is hence another formal similarity between each of us and Alcibiades: just as he wants something above all other things, we too tend to desire what is best for us. Furthermore, just like Alcibiades, we are not in a position to reach that superlative. It just so happens that Alcibiades believes he can attain it, whereas we tend to settle for lesser versions of it. In addition, just as Alcibiades tends to be shy about his megalomaniac ambitions, we also tend not to admit we wish everything we actually desire.

And so we see that, in the case of both these fundamental differences between the reader and Alcibiades, Plato is actually trying to bring us closer to Alcibiades. He is trying to show that, just like Alcibiades, we need a) to identify what it is that we want the most, and b) to map out our vital situation and identify the means necessary to get it. Furthermore, he also tries to show that it is only after identifying what we want the most that we can identify how far away we are from it and what means are necessary to attain it.

7. ZOOMING IN ON THE SUPERLATIVE

As always happens in Platonic dialogues, it is not by chance that Socrates' description of Alcibiades focuses so much on his power and his supreme goal. In fact, they are the crucial aspects Socrates attacks during the remainder of the dialogue.

Now, it is true that Plato does not *expressly* address these two problems at the beginning of the *First Alcibiades*.[32] In a very platonic fashion, he only evasively touches on the real problem lurking behind all this: the problem of discovering *what the best thing in life is*. Or, put simply: instead of openly telling the reader what he will be discussing in the dialogue, Plato forces him to wonder why Socrates begins with such a weird introduction. And once we start trying to do this, we realize what the text is really asking us: 1) are we, like Alcibiades, never willing to settle for what we believe to be "second best"? Is it either the best or nothing for us? 2) am I really bound to a superlative goal in life, or is this connection to the superlative peculiar to Alcibiades? 3) Is this superlative the same for everyone? Should it be? Is there one thing that is better than all others? And if so, what is it?

Let us then consider how the idea of a superlative is at stake from the beginning of the text and how it is the very thing behind the *disproportion* and the *tension* I alluded to. By doing so, we will both A) see how the *identification* (*i.e. the identity*) of the superlative is itself a problem, and B) understand how the tension towards the superlative poses a problem of power (the other major difference between us and Alcibiades).

Just as in other dialogues[33], Plato starts by introducing the idea of a superlative in a subtle manner. But, even if inconspicuously, this concept *is* present from the very beginning of the description of Alcibiades. It is said that:

a) the young man overpowers his lovers in such a way that they have all ran away ("πολλῶν γὰρ γενομένων καὶ μεγαλοφρόνων οὐδεὶς ὃς οὐχ ὑπερβληθεὶς τῷ φρονήματι ὑπὸ σοῦ πέφευγεν" 103b);

b) he does not need them for anything ("οὐδενὸς φῂς ἀνθρώπων ἐνδεὴς εἶναι εἰς οὐδέν" 104a);

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[32] There are other plays where this problem is thoroughly considered, such as the *Gorgias*, the *Phaedo* and the *Phaedrus*. Here, in the *First Alcibiades*, once one has read the dialogue from start to finish, one understands that the question concerning what is best in life is one of the central themes in the play. Indeed, one can go as far as saying that the question "who is Alcibiades?" is essentially intertwined with the question "what does Alcibiades consider the best thing in life to be?". The same applies to the reader.

[33] This is a frequent technique used by Plato. Before introducing in the text the subject he is after, he starts by indirectly alluding to it, be it by using proverbs or indirect quotations, or by using adjectives that relate to this subject while addressing previous and apparently unrelated matters (as is the case in the Alcibiades).

c) his resources, starting with the body and finishing with the soul, are so strong that he lacks nothing ("τὰ γὰρ ὑπάρχοντά σοι μεγάλα εἶναι, ὥστε μηδενὸς δεῖσθαι, ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἀρξάμενα τελευτῶντα εἰς τὴν ψυχήν" 104a).

Now, even though there are no superlatives in this description, the fact that Socrates is describing Alcibiades as a) stronger than all the others, b) in no need of anything else and c) as someone with resources that are so great that they are all-encompassing, gives us both a hint that something superlative is at stake and also *an initial description of what a superlative is*.

Such clues are confirmed by the fact that Plato starts using superlative adjectives in the next sentences. We are told that Alcibiades is the most handsome (κάλλιστος) and the strongest (μέγιστος)[34], belonging to the finest (or most high spirited, νεανικώτατον) family in his city, which is the greatest (μεγίστη) in Greece. As if that were not enough, he also has the most (πλεῖστοι) and best (or most excellent, ἄριστοι)[35] relatives and friends[36].

But, if Alcibiades is in what seems (*to a third person*) to be a superlative position — for he is a) stronger than all the others, b) in no need of anything else and c) has resources that are all-encompassing — and also has and is himself several superlatives, how can Socrates say that he still does not have what he truly wants? In fact, it is later said that all these superlatives are not enough, and that, if Alcibiades had to stick to them and have nothing more, he would rather not live (105a-e).[37] But, if they are *superlatives,* how can this be?

The solution to this problem seems easy: Alcibiades must be after other things, which he still does not have (other superlatives he lacks). He has/is some superlative things, and he must be content with that — he is in a position of ἀγαπᾶν and μηδενὸς δεῖσθαι regarding these. But he lacks other things, and this shortage is what drives him.

Nevertheless, Plato puts it in such a way that Alcibiades' problem is not one of acquiring (κτάομαι) *more* things, but in particular *greater* (μείζω) things.

Be that as it may, the question remains: what are those greater things? Socrates suggests

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[34] Socrates is playing with the complex semantic field of μέγιστος, by using it in an ambiguous fashion. Here, he is clearly alluding to Alcibiades' remarkable physical stature, but also to his strength (physical or not) and to an unspecific greatness. In this fashion, Socrates complements Alcibiades, while maintaining a considerably vague image of him.

[35] With the adjectives πλεῖστοι and ἄριστοι, Socrates is both referring to quantity in numbers and to the noble character of the many friends

[36] All this takes place in 104a-b. I will now skip the second part of the description. The reason is very simple: it has to do with power, and that is a subject that I want to address later on. But I can already say this: Socrates' first big speeches can be divided into two sections each: one concerning the superlative, the other concerning the problem of how to get there (*i.e.* the problem of having the power to get there). In order to make my explanation clear, I will start by considering the superlative in both these speeches, and then consider the problem of power they pose.

[37] In 105c Socrates even says that he is not guessing at this, as he knows it to be so: "ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἔχεις ταύτην τὴν ἐλπίδα, εὖ οἶδα καὶ οὐκ εἰκάζω."

that, from Alcibiades' point of view, it would be to rule Europe and Asia, but, *most off all*, to fill, so to speak, all men with his name and his power ("οὐκ ἂν αὖ μοι δοκεῖς ἐθέλειν οὐδ᾽ ἐπὶ τούτοις μόνοις ζῆν, εἰ μὴ ἐμπλήσεις τοῦ σοῦ ὀνόματος καὶ τῆς σῆς δυνάμεως πάντας ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἀνθρώπους." 105c). He therefore hints that there is *one single thing* that would satisfy Alcibiades. However, one can counter-argue and say he wants all the things he already has, and he is just not focusing on them because he already has them. The question is then: is Alcibiades after many superlatives or *a* superlative? Do the tension and disproportion we have mentioned relate to *one superlative* — one thing that subsumes and gives order to all other things — or to many different superlatives?

Once again, this is a difficulty that only appears later in the dialogue, at least explicitly. But we can already give it a temporary answer: as Alcibiades initial description shows, having a lot of superlatives can be equated to having nothing he wants, since he would rather die than to live with them. And this means that having all these superlatives is only something desirable if they somehow lead to what one really wants — *to the very best thing of all*.

It is therefore here that we find the fourth answer to the question "who is Alcibiades?" He is the man who wants to be known by everyone, everywhere, and to be considered as a historical benchmark for the future (just like Xerxes and Cyrus).[38] In other words, he is the epitome of the philotimic take on life. For him, the most important thing of all is to be admired by others.[39] Accordingly, in Alcibiades' case, having all these amazing attributes is only important because it helps him in the process of getting what he really wants — to fill, so to speak, all men with his name and his power, to be known and admired by everyone.[40] If these things do not lead him to such a goal, he would rather die than live with them.

The disproportion and tension we have talked about relate therefore to *one superlative.*

Nevertheless, desiring this superlative seems to involve desiring the *means* to get there. Herein lies the articulation between *the* superlative and the "sub-superlatives": the latter are desired for the sake of the former.[41]

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[38] 105c.

[39] We hence find an implicit reference to the role played by philotimia in human life, a subject debated in the *Phaedrus*, the *Charmides* and the *Symposium*. Just as in these dialogues, Socrates focuses on how this desire to be admired rests on a kind of knowledge.

[40] In order to make this explanation clearer, I will save the problem of power and the simple/complex nature of the superlative for later.

[41] This is obviously entailed in Plato's analysis. This aspect will be further developed later on in the dialogue, but never with the same depth with which it is considered in the *Gorgias*, namely in the discussion between Polus and Socrates. (467c-468e). Nevertheless, further ahead Alcibiades indirectly says that, if he could get to power without having to work on improving himself, he would gladly do it (119b-c).

The superlative is hence *that thing for the sake of which all other things are done and desired*. Such a thing is simply *the best* — that which cannot be done for the sake of others, that which knows nothing bigger or better, that which can never be overtaken by anything else, and that which suffices by and of itself.

It is important to note that this is an utterly *formal* description. The superlative is whatever fits this role. The tension towards a better "living situation" turns out to be a tension towards *the best* "living situation", and the disproportion between where one is and where one would rather be equates to the distance between where one is and the *best* place in the world.

Now, these considerations about the superlative leave us better equipped to deal with the questions we have raised above.

This first question we can answer is whether or not the tension towards the superlative is something peculiar to Alcibiades. But, because the best way to answer this question is to consider whether or not we also crave for the best of the best, we must consider this question in conjunction with another: how is Alcibiades' unwillingness to compromise related to my willingness to compromise?

As we have seen, the main differences between our own position and Alcibiades' position lie in our need or will to compromise. This happens for one of two reasons: either we are not in a position to get everything we want, or we are actually perfectly content with what we have. In the first case, we wish for more than we have, but, if this is out of our reach — *i.e.* if we do not have the power to get it —, we settle for the best we can get, which means that we do want a superlative, but just do not have the means to get it. In the second, we think that what we currently have is exactly what we need. In this case, we believe that we have the best we can have, otherwise we would not be content with it. And even if there is a chance that we are content because we have settled for the best possible, the fact that it is a best possible already hints that there is a hidden tension towards the real best.

My claim is therefore that Plato is trying to make us realize that, just like Alcibiades, we will only be truly content when we get what we consider to be the very best. When we settle for something other than that, there is still a tension towards what we do not have. It just happens that this tension is hidden behind a "defensive" calculation of what is *de facto* possible to attain.[42] In this scenario, there is still disproportion and tension, for we have not yet reached what we want to reach (*i.e.* we would still like to be where we think we cannot be). It is actually

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[42] Obviously, Plato does not mean to say that one cannot attain the superlative and be happy with it (neither am I implying this). To deny such a possibility would be too dogmatic for Plato. At stake is just an inventory of what it would take to actually find the superlative and to get it.

not that hard to fathom how this can indeed be the case with each of us. In fact, to comprehend it, it suffices to say that, if, for any reason, we saw an opportunity to jump at what we really long for, the disproportion would become manifest and the tension would drive us in our goal's direction.

Deep down, Plato is trying to show that we have a conqueror's soul, just like Alcibiades. We just tend to be shy about it, just like Alcibiades. Why? That is a question to be considered in the History of Resistance in the *First Alcibiades*.[43]

The dialogue deals with all these problems towards the end of the discussion between Socrates and Alcibiades, but there are already clear hints of Plato's position in these early stages. For he seems to be asking his reader: imagine you have no limitations, imagine you can get whatever you want — imagine you are put in what seems to be Alcibiades' (*or even Pericles'*) powerful position — what would you go for? Would you still be content with just a little bit more? Or would this change the way you behave and make you strive towards different things? If your power had no limits, would you not be just as much a conqueror as Alcibiades? Even if you tried to conquer different things, would you really stop until you got whatever you thought to be the best?

If the answer is yes, that means I am currently aiming towards — or settling for — what I believe to be best *possible*, while I would actually prefer to have the very best.

Another way to look at it is to take away Alcibiades' unwillingness to settle. A simple example suffices: imagine Alcibiades ruled the whole of Asia and Europe — and all men in those continents knew his name and were subdued to his power —, but then he discovered that there was still another continent called Oceania, where no one had ever heard of him. Imagine also that, upon knowing about the existence of Oceania, he understood that it was clearly out of his reach. In this scenario, he would either relinquish his superlative goal — thus aiming towards a *possible* superlative (to be the ruler of Asia and Europe, excluding Oceania, because he could not get there) —, or he would try to conquer Oceania, and would not be happy until he did so.

In the first case, Alcibiades' position would be very similar to our own, because he could either admit his defeat and settle for what he has — knowing he wanted more —, or he could

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[43] As this study aims to show, our reluctance in admitting to this is related to a certain *quantum minimum* of philotimic tension within us. We care about what other people think of us, and that is why we shy away from admitting this in public. As the History of Resistance also shows, this is not a problem that Plato addresses directly in this play, and hence it is also connected to the history of resistance — he wants us to ask this, but he does not answer it (in this dialogue). It is like an open door, left there for us to peep into,

be content with what he has, forget about Oceania, and live happily with his rule over the rest of the known world.

However, we must not forget that Alcibiades is described as the one who *never* compromises. [44] He is put —*via dramatic means* — in a "do or die" position.

It is this "do or die" attitude that highlights Alcibiades' unswerving tension towards the superlative. But, in doing so, it ends up making us question whether or not we are like him in that regard. Or, in other words, Alcibiades' rather bold attitude towards his goal in life makes us question our own relationship with what we desire: do we settle for lesser versions of what we want? Or are we all-in? And, when we are content with what we have, does this happen because we believe it to be the very best? Or do we compromise because we believe it the best we can get?[45]

Furthermore, by putting so much emphasis on Alcibiades' "do or die" approach to life, Plato paves the way for the final stages of the dialogue, where the former's steadfast attitude comes to epitomise the idea of care for oneself (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ). Here (from 120c onwards), Socrates tries to show that care for oneself is care for the superlative, and vice-versa. It is this "care for himself" and "taking trouble with himself" (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ) that will force Alcibiades to recognize the importance of a preliminary appraisal of his situation. So that, in the end, it is Alcibiades' unswerving will to improve his situation that makes it necessary for him a) to identify what is lacking in his life, b) to identify the means to acquire what is lacking (which are also lacking), and c) to acquire these intermediate things and, with their help, get to the situation we wishes to be in. Put simply: it is this immense care for himself that forces Alcibiades to review who he is and where he is.

Now, besides all this emphasis on the tension towards the superlative, the comparison between Alcibiades and each of us also helps to understand how the *identification* of the superlative is indeed a problem. Which brings us to the third question formulated above: is this superlative the same for everyone?

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[44] It is rather hard to say if he would actually prefer to die if faced with the choice between failing to achieve his goal and dying *de facto*. Plato is also playing with an obvious factor: for most of us, death is the worst thing of all, *i.e.* what can be termed a *negative superlative*. Once again, he is playing with concepts and connections which he tackles elsewhere (just to name two: *Gorgias* 469b and the *Phaedo* 83c; in both these texts, Plato addresses the problem of the greatest evil in connection with the idea of εἰδέναι and οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι — as will happen latter in this text.)

[45] Things are obviously more complicated than this. I will not go into all the complexity involved here, for that would be more suited to the actual history of resistance. Be that as it may, I believe Plato wants us to ask these questions — they correspond to the kind of resistance Plato wants to create in us.

As is said in the *Gorgias*, there is a rather heated controversy or dispute (ἀμφισβήτησις) about what is the best in life (451d-452e)[46]. And that surfaces as soon as we ask ourselves if we fit in Alcibiades shoes. Indeed, I can be similar to him in some regards — wanting to rule the world and to be known by everyone is not one of them. Accordingly, even if I admit to having a conquerors soul, such desire for more and more can be restricted to a very finite field in live, while still being *the* superlative: *the* best thing in life is to be the best father and husband, or to be the best surfer, or the best philosopher, or even to have a quiet, balanced and normal life.[47]

Plato's description of Alcibiades as a young man who only cares for power and fame clearly aims at creating such a controversy (ἀμφισβήτησις). Indeed, some think it is important to be rich and powerful, while others see it as a source of trouble and misery. And even though there is a predominant side, there are numerous *nuances* between them (and everything but a consensus).

But the most important thing to note regarding this dispute is that it creates a very serious danger: in the end, *one might be wrong about what is the best thing in life.*

In fact, even if we agree that each person might have a different superlative, this does not mean he actually *knows* what is the best thing in life. It is not just a matter of different people believing the superlative to be different things. No: the real problem lies in the fact that such differences should make us question whether we truly know what is the best.

It should be added that these differences in the identification of the superlative do not only happen when comparing myself with others. As life tends to show — *and this happens in the First Alcibiades* — the same person may consider the superlative to be different things throughout his life. It is not by chance that Alcibiades is just turning into an adult. When I was a kid, I might have thought that the best life would be a life playing football the whole day. Nowadays, that seems very far from the best life possible. And who is to say that the thing I consider to be the best now will not turn out to be far worse than playing football the whole day? Am I sure this will not happen? If I am not, the results can be catastrophic. I could be steering my life towards something that turns out to be terrible. All it takes is a misinterpretation of the superlative.

So, in the end, both Alcibiades and us have the same *formal structure* of tension towards what we consider to the best in life. And this means that the superlative appears once again as

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[46] See notably 451d "Ἀλλ', ὦ Γοργία, ἀμφισβητήσιμον καὶ τοῦτο λέγεις καὶ οὐδέν πω σαφές." This is just one example, for the whole dialogue is built around this discussion — and different candidates for the role of "best thing in life" appear throughout the text.

[47] There are several problems I am not considering here. In the second part, we will see how they appear as silent questions. These silent questions are one of Plato's ways of asking us to resist him in a good way.

something merely *formal* — the very best. However, we probably will not agree on what that is — and neither will the fifty-year-old Alcibiades agree with the twenty-year-old Alcibiades nor the fifty-year-old me with the twenty-year-old me.

The real problem is thus that we cannot find a rule to deformalize the superlative into a specific content.

Put simply: there is a problem when it comes to knowing what the very best thing in life is, for we are not in a position to say with certainty that the superlative is X or Y or Z.[48]

8. THE SUPERLATIVE GOAL AND SUPERLATIVE POWER

Now that we have addressed these questions — in a way that only poses them as problems to be considered throughout the dialogue —, we can compare Alcibiades' and our "living situation" in terms of power. For, as we have seen, the tension towards the superlative forces us to consider if (and how) we can actually attain that superlative. This is therefore a problem that we share with Alcibiades. However, it is suggested that our position in this regard clearly diverges from his.

Let us then start by seeing how the concept of power (δύναμις) appears in the text.

Just like the idea of superlative, the concept of power is introduced in a rather sneaky fashion. The first time it comes around is in 103a, when Socrates says that some divine opposition — of whose *power* Alcibiades will learn about later — prevented him from talking to the young man in the past.[49] By saying this, Plato is associating power both with something divine (δαιμόνιον)[50] and with the ability to *effectively* influence the course of life (in this case, the gods prevented Socrates from talking to Alcibiades). The divine aspect of power will be mentioned several times during the dialogue, but the description of power as something efficient — as the ability to make things happen — is the key aspect on which Socrates focuses during the initial part of the text.

This is exactly what happens in 104b, where the word δύναμις appears for the second time. This passage is a bit more complex, for it plays with both a) a reference to Alcibiades'

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[48] But this is not equivalent to saying that we will never be.
[49] "τούτου δὲ τὸ αἴτιον γέγονεν οὐκ ἀνθρώπειον, ἀλλά τι δαιμόνιον ἐναντίωμα, οὗ σὺ τὴν δύναμιν καὶ ὕστερον πεύσῃ."
[50] There are several subtle connotations to this adjective. In a way, the idea of power is already present in it, for it can be used to express the idea of "being under the power of the gods".

connections in "high places" — *i.e.* what we would term *positions of power* —, and b) a reference to Pericles' ability to do whatever he wants ("δύναται πράττειν ὅτι ἂν βούληται").

In fact, Socrates starts by saying that these connections will serve Alcibiades in situations of need,[51] thus implying that they can help him *get things done*. Then he says that he has an even *stronger* power in his relationship with Pericles, his tutor. Consequently, even if Plato does not explicitly describe Alcibiades' connections as a form of power, by comparing these two things,[52] he is telling us that Alcibiades' connections with important people are δυνάμεις. And the truth is that we have all dealt with this kind of power[53]: we might have benefited directly from it or we might have heard stories of people who got things done because someone put in a good word (a job position in a company, some papers that were taking too long in the city hall, etc.).

Now, notwithstanding the fact that both these things are described as forms of power, the key to grasp what δύναμις means lies in the reference to Pericles. For he is portrayed as the truly powerful man — the man who can do whatever he wants, wherever he wants (and, one assumes, whenever he wants).[54] True power thus seems to rest in the ability to do whatever one wants, *without limitations*.

But things get even more complicated, since the reference to Pericles and the use of the expression "δύναται πράττειν ὅτι ἂν βούληται" clearly allude to Plato's *Gorgias*. There is both 1) a reference to the opposition between "doing what one wants" (*ποιεῖν ἃ βούλεται*) and "doing what one thinks fit" (*ποιεῖν ἃ δοκεῖ αὐτῷ*), and 2) a reference to Pericles' despotic power and its connection to happiness and the superlative.[55]

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[51] "οῖ εἴ τι δέοι ὑπηρετοῖεν ἄν σοι".

[52] He does so by using the adjective μέγασ in the comparative (μείζω).

[53] What is nowadays called "having *connections*".

[54] In fact, this power is not limited to Athens, but extends to the whole of Greece and reaches many and great Barbarian nations/families/races. "ὃς οὐ μόνον ἐν τῇδε τῇ πόλει δύναται πράττειν ὅτι ἂν βούληται, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν πάσῃ τῇ Ἑλλάδι καὶ τῶν βαρβάρων ἐν πολλοῖς καὶ μεγάλοις γένεσιν."

[55] The problem of tyranny appears several times, and one could argue that it is present from the beginning of the text. Nevertheless, an express analysis of it appears in the discussion between Polus and Socrates. In 468e there is a characterization of tyranny without using the word itself ("ὡς δὴ σύ, ὦ Σώκρατες, οὐκ ἂν δέξαιο ἐξεῖναί σοι ποιεῖν ὅτι δοκεῖ σοι ἐν τῇ πόλει μᾶλλον ἢ μή, οὐδὲ ζηλοῖς ὅταν ἴδῃς τινὰ ἢ ἀποκτείναντα ὃν ἔδοξεν αὐτῷ ἢ ἀφελόμενον χρήματα ἢ δήσαντα"), while the problem then becomes explicit from 469c until Callicles intervenes (Polus asks "σὺ ἄρα τυραννεῖν οὐκ ἂν δέξαιο;" and Socrates answers "οὔκ, εἰ τὸ τυραννεῖν γε λέγεις ὅπερ ἐγώ."). We notice the second reference when we realize that Plato is putting Pericles in the tyrant role, which is played by Archelaus in the *Gorgias* Even though Pericles is also mentioned as a tyrant in Plato's *Gorgias*, Archelaus ends up being the main figure. The reason lies in Plato's desire to highlight the unjust ways by which Archelaus rose to power, more so than to claim one is more powerful than the other. Nevertheless, according to Polus, both of them fit the role of the tyrant who is happy because he is able to do whatever he wants — and this enables both of them to get the best thing(s) in life. According to Socrates however, they are only able to do whatever they think fit, and not what they want — and hence, they have no power whatsoever.

My claim here is that these references are meant to make us consider both a) if doing whatever one wants is indeed power, and b) if every project about acquiring power is necessarily tyrannical.

Let us start by further considering the intrinsically despotic or tyrannical nature of power, since this is what is at stake in the next few occurrences of the word δύναμις.

In 105b, Socrates makes a simile between the "living situation" Alcibiades wishes to reach and Pericles' current position. Even though the comparison is implicit, because the allusion to Pericles happened a while ago (104b), it is clear: just as Pericles is able to do whatever he wants, Alcibiades wants to obtain the *greatest* power in the city, which, being power over the greatest city, will translate into power over the rest of Greece and the barbarians.[56] And this hints that, in both Pericles' and Alcibiades' cases, the greatest power equates to being able to control *everything*, not just a few things. This is actually why Alcibiades is not yet where he wants to be — although he seems to be powerful, he is still unable to get *everything* he wants (as Pericles does).

It is therefore here that we find the connection between power and the superlative. For all this suggests that the tension towards the superlative requires a tension towards a *superlative power* — a power that knows no limits, a power that can effectively render whatever one wants, that overcomes all possible obstacles on one's way to the superlative. This is also implied in 105c, where it is said that Alcibiades wants to fill, so to speak, *all* men with his name and his power[57] — *i.e.* to make his own power *limitless*.

If we then take a closer look at 105c, we notice that the distinction between the superlative *per se* and superlative power is blurry. Indeed, one already has the idea that Alcibiades wants to be known and admired by everyone, but now it seems that his supreme goal in life is to be known by everyone *and* to have power over all men. Put like this, it is not completely clear whether his goal is a) merely philotimic (to be known by everyone), in which case having absolute power is just a way to get that recognition, or b) to be known by everyone *as* the man who rules the world, or even c) if he wants to be known by everyone *and* wants to be the most powerful man in the whole world.

Put simply: the connection between power and the superlative is hazy.[58]

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[56] This is not a translation, but rather an approximate and condensed version of the actual passage. It reads: "καὶ τοῦτ᾽ ἐνδειξάμενος μέγιστον δυνήσεσθαι ἐν τῇ πόλει, ἐὰν δ᾽ ἐνθάδε μέγιστος ᾖς, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις Ἕλλησι, καὶ οὐ μόνον ἐν Ἕλλησιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τοῖς βαρβάροις, ὅσοι ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμῖν οἰκοῦσιν ἠπείρῳ."

[57] "εἰ μὴ ἐμπλήσεις τοῦ σοῦ ὀνόματος καὶ τῆς σῆς δυνάμεως πάντας ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἀνθρώπους".

[58] For example, one could still ask: is the superlative —the best — something necessarily simple, or can it be a combination of things? This is in fact a serious objection, which I have overlooked so far: even if one agrees that

Evidently, Plato chooses this grey area as the place to strike. In 105d-e, Socrates claims that, without him, Alcibiades will not have this greatest power, because he will not be able to get what he wants. Deep down, he is playing with Alcibiades' confused understanding of the connection between getting what he wants and having unlimited *efficient* power. And that is how Socrates turns the tables and gives himself absolute power over Alcibiades — *i.e.* absolute control over Alcibiades' possibility of reaching both his goal and absolute power.

Let us then consider 105d-e carefully:

Everything starts with a rather surprising turn of events. After describing Alcibiades and his goals, Socrates starts 105d by anticipating an obvious question yet to be raised by the young man: what is your point? Indeed, even the reader is asking the same thing by now. Why has Socrates spent so much time praising Alcibiades and saying that he wants this and that? And how is this description connected to the fact that Socrates refuses to turn his back on Alcibiades, just like his other lovers? The answer is incredibly surprising: because Socrates, the old man with no power whatsoever in the city — the man who is despised by many and holds no sort of significant position — says that Alcibiades cannot attain *anything* he wants without him. And because he loves Alcibiades, Socrates will try to help him in his quest.

But how is it that the same man who was just described as incredibly powerful needs a nobody? How can this strange fellow who weirdly stalks Alcibiades around town be of any service to the mighty young man?

Once we look at the text with serious eyes, this twist of fate becomes comical. Indeed, if instead of sticking to the surface (*i.e.* instead of *resisting* seeing the depth of the text) we try to picture the dramatic side of the dialogue, we understand that this is the same as an average man[59] walking up to a young prince and saying: without me, you will not be able to get *anything* you want in life. The prince would surely be interested, just like Alcibiades is. Still, that interest would amount to something like "let's see what this lunatic has to say".

But Socrates means every word he says. And that is what makes the passage utterly ironical: there is a nobody who claims to have total control over one of the most powerful men in the world, and indeed so much so that Alcibiades' entire fate depends on him. Only Socrates — who has no power at all — is able to give Alcibiades the unlimited power he wants.[60]

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the superlative is simply the best (and thus forms a kind of unit), this does not mean that the best thing in life has to be simple. Indeed, for some people the best can translate into being the richest man in the world, while for others it would consist in being the best and the healthiest, and for yet others it would consist in being the richest, healthiest and most handsome (while for others it would just consist in being the healthiest and the most handsome, etc.).

[59] For this is Socrates' role in his city, in the best-case scenario.

[60] Funnily enough, the text will show Socrates is right.

Everyone is then left with a very simple question: how?

Unlike the question, the answer is rather complex. In fact, it is so complicated that it will take the whole dialogue to unveil. But where does one start looking for it?

At this stage of the dialogue, several hints have already been given. Sure, they have not been given in a clear and textual fashion — for the written text gives us no clue about where this is going and how Socrates has any kind of power over Alcibiades. Yet, the tacit and dramatic aspects highlighted so far prove to be fruitful. To be more specific, by hinting that the superlative is controversial and not easy to identify, Plato is implying that, if Alcibiades does not *know* what the superlative is, he has no power at all, since he has no *effective* way of getting it.[61]

But where can we find this in the *First Alcibiades*? Surely not in the text… Well, it is in the text, just not in plain sight. It is rather hidden in the implicit reference to the opposition between ποιεῖν ἃ βούλεται and ποιεῖν ἃ δοκεῖ αὐτῷ in the *Gorgias*. For, just as in the *Gorgias*, Plato is trying to force his reader to ask whether doing whatever one wants is indeed power — and this will be a crucial point throughout the *First Alcibiades*.

Now, in the *Gorgias,* at the heart of this opposition lies the question of whether power, in order to be power, needs to be good for whoever has it — i.e. needs to be *beneficial* to him who has it.[62] Here, in Plato's *First Alcibiades*, such a question is also posed, but it only appears explicitly further down the road.[63] Nevertheless, it is certainly implied here, since Alcibiades seems to consider power to be both a) something good in and of itself and b) something that leads to good things (and ultimately to the superlative).

In fact, according to Alcibiades' initial description, he seems to believe that power is synonymous with the ability to get good things — and ultimately the superlative. More to the point, power seems to be the capability to get things that are good *for him* — and indeed what is the best *for him*.

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[61] There is an obvious objection to this: one can argue that power is the ability to get things done, period. This implies that power, as power, does not have to be good for him who has it. This is an objection that Plato does not consider in this dialogue (he comes close to it in *Gorgias* 466b; but ultimately, he does not really consider it there either, because Polus agrees that power has to be good for him who has it, otherwise it will not be power). It is easy to see why Plato does not worry much about such an objection: if things are as he says, then we only want power in order to get the superlative, and that means that if power does not lead us to something we consider to be good, we are not interested in it. This problem will be considered with more care in the second part, where we will see how Plato leaves this as an implicit question, begging for us to resist it (in a positive way).

[62] *Gorgias*, 466b.

[63] 115a. The parallels are huge. In the *First Alcibiades*, Plato uses συμφέρω and nominal forms (mostly συμφέροντα), in the *Gorgias*, he uses the verb ὀφελέω and several nominal forms (446b).

And this brings us to another aspect of Alcibiades' description, one I have only briefly mentioned: Alcibiades' care for himself.

The young man is not indifferent to whatever happens to him. On the contrary, he deeply cares for himself, indeed so much so that he will not stop until he acquires what he considers to be the best *for him*.

This is the sole reason why Alcibiades becomes interested in what Socrates has to say: it affects him. Just like in several other plays, Socrates is connecting the tension towards the superlative with A) a non-indifference towards oneself, B) a tension towards a power that can deliver this superlative, and C) a tension towards knowing where one is as regards one's distance to the superlative and as regards one's ability to effectively get it.

9. POSITIVE NON-INDIFFERENCE TOWARDS ONESELF AND KNOWLEDGE

As the dialogue will show, it is this non-indifference towards himself that makes Alcibiades go after the superlative, and it is also this tension towards the superlative that makes him interested in having any sort of power. Alcibiades is so devoted to himself that he wants nothing but the best for him. It is therefore Alcibiades' utmost devotion to himself that opens the door for Socrates' analysis of ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ.

In addition to this, it is also because of this fundamental non-indifference towards himself that Alcibiades does not want what *seems* to be the best, but what *is* the best. Accordingly, it is Alcibiades' fundamental non-indifference towards himself — *i.e.* his non--indifference towards whatever happens to him — that creates a tension towards a) actually *knowing* what is the best for him and b) *knowing how* he can attain it.

Socrates' — Plato's — goal is to test this knowledge

This test starts with Socrates' initial questioning of Alcibiades. For this questioning tries to prove that Alcibiades does not *know* what he thinks he knows, and that this impedes him from getting what he truly wants. Socrates' goal is hence to help Alcibiades realize that he does not know what he thinks he knows (and therefore might be aiming for something that is not in his best interest, but only appears to be the best for him — *i.e.* he might be aiming for an illusion of the best).[64]

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[64] This is also why it is *Plato* — not Socrates — who plays with the idea that there is a dispute concerning what is the best thing in life (by using an implicit reference to the *Gorgias*). In fact, despite being true that the *character* Socrates will start by attacking Alcibiades' pretence of knowledge, he has not, at this point in the dialogue, given

So, in sum: Socrates means to show that Alcibiades is in a state of *pretence* of knowledge. What is more, he wants to show him that he is in a state of pretence of knowledge that *does not recognize itself as pretence of knowledge*.

Once again, the same applies to me, the reader. In fact, if Alcibiades is meant to portray the reader — as I have been arguing so far, — this must mean that, just like Alcibiades, I too tend to be in a state of pretence of knowledge regarding several things in life (amongst which it is likely there is the knowledge of the superlative, of what power is, etc.).

But this is not all.

For even though Alcibiades is portrayed as the man who believes he knows what the best thing in life is, he is also portrayed as the man who *does not know* how to acquire it. This is why he still does not have it, and also why he is interested in hearing what Socrates has to say (for if he already knew how to acquire his superlative goal, he would not need to pay any attention to Socrates).

So, in reality, Alcibiades believes he knows what the best thing in life is, but realizes he might still not know how to get there (even though he does have a plan, as seen in 106c). And this in turn means that there is also a tension towards *knowing how to get to the superlative*, and not only towards knowing *what the superlative is*. In other words: there is also a tension towards *knowing* what are *the means* that render the superlative. In this same sense, there is a tension towards knowing *what kind of power* enables us to attain the superlative — and because of this, there ends up being a tension towards knowing *what power truly is*.

Being astute as he is, Plato will make Socrates begin by attacking what Alcibiades is not sure he knows. This is why Socrates starts by questioning how Alcibiades plans to become the most well-known and powerful man in the world. And, as the dialogue attests, he finds several gaps in the young man's plan. All of these faults stem from Alcibiades' lack of knowledge, especially his lack of any sort of knowledge that might benefit the assembly. But by questioning the foundations of Alcibiades' knowledge, Socrates ends up making him become unsure about whether he truly knows anything he thought he knew. Consequently, Alcibiades gradually begins to doubt whether he truly knows what the best thing in life is —

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any explicit clue as to what he will do. That is why the *character* Alcibiades' is baffled. And this is why the reader who is studying the text for the first time (and perhaps has not read other dialogues) is also baffled and confused. However, *Plato* — the cunning author — is playing with several levels of complexity, giving clues to his reader regarding what is happening and how the dialogue will unfold, and also trying to help the reader who is reading for the second or tenth time to see that the very problems that will show up further ahead are already at stake at the very beginning. It is hence by resisting the text in a good way — *i.e.* by offering resistance to its superficial value — that we come to play the same kind of philosophical game with the dialogue that Socrates is playing with his opponent.

and this is when he starts surrendering to Socrates and promising to follow him as his teacher (*i.e. when he promises to learn Socrates' way of looking at things*).

It is not hard to see how this translates to the reader. In fact, we also tend to uncritically consider something to be the best thing in life[65], but also to acknowledge that we might not know how to attain it. For example, I can consider being the richest man in the world to be the best thing in life, but still not be sure as to how I can become that man. Usually this makes me so focused on understanding how to become the richest man that I never — or rarely and vaguely — stop to consider whether being the richest man in the world really is the best thing I can aspire to.

By making Alcibiades question his inclination towards fame and power, Plato is trying to question not only my ability to *effectively* acquire what I believe to be the best thing in life, but also — and perhaps mostly — my *identification* of it. But in doing so, he makes me question several other things that I always took for granted.

Deep down, this a problem of *identity*:

First, we have to be able to *know* what the best thing in life really *is — i.e. we have to be able to identify it.* Then we have to *know* how to get it — *i.e.* we have to *identify the means* that will lead us to that superlative. And it should be noted that, if I do not know where I want to go to, I cannot know how to get there. Which in turn means that the *identification* of the means is subordinated to the identification of the end. Therefore, if I find all the right means to acquire the wrong goal, all my efforts are in vain. And this is what Socrates claims to be happening to Alcibiades — and, what is more, *to each one of us*.

Now, I admit that all these subtle connections are still blurry. But my claim is that Plato wants them to be so. In fact, this haziness creates tension towards answers. We are left wondering what this means and how the pieces of the puzzle fit together. And that is the kind of tension that creates *good* resistance: it makes us stop and ask questions, it makes us question whether Socrates and Alcibiades are making any sense, whether they are answering all the questions we are left with.

Put briefly: this obscurity creates a tension towards *knowing* (εἰδέναι) what is truly happening, not only in the text, but also in our own lives.

Plato is hence performatively doing to the reader what Socrates is doing to his Alcibiades: creating in him the idea that he might not know what he thinks he knows. By doing this, Plato creates in the reader tension towards actually knowing what is going on with the

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[65] Be it the very best or the best possible.

dialogue, yes, but also towards knowing how the dialogue relates to him — and, as a result, tension towards knowing what is going on with his life.

The reason why Plato does this is simple to grasp: Plato wants us to stop and listen to our inner Socrates. He wants us to, instead of running towards what might be an illusion of the best, first consider if we actually *know* what we are running after.

Just as in the dialogue, it is the identification of a lack of knowledge that allows Socrates to come into our lives. In fact, Socrates' main goal throughout the remainder of the dialogue is still to show Alcibiades that his knowledge is lacking in several regards.

Furthermore, it is important to stress that this lack of knowledge threatens to destroy Alcibiades' power. In fact, if he neither *knows* what he truly wants nor how to get it, then he will not be able to achieve his lofty goals. And this is why Socrates claims that, without his help and the gods' help (the only ones who appear to have true power), Alcibiades is in trouble: *because he does not know these things*. [66] In the end, Alcibiades might be completely unable to get what he wants — *just like everyone of us*. In fact, if this is the case, Alcibiades' position becomes closer to the reader's position. In fact, if Alcibiades' power turns out to be an illusion of power, he is in the same position as everyone else: he is in a state of incapacity to get what he wants, because he lacks the means to do it by himself.

And this in turn implies that this is a problem of *identity* in a second sense — which is the original sense referred to at the beginning of this paper. For if, given that Alcibiades' identity was built upon his incredible power and his superlative attributes, it turns out that *he is not powerful at all*, that *he does need someone else* (Socrates), and that *he does lack several things* (of which the most important is knowledge), then Alcibiades is not who he thinks he is.[67]

Or, to answer the question "who is Alcibiades?" in a more categorical fashion: if Socrates is right, then Alcibiades is just like every one of us — which means, for dramatically and philosophical purposes, that he *is* each of the readers.

But this relationship goes both ways! For, if Alcibiades portrays the reader, then Plato is also trying to tell the reader that, just like Alcibiades, he might not know what he thinks he knows —and, what is more, that he might not know who he really is.

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[66] And this is one of the reasons why, towards the end of the dialogue, Socrates asks if Alcibiades knows who he really his — because, if he is to look after himself, he first needs to know who he is.

[67] And Plato is playing with the fact that history itself proved the grand image Alcibiades had of himself to be false.

10. RESISTANCE, POWER AND KNOWLEDGE: THE HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL ANSWERS

We must now clarify a) how all the above gives us an entry point into the history of resistance, b) how this history is related to Alcibiades' identity and c) what role it plays in the dialogue.

For this purpose, I would like to recall the political and historical answers. Behind both these answers lies a common thread: Alcibiades portrays a man of action, as opposed to a man of thought. In this sense, one of his main traits is his ability to *do things*, *i.e.* his *power* (or, historically speaking, his lack thereof).

In ancient Greece, philosophers like Socrates were often considered useless because of their inability to make practical decisions. After giving much consideration to everything, they were unable to convert such thought into action (which is ironically Alcibiades' fate). One must not forget that this was a culture marked by the birth of democracy, where the definition of a man was based on his ability to vote and partake in the city's political life. Accordingly, being considered unfit to partake in it was seen as a great insult. On the contrary, Alcibiades appears as the political man *par excellence*. He was well embedded in the political meanders of the city, he knew everyone of importance and, most of all, he *could get things done*.

If we now consider the main positions being portrayed by this contrast, we discover something that still holds true today. For the main reproach still made to philosophers is their inability to translate their theoretical knowledge into *effective* action. They might have theoretically sound foundations, but they are usually unable to *apply* them. Let them stay at their desks, where they no doubt have a lot of knowledge. But don't let them open the door and come outside. Out here, in the real world, we play by different rules. And in this sense Alcibiades can still be seen as the antithesis of the philosophical way of life.

Underneath the opposition between these perspectives lies a distinction between a *theoretical* knowledge and a *practical* one. What is more, a discontinuity between these two forms of knowledge is being presupposed — *i.e.* it is being *presupposed* that one can have the latter without having the former. Put like this, Socrates represents a man who might have theoretical knowledge, but lacks the practical sort. On the other hand, in the preliminary stages of the dialogue Alcibiades is undoubtedly presented as the man who can *get things done,* thus implying he has practical know-how; but it is still not clear where he stands in terms of theoretical knowledge.[68]

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[68] It is suggested that he has great resources when it comes to his soul 104a, but it is hard to understand what this means.

The political and the historical answers hence connect some kind of knowledge — a practical one — with the ability to get things done. And this explains *why* Socrates is going to attack Alcibiades' concept of power: because he thinks Alcibiades does not understand the connection between knowledge and power. But it also shows *how* Socrates will attack it: he is going to focus on the discontinuity between practical and theoretical knowledge. By demonstrating that what we loosely call "practical knowledge" is first and foremost a kind of knowledge, Socrates aims to prove that power — the ability to *effectively* get what one wants — always depends on a) actually *knowing what* one wants and b) on *knowing how* to get it (in such a way that the *how* is always *subordinated* to the *what*).

Besides all this, these two answers — the political and the historical — also serve as examples of how the dramatic aspects of the dialogue play with the reader's presuppositions. In fact, I believe Plato wants us to see what I have termed Alcibiades' historical[69] and political traits. What is more, I think he builds up Alcibiades' character in order to make us think of them. By doing so, he is both testing us and putting us in Alcibiades' position. He is putting us in Alcibiades' shoes because he tricks us into thinking just like him. He plays us into thinking of Alcibiades what he thinks of himself — for just like we see Alcibiades as the political and practical man, he also sees himself like that, and just as we tend to recognize his power and all his attributes, he also admires himself, his powers and all his attributes. Hence, by portraying Alcibiades as a vain man who admires his own power and political prowess, while at the same time tricking us into admiring the young man for these very reasons, Plato is telling us that we think just like Alcibiades. But he is also testing us, because, deep down, he is asking: do you know why Alcibiades needs me? Do you know that you are just like Alcibiades? Do you know why *you* need me? Can you even guess where I am going with all this?

It is in this complicated game that we start to see the role played by resistance. For this illustrates both the resistance Socrates is trying to provoke and the resistance he is trying to condemn.

I will then try to clarify what I mean by resistance. Afterwards, I will move on to explain in what way resistance can be either good or bad.

We can start by seeing how the ideas of provocation and condemnation are intrinsically associated with an opposition. This is why it was so important to identify Alcibiades as

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[69] I do not mean to say that Plato wrote this dialogue thinking of how people in the future would see it. For even if this is not the case, what I mean here by historical traits is something that those people who lived at the same time as Plato would be able to pick up on. By that time everyone in Athens was aware of the historical facts of Alcibiades' life (which were intrinsically related to the cultural paradigm that gave them a context).

Socrates' opponent. Indeed, just as in all the other Platonic dialogues, we are dealing with a form of contention. And just as in all other dialogues, Plato quickly identifies two opposite sides. In this case, he does it in the complicated way I just tried to explain: on the one hand, he silently presents Alcibiades' character as having several *presuppositions*, which the reader is led to share; on the other hand, precisely because he emphasises Alcibiades' *philotimic* purpose and his power (via his political ability), he hints that these will be the things Socrates will go against.

So, when Socrates tells Alcibiades he will not be able to do anything he wishes without him, he is saying that *Alcibiades has no actual power* — and that certainly *provokes* him. But he is also hinting that the lack of power is intrinsically related to a lack of knowledge. Alcibiades still does not know this, as he still ignores that all the argument will be centred on his unconsidered *philotimic* aspirations and the fact that he has completely failed to understand what it means to be powerful. He still does not grasp what is at stake in his own position, *and this is what Socrates is condemning*.

The history of the discussion between them is hence the history of how both sides resist one another. Given the fact that Socrates takes the lead, one tends to think that resistance is predominantly on Alcibiades' side. Still, we must remember that Socrates also opposes Alcibiades: he is, after all, the only one of his lovers who has not yielded to his power (104c).

But more than just representing two sides resisting one another, these two characters are meant to portray two kinds of resistance: Socrates resists Alcibiades *mostly* in a good way, and Alcibiades resists Socrates *mostly* in a bad way.

In addition, we must not forget that Alcibiades' position tends to be our own position. As stated above, I would even go as far as saying that Alcibiades' character is first and foremost a dramatic resource Plato uses to provoke his reader — to instil in him a certain kind of resistance (Socrates' kind), while at the same time condemning another (Alcibiades' kind).

This means that Plato is playing with multiple intertwined levels of resistance. He uses Alcibiades to oppose Socrates, hence revealing the several ways in which the young man resists him — which tend to portray the reader's resistance to Socrates. Accordingly, as long as the reader fits Alcibiades' shoes, he resists Socrates just like him. But, as a reader, one can also resist Alcibiades' character, Socrates' character and even the text itself. And this is exactly what Plato wants. Plato does not want us to follow him like well-behaved schoolboys. He rather wants us to oppose him (and Socrates) and to commit to a dialogue with him that makes us question where we stand and what we think we know.

The turn of events in which Socrates claims power over Alcibiades is an example of this: Plato is not just condemning Alcibiades; no, he is also condemning his reader for embarking on Alcibiades' idea of power, while at the same time provoking him by saying he does not know what power is. Hence, Plato is asking his reader to resist him in a good way, by trying to figure out what is really happening and how it is that Socrates has power over Alcibiades (and, by the way, he is also asking him to consider whether Socrates actually has any power over Alcibiades or not…).

Now, although this begins to shed some light on the concept of resistance — or so I hope —, everything I have just said can be applied *mutatis mutandis* to every other platonic dialogue. In all the dialogues, the resistance offered by both the characters and the reader is built around the presuppositions they harbour. We must then zoom in on the specific role played by resistance in the *First Alcibiades*.

The key to grasp it has already been presented: in Alcibiades' case, he thinks it obvious a) that the best thing in life is to be known and to rule all over the world and b) that his position is a powerful one. The reader tends to assume that Alcibiades is indeed powerful and that he has the means to get what he wants, even if he does not necessarily agree that being known all over the world and having power over everyone is the best thing in life. Still, just as Alcibiades considers this to be the best in life, Plato suggests a) that the reader also considers something to be the best in life, and b) that, just like Alcibiades, he has not thoroughly considered if it is indeed the best thing in life — *i.e.* that he also *presupposes* something to be superlative.

Even disregarding the details, I will save for the history of resistance as such, it can already be said that these presuppositions assume the form of *unspoken (pretence of) truth*. Or, in other words, despite never having bothered to investigate what power truly is, it seems obvious to us that Alcibiades is a powerful man. He sees this as obvious, and so do we. In addition, although Alcibiades has never really considered what is indeed the best thing in life, he is portrayed as someone who sees his *philotimic* goal as his life's *evident* purpose. And if each of us thinks about his own life, it is easy to see how something can present itself as the self-evident best thing in life.

How such *unspoken (pretence of) truth* works is something that the history of resistance in this text will have to show. And I can also say that most of this history is the history of several *unspoken (pretences of) truth* (such as the one of power)*,* which can be traced back to this *fundamental unspoken (pretence of) truth* in one way or another.

In Plato's defence, it must be said that he is not as *naive* as to say that we never question this (these) presupposition(s). He is well aware that changes in the course of life often make us question what is the best thing in life. And this is why he describes Alcibiades as a young man who is turning into an adult, a young man whose prime is finishing.[70] In fact, such questions tend to emerge with the beginning of adult life. At that time, we are often faced with the question of the superlative: what is the best thing I can do with my life? And how can I do it? Can I really get it?

Nevertheless, it must be clarified that Socrates' main concern is not whether we raise these questions or not — even though this is indeed important — *but whether we try to answer them properly* or just embark on a new presupposition without having sufficient grounds to prove it. In the second case, there is no real change in our attitude (there is no real question). In this sense, we can be young all our lives, jumping from one unsubstantiated assumption to another. If this happens, we never truly question the *unspoken (pretence of) truth* itself — we just question its content.

Plato's goal is to make Alcibiades and us question the *unspoken (pretence of) truth itself*, not only its content. More than just questioning what is the best thing in life, he wants us to try and figure out our intricate connection to the superlative. This is precisely why he starts his discussion with Alcibiades by questioning the foundations of his knowledge [106d-e]. He wants to know how Alcibiades came to know what he thinks he knows. Deep down, he is trying to show that Alcibiades has no clue. He thinks he knows this and that, but he does not know how he learnt these things. In sum, Socrates' (and Plato's) goal is to show that there was never a "quality control" over the knowledge he acquired. For this reason, it might very well be that such so-called knowledge has no quality whatsoever — *i.e. that Alcibiades bought a pig in a poke*.

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[70] This happens explicitly in 105e and 131d. A connection between this bloom and an *illusion* is implied here. I believe that Plato is associating this prime of youth, this vigour and all those qualities we admire in youth with the undaunted and unstained belief in something as the best thing in life — as long as we blindly believe both in that superlative as something obvious and in our ability to grasp it, we feel invincible, and life seems something promising. As soon as we start questioning both what is the best thing in life and our ability to attain it, we are no longer young. Hence, youth and adulthood are *formal* concepts: one may be young until one is eighty; another might be an adult at ten. It would be very interesting to study this relationship in connection with other dialogues — for example, Polus, from the *Gorgias* is also a young man —, but also in connection with Joseph Conrad's *Youth*, where the concept of *illusion* is associated both with power and with the unquestioned belief in something unseen and unspoken.

The history of resistance is the history of how this pig in a poke is a) seen as a real pig and b) resists being recognized as a poke. In other words, it is the history of the stubborn "deficit of acuity" that tricks us into buying an empty poke when what we really wanted was the pig.[71]

It is hence the "pig in a poke" metaphor that brings us back to the problem of *identity*. For the fact that Alcibiades has no control whatsoever over what he thinks he knows is meant to make him retrospectively question what he thinks of himself, what he wants and the power he thought he had. Accordingly, it should also make us rethink all these things, not only as regards Alcibiades, but also as regards ourselves.

Sadly, all these unspoken (pretences of) truth not easy to pull out. They have a *vital* character, they are embedded deep in our lives, they *shape* our lives, they tell us what is important and how we should get it. Eradicating such unspoken (pretences of) truth would imply an extreme makeover. It would force Alcibiades to recognize that he does not know what he thinks he knows, that he is not who he thinks he is, etc. The history of resistance is hence the history of how and why we resist this extreme makeover: of how and why we tend to cling to the poke even though we really want the pig.

But this might suggest that all resistance is bad, while I have already said that there is some kind of positive resistance. The time has now come for me to explain what I mean by this and how it fits into the overall framework of resistance.

To get a glimpse of what good resistance is, we can consider Socrates' anticipation of the objection "what is your point with all this?" (105d) and Alcibiades' perplexity and curiosity when Socrates presents himself as a *conditio sine qua non* for his success.

The question "τί δὴ οὖν, ὦ Σώκρατες, τοῦτ᾽ ἐστί σοι πρὸς [105δ] λόγον" is the first explicit sign of good resistance in the whole text. Plato is clever in putting such words in Socrates' mouth. Even though both Alcibiades and the reader are probably wondering the same thing by now, the fact that Socrates himself asks it means that he also thinks that it is an important question to be asked. In other words, it shows that he wants and encourages resistance.

With this rhetorical device, Plato also connects resistance with a petition for understanding (or knowing, εἰδέναι) what is going on. The fact that Socrates himself raises the question makes it clear that he recognizes how obscure, with such praises, his goal is. Furthermore, it shows that he also considers a clarification necessary. He is leading by example,

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[71] The meaning of the expression "buying a pig in a poke" suits Plato's intent to a T, for it highlights exactly what Plato is trying to say: foolishly buying/accepting something without examining it first.

so to speak, and showing how both Alcibiades and the reader are supposed to stop him and ask him questions when they do not understand what is going on.

Obviously, the answer to the question "what is your point?" does not shed any light on Alcibiades' or the reader's doubts. If anything, it only plunges them into further darkness. For it is not clear how the praises given to Alcibiades and the description of his living situation and his goal in life are related to the fact he cannot attain any of it without Socrates. This obscurity is meant to increase Alcibiades' (and the reader's) astonishment, so that one is really forced to ask: where is he going with this?

And this is another example of good resistance. Plato wants Alcibiades and the reader to be truly baffled by this turn of events. He plays them, so that they want to *know* what is going on. This will probably make them pay attention to what Socrates is saying and make them consider it in a more critical way.[72] In sum, Plato is using Socrates to set a benchmark for the "quality control" we talked about: if you don't understand something, just stop and ask — and don't stop doing this until you have a proper answer.

If you are not sure it is a pig, don't buy the poke; just open the bag and look inside.

The surprise this dramatic trick is meant to generate in Alcibiades and the reader also proves to be a *performative* way of reaching the same effect the previous explicit question was aiming at. In fact, it is even more effective in generating good resistance, for it puts Alcibiades and the reader *in Socrates' shoes*: we are left wondering what is going on, truly surprised and truly interested in getting an answer. Indeed, this is Socrates' main trait: he is after all, the man of thought, the man who first needs to properly answer the questions he has before moving on and acting. When we resist the text in a good way, we are playing Socrates' part.[73]

So, now that we have an idea of what good resistance is, we can also consider its opposite, to wit, bad resistance.

Let us start with the fact that Plato puts an unanalysed presupposition in both Alcibiades' and our mouth — *i.e.* we start with the fact that there is something we think we know, without actually knowing it.

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[72] Plato is also playing with Alcibiades' philotimia. In fact, he is playing with the image he has of himself and the image he wants to project outwards. By hearing that he might not have any power, that the young man is forced to argue with Socrates, since he cannot consider himself inferior to Socrates nor can he be seen as inferior to him.

[73] As we will see, Plato can be rather sly. He often makes Socrates say things that do not live up to the quality control Socrates himself tries to uphold. I believe he does this on purpose — for it would be very strange for a man so perceptive about some things to be so blind concerning others. As I will try to show, I believe these cases are invites to resist, ways to make us question the text. Several times, these silent questions also point us in the direction of other dialogues, where the problem at stake is better considered.

In this particular case, we assume a lot of things without questioning them. We take Alcibiades to be powerful, but we do it without questioning what power is. For, if someone were to ask me "Tomaz, what is power?", most likely I would say it is the ability to do what I want to do. But have I ever considered what power truly is? Am I in a condition to guarantee that I *know* what power is? If I had my back against the wall — which is what Socrates will try to achieve —, I would probably admit that I am not that sure. Yet, this did not stop me from assuming that Alcibiades was a very powerful man. But how can I assume such a thing if I don't even know what power is? Assuming I know something I do not know is a form of bad resistance. Indeed, as I hope to show, it is the heart of bad resistance.

We can thus see that, just like with good resistance, the problem lies in the quality control of our natural standpoint. For some reason, we resist opening the poke; we just buy it without checking if there is an actual pig inside.

Now, there can be two reasons for this: either we don't really care, or we are prone to some kind of astigmatism (a *deficit of acuity*).

The first option is denied by Alcibiades' (and the reader's) interest in understanding where Socrates is going with his argument. Each of us seems *to care so much about himself* that he would not want to be tricked into getting what he does not really want.

We are hence left with the second option: we fail to control the noetic quality of what we assume to be true because we are prone to some form of astigmatism. We tend to take a pretence of knowledge for actual knowledge.

Put in a nutshell: my non-indifference towards myself *requires* me to control the noetic quality of the things I assume to be true, and yet I tend to assent to things I have not properly considered.

As the dialogue will try to show, this form of resistance to truth is rooted in the fact that we believe we know what we don't actually know (οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδῶς). As Socrates struggles to demonstrate, we have no clue whatsoever concerning how and when we have learnt what we think we know. Accordingly, we have no way to back our belief in these things. Yet, because we actually believe we know them, we lead our lives without questioning them. We *resist* seeing we do not know what we think we know.

We are hence forced to ask: if we are so interested in truly knowing what is going on with our lives, *why* does this happen? *How* does this happen?

These are the fundamental questions. I would argue that the whole *corpus platonicum* gravitates around them. My goal with the history of resistance in Plato's *First Alcibiades* is to contribute to answering them.

11. WHAT IT MEANS TO RESIST SOCRATES

I am now left with two final things I want to clarify before finishing. They are the following: what does it mean to resist Socrates? And how does resistance appear in the text?[74]

I have partially said what it means to resist Socrates *in a bad way*: failing to control the noetic quality of what we think we know, *i.e.* living by unanalysed presuppositions. The text portrays us as men who lead their lives assuming they know things they do not know. Socrates tries to force us into reviewing these things (and all the other presuppositions that are connected to them and support them); but we resist, mostly because we see no need to review them. Put this way, it is clear what resisting Socrates in a bad way means: resisting philosophy.[75]

In fact, Socrates is the embodiment of philosophy— he is what philosophy should be: the constant analysis and revaluation of what we think we know. Resisting him in a *bad* way therefore consists mostly in avoiding his invitation to put ourselves on the line and joining him in his effort to understand what is really going on with our lives.

On the contrary, resisting Socrates in a *good* way amounts to joining him in a dialogue — it means we are playing his part and hence venturing into philosophy. When we resist Socrates by asking him to clarify something, or by objecting to something he said, we resist being led by unanalysed aspects of what is being said (by him, by Alcibiades or even by Plato). And this is exactly the "quality control" I referred to — it equates to opening the poke and checking if we are really taking a pig home.[76]

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[74] Both these clarifications are meant to explain goals b) and c) from the introduction. Although all the elements to explain these are already present in what I have said so far, I hope to articulate them in such a fashion that one understands the history of resistance in Plato's *First Alcibiades* better.

[75] As we will see throughout the dialogue, Socrates is trying to show that we lack a certain τέχνη concerning what is the best in life and how to get. This has a close connection with most Platonic dialogues, most notably the *Apology*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Sophist* and *Symposium*. Once again, this is also linked to the political answer: resisting Socrates in a bad way equates to not understanding the need to *actually know* some things before acting, before leading our lives according to unanalysed presuppositions.

[76] Plato himself tries to sell a lot of empty pokes (most of them on purpose), so as to test our ability to check what we are dealing with. He does not want us to blindly follow what he says. Instead, he wants us to follow the Socratic example, which is an example of how to think about things rather than an example of a man who portrays a specific set of beliefs (even if one can — and should — argue that this philosophical way of life does rest on a specific set of beliefs).

But we still need to grasp how these two forms of resistance appear in the text, if we are to find them.

I have also partially explained that by showing how at different moments Alcibiades and the reader tend to either ignore Socrates or to formulate objections based on unanalysed presuppositions. Both these cases are connected to a certain lack of *precision* in the relationship we have with knowing (εἰδέναι). Still, this lack of precision — which amounts to bad resistance — can come in many colours and shapes: we might assume we know something we have never thoroughly considered; we might think that two different things are the same; or we might take the same thing to be two different things; we might be unable to recognize something we already acknowledged if it is presented to us under a different cloak; we might be unable to extract direct consequences from what we have already admitted; and so on and so forth. There are examples of all of these cases in the *First Alcibiades*.

Conversely, we might stop Socrates when he is maliciously tricking us into taking two different things to be the same, or we might surprise him by anticipating consequences he did not present and that might go against previously accepted theses, etc. In this case, we are resisting him in a good way (and there are also instances in which Alcibiades does this).

However, as I previously stated, *most of these things do not come about by explicit questions and answers*. Sometimes, Plato lets us take two different things to be the same for a long time, and then reaches a conclusion we cannot agree with. This is also a way he has of letting us know we are resisting Socrates. Some other times, he leaves a hint that Socrates is cheating, leaving something unsaid that could alter the course of the discussion. This is another way he finds to ask us to resist; and if we pick it up, it is also a way for us to resist him in a positive sense.

All of these dramatic tricks are used to make us question our relationship with the several "tacit characters" in the play: the ideas of superlative, power, εἰδέναι, οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς, the vital *unspoken (pretence of) truth*, one's non-indifference towards oneself, and several others. The identification and articulation of all these forms of resistance to all these "tacit characters" is the history of resistance in Plato's *First Alcibiades*.

Ἐπιμελεῖσθαι AND ἅττειν IN THE *ALCIBIADES MAJOR*

M. Jorge de Carvalho

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The first thing to know about this paper is that it follows a '*radiological approach*' – in a very metaphorical and loose sense of the term.

X-ray images enable us to see the human body, what it looks like inside, and to get a clear understanding of its interior structures, etc. Now, the point is that there is more to the *Alcibiades Major* than meets the eye. On the one hand, some of its main components (and indeed if we are right, some of its main claims) are *mentioned only in passing* without further clarification or amplification. And on the other hand, some of its main components (and indeed if we are right, some of its main claims) are not *explicitly stated* – they either remain discreetly in the background or are implied in Socrates' or Alcibiades' explicit claims, without being clearly expressed. They form the *inner scaffolding* or a *subtext*, as it were, behind the explicit content. So that, if one really wants to try to solve this intriguing puzzle – the *Alcibiades Major* – and to put *all* its pieces together, a 'radiological approach' – i. e. a thorough survey a) of what lies *underneath the surface* and *is not immediately visible* and b) of the *connection* between what lies beneath the surface and the explicit content – is to be recommended.

The above gives a broad overview of the issues we would like to address. In this paper, we will concentrate on an essential component of what a 'radiological approach' to the *Alcibiades Major* needs to examine and take into consideration. We will single out what might be described a) as Socrates' '*reading grid*' or '*analysis grid*' – the grid he uses to read *the 'text', as it were, of his interlocutor's attitude to life* and b) the underlying grid of *Alcibiades' reaction* to Socrates. In short, we will single out the *analytical tools* that play a pivotal role in the dialogue and are the *guidelines* or *guiding principles viz. the rationale* behind what Socrates and Alcibiades say or do. The fact is that the tacit assumptions and claims behind the dialogue's analytical procedures *show through* the explicit content of the *Alcibiades Major*, provided that we pay enough attention to them. In other words, Socrates and Alcibiades say nothing – or little

– about them, but by saying what they say they enable us to *retrieve* their tacit rationale viz. their tacit guidelines. And this is what this paper is about.

The second thing to know about this paper is that we cannot address all the issues a 'radiological approach' to *the Alcibiades Major* would have to tackle. The problem is that to discuss them all and to consider the text in detail would require much more room than is allowed here. We shall therefore confine ourselves to a more modest task, namely to working out the *main actors* – and by this I do not mean Socrates and Alcibiades, but rather the main '*conceptual* actors' or the main '*conceptual* characters': the *main 'concepts' or 'issues'* coming into play in the *Alcibiades Major*.

The point is that, although this dialogue seems to be (and in a way, is) all about a character, namely Alcibiades, the son of Cleinias, or Socrates, the son of Sophroniscus (or about both), on closer inspection it emerges that, to speak like Aristotle in his *Poetics*, the δέσις (the 'plot' or rather the 'narrative *knot*') the *Alcibides Major* tries to 'untie' has to do with 'conceptual characters', with a certain set of attitudes, forms of relation to life or to oneself, desires, intentions and projects, notions and assumptions, knowledge claims, deeply engrained self-evidences and the like. And on the other hand, in the *Alcibiades Major* the λύσις (the denouement or solution of the plot) – and, in particular, both the περιπέτεια and the ἀναγνώρισις – have to do with 'conceptual characters'.[1] For the dialogue is all about finding out a) that the action (namely the action prompted by the said set of 'conceptual characters', i. e. Alcibiades' whole endeavour) is bound to *veer round to its opposite*, so that – without being aware of it – Alcibiades is preparing his own doom, and b) that the reason for this is because once one scrutinizes the *true nature* of the 'conceptual characters' behind Alcibiades' endeavour they suffer nothing less than a radical change of identity, and the 'conceptual characters' in question *turn out to be very different from what they seemed*. And the point is that all this holds true both for the 'real action' of the dialogue (i. e. for what happens in the *Alcibiades Major* viz. what happens "on stage") and for the action 'in real-life' the *Alcibiades Major* is constantly referring to, namely a) what *will happen if* Alcibiades does not heed Socrates's advice and b) what *has actually happened* 'in real life' because, as the reader knows in hindsight, Alcibiades *did not* heed to Socrates, and his life continued to be determined by the "conceptual characters' the dialogue is all about.

The third thing to know about this paper is that it assumes that the set of 'conceptual characters' – viz. the 'conceptual drama' – we are talking about does not just concern the

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[1] On δέσις and λύσις cf. ARISTOTLE, *Poetica*, 1455b24ff.

dialogue (the *Alcibiades Major*) as such, nor does it concern only Alcibiades, the son of Cleinias – or, for that matter, the particular kind of human being he stands for. To be sure, the son of Cleinias is the one in the hot seat – and in this sense, the dialogue is all about him. But on the other hand, there is a very strong suggestion that the 'conceptual characters' we are talking about, besides being the main characters of this dialogue (and if Socrates is right, the main characters in Alcibiades' life), also play another role: *mutatis mutandis,* most of them are main characters in *everyone else's lif*e – that is, main 'conceptual characters' in human life *überhaupt.* Put another way, this paper assumes that the *Alcibiades Major* gives something of a 'radiological' view *avant la lettre*: it tries to work out the internal composition of Alcibiades' life – but in such a manner that in the same breath it allows us to see much of the inner composition of *human life* itself, even when it does not take the specific form that distinguishes Alcibiades from other human beings. That is, we assume that what we are dealing with when dealing with the *Alcibiades Major* is nothing less than an insight into the *kaleidoscope* of human life viz. of its self-understanding – and indeed an insight into a) the *composition* of the *kaleidoscope* of human life (notably the various 'pieces 'viz. the various 'conceptual characters' in its 'cell') and b) the 'rotation' viz. the process by means of which changes affecting the 'pieces' in the 'cell' (viz. changes affecting the various 'conceptual characters' that are pivotal to human life) result in changes of the *viewed pattern* (i.e. in very different *outlooks on life*, *what it is all about, where you stand,* etc.).

Finally, the fourth thing to know about this paper is that even this task would require much more room than is allowed here. We cannot take into account all the 'conceptual characters' playing a significant role in the *Alcibiades Major,* nor can we discuss the whole dialogue from beginning to end. In other words, we cannot consider the whole 'kaleidoscope' of human life viz. of its self-understanding, as it is depicted in this dialogue. We must concentrate on a more modest task. We therefore single out the complex set of 'conceptual characters' that form one of the key protagonists (N.B.: of the *conceptual* protagonists) in the *Alcibiades Major*, namely ἐπιμέλεια and ἐπιμελεῖσθαι.

The title of this paper speaks of two opposite 'conceptual characters' (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι and ἄττειν).

On the one hand, the point is that the ἐπιμέλεια viz. ἐπιμελεῖσθαι the *Alcibiades Maior* constantly refers to is part of an *either/or,* and can be adequately understood only as part of the *either/or* (or in the framework of the *either/or*) it belongs to – namely the *either/or* between ἐπιμέλεια viz. ἐπιμελεῖσθαι and ἀμελεῖν viz. ἀμέλεια (and ἄττειν). Or to be more precise, the two opposite 'conceptual characters' in question are *self-related* ἐπιμέλεια viz. ἐπιμελεῖσθαι and

self-related ἀμελεῖν viz. ἀμέλεια (and therefore ἄττειν). The *Alcibiades Maior* is all about ἐπιμέλεια and ἐπιμελεῖσθαι <u>αὑτοῦ</u> versus ἀμελεῖν viz. ἀμέλεια <u>αὑτοῦ</u> – for although much of what it has to say also applies to ἐπιμέλεια and ἐπιμελεῖσθαι in general, the main focus of this dialogue is on ἐπιμέλεια viz. ἐπιμελεῖσθαι *αὑτοῦ* viz. on its opposite. In short, the point is that the ἐπιμέλεια viz. ἐπιμελεῖσθαι <u>αὑτοῦ</u> the *Alcibiades Maior* constantly refers to can be adequately understood only as part of the *either/or* (or in the framework of the *either/or*) it belongs to – namely the *either/or* between ἐπιμέλεια viz. ἐπιμελεῖσθαι <u>αὑτοῦ</u> and ἀμελεῖν viz. ἀμέλεια <u>αὑτοῦ</u> (and the corresponding <u>self-related</u> ἄττειν).

On the other hand, one of Socrates' main claims in the *Alcibiades Major* (I mean: one of his '*radiologically' detectable* claims) is that ἐπιμέλεια and ἐπιμελεῖσθαι (or, more precisely, ἐπιμέλεια and ἐπιμελεῖσθαι <u>αὑτοῦ</u>) can stand for very different things, and that, on closer inspection, some – and indeed *most* – of them turn out to be the very *opposite* of what they seem to be, namely the very opposite of real and effective ἐπιμελεῖσθαι viz. ἐπιμέλεια αὑτοῦ. In other words, one of the key issues in the *Alcibiades Major* is that, paradoxically enough, many of the very different things ἐπιμέλεια and ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ can stand for turn out to be no less than ἀμέλεια or ἀμελεῖν αὑτοῦ viz. self-related ἄττειν. According to Socrates this is what Alcibiades' relation to life is all about. And if we are not mistaken, what is implied is that this possibility belongs to human life as such, and is one of the main components of the said 'kaleidoscope'. Now, this is the task we set ourselves in this paper: to examine the aforementioned *either/or* and the complex relations between ἐπιμέλεια and ἀμέλεια αὑτοῦ – the complex relations highlighted in the *Alcibiades Major* and owing to which the former (what seems to be ἐπιμέλεια viz. ἐπιμέλεια αὑτοῦ) can turn out to be nothing but *ἀμέλεια* – viz. ἀμελεῖν αὑτοῦ[2] – *in disguise* (i. e. a form of the latter).

That said, let us plunge *in medias res*.

2. THE *THREEFOLD STRUCTURE* OF HUMAN LIFE (ὑπάρχοντα/οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα, ἀγαπᾶν/οὐκ ἀγαπᾶν, μείζω κτήσασθαι AND ἐλπίς) BOTH IN ALCIBIADES' CASE AND IN GENERAL. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THIS BASIC STRUCTURE AND 'ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ'

It all begins with Socrates' description of what is so special about Alcibiades. Socrates depicts the inner structure of Alcibiades' life (viz. of his relation to life). And first he depicts it

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[2] I.e. *self-negligence, self-neglect*.

in terms of τὰ ὑπάρχοντα (or to be more precise: of τὰ ὑπάρχοντά σοι)[3] – that is, of his resources or possessions, what he already has (what is already there, already available or at his disposal: what he has at his command) as opposed to what Socrates refers to when he speaks of δεῖσθαι: what he still lacks (what is not yet there, not yet at his disposal: what is still missing).[4] In other

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[3] See notably 104a2 (οὐδενὸς φῂς ἀνθρώπων ἐνδεὴς εἶναι εἰς οὐδέν: *τὰ γὰρ ὑπάρχοντά σοι* μεγάλα εἶναι, ὥστε μηδενὸς δεῖσθαι, ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἀρξάμενα τελευτῶντα εἰς τὴν ψυχήν.), 104b4 (συμπάντων δὲ ὧν εἶπον μείζω οἴει *σοι* δύναμιν *ὑπάρχειν* Περικλέα τὸν Ξανθίππου, ὃν ὁ πατὴρ ἐπίτροπον κατέλιπε σοί τε καὶ τῷ ἀδελφῷ), and 119c3 (βαβαῖ, οἷον, ὦ ἄριστε, τοῦτ' εἴρηκας: ὡς ἀνάξιον τῆς ἰδέας καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν σοι ὑπαρχόντων) (emphasis added). See also 119d6, 121b6 and 124a3 Cf. D. M. JOHNSON, *A Commentary on Plato's Alcibiades*, Diss. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1996, on 104a2, 104b4, 119c3, 119d6. Denyer is perhaps right in pointing out that τὰ ὑπάρχοντα σοι and similar expressions are a typical way of talking in *courting* exchange and reflect the corresponding terminology. Cf. N. DENYER (ed.), *Plato Alcibiades*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, on 104a2-3. He refers to DEMOSTHENES (or rather Ps-DEMOSTHENES), *Eroticus*, 61.6 and 61.7 (one might add 9.5 and 50.3) – cf. W. RENNIE (ed.), *Demosthenis orationes*, vol. 3, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1931, repr. 1960. But even if Denyer is right, none of this prevents τὰ ὑπάρχοντα σοι and similar expressions from playing a somewhat different role in the *Alcibiades Major*, where they are used to express a main component of *human life's relation to itself*. As a matter of fact, Socrates uses τὰ ὑπάρχοντα σοι to depict not how Alcibiades appears *in the eyes of his ἐραστής*, but *his attitude to his own life*: how he *sees himself and relates to himself* (i.e the inner 'economy', as it were, of his own life). To be sure, this depiction of Alcibiades' relation to his life is put in the mouth of a soi-disant ἐραστής. But then again, the whole point in the *Alcibiades Major* is that Socrates is a very particular kind of ἐραστής, and that his ἐρωτικὸς λόγος completely overturns the genre's conventions and clichés. But this is not all. A few pages further on, in his commentary on 121b7, Denyer sheds another light on this topic. He writes: "The verb ὑπάρχειν is standardly used in an ἐπιτάφιος λόγος (…), to speak of things to the credit of present or past Athenians (cf. *Mx.* 237b, Th. 2.42.1, 2. 45.2, Demos. 60.6, Lys. 2.17, Hyp. *Epit.* 28)." He is referring to "the speech that every year in Athens was delivered over the grave of those who had fallen in battle (ὁ ἐπιτάφιος λόγος)." (DENYER, *op. laud.*, on 121b1-2, p. 175). And his point is that "one important object of an ἐπιτάφιος λόγος (professed at Th. 2.43.1, Lys. 2.3, Demos. 60.35, *Mx.* 236e) was to incite its audience to virtue, as Socrates here hopes to incite Alcibiades." (*ibidem*). The context has changed, but once again Denyer takes the view that ὑπάρχειν has to do with the *vocabulary of eulogy* and stands for "things to the credit of" the eulogized person. But here again, even if his remarks are not unfounded, he overlooks the key point: what is at stake in Socrates' use of ὑπάρχειν in the *Alcibiades Major* is far more than a particular circumstance (be it the praise of the city's heroes or the comparison of one's life with other people's, etc.). It is rather an *essential structure of human life as such* (and this is precisely why it plays an important role in the said particular contexts). If anything, Socrates is using the typical vocabulary of the αὐτάρκεια-topos (and of the kind of analysis of human life that goes with it). See notably Herodotus's Kroisos Logos, I, 32 ("τὰ πάντα μέν νυν ταῦτα συλλαβεῖν ἄνθρωπον ἐόντα ἀδύνατον ἐστί, ὥσπερ χωρῇ οὐδεμία καταρκέει πάντα ἑωυτῇ παρέχουσα, ἀλλὰ ἄλλο μὲν ἔχει ἑτέρου δὲ ἐπιδέεται: ἣ δὲ ἂν τὰ πλεῖστα ἔχῃ, αὕτη ἀρίστη. ὡς δὲ καὶ ἀνθρώπου σῶμα ἓν οὐδὲν αὔταρκες ἐστί: τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἔχει, ἄλλου δὲ ἐνδεές ἐστι (…)") and ARISTOTLE, *Politica*, 1326b ("τὸ γὰρ πάντα ὑπάρχειν καὶ δεῖσθαι μηθενὸς αὔταρκες"). Cf. note 4, below. See also Appendix I (p. 179).

[4] See notably 104 a: οὐδενὸς φῂς ἀνθρώπων *ἐνδεὴς εἶναι* εἰς οὐδέν: τὰ γὰρ ὑπάρχοντά σοι μεγάλα εἶναι, ὥστε μηδενὸς *δεῖσθαι*, ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ἀρξάμενα τελευτῶντα εἰς τὴν ψυχήν. (emphasis added). The wording clearly alludes to the ancient μηδενὸς-δεῖσθαι ideal (viz. to the ideal of *self-sufficiency* or αὐτάρκεια). Cf. XENOPHON, *Memorabilia*, in: E. C. MARCHANT (ed.), *Xenophontis opera omnia* Bd. 2. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1921, 1.6.10. ("ἐγὼ δὲ νομίζω τὸ μὲν μηδενὸς δεῖσθαι θεῖον εἶναι, τὸ δ' ὡς ἐλαχίστων ἐγγυτάτω τοῦ θείου, καὶ τὸ μὲν θεῖον κράτιστον, τὸ δ' ἐγγυτάτω τοῦ θείου ἐγγυτάτω τοῦ κρατίστου"), EURIPIDES, *Hercules*, 1345f., ANTIPHON, *DK* 87 B 10, PLATO, *Lysis* 215a, *Timaeus* 33d1ff., 34b7, *Philebus*, 20e, 69c, ARISTOTLE, *Politica*, 1326b ("τὸ γὰρ πάντα ὑπάρχειν καὶ δεῖσθαι μηθενὸς αὔταρκες"), *Ethica Nicomachea*, 1097b8ff., 1176b5 – and also E. M. COPE/J. E. SANDYS (ed.), *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, Cambridge, University Press, 1877, repr. Hildesheim, Olms, 1970, vol. I, 73f., R. C. JEBB (ed.), *Sophocles The Plays and Fragments* II, The Oedipus Coloneus, Cambridge, University Press, 1885, on 1336, U. von WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF, *Euripides Herakles*, Berlin, Weidmann, 1909[2], on 1346, E. NORDEN, *Agnostos Theos*. Untersuchungen zur Formengeschichte religiöser Rede, Stuttgart, Teubner, 1913, repr. Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974, 13f., G. CALOGERO (ed.), *Il simposio di Platone*, Bari, Laterza & Figli, 1928, 70f., P. GROENEBOOM (ed.), *Aeschylus' Persae*, Groninger, Wolters, 1930, on 852-857, K. OPPENHEIMER, *Zwei attische Epitaphien*, Diss. Berlin, 1933, 16ff., G. KITTEL, αὐτάρκεια, αὔταρκες, in: IDEM (ed.), *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, vol. I, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1933, 466-467, A.-J. FESTUGIÈRE, *Contemplation et vie*

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words, Socrates describes Alcibiades' life in terms of a *relation of forces* between τὰ ὑπάρχοντα and τὰ οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα.

Or to be more precise, Socrates depicts Alcibiades' life in terms not so much of the real relation of forces between τὰ ὑπάρχοντα and τὰ οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα as in terms of Alcibiades' *perception* of the said relation of forces.[5] As Socrates points out, in his case this relation of forces is characterized by the fact that, τοῦ σώματος ἀρξάμενα τελευτῶντα εἰς τὴν ψυχήν ("beginning with the body, and ending with the soul") his resources are *great* (μεγάλα) and indeed *exceptionally* great.[6] He distinguishes himself by his exceptional beauty and stature, by the fact that he comes "from one of the most distinguished families in his own state, which is the greatest in Hellas", that he is highly connected and has most powerful friends "who – as Socrates puts it – are able to do whatever they like not only in this city but all over Greece and among many great nations of the barbarians".[7] Moreover, even if he does not attach much importance to this, he is rich.[8] Socrates' description shows that what he has in mind when speaking of τὰ ὑπάρχοντα (viz. of the relation of forces between τὰ ὑπάρχοντα and τὰ οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα) has nothing to do with 'possessions' in the stricter (i.e. in the material) sense of the word. He means anything one can have or lack in such a manner that having or lacking it defines or influences 'where one stands' (viz. life's features, life's circumstances and life's means). And on the other hand, even if Socrates does not emphasize this, the very fact that he describes Alcibiades' life (and compares him with other human beings) in these terms strongly suggests that pretty much the same applies to everybody else. That is, what is at stake here is an underlying claim that human life has an essential relation to τὰ ὑπάρχοντα – to one's resources or possessions: what one already has (what is already there, already available or at one's

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[5] Socrates insists on this point. Cf. 104a: τὸν δὲ *λόγον, ᾧ ὑπερπεφρόνηκας, ἐθέλω διελθεῖν. οὐδενὸς φὴς ἀνθρώπων ἐνδεὴς εἶναι εἰς οὐδέν (…) οἴει γὰρ δὴ εἶναι πρῶτον μὲν κάλλιστός τε καὶ μέγιστος),* etc.

[6] Cf. 104a. Translations borrowed from W. R. M. LAMB (ed.), *Plato with an English Translation*, vol. VIII, Charmides Alcibiades I and II Hipparchus The Lovers Theages Minos Epinomis, London/Cambridge, Mass., W. Heinemann/Harvard University Press, 1914, with slight changes.

[7] Cf. 104a-b: "οἴει γὰρ δὴ εἶναι πρῶτον μὲν κάλλιστός τε καὶ μέγιστος – καὶ τοῦτο μὲν δὴ παντὶ δῆλον ἰδεῖν ὅτι οὐ ψεύδη – ἔπειτα νεανικωτάτου γένους ἐν τῇ σεαυτοῦ πόλει, οὔσῃ μεγίστῃ τῶν Ἑλληνίδων, καὶ ἐνταῦθα πρὸς πατρός τέ σοι φίλους καὶ συγγενεῖς πλείστους εἶναι καὶ ἀρίστους, οἳ εἴ τι δέοι ὑπηρετοῖεν ἄν σοι, τούτων δὲ τοὺς πρὸς μητρὸς οὐδὲν χείρους οὐδ᾽ ἐλάττους. συμπάντων δὲ ὧν εἶπον μείζω οἴει σοι δύναμιν ὑπάρχειν Περικλέα τὸν Ξανθίππου, ὃν ὁ πατὴρ ἐπίτροπον κατέλιπε σοί τε καὶ τῷ ἀδελφῷ· ὃς οὐ μόνον ἐν τῇδε τῇ πόλει δύναται πράττειν ὅτι ἂν βούληται, ἀλλ᾽ ἐν πάσῃ τῇ Ἑλλάδι καὶ τῶν βαρβάρων ἐν πολλοῖς καὶ μεγάλοις γένεσιν."

[8] Cf. 104b-c: "προσθήσω δὲ καὶ ὅτι τῶν πλουσίων· δοκεῖς δέ μοι ἐπὶ τούτῳ ἥκιστα μέγα φρονεῖν."

disposal) – as opposed to τὰ οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα: what one still lacks (what is not yet there, not yet at one's disposal: what is still missing). Or, more precisely, the underlying claim seems to be that human life is intrinsically related to a certain perception of the relation of forces between τὰ ὑπάρχοντα and τὰ οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα. Socrates is implicitly referring to a vast and heterogeneous array of items acting either as ὑπάρχοντα or as οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα and therefore defining a) a certain combination of ὑπάρχοντα and b) a certain combination of οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα and hence c) a certain relation of forces between them. What matters is both the *quantity* of ὑπάρχοντα viz. οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα and their *quality*. In other words, Socrates is implicitly referring both to an *invariable* structure and to the highly *variable* form it takes in each concrete case. And the difference between Alcibiades and other human beings (what makes Alcibiades so special) is the fact that in his case there is an absolutely exceptional accumulation of positive ὑπάρχοντα (of the best possible 'possessions') – one that *does not leave much to be desired*.

But this is not all. In Socrates' view, Alcibiades' life (viz. his relation to it) defines itself not only by the said exceptional accumulation of positive ὑπάρχοντα, but also by a certain *attitude* towards them. And this is what Socrates' second point is all about. He points out that what makes Alcibiades so special is the fact that although he is characterized by an extraordinary accumulation of positive ὑπάρχοντα, he is not satisfied (ἀγαπῶντα)[9] with what he already has and does not accept the idea of having to pass his life with the very same ὑπάρχοντα (τε καὶ οἰόμενον δεῖν ἐν τούτοις καταβιῶναι).[10] That is, on the one hand, Alcibiades is exceptional because he has more positive ὑπάρχοντα than most other human beings. But on the other hand, he is absolutely outstanding because, instead of being content with this state of affairs, he thinks nothing of it (the said unusual accumulation of positive ὑπάρχοντα is not enough for him). Socrates expresses this by saying that if Alcibiades were given the choice between "living with his present possessions, or dying immediately if he is not to have the chance of acquiring greater things", the son of Cleinias would no doubt choose to die ("εἴ τίς εἴποι θεῶν· "Ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδε, πότερον βούλει ζῆν ἔχων ἃ νῦν ἔχεις ἢ αὐτίκα τεθνάναι, εἰ μὴ ἐξέσται μείζω κτήσασθαι;" δοκεῖς μοι ἑλέσθαι τεθνάναι·").[11] Socrates points out that Alcibiades' possessions (the fact that he *has what he has*: ἔχων ἃ νῦν ἔχει) could give rise to *two opposite attitudes or reactions*: either a) ἀγαπᾶν (to *be contented with what one already has*) and willing to pass one's life with the very same ὑπάρχοντα (οἰόμενον δεῖν ἐν τούτοις

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[9] 104e7.
[10] Cf. 104e: "ἐγὼ γάρ, ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη, εἰ μέν σε ἑώρων ἃ νυνδὴ διῆλθον *ἀγαπῶντα καὶ οἰόμενον δεῖν ἐν τούτοις καταβιῶναι*, πάλαι ἂν ἀπηλλάγμην τοῦ ἔρωτος (…)" (emphasis added).
[11] 105a4-5.

καταβιῶναι), in which case the μείζω κτήσασθαι (acquiring greater things) does not play a significant role, or b) *not to be contented with what one already has*, that is, to reject all ἀγαπᾶν (and the idea of passing one's life with the very same ὑπάρχοντα), in which case one's life revolves around the *μείζω κτήσασθαι* (i.e. around acquiring greater things) – and it all depends upon the chance of acquiring greater things (upon the ἐξεῖναι μείζω κτήσασθαι).[12] Alcibiades choses the latter – and indeed so much so that he would rather die than continue to live just having what he already has (ἔχων ἅ νῦν ἔχει) and nothing more. In other words, everything he has is weighed on the balances and found to be lacking. And indeed so much so that he would not want to go on living, should his life be deprived of any chance of μείζω κτήσασθαι. In this sense, the μείζω κτήσασθαι is quite literally *everything for him*. Or, as Socrates puts it, Alcibiades lives entirely ἐπ'ἐλπίδι,[13] He lives *in anticipation* of what is to come viz. *in anticipation* of change – namely of the μείζω κτήσασθαι. And it would be no exaggeration to say that his life is *rooted solely in hope* – that *hope* is the 'umbilical cord' keeping Alcibiades alive and *willing* to stay alive (the *raft*, as it were, keeping him afloat).

But this is not all. There is a further reason why Alcibiades is so special. For according to Socrates, the ἐλπίς that is, as it were, his *life-line* (viz. the life-line of his ἐλέσθαι or ἐθέλειν ζῆν) has a very particular character. For Alcibiades it is not only a question of acquiring *something* more. The point is the *extraordinary nature and extent* of what would satisfy him viz. the extraordinary nature and extent of the μείζω κτήσασθαι for the sake of which he is willing to stay alive. According to Socrates, it would not be enough for him to have the greatest power in Athens or to have the greatest power not only among the Greeks but among all the barbarians who inhabit the same continent. If he were not allowed to cross over into Asia and to meddle with the Asian affairs (that is, if he were not allowed to have the greatest power in Asia as well) he would not be willing to stay alive (or he would not choose to live) upon these terms either.[14] As a matter of fact, the μείζω κτήσασθαι Alcibiades has in mind – the thing without which he would not be willing to live – is nothing less than this: "filling virtually

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[12] On the role played by κτήματα and κτᾶσθαι (μείζω κτᾶσθαι and the like) as basic components of human life, see M. Jorge de CARVALHO, *Sobre a Prescindibilidade ou imprescindibilidade do ΦΡΟΝΕΙΝ. Um Gedankenexperiment no Filebo e no Protréptico*, Porto, Fundação Engenheiro António de Almeida, 2013, 23ff.

[13] 105a7.

[14] 105 a-c: "ἀλλὰ νῦν ἐπὶ τίνι δή ποτε ἐλπίδι ζῆς, ἐγὼ φράσω. ἡγῇ, ἐὰν θᾶττον εἰς τὸν Ἀθηναίωνδῆμον παρέλθῃς—τοῦτο δ᾽ ἔσεσθαι μάλα ὀλίγων ἡμερῶν— παρελθὼν οὖν ἐνδείξεσθαι Ἀθηναίοις ὅτι ἄξιος εἶ τιμᾶσθαι ὡς οὔτε Περικλῆς οὔτ᾽ ἄλλος οὐδεὶς τῶν πώποτε γενομένων, καὶ τοῦτ᾽ ἐνδειξάμενος μέγιστον δυνήσεσθαι ἐν τῇ πόλει, ἐὰν δ᾽ ἐνθάδε μέγιστος ᾖς, καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις Ἕλλησι, καὶ οὐ μόνον ἐν Ἕλλησιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τοῖς βαρβάροις, ὅσοι ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ἡμῖν οἰκοῦσιν ἠπείρῳ. καὶ εἰ αὖ σοι εἴποι ὁ αὐτὸς οὗτος θεὸς ὅτι αὐτοῦ σε δεῖ δυναστεύειν ἐν τῇ Εὐρώπῃ, διαβῆναι δὲ εἰς τὴν Ἀσίαν οὐκ ἐξέσται σοι οὐδὲ ἐπιθέσθαι τοῖς ἐκεῖ πράγμασιν, οὐκ ἂν αὖ μοι δοκεῖς ἐθέλειν οὐδ᾽ ἐπὶ τούτοις μόνοις ζῆν, εἰ μὴ ἐμπλήσεις τοῦ σοῦ ὀνόματος καὶ τῆς σῆς δυνάμεως πάντας ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἀνθρώπους:

everyone nearly [virtually all men or all mankind] with his name and his power" (εἰ μὴ ἐμπλήσεις τοῦ σοῦ ὀνόματος καὶ τῆς σῆς δυνάμεως πάντας ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἀνθρώπους): supreme universal power, being known in every corner of the world and winning the greatest admiration for himself both on the local and on the world scene.[15]

In other words, the *non plus ultra* or the *absolute plenitude* of τιμᾶσθαι (of fame and appreciation), the *non plus ultra* or the *absolute plenum* of δυναστεύειν (i.e. of power), the *non plus ultra* or the *absolute plenum* of ἐμπιμπλάναι τοῦ σοῦ ὀνόματος καὶ τῆς σῆς δυνάμεως πάντας ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν ἀνθρώπους – i.e., the absolute superlative of φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία – is what Alcibiades is striving at, the object of his hope: the thing without which he would not want to live.[16]

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[15] Cf. 124 b: ὧν σὺ εἰ ἀπολειφθήσῃ, καὶ *τοῦ ὀνομαστὸς γενέσθαι* ἀπολειφθήσῃ *ἐν Ἕλλησί τε καὶ βαρβάροις, οὗ μοι δοκεῖς ἐρᾶν ὡς οὐδεὶς ἄλλος.*(emphasis added). And this is why it is not exaggerated to speak, as Socrates does, of τοσαύτης ἐλπίδος γέμειν (105e6): Alcibiades is *bursting with hope*, both a) in the sense that he is filled with hope (and this is, as it were, his *lifeblood* and what attaches him to life) and b) in the sense that the hope in question is nothing less than *the most ambitious or the most far reaching* – the *immense* hope Socrates refers to. Incidentally it should be noted that this part of Socrates' description of Alcibiades bears the form of a superlative *Priamel*. For, on the one hand, each step of the ascending scale – 1) making oneself powerful, known and admired in Athens → 2) all over Greece → 3) also among the Barbarians in Europe → 4) also in Asia) serves as a foil for enhancing the following step of the scale; and on the other hand, the whole *crescendo* serves as a foil for enhancing the climactic term, namely 5) making oneself powerful, known and admired in every corner of the world viz. in the eyes of all mankind. On the Priamel (and in particular on the *superlative* Priamel) see M. Jorge de CARVALHO, Triumph of the ΠΑΝΤΟΠΟΡΟΣ? The Image of the Self-invented and Self-inventing ΔΕΙΝΟΝ in Antigone's First Stasimon, *Revista Filosófica de Coimbra* 55 (2019), 105-196, in particular 112ff., with bibliographic references.

[16] This is not the place to discuss φιλοτιμία viz. φιλονικία and what these two words stand for. But the following should be borne in mind:

1) Φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία are two forms of non-indifference or non-neutrality. They have to do with the fact that human life is completely steeped in *non-indifference* or *non-neutrality*: it is essentially a 'place'" *where there is something at stake*, and indeed so much so that the fact that there is something at stake in it (and the issues that are at stake in it) forms a fundamental component of human life and an essential feature of all its moments. In other words, human life has some kind of 'program' or agenda: on the one hand, *inclinations*, *preferences* and indeed *cravings* and *demands*; and, on the other hand, also *disinclinations*, *aversions* and *loathings*. The result being that whatever appears to us is essentially related to inclinations, preferences or demands (viz. disinclinations, aversions and loathings) on the part of the perceiver: it *concerns* the perceiver, it has functions to perform and is required to meet perceiver-related needs or demands and not to prompt disinclinations, aversions, etc. on the part of the perceiver. In short, we are anything but a pure spectator (a pure onlooker or bystander) just taking notice of perceptual contents, without becoming involved in them: each one of us has an agenda of his or her own, and all percepta define themselves by the role(s) they play with regard to one's own agenda.

2) The non-neutrality or non-indifference we are talking about is by no means a simple phenomenon; it encompasses many different facets, a *multiplicity* both of *disparate* inclinations, needs and cravings and of *disparate* disinclinations, aversions and loathings. In other words, what is at stake in our life is not one single thing, but rather a 'bundle' of *different issues* that are intricately intertwined. In other words, 'non-indifference' viz. 'non-neutrality' goes *in different directions, and* our percepta are not subjected only to one, but to a plurality of *divergent*, sometimes *conflicting* pressures.

3) One of these directions of non-neutrality is φιλοτιμία. This word denotes the *desire for honour* (striving to stand in esteem, to be known and admired, to be seen in a positive light and in a high position). Put another way, φιλοτιμία stands for the *need to be extolled*: a longing for *glory* and *renown* (δόξα and κλέος). We can also speak of the *desire to be great* (N.B.: to be great *in other people's eyes* – in such a way that one's greatness *does not remain unnoticed*). In short: it is the very opposite of the biblical "keeping one's light under a bushel". Hence, φιλοτιμία is intrinsically related to other people viz. to other "consciousnesses" – to how one is *perceived and valued by others* (or rather to how one *perceives oneself to be perceived and valued by others*). Positively φιλοτιμία means a) a drive towards being *noticed by other people* – a need to *seek other people's attention*, to *make oneself*

known, and b) to make oneself known *as a remarkable or exceptional person*. Negatively, φιλοτιμία means a) an *aversion to remaining unnoticed* (to being a 'nobody'), and b) a still greater *aversion* to being perceived *in a negative or shameful light* (viz. an aversion to *falling in disrepute*).

4) Φιλονικία stands for a somewhat different direction of non-neutrality. The word denotes *competitiveness* and *spirit of emulation* – a penchant for *rivalry* and *competition*. On the one hand, φιλονικία *makes one see everybody else as antagonists* (as competitors and rivals in a zero-sum struggle). And on the other hand, it consists in an urge or longing for *competitive success*: in a desire to *win*, to *prevail over others*, to *beat everyone else*. In other words, the particular kind of non-indifference φιλονικία is all about has to do with a single-minded focus on *power* and *winning* (on *ascendancy* over other people, on being able to *dominate* them and *having them submit to one's power*). Positively φιλονικία means being insistent on winning (on coming out *on top*, etc.). Negatively it means a *horror of being defeated* and an *emulous envy* of other people when they win.

5) Hence, φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία are far from being the same. But there is a *common denominator* between them. For a) they are both *intrinsically 'other-related'* (both would be pointless if there were no other *consciousnesses*) and b) both have to do with a *desire to excel*, to be better than the others and to perceive oneself as being perceived by other consciousnesses as *superior*.

6) Alcibiades is at the same time a) an absolutely *outstanding* individual (a very *particular* case and indeed a *unique* case) and b) an *exemplary* case.

7) As an exemplary case

7.1) he made himself into an emblematic figure for φιλοτιμία: he stood not only for *ambition*, but for *unbounded* and *superlative* ambition. It is no coincidence that one of the first things Plutarch says about him is the following: φύσει δὲ πολλῶν ὄντων καὶ μεγάλων παθῶν ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ φιλόνικον ἰσχυρότατον ἦν καὶ τὸ φιλόπρωτον (PLUTARCH, *Alcibiades* 2, 3-5, in: *Plutarchi vitae parallelae*, vol. 1.2, Leipzig, Teubner, 1964³). Socrates' portrait of Alcibiades highlights this feature and presents it as the *be all and end all of Alcibiades' life project*. See also XENOPHON, *Memorabilia* I, 2, 14 (speaking of Critias and Alcibiades he writes: ἐγενέθην μὲν γὰρ δὴ τὼ ἄνδρε τούτω φύσει φιλοτιμοτάτω πάντων Ἀθηναίων, βουλομένω τε πάντα δι' ἑαυτῶν πράττεθαι καὶ πάντων ὀνομαστοτάτω γενέσθαι), THUCYDIDES, *Historiae*, VI, 15 and PS.-PLATO, *Alcibiades Minor*, 141a-b.

7.2) Alcibiades also became the epitome of *treason* and *disgrace* (of *discredit* and *utter disrepute* – i.e. of the very opposite of what φιλοτιμία is all about). Hence, he became the paragon of an *extraordinary disappointment or an extraordinary fiasco* and an emblematic figure for the connection between overambitious φιλοτιμία and utter disgrace). This, too, resonates in the background, together with the fact that it could be used as a weapon against Socrates (for Alcibiades had been a member of the 'Socratic circle').

8) To be sure Alcibiades was a controversial and highly debated personality. But the point is that even his most ardent admirers had to deal with the said combination of distinctive features mentioned in 6.1 and 6.2.

On the historical Alcibiades, his emblematic dimension and its main characteristics, see notably G. F. HERTZBERG, *Alkibiades der Staatsmann und Feldherr* nach den Quellen dargestellt, Halle, Pfeffer, 1853, R. HOYER, *Alkibiades Vater und Sohn in den Rhetorenschulen*, Kreuznach, Wohlleben, 1887, I. BRUNS, *Das literarische Porträt der Griechen* im vierten und fünften Jahrhundert vor Christi Geburt, Berlin, W. Hertz, 1896, 250-254, and 493-520, H. DITTMAR, *Aischines von Sphettos*. Studien zur Literaturgeschichte der Sokratiker. Untersuchungen und Fragmente, Berlin, Weidmann, 1912, repr. Berlin, Weidmann, 2001, 65ff., F. TAEGER, *Alkibiades*, Stuttgart, Perthes, 1925, N. M. PUSEY, Alcibiades and τὸ φιλόπολι, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 51 (1940), 215-231, R. RAUCHENSTEIN, Über die Reden für und gegen den jüngeren Alkibiades bei Isokrates und Lysias, *Neues Schweizerisches Museum* 2 (1948), 273-286, A. E. RAUBITSCHEK, The Case Against Alcibiades (Andocides IV), *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 79 (1948), 191-210, J. HATZFIELD, *Alcibiade*. Étude sur l'histoire d'Athènes à la fin du Ve siècle, Paris, PUF, 1951², E. DÉLÉBECQUE, *Euripide et la Guerre du Péloponnèse*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1951, 336ff., R. A. GAUTHIER, *Magnanimité*. L'idéal de la grandeur dans la philosophie païenne et dans la théologie chrétienne, Paris, Vrin, 1951, in particular 21ff. 26f., 36, 45ff., O. GIGON, *Kommentar zum ersten Buch von Xenophons Memorabilien,* Basel, Reinhardt, 1953, 66, R. GOOSSENS, *Euripide et Athènes* (Mémoires de l'Académie Royale de Belgique, Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques LV, 1962), Bruxelles, Académie Royale de Belgique, 1962, J. F. TALBOT, Aristophanes and Alcibiades*, Classical Bulletin* 39 (1963), 65-68, M. F. McGREGOR, The Genius of Alcibiades, *Phoenix* 19 (1965), 27-46, E. DÉLÉBECQUE, *Thucydide et Alcibiade,* Aix-en-Provence, Ophrys, 1965, R. SEAGER, Alcibiades and the Charge of Aiming at Tyranny, *Historia* 16 (1967) 6-18, G. C. FIELD, *Plato and His Contemporaries*. A Study in Fourth-century Life and Thought, London, Methuen, 1967, W. R. CONNOR, *The New Politicians of Fifth-Century Athens*, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1971, 140f., E. F. BLOEDOW, *Alcibiades Reexamined*, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1973, O. AURENCHE, *Les groups d'Alcibiade, de Léogoras et de Teucros* : remarques sur la vie politique athénienne en 415 avant Jésus Christ. Paris, Belles Lettres, 1974, M. DELAUNOIS, Les leçons d'Alcibiade, *Les études classiques* 46 (1978), 113-126, M. COGAN, *The Human Thing*. The Speeches and Principles of Thucydides' History, Chicago/London, The University of Chicago Press, 1981, 99, M. PALMER, Alcibiades and the Question

To put it in a nutshell, what is so special about Alcibiades is a) that he possesses much more than most human beings, b) that he nevertheless 'puts all his eggs in one basket', namely in the 'basket' of the μείζω κτήσασθαι, and indeed so much so that he would not be willing to

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Alcibiades and the Fall of Athens, Cambridge (Mass.)/London, Harvard University Press, 2018.

stay alive if he had to live just with what he already possesses (ἔχων ἅ νῦν ἔχει) and nothing more, and c) that he sets the bar extravagantly high, so that for him nothing short of *everything* (namely the *philotimic* and *philonicic everything*) will really do.[17]

This completes the picture (and indeed both with regard to Alcibiades and the inner structure of human life).

Socrates' description of Alcibiades reveals an underlying understanding of what defines each human life (viz. each of its stages) – and indeed the underlying description both of an *invariable basic structure* and of the highly *variable* form it takes in each concrete case. First, each human life (viz. each of its stages) defines itself by a certain combination of ὑπάρχοντα, a certain combination of οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα and a certain *relation of forces* between them. Secondly each human life (viz. each of its stages) also defines itself by a certain *reaction* to (or *attitude* towards) the said ἔχειν ἅ ἔχει and οὐκ ἔχειν ἅ οὐκ ἔχει. Socrates speaks of an *either/or*: either ἀγαπᾶν or the opposite, either to *be contented* or *not to be contented* with *what one already has* (in which case everything hinges on the μείζω κτήσασθαι). But this is not all. The attitude or reaction Socrates refers to is intrinsically related to *non-indifference* and depends on the direction taken by the stream of non-indifference in each concrete case (that is, on what one values, on what is important and unimportant in one's eyes, etc.). A human being's reaction to (or attitude towards) his or her ὑπάρχοντα viz. οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα depends on the connection between the latter and the kind of non-indifference that has the upper hand in his or her case. In other words, everything depends on whether the ὑπάρχοντα meet – or fail to meet – one's needs, interests and priorities. Alcibiades' main drive is φιλοτιμία viz. φιλονικία: in his case, everything seems to revolve around ambition, power, prominence, renown, prestige and the like. But in other cases, the stream of non-indifference goes in other directions. Furthermore, Socrates draws our attention to the fact that the *strength and intensity* of one's attachment to the μείζω κτήσασθαι can vary. In the case of Alcibiades, it is really extreme: he would prefer to die rather than continue life just with his present possessions (ἔχων ἅ νῦν ἔχει).[18] But nothing prevents the said attachment from taking milder forms in other cases. Last but not least, Socrates

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[17] What we are dealing with here is a complex *interplay between closely related superlatives*. The point is that in Alcibiades' eyes his superlative set of advantages is simply *worthless*. From his point of view, what at first would seem to be superlative ὑπάρχειν (something close to the ideal μηδενὸς δεῖσθαι – that is, to perfect αὐτάρκεια, see note 4 above) fades to almost *nothing*. It is in fact the very *opposite* of superlative ὑπάρχειν: it is but *superlative lack* (not only δεῖσθαι, but indeed *superlative δεῖσθαι*). In other words, Alcibiades' assessment of his own life is all about the *lack of the real superlative*. And this in turn gives rise to what might be described as a *superlative kind of μείζω κτήσασθαι* and a *superlative kind of hope*: everything hinges on a *superlative hope* (namely the hope for the *superlative μείζω κτήσασθαι*).

[18] Or, as Socrates puts it in 124b, Alcibiades' love for the object of the μείζω κτήσασθαι is stronger than any other man's love for anything: "οὖ μοι δοκεῖς ἐρᾶν ὡς οὐδεὶς ἄλλος ἄλλου ("which you seem to desire as no other man ever desired anything" ["of which you seem to be enamoured as no one else ever was of anything"].

highlights the role played by the variable *dimension or extent* of the μείζω κτήσασθαι as such. As pointed out above, Alcibiades will be satisfied with nothing less than the *unsurpassable*: the goal he aims at leaves literally *nothing to be desired*.[19] But it seems that other human beings are not as demanding as the son of Cleinias and will therefore be satisfied with less ambitious goals.

So much for Socrates' underlying description of what defines each human life viz. each of its stages. Incidentally it should be noted that this underlying description provides a glimpse into the essential components of ἐπιμέλεια or ἐπιμελεῖσθαι (and in particular of ἐπιμέλεια or ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ). To be sure, Socrates does not mention ἐπιμέλεια or ἐπιμελεῖσθαι before 119a.[20] But this absence "in nomine" is by no means an absence "in re." Without being explicit, his depiction of Alcibiades' life highlights the pivotal role played by ἐπιμέλεια and ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ and what ἐπιμέλεια and ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ are all about. As a result, when these words eventually make their entrance in the *Alcibiades Major* and assume a leading role in the dialogue, what they stand for is already there, and indeed almost from the very beginning.

So, let us take a closer look at how Socrates' underlying description provides a glimpse into the internal composition of ἐπιμέλεια or ἐπιμελεῖσθαι (and in particular of ἐπιμέλεια or ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ). First, ἐπιμέλεια viz. ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ always has to do with a certain instance of ἔχειν ἅ ἔχει and οὐκ ἔχειν ἅ οὐκ ἔχει (i.e. with a certain constellation of ὑπάρχοντα and οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα). Secondly, it always has to do with a particular kind of *reaction* to (or *attitude* towards toward) this. More precisely, it always has to do with the second component of the above-mentioned *either/or*. That is, ἐπιμέλεια and ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ presupposes the opposite of ἀγαπᾶν, to wit: *not being contented with and not accepting what one already has*, finding it insufficient. Finally, ἐπιμέλεια and ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ is the very opposite of ἀγαπᾶν in the sense that it does not accept what one already has, it *does something about it.* In other words, it *does not leave things as they are*: it *tries to achieve what is missing* (i.e. to turn the missing οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα into ὑπάρχοντα).

Having said that, let us return to Alcibiades.

In a way, Socrates' description of Alcibiades amounts to saying that he is, as it were, *the epitome of ἐπιμέλεια or ἐπιμελεῖσθαι* αὑτοῦ: a man whose life is all about a) *not accepting*

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[19] N.B.: it leaves nothing to be desired *in the realm of φιλοτιμία viz. φιλινικία.*

[20] Socrates uses ἐπιμελέστατα in 104 d3. But it is just a first hint, something said entirely *en passant* – and indeed just an idiomatic way of expressing Socrates' *persistence* and *insistence* (Ast translates the adverb: *sedulo, studiose*). Taken in itself the wording would lack significance. Cf. F. AST, *Lexikon Platonicum sive Vocum Platonicarum Index*, Lipsiae, Weidmann, 1835, repr. Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956, 786, and DENYER, *op. laud.*, *ad loc.*

what he already has and b) doing something about it. The point is that in Alcibiades' life ἐπιμέλεια viz. ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ is not just a component among many others. As pointed out above, Alcibiades 'puts all his eggs in one basket' – namely the 'basket' of a philotimic viz. philonicic ἐπιμέλεια or ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ. In this sense, his life is all about ἐπιμέλεια viz. ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ. What is more, his life is about ἐπιμέλεια αὐτοῦ *in the highest degree*. On the one hand, he would not be willing to live if it were not for his ἐπιμέλεια-related hope (the hope of being able to change the ὑπάρχοντα/οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα-constellation defining him). And on the other hand, the change he wants to bring about (the change his ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ is all about) is the most far-reaching change; for Alcibiades targets nothing less than the *unsurpassable* viz. the 'absolute jackpot' (the full satisfaction of all his desires, the complete achievement of all he cares for). Alcibiades stands therefore for the *most far-reaching form of ἐπιμέλεια or ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ* (or, more precisely, for the *philotimic* or *philonicic* variety of the *most far-reaching form of ἐπιμέλεια or ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ*).

3. HUMAN LIFE AND ITS COGNITIVE SCAFFOLDING – THE UNDERLYING 'COGNITIVE DRAMA' AND ITS MAIN 'DRAMATIS PERSONAE'. THE ROLE PLAYED BY *SHAM KNOWLEDGE* VIZ. ἀμαθία (οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς)

But let us now take a closer look at how the dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades develops after the preliminary remarks we have just examined.

In 106c the conversation takes a somewhat unexpected turn. Socrates concentrates on the question of Alcibiades' *cognitive* equipment – that is, on whether he really knows everything he needs to know in order for his life project to be successful. The discussion of this topic extends from 106 to 124.

Socrates does not say it expressly, but, on the one hand, it is crystal clear that what is at stake here are *knowledge*-related ὑπάρχοντα viz. οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα (*cognitive* 'possessions or the lack thereof). That is, Socrates is doing none other than *applying the very same 'analysis grid' to Alcibiades' 'cognitive situation'*. And on the other hand, what is at stake is Alcibiades' *attitude* towards his 'cognitive situation' (towards his *knowledge-related* 'possessions' viz. the lack thereof). That is, what is at stake here is a *knowledge-related instance* of the above-mentioned *either/or*: *either* what Socrates terms ἀγαπᾶν (in this case, being completely satisfied with one's *cognitive* possessions) *or* the exact opposite (finding them *insufficient* and *doing something about it*). The point is a) that Alcibiades *lacks* certain *cognitive* possessions,

b) that he *is not aware of this*, and c) that he is *doing nothing about it*. But this is not all. Socrates' point is that the 'cognitive possessions' (viz. the cognitive οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα) he is referring to play a pivotal role as *essential requirements* of Alcibiades' '*philotimic*' or '*philonicic*' endeavour. In other words, what is at stake in this part of the dialogue is a set of 'cognitive possessions' Alcibiades' endeavour cannot do without, for pursuing this kind of endeavour and failing to meet the cognitive requirements in question inevitably leads to making a fool of oneself or disgracing oneself (the very opposite of what φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία viz. Alcibiades' endeavour are all about).

The main components and structure of this part of the dialogue are relatively simple. It is composed of two major elements. On the one hand, there is an underlying 'cartographic survey' of the realm of knowledge, its main actors and the relation between them. The leading question is: what possible forms of ὑπάρχειν/οὐκ ὑπάρχειν (and of reaction to either of them) play a significant role in the case of knowledge? In other words: what possible forms of possession of knowledge or of lack thereof, and what forms of reaction to the possession of knowledge or to the lack thereof there be with regard to any given object of knowledge? On the other hand, this 'cartographic survey' is used to place Alcibiades in the realm of knowledge – to determine *where he stands* as far as knowledge is concerned. Socrates does not try to give an overall viz. a single or simple answer to this question. He takes a case-by-case approach. He tries to ascertain 1) what kind of knowledge must Alcibiades possess (what cognitive requirements must be met) if his philotimic/ philonicic *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* is to make any sense and be successful? 2. What kind of knowledge claims does Alcibiades make and how far do the latter meet the said requirements? 3. How far is each of Alcibiades knowledge claims well--founded? What is their cognitive nature: their real place in the realm of knowledge viz. in the framework of the said 'cartographic survey'?

But let us take a closer look at this topic.

Socrates' 'cartographic survey' of the realm of knowledge has two essential components. First, he identifies the 'main characters' in the realm of knowledge – that is, all the 'dramatis personae' of the "*cognitive drama*" underlying human life.[21] According to him, they are the following:

a) εἰδέναι, ἐπίστασθαι, γιγνώσκειν viz. οὐκ ἀγνοεῖν (knowing, knowledge),[22]

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[21] N.B.: not in the sense that human life is *just* a 'cognitive drama', but in the sense that it is *also* a 'cognitive drama' – that human life is embedded in a 'cognitive drama' or takes place in the framework of a 'cognitive drama', upon which everything else depends.

[22] Cf. 106d, 106e, 107b, 107c, 109e, 110c, 111a-111e, 112d, 114b-c, 117a-b, 118d.

b) οὐκ εἰδέναι viz. μὴ εἰδέναι, οὐκ ἐπίστασθαι, ἀγνοεῖν (not knowing, ignorance),[23]

c) μανθάνειν (learning),[24]

d) εὑρεῖν viz. ἐξευρεῖν (finding out or discovering),[25]

e) οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι, οἴεσθαι ἐπίστασθαι, οἴεσθαι γιγνώσκειν (to think that one knows),[26]

f) οἴεσθαι οὐκ εἰδέναι (to think that one does not know),[27]

g) οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς (*conceit of knowledge* or *sham knowledge*: not to know and yet to think that one knows – to think that one knows what one does not know),[28]

h) ζητεῖν or ζητῆσαι (searching or inquiring, investigating, examining),[29]

i) μανθάνειν ἐθέλειν (to be *willing* to learn),[30]

j) ζητεῖν ἐθέλειν (to be *willing* to inquire or investigate),[31]

k) ἀμελεῖν μανθάνειν (*neglecting* to learn),[32]

l) ἀμελεῖν ζητεῖν (*neglecting* to search or to inquire),[33]

and, last but not least,

m) ἁμαρτάνειν (making *mistakes*, being *mistaken, to err, to fail, to do wrong*). [34]

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[23] Cf. 107c, 110b-c, 112d, 112e, 113bc, 114b, 116e, 117ab, 117d-e, 127d.

[24] Cf. 106d-e, 109d, 110d, 111a, 112d, 113e, 114a, 118c, 119b, 120b, 123d.

[25] Cf. 106d, 109e, 110c-d, 112d, 113e.

[26] Cf. 106d, 110a, 110c, 113c, 113e, 116c, 117d. Οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι can mean either a) the very fact that one believes that one knows (irrespective of whether this belief is sound or unsound) or b) an ill-founded belief that one knows (i.e. the above mentioned οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι <u>οὐκ εἰδώς</u>). In the final analysis, "a)" is part and parcel of all knowledge as such; for *there is no knowledge without a knowledge claim*. Οἴεσθαι *εἰδέναι* in this *neutral sense* is the *underlying common denominator* between *sound* οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι, on the one hand, and *unsound* οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι (i. e. οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς), on the other. See note 43 below. In Socrates' dialogue with Alcibiades the first step always has to do with the former, the second with the latter. That is, Socrates always starts by ascertaining whether there is an underlying *knowledge claim* and only then does he discuss whether the knowledge claim in question is well founded or ill founded.

[27] Socrates uses a variety of expressions to express this: οὐχ ἡγεῖσθαι εἰδέναι (106e), οἴεσθαι μὴ εἰδέναι (109e), οὐκ οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι (110a), ἀγνοεῖν εἰδέναι (110c), οὐκ οἴεσθαι αὐτὸ εἰδέναι οὐκ ἐπιστάμενος (117b), "ἃ μὴ "ἐπίστασαι, γιγνώσκεις δὲ ὅτι οὐκ ἐπίστασαι" (117c), "ἅπερ εἰδῇς ὅτι οὐκ οἶσθα" (117d), μὴ οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι (117e), "οἱ τῶν μὴ εἰδότων εἰδότες ὅτι οὐκ ἴσασιν" (117e-118a).

[28] In this case too, Socrates uses various expressions: "πότερον σαυτὸν λέληθας ὅτι οὐκ ἐπίστασαι τοῦτο" (109d), "ὅτι Ἀλκιβιάδης ὁ καλὸς ὁ Κλεινίου οὐκ ἐπίσταιτο, οἴοιτο δέ" (113b), "διὰ ταύτην τὴν ἄγνοιάν ἐστι, τὴν τοῦ μὴ εἰδότα οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι" (117d), "οἱ μὴ εἰδότες, οἰόμενοι δ᾽ εἰδέναι" (118a), "οὐ μόνον ἀγνοεῖς τὰ μέγιστα, ἀλλὰ καὶ οὐκ εἰδὼς οἴει αὐτὰ εἰδέναι"(118b), and also 127d.

[29] Cf. 109e, 110a, 110c.

[30] Cf. 106d. The point is that μανθάνειν *ἐθέλειν* plays a pivotal role as a *sine qua non* of μανθάνειν, for the latter is not possible without μανθάνειν *ἐθέλειν*

[31] Cf. 106d. The point is that ζητεῖν ἐθέλειν plays a pivotal role as a *sine qua non* of ζητεῖν, for the latter is not possible without the former.

[32] Cf. 113c, 120b.

[33] There is no explicit mention of ἀμελεῖν ζητεῖν in the *Alcibiades Major*. But the parallel drawn between μανθάνειν and ζητεῖν – cf. D. M. JOHNSON, *A Commentary on Plato's Alcibiades*, Diss. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1996, on 104d4-5 and N. DENYER (ed.), *Plato Alcibiades*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, on 106d4-5 and 114a6 – strongly suggests that this, too, is a 'dramatis persona' of the "cognitive drama" underlying human life.

[34] 117d-e, 134a. It should be borne in mind that we focus on some main features of Socrates' survey. We leave out some important aspects – notably n) ὁμολογεῖν as a symptom of real knowledge and o) διαφέρεσθαι viz. ἀμφισβητεῖν and πλανᾶσθαι (112d, 117a-118a) as a symptom of *sham knowledge*.

And, as pointed out above, Socrates tries to work out how they relate to one another. His analysis pays special attention to the question as to how each piece of knowledge (viz. of putative knowledge) was acquired – i.e. as to how it became ὑπάρχον. His point is that if one has some piece of knowledge it must have been acquired – and the question is: how? In other words, each piece of knowledge (or putative knowledge) is put under pressure: it must explain its origin or clarify where it came from.

Socrates' main claim in this respect is that knowledge is either the result of μανθάνειν or of εὑρεῖν. According to him, the former presupposes willingness to learn, while the latter presupposes ζητῆσαι. And these in turn presuppose awareness of one's ignorance. In other words, according to him all knowledge ultimately derives from some kind of οἴεσθαι οὐκ εἰδέναι. And it must be able to prove its genealogical link to it. But what is οἴεσθαι οὐκ εἰδέναι? In the final analysis, it is but a) the awareness of a knowledge-related ὑπάρχοντα/οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα-constellation, which b) paves the way for a certain attitude toward (or reaction to) it – namely the cognitive form of οὐκ ἀγαπᾶν and ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ. In short, Socrates emphasizes the role played by the *cognitive* variety of οὐκ ἀγαπᾶν or ἐπιμέλεια (viz. ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ) as the mainspring for the acquisition of knowledge. Furthermore, he also highlights the role played by the opposite, namely the cognitive variety of ἀγαπᾶν viz. by *cognitive* ἀμέλεια (cognitive carelessness: unawareness of one's cognitive situation and absence of any initiative to improve it).

This is not the place to discuss such aspects in detail. Instead, we focus our attention on one of Socrates' claims – namely one which turns out to be the second main component of his 'cartographic survey' of the realm of knowledge (or of his survey a) of the 'dramatis personae' in the 'cognitive drama' underlying Alcibiades' – and indeed human – existence, and b) of how these cognitive 'dramatis personae' are interrelated).

The second component we are referring to has to do with Socrates' claim that there is a third possibility between εἰδέναι and οὐκ εἰδέναι, between knowledge and ignorance. The very basic structure the *Alcibiades Major* constantly refers to (namely the ὑπάρχοντα/οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα structure) seems to suggest that in this case, too, there are only two possibilities: either one *does*, or one *does not* possess certain knowledge – *tertium non datur*. But Socrates points out that there is indeed a *third possibility* – namely a very particular kind of ignorance: οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς. [35] In Socrates' view this is the *utmost* and *most virulent* form of ignorance –

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[35] See notably 117d7-118a6:
"ἐννοεῖς οὖν ὅτι καὶ τὰ ἁμαρτήματα ἐν τῇ πράξει διὰ ταύτην τὴν ἄγνοιάν ἐστι, τὴν τοῦ μὴ εἰδότα οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι;
(…)

and indeed the sole origin of all mistakes (not least of all mistakes in life and practice); for simple, straightforward ignorance does not leave room for misapprehension or error. The specific trait of this particular kind of ignorance is its *illusiveness* or *deceptiveness*: it stands for *sham knowledge* or for mere *semblance of knowledge* – for ignorance *posing as knowledge* and *being mistaken for it*. In a word, it is but *conceit of knowledge*. And that is why, on the one hand, it is dangerous and mischievous; and on the other hand, it is *reproachable* or *reprehensible*: and indeed so much so that it is no exaggeration to speak, as Socrates does, of a *shameful* and *disgraceful* (ἐπονείδιστος) sort of ignorance. There is nothing stupid about simple, straightforward ignorance (or simple lack of knowledge). It is just there and it is not one's fault that it is there (and if one simply ignores what one ignores, one cannot do anything about it). But to allow oneself to be carried away by *sham knowledge* is foolish – and Socrates therefore speaks of ἀμαθία (i.e. of *dull, foolish, or stupid* ignorance).[36]

ἐπειδὴ δ᾽ οὔθ᾽ οἱ εἰδότες οὔθ᾽ οἱ τῶν μὴ εἰδότων εἰδότες ὅτι οὐκ ἴσασιν, ἢ ἄλλοι λείπονται ἢ οἱ μὴ εἰδότες, οἰόμενοι δ᾽ εἰδέναι;

οὔκ, ἀλλ᾽ οὗτοι.

αὕτη ἄρα ἡ ἄγνοια τῶν κακῶν αἰτία καὶ ἡ ἐπονείδιστος ἀμαθία;

ναί."

In this passage, "τὸ μὴ εἰδότα οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι" and "οἱ μὴ εἰδότες, οἰόμενοι δ᾽ εἰδέναι" express the particular kind of ignorance Socrates is referring to (cf. note 28 above). There are other examples of this wording in the *corpus platonicum*. *Apologia Socratis* 21d5 and *Meno* 84c5 speak of "οἴεσθαί τι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς". "Οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι (οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι ἃ οὐκ οἶδεν)" is the wording used in the *Apologia Socratis* 29b1. In the *Sophista* (229c5) the foreigner puts it like this: "τὸ μὴ κατειδότα τι δοκεῖν εἰδέναι: δι᾽ οὗ κινδυνεύει πάντα ὅσα διανοίᾳ σφαλλόμεθα γίγνεσθαι πᾶσιν." In the *Gorgias* (459d6) Socrates speaks of "δοκεῖν εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς". In the *Apologia Socratis* 29a5-6 we find the wording "δοκεῖν σοφὸν εἶναι μὴ ὄντα". In addition to these passages, see also *Apologia* 21b-22a, 23a-e, 29a-b, *Sophista* 229c, 230a-b, 268a, *Leges* 732a, 863, 886c-d, *Symposium* 204a, *Theaetetus* 187c, 210c, *Phaedrus* 275b, *Politicus* 302a-b, and *Philebus* 48d-49b. Other passages go pretty much in the same direction. It is notably the case of *Meno* 84a4-7 ("ὅτι τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ᾔδει μὲν οὔ, ἥτις ἐστὶν ἡ τοῦ ὀκτώποδος χωρίου γραμμή, ὥσπερ οὐδὲ νῦν πω οἶδεν, ἀλλ᾽ οὖν ᾤετό γ᾽ αὐτὴν τότε εἰδέναι, καὶ θαρραλέως ἀπεκρίνετο ὡς εἰδώς, καὶ οὐχ ἡγεῖτο ἀπορεῖν"), *Leges* 732a5-6 ("τὸ τὴν ἀμαθίαν τὴν παρ᾽ αὑτῷ δοκεῖν σοφίαν εἶναι"), and *Leges* 863c2-6 ("τρίτον μὴν ἄγνοιαν λέγων ἄν τις τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων αἰτίαν οὐκ ἂν ψεύδοιτο: διχῇ μὴν διελόμενος αὐτὸ ὁ νομοθέτης ἂν βελτίων εἴη, τὸ μὲν ἁπλοῦν αὐτοῦ κούφων ἁμαρτημάτων αἴτιον ἡγούμενος, τὸ δὲ διπλοῦν, ὅταν ἀμαθαίνῃ τις μὴ μόνον ἀγνοίᾳ συνεχόμενος ἀλλὰ καὶ δόξῃ σοφίας, ὡς εἰδὼς παντελῶς περὶ ἃ μηδαμῶς οἶδεν").

[36] "Ἀμαθία" has a variety of shades of meaning. The word developed, as it were, in various directions and was used with different emphases, according to the context, etc. A main component of its semantic field is the idea of *ignorance* or *lack of insight* (lacking some kind of cognitive skill, expertise or intellectual ability) or the incapacity to understand something. But this is not all. On the one hand, "ἀμαθία" can denote the want of *moral* rather than of *intellectual* perception (and the former shade of meaning is fairly common). On the other hand, the word does not necessarily stand for the *lack* of a given *knowledge skill*: it can also express the idea of *having the skill but failing to use it*. In any case, it suggests some kind of *stubbornness* – not only the idea of ignoring something or failing to perceive it, but also 'having one's back turned' to what one fails to perceive (closing one's eyes, as it were, – or being 'militantly blind' – to something). This is closely connected with the fact that ἀμαθία conveys not just the idea of ignorance, but also the idea of *stupidity, foolishness, obtuseness, purblindness, oafishness*, (cognitive) *clumsiness* and *ineptitude*. It is a very strong word. More often than not it suggests that the cognitive condition (the cognitive *defect* or the cognitive *flaw*) in question is due to one's own *fault* – and somehow *inexcusable* or *unacceptable*. In other words, it stands for what might be described as *self-inflicted ignorance or lack of insight* – and it is as much a *moral* as a cognitive flaw (a cognitive flaw resulting from the fact that one failed to do what *could* and *should* have been done to prevent it). Furthermore, "ἀμαθής", "ἀμαθία", etc., also convey the idea that the missing knowledge-skills are *easily attainable* – i. e., that one lacks knowledge-skills one *could* and *should* have acquired (or fails to use knowledge-skills one *could* and *should* use). In other words, the ἀμαθής manages to ignore something *essential* or *basic* (and that is precisely what makes him ἀμαθής). Which

leads us to a further aspect: like other words denoting cognitive flaws ("ἀνόητος", "ἀσύνετος", "ἀπαίδευτος" and the corresponding substantives), "ἀμαθής" and "ἀμαθία" convey the idea of some kind of *inferiority* and *ineptitude*. They therefore have a strong *insulting* connotation (like stupidity, foolishness, imbecility, dickheadedness, daftness, idiocy and the like).

This semantic cluster can give rise to other more specific shades of meaning. First, "ἀμαθία" can denote not only *cognitive clumsiness* (*mental* clumsiness), but also *clumsiness in general* (unmannerly clumsiness: *boorishness*, *crassness* and the like). Secondly, "ἀμαθία" can also be related to the idea of *education* and express "absence of training or discipline and the condition which this absence produces" (Denniston, on Euripides *Electra* 294-6). In which case it stands both for what might be described as *ill-bred ignorance* (Cropp, on Euripides *Electra*, 194) – that is, '*unlearnedness*', *lack of culture*, etc. – and for *ill-bred behaviour* (lack of manners and the like). But this is not all. Thirdly, the word can equally express *lack of feelings* – in particular, lack of *finer feeling* (Denniston, *loc. cit.*). It can also mean *insensibility*, *insensitivity* and the like. In particular, it denotes both a) "moral culpable neglect of norms accepted by better people" (Mastronarde, on Euripides *Medea*, 224) and b) moral culpable neglect of the social norms "that ought to restrain a man from outrageous behaviour" (Douglas Olson, on Aristophanes *Pax*, 1231). Dover – in his *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle,* 122 – speaks of 'the failure to understand what is required by decency and propriety". But the insensitivity or the lack of finer feeling we are talking about can range – as Stevens (on Euripides *Andromacha*, 674) puts it – "from mere tactlessness (…) to savagery". Denniston, *loc. cit.* goes pretty much in the same direction when he points out that "ἀμαθία" covers a range of meanings from "discourtesy", "rudeness", "lack of kindness" or "intractability", to "rebellious perversity", the "indecency of the savage", the "cruelty of human sacrifices" or the "savageness of self--mutilation".

To conclude this point, let me add three remarks.

1. It goes without saying that "ἀμαθία" does not always carry all these shades of meaning. They vary according to the context, etc. But the point is that, even so, they are always somehow *pulsating in the background*.

2. Hence, although the *Alcibiades Major* uses "ἀμαθία" to designate a very particular kind of cognitive flaw (*sham knowledge* viz. *conceit of knowledge*), it nevertheless associates the particular kind of cognitive flaw in question with the semantic field of "ἀμαθία" (that is, with the plethora of the above-mentioned shades of meaning).

3. As for ἐπονείδιστος ἀμαθία cf. *Apologia* 29b2. There is, of course, something redundant about ἐπονείδιστος ἀμαθία. For "ἀμαθία" suggests itself the idea of a *reprehensible* or *reproachable* feature and cannot be used without at least a tinge of this connotation. It is perhaps better to follow Stallbaum in taking ἀμαθία as an *apposition* ("per appositionem ad ἡ ἄγνοια tradatur"). Cf. G. STALLBAUM (ed.), *Platonis opera omnia* V1, Gothae/Erfordiae, Hennings, 1857, *ad loc*. But on the other hand, it is also possible that Socrates is singling out this particular kind of ἀμαθία (τὸ οὐκ εἰδὼς οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι) and pillorying it as the *most shameful and reprehensible*. This would be consistent with the fact that he also characterizes τὸ οὐκ εἰδὼς οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι as the most *extreme* (the vilest, the most disgraceful) kind of ἀμαθία: ἀμαθία ἡ *ἐσχάτη* (118 b6). Finally, it is also possible that, by speaking of ἐπονείδιστος ἀμαθία and ἀμαθία ἡ ἐσχάτη, Socrates is presenting sham knowledge (τὸ οὐκ εἰδὼς οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι) as the *real spring* and *sole origin* of *all* ἀμαθία viz. as the real spring and sole origin *of all that is reprehensible* about ἀμαθία

On ἀμαθία, ἀμαθής, etc. see notably H. WEIL (ed.), *Sept tragédies d'Euripide*, Paris, Hachette, 1868, on Electra 294-295, A. W. VERRALL (ed.), *The Medea of Euripides*, London, Macmillan, 1881, on 223, F. A. PALEY (ed.), *The Andromache of Euripides*, Cambridge, Deighton, Bell & Co, 1887, on 170, R. D. ARCHER--HIND (ed.), *The Timaeus of Plato*, London, Macmillan & Co, 1888, on 86b, A. W. VERRALL (ed.), *The Ion of Euripides*, Cambridge, University Press, 1890, on 374, P. SHOREY, On the Implicit Ethics and Psychology of Thucydides, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 24 (1893), 66-88, in particular 75f. (=IDEM, *Selected Papers*, ed. L. Tarán, vol. 1, N.Y./London, Garland, 1980, 192-214, in particular 201f.), W. J. M. STARKIE (ed.), *The Wasps of Aristophanes*, London, Macmillan, 1897, on 1183, 1321, W. NESTLE, *Euripides*, der Dichter der griechischen Aufklärung, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1901, 36, 90, 114, 125, 127, 188ff., 446, 480, J. ADAM (ed.), *The Republic of Plato*, vol. I, Cambridge, University Press, 1902, on 382a5, A. C. PEARSON (ed.), *Euripides The Phoenissae*, Cambridge, University Press, 1909, on 393, 569, 763, 874, U. von WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF (ed.), *Euripides Herakles*, Zweite Bearbeitung, Berlin, Weidmann, 1909, on 347, R. A. NEIL. (ed.) *The Knights of Aristophanes*, Cambridge, University Press, 1909, on 191-3, W. NESTLE, Thukydides und die Sophistik, *Neue Jahrbücher für das Klassische Altertum* 33 (1914), 649-685 (=IDEM, *Griechische Studien*. Untersuchungen zur Religion, Dichtung und Philosophie der Griechen, Stuttgart, Hansmann, 1948, repr. Aalen, Scientia, 1968, 321-373, in particular 328, 357), A. C. PEARSON (ed.), *The Fragments of Sophocles*, Cambridge, University Press, 1917, on Fr. 924, 1020, J. BURNET (ed.), *Plato's Euthyphro, Apology of Socrates and Crito*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924, repr. 1964, on Euth. 2c6, H. BENGL, *Staatstheoretische Probleme im Rahmen der attischen, vornehmlich euripideischen Tragödie*, Diss. München, 1929, 51f., F. M. CORNFORD, *Plato's Cosmology*. The Timaeus of Plato Translated with a Running Commentary, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1937, repr. 1956, 346f., M. PLATNAUER

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Now, when we consider this third possibility – namely *sham knowledge* (οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς) – an entirely different picture emerges. 'Cognitive possessions' can include *sham--ὑπάρχοντα* (a cognitive hybrid of ὑπάρχον and οὐκ ὑπάρχον: *mere semblance of knowledge* counting as real knowledge). And this creates a) a very particular sort of ὑπάρχοντα/οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα-constellation, and b) the possibility for a new kind of ἀγαπᾶν: one can be satisfied with one's cognitive situation and leave things as they are because of *illusory* cognitive possessions (because one mistakenly thinks to possess more than one really does). According to Socrates, ἐπονείδιστος ἀμαθία is the main source of cognitive ἀγαπᾶν – the main source of ἀμελεῖν μανθάνειν (neglecting to learn)[37] and, for that matter, the main source of ἀμελεῖν ζητεῖν (neglecting to search or to inquire). In a word, ἀμαθία (οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς) is the main source of what might be described as '*cognitive occlusion*' or '*cognitive blockage*'.

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[37] 113b.

4. Ἀμαθία, ἅττειν, ἐπιμέλεια αὐτοῦ AND ἀμέλεια αὐτοῦ. Ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ, COGNITIVE ἐπιμέλεια AND COGNITIVE ἀμέλεια. THE INTERTWINING BETWEEN ἐπιμέλεια AND ἀμέλεια. A PUZZLING POSSIBILITY: ἀμέλεια αὐτοῦ IN THE GUISE OF ἐπιμέλεια αὐτοῦ

Now, this underlying 'cartographic survey' provides the basis for Socrates' attempt to pinpoint Alcibiades' 'cognitive location', as it were – or rather the 'cognitive location' of his various knowledge claims. We cannot examine this in any detail. But two main points should be borne in mind. On the one hand, Socrates shows that Alcibiades' knowledge claims are not able to explain their origin or clarify where they come from. But, on the other hand, the gravamen of his cross-examination of Alcibiades' 'cognitive equipment' does not lie here: it is rather the fact that Alcibiades' knowledge claims *collapse under the weight of scrutiny*, so that they turn out to be nothing but *sham knowledge*: foolish, dull or stupid ignorance (ἐπονείδιστος ἀμαθία) viz. οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς.

At first Alcibiades resists Socrates' pressure and tries to justify his knowledge claims. And when he ends up with his back against the wall, he tries to extricate himself by denying that the matter they are discussing (the object of his alleged knowledge viz. of his οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς) is of any importance, because it is not necessary for (and does not play a significant role in) his philotimic/philonicic endeavour. Put another way, when he finds himself cornered by Socrates and forced to acknowledge his lack of knowledge viz. his ἀμαθία, he resorts to a particular kind of 'deux ex machina': he tries to cut the link between the matter in question and the philotimic/philonicic ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ his life is all about. At first he says that public life and power revolves around the βέλτιον, the ἄμεινον, the δίκαιον and their opposites.[38] Then he claims that these 'conceptual characters' play no significant role in politics or public life, for the latter's real 'conceptual protagonist' is rather the συμφέρον and the like.[39] And when he is finally forced to capitulate and finds himself unable to deny a) his lack of knowledge and his ἀμαθία (viz. his οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς) and b) the crucial importance of the matters in question (N.B. their crucial importance for his philotimic/philonicic endeavour i.e. for his ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὐτοῦ), then he 'pulls one last rabbit out of his hat', namely the claim that his rivals are as ignorant as he is (the point being that he therefore has no need of the knowledge he has been shown to lack and can safely pursue his philotimic/ philonicic endeavour without it).[40] Not until Socrates shows that this knowledge claim, too, is unsound

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[38] 107dff.
[39] 113dff.
[40] 119bff.

and that Alcibiades ignores both his true rivals and the real relation of forces between him and them (viz. that his only chance is the very thing he has been neglecting, namely ἐπιμέλεια)[41] does he admit his cognitive ill-preparedness and capitulate to Socrates.

Socrates' words in 118b capture the results of his examination of Alcibiades' 'cognitive equipment' in a nutshell: "ἀμαθίᾳ γὰρ συνοικεῖς, ὦ βέλτιστε, τῇ ἐσχάτῃ (…) διὸ καὶ ἅττεις ἄρα πρὸς τὰ πολιτικὰ πρὶν παιδευθῆναι." ("You are cohabiting with [you are wedded to] foolish, [dull or stupid] ignorance, my fine friend, of the utmost and meanest kind (…) and this is why you rush [dash] into politics before you have been educated")[42].

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[41] So that in this case, too, Alcibiades' knowledge claim turns out to be nothing but ἀμαθία viz. οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς.

[42] As for συνοικεῖν, the verb conveys the idea of *being married* or *dwelling together* (and hence of *constant togetherness* or *constant closeness*, etc.). See notably J. H. H. SCHMIDT, *Synonymik der griechischen Sprache*, II, Leipzig, Teubner, 1878, 516f., 542f, H. J. Wolff, Marriage Law and Family Organization in Ancient Athens: A Study on the Interrelation of Public and Private Law in the Greek City, *Traditio* 2 (1944), 43-95, in particular 65f., W. K. LACEY, *The Family in Classical Greece*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1968, 112, A. R. HARRISON, *The Law of Athens* I The Family and Property Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968, 2ss., J. K. DAVIES, Athenian Citizenship: The Descent Group and Its Alternatives, *Classical Journal* 73 (1978), 105-21, in particular 112f., D. WHITEHEAD, Women and Naturalisation in Fourth-Century Athens: The Case of Archippe, *The Classical Quarterly* 36 (1986), 109-114, C. B. PATTERSON, Marriage and Married Woman in Athenian Law, in: S. POMEROY (ed.), *Women's History and Ancient History*, Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press, 1991, 48-72, J. H. OAKLEY/R. H. SINOS, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens*, Madison, Wis., University of Wisconsin Press, 1993, 9f., R. JUST, *Women in Athenian Law and Life*, London-New York, Routledge, 1989, 1994, 43f., C. B. PATTERSON, *The Family in Greek History*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1998, 108ff., A. M. VÉRILHAC/C. VIAL, *Le mariage grec du VIe siècle av. J.-C à l'époque d'Auguste* (Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique, Suppl. 32), Paris, De Boccard, 1998, 229ff., 286ff., K. A. KAPPARIS (ed.), *Apollodoros' Against Neaira [D. 59]*, N.Y./Berlin, De Gruyter, 1999, 203, E. HARTMANN, *Heirat, Hetärentum und Konkubinat im klassischen Athen*, Frankfurt a.M., Campus Verlag, 2002, 79ff., D. HAMEL, *Der Fall Neaira*: die wahre Geschichte einer Hetäre im antiken Griechenland, Darmstadt, Primus-Verlag, 2004, 76f., G. BAKEWELL, Forbidding Marriage: Neaira 16 and Metic Spouses at Athens, *The Classical Journal* 14 (2008/2009), 97-109, in particular, 99ff., D. GIERKE, *Eheprobleme im griechischen Drama*: Eine Studie zum Diskurs von Oikos und Polis im Athen des V. Jahrhunderts vor Christus, München, H. Utz Verlag, 2014, 70, M. SILVER, *Slave-wives, Single Women and "Bastards" in the Ancient Greek World*. Law and Economics Perspectives, Oxford/Philadelphia, Oxbow Books, 2018, 30, 53, 72, and K. A. KAPPARIS, *Athenian Law and Society*, London, Routledge, 2018. Its metaphorical use to describe *the relation between someone and his or her circumstances, feelings, states of mind,* etc., was relatively common. See, for example, AESCHYLUS, *Supplices* 415, *Agamemnon* 1642, *Choephori* 909, 1005, *Eumenides* 833, SOPHOCLES, *Philoctetes* 1168, *Oedipus Coloneus* 1132, 1238, *Trachiniae* 1055, *Electra* 785, Fr. 753, EURIPIDES, *Hippolytus* 163, 1219-20, *Heraclidae* 996, *Andromacha* 237, *Hecuba* 1139, *Iphigenia Taurica* 524, Fr. 369 (Erechtheus), 2, ARISTOPHANES, *Plutus* 437, *Pax*, 708, PLATO, *Gorgias* 579b8, *Respublica* 367a4, 587c3,10, *Symposium* 203d, *Philebus* 45b8, 63d*, Leges* 679b7, XENOPHON, *Symposium* 8, 24. See also SEMONIDES, Fr. 7 West 101-102 and HERODOTUS, *Historiae* 7, 102. Cf. F. W. SCHNEIDEWIN (ed.), *Aeschylos Agamemnon*, Berlin, Weidmann, 1856, on 1610f., R. C. JEBB (ed.), *Sophocles The Plays and Fragments* II: The Oedipus Coloneus, Cambridge, University Press, 1885, on 1132 ff. and 1238, R. C. JEBB (ed.), *Sophocles The Plays and Fragments* IV: The Philoctetes, Cambridge, University Press, 1890, on 1168, A. C. PEARSON (ed.), *Euripides The Heraclidae*, Cambridge, University Press, 1907, on 996, A. C. PEARSON (ed.), *The Fragments of Sophocles*, vol. III, Cambridge, University Press, 1917, on 753, E. FRAENKEL (ed.), *Aeschylus Agamemnon*, vol. III, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1950, repr. 1988, on 1641f., W. S. BARRETT, *Euripides Hippolytos*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1964, on 161-164, O. LONGO*, Comentario linguistico alle Trachinie di Sofocle*, Padova, Antenore, 1968, on 1053-7, P. T. STEVENS (ed.), *The Plays of Euripides Andromache*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971, on 237, K. J. DOVER, *Aristophanic Comedy*, London/Berkeley/L.A., University of California Press, 1972, 47f., H. FRIIS JOHANSEN/E. W. WHITTLE (ed.), *Aeschylus The Suppliants,* vol. II, København, Gyldendalske Boghandel/Nordisk Forlag, 1980, on 415, A. F. GARVIE (ed.), *Aeschylus Choephori*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986, on 1005-6, A. H. SOMMERSTEIN (ed.), *Eumenides*, Cambridge/N.Y./Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1988, on 833, M.

Socrates is referring both to Alcibiades' 'cognitive equipment' (or rather to his lack of cognitive equipment viz. to the fact that his cognitive equipment turns out to be nothing but ἀμαθία i.e., οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς) and to his philonicic/philotimic endeavour – that is, to Alcibiades' *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ*. And he emphasizes the fact that Alcibiades' ἀμαθία is the reason why the son of Cleinias ᾄττει πρὸς τὰ πολιτικά (*rushes* – or *dashes* – into politics or the public life). That is, Alcibiades' endeavour – his *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* – is described by Socrates as an ᾄττειν πρὸς τὰ πολιτικά. Now, ᾄττειν can be understood as conveying the idea of a *rash and impetuous movement* – that is, as expressing Alcibiades' eagerness viz. the fact that he is a 'young man in a hurry'. But on the other hand, Socrates seems to use ᾄττειν with a somewhat different shade of meaning – so that it conveys the idea of *precipitateness*: of something *heedless*, *inconsiderate* or *ill-judged, viz. of something hasty and premature*. In other words, all emphasis seems to be placed on the πρὶν παιδευθῆναι: on Alcibiades cognitive ill-preparedness – viz. on the lack of fulfilment of the cognitive requirements (i.e. on the fact that, as far as the latter are concerned, what characterizes Alcibiades is the very opposite of *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ*: it is rather ἀμέλεια or ἀμελεῖν *αὑτοῦ* (cognitive *self-negligence* or *self-neglect*).[43] To be sure, as

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DAVIES (ed.), *Sophocles Trachiniae*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991, on 1055, J. WILKINS (ed.), *Euripides Heraclidae*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995, on 996, D. M. JOHNSON, *A Commentary on Plato's Alcibiades*, Diss. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1996, on 118b6, K. SIER, *Die Rede der Diotima*. Untersuchungen zum platonischen Symposion, Stuttgart/Leipzig, Teubner, 1997, 81, S. DOUGLAS OLSON (ed.), *Aristophanes Peace*, Oxford/N.Y., Oxford University Press, 1998, on 706-8, P. KYRIAKOU, *A Commentary on Euripides' Iphigenia in Tauris*, Berlin, de Gruyter, 2004, on 521-524, P. PONTIER, *Trouble et ordre chez Platon et Xénophon*, Paris, Vrin, 2006, 212f., and P. J. FINGLASS (ed.), *Sophocles Electra*, Cambridge/N.Y./Melbourne, 2007, on 785. But the possibility of a sexual double entendre (living together "in a sexual relationship": *one's ἀμαθία as one's mistress*) cannot be ruled out with certainty. Cf. J. HENDERSON, *The Maculate Muse*. Obscene Language in Attic Comedy, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1975, repr. 1991, 65, M. CASSANELLO, *Lessico erotico della tragedia greca*, Roma, Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale, 1993, 121, and N. DUNBAR (ed.), *Aristophanes Birds*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, on 414.

[43] Let us take a closer look at ᾄττειν as used in the *Alcibiades Major*. It all has to do with Socrates' claim in 117 d11-12, according to which τότε που ἐπιχειροῦμεν πράττειν, ὅταν οἰώμεθα εἰδέναι ὅτι πράττομεν. The point is that all human endeavour viz. all human action essentially depends on (and is oriented by) a *cognitive* basis – or, to be more precise, a cognitive *claim*. Socrates expresses this by saying that acting (leading one's life, etc.) presupposes some degree of οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι. As pointed out above, the latter can mean either the very fact that one believes that one knows (irrespective of whether this belief is sound or unsound) or b) an ill-founded belief that one knows (i.e. the above mentioned οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι <u>οὐκ εἰδώς</u>). In the final analysis, "a)" is part and parcel of all knowledge as such; for *there is no knowledge without a knowledge claim*. Now, this also means that "a)" – that is, *oiesthai eidenai* in this *neutral sense* – is the *underlying common denominator* between *sound* and *unsound* οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι (i.e. οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς). Hence, in Socrates' claim "τότε που ἐπιχειροῦμεν πράττειν, ὅταν οἰώμεθα εἰδέναι ὅτι πράττομεν", "οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι" stands for "a)" not for "b)". But then again, the point is that "a)" (the cognitive root of all action) can take the said two forms. For "b)" – 'sham knowledge', unsound knowledge claims – can play the role of "a)" and provide the necessary basis for human action. And here is where ᾄττειν comes into play. We can lead our life in such a way that the knowledge claim(s) upon which everything depends remain(s) unverified and turn(s) out to be nothing but 'sham knowledge' (οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι <u>οὐκ εἰδώς</u>). And that is what Socrates' ᾄττειν (118b7) is all about. It stands for *cognitive overhastiness* – and for the ensuing *cognitively careless* or *sloppy* action.

To be sure, taken by itself, ᾄττειν denotes the idea of rushing (darting, shooting) – that is, a) the idea of *movement* and b) the idea of *velocity* and *agility* (WEST, on Hesiod's *Theogony*, 150, Willink, on Euripides' *Orestes*, 1430), of *energy* and *impetus*. Stallbaum writes: "verbum ad animi levitatem significandam sanequam

Socrates points out, Alcibiades is not alone in this plight – pretty much the same could be said of most Athenian statesmen (πέπονθας δὲ τοῦτο οὐ σὺ μόνος, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν πραττόντων τὰ τῇσδε τῆς πόλεως, πλὴν ὀλίγων (…).”). But the underlying point is that, although Alcibiades is the epitome of ἐπιμέλεια or ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ (a man whose life is all about a) *not accepting what he already has and b) doing something about it),* surprisingly enough, as far as the cognitive requirements of his own *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* are concerned, he is a man whose life is characterised by the very opposite, namely by fact that a) he *accepts what he has* and b) *does nothing to change it.*

In short, Alcibiades' ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ is, as Socrates puts it, 'cohabiting' with or 'wedded' to (συνοικεῖ) ἀμαθία – and by 'cohabiting' with' or being 'wedded' to ἀμαθία it is 'cohabiting with' or 'wedded' to the very opposite of ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ – namely to ἀμέλεια

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aptissimum”. Figuratively, the verb can denote the idea of „turning eagerly to a thing, being eager after something, or “rushing frenziedly” (Griffith, on Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* 836-7). Ast translates with *mico, salio, ruo, feror*; Bailly speaks of “s'élancer impetueusement, se precipiter”; according to Passow the verb is used “von jeder schnellen, reissenden Bewegung, sich leicht oder schnell bewegen, dah. mit Ungestüm darauf los gehen, losfahren, anstürmen, ansprengen auf etwas (...)”. These translations capture the essential meaning of the verb. Cf. F. PASSOW, *Handwörterbuch der griechischen Sprache*, 1. Band, Leipzig, Vogel, 1831*, sub voce*, F. AST, *Lexikon Platonicum sive Vocum Platonicarum Index*, Lipsiae, Weidmann, 1835, repr. Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956, *sub voce*, M. L. WEST (ed.), *Hesiod Theogony*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1966, repr. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997, on 150, M. GRIFFITH (ed.), *Aeschylus Prometheus Bound*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, repr. 1997, on 836-7, and C. W. WILLINK (ed.), *Eurpides Orestes*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986, repr. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998, on 1426-30). See also the use of ἄττειν in the *Corpus Platonicum* (*Epist*. II 313b7, *Theaetetus* 144a8, *Respublica* X 621b4, and *Leges* IV 709a8). On the question whether ἄττειν is or is not good Attic and whether there is something *harsh* or '*un-Platonic'* about its use in the *Alcibiades Maior*, see notably W. NESTLE, Review of P. Friedlander, Der Große Alkibiades. Ein Weg zu Platon, Bonn, 1921, *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift* 42 (1922), Col. 481-484, in particular 483, P. FRIEDLÄNDER, *Der Große Alcibiades*. Zweiter Teil: Kritische Erörterung, Bonn, F. Cohen, 1923, 6, R. WEIL, La place du Premier Alcibiade dans l'oeuvre de Platon, *L'information littéraire* 16 (1964), 75-84, in particular 80, C. A. BOS, *Interpretatie vaderschap en datering van de Alcibiades Maior*, Culemborg, Tjeen Willink-Noorduijn N. V, 1970, 99, D. M. JOHNSON, *A Commentary on Plato's Alcibiades*, Diss. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1996, on 105a1-2.

In short, taken by itself, ἄττειν does not seem to convey the idea of something *premature* or *overhasty* (*ill--considered* and the like). This idea is introduced by the connection with πρὶν παιδευθῆναι. The ἄττειν Socrates is referring to is an **ἄττειν/πρὶν παιδευθῆναι.** On the one hand, this means that it takes place *too soon* – without guaranteeing that basic requirements are fulfilled. On the other hand, it also means that the basic requirements in question are *cognitive* requirements – they have to do with *cognitive improvement*, i.e. with *cognitive μείζω κτήσασθαι*. And this in turn means that the **ἄττειν/πρὶν παιδευθῆναι** Socrates is talking about amounts to ***cognitive ἀγαπᾶν*** (*cognitive ἐᾶν ὡς νῦν ἔχει* – that is, to ***cognitive ἀμέλεια***).

This can never be emphasized enough: we use ἄττειν as a **shorthand** for **ἄττειν πρὶν παιδευθῆναι** viz. for *cognitive ἀγαπᾶν* (*cognitive ἐᾶν ὡς νῦν ἔχει, cognitive ἀμέλεια*).

Incidentally, it should be noted that Socrates' intervention is presented by him as an *interruption* of Alcibiades' very *first* 'political" step. Alcibiades is asked to suppose that Socrates takes hold of him *as he comes forward as adviser to the Athenians and is about to ascend the platform* – that is, *at the precise moment when he is about to start his political career* (i.e. to *launch* his philotimic life project): “φέρε δή: διανοῇ γάρ, ὡς ἐγώ φημι, παριέναι συμβουλεύσων Ἀθηναίοις ἐντὸς οὐ πολλοῦ χρόνου· εἰ οὖν μέλλοντός σου ἰέναι ἐπὶ τὸ βῆμα λαβόμενος ἐροίμην· ‘ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη, ἐπειδὴ περὶ τίνος Ἀθηναῖοι διανοοῦνται βουλεύεσθαι, ἀνίστασαι συμβουλεύσων; ἆρ᾽ ἐπειδὴ περὶ ὧν σὺ ἐπίστασαι βέλτιον ἢ οὗτοι;’ τί ἂν ἀποκρίναιο;” (106c4-d1). This concrete situation illustrates the interruption of the course of ἄττειν, when it is *already under way*. You could say that the whole conversation between Socrates and Alcibiades in the *Alcibiades Major* is placed in this 'interstitial time” of an *extended interruption* of Alcibiades' ἄττειν πρὸς τὰ πολιτικά.

or ἀμελεῖν *αὑτοῦ* (N.B.: not only to cognitive ἀμέλεια but to ἀμέλεια regarding the cognitive requirements *of his ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* – that is, of the *very thing his life is all about*).

And that this is what Socrates has in mind is confirmed a few lines further down, where he addresses Alcibiades as follows: "Εἶεν· τί οὖν διανοῇ περὶ σαυτοῦ; πότερον ἐᾶν ὡς νῦν ἔχεις ἢ ἐπιμέλειάν τινα ποιεῖσθαι;"[44] ("Very well: then what is your intention regarding yourself? Do you mean to remain as you are [to *leave things as they are*], or to do something about it [to take steps to change it]?").

These lines from 119a are important for several reasons.

First, they confirm that the above-mentioned basic structure (ὑπάρχοντα/οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα) and the above-mentioned *either/or* (either ἀγαπᾶν or the opposite, either to *be contented* or *not to be contented* with *what one already has*) runs like a connecting thread through the whole dialogue.

Secondly, they confirm that Socrates' analysis of Alcibiades' cognitive equipment follows the same path. It is all about being *contented* or *not being contented with one's own cognitive equipment* (with one's *knowledge*-related ὑπάρχοντα).[45]

Thirdly, in these lines Socrates paraphrases the first component of the said *either/or* (namely ἀγαπᾶν) by "ἐᾶν ὡς νῦν ἔχεις" (that is, to '*remain as you are*' or to '*leave things as they are*'), while the second component (namely, the οὐκ ἀγαπᾶν) is paraphrased as 'ἐπιμέλειάν τινα ποιεῖσθαι'. In other words, Socrates tacitly equates ἀγαπᾶν with ἐᾶν ὡς νῦν ἔχει, on the one side, and οὐκ ἀγαπᾶν with ἐπιμέλειάν τινα ποιεῖσθαι (viz. ἐπιμελεῖσθαι), on the other. He thereby confirms our previous claim that, without naming it expressly, he has been talking about ἐπιμέλεια and *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* all along.

It should be noted that Socrates returns to this very same either/or-structure a couple of pages further on – namely both in 120b-c[46] and in 123d-e.[47] In the former passage he contrasts σαυτοῦ ἀμελεῖν, <u>μήτε</u> μανθάνειν ὅσα μαθέσεως ἔχεται, <u>μήτ'</u> ἀσκεῖν ὅσα δεῖται καὶ πᾶσαν

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[44] 119a.

[45] Cf. 119b: "εἰ μέν που ἦσαν *πεπαιδευμένοι*, ἔδει ἂν τὸν ἐπιχειροῦντα αὐτοῖς ἀνταγωνίζεσθαι *μαθόντα καὶ ἀσκήσαντα* ἰέναι ὡς ἐπ' ἀθλητάς· νῦν δ' ἐπειδὴ καὶ οὗτοι ἰδιωτικῶς ἔχοντες ἐληλύθασιν ἐπὶ τὰ τῆς πόλεως, τί δεῖ *ἀσκεῖν καὶ μανθάνοντα πράγματα ἔχειν;*" (emphasis added).

[46] "(…) πρὸς τούτους σε δεῖ, οὕσπερ λέγω, βλέποντα σαυτοῦ δὴ ἀμελεῖν, καὶ μήτε μανθάνειν ὅσα μαθήσεως ἔχεται, μέλλοντα τοσοῦτον ἀγῶνα ἀγωνίζεσθαι, μήτε ἀσκεῖν ὅσα δεῖται ἀσκήσεως, καὶ πᾶσαν παρασκευὴν παρεσκευασμένον οὕτως ἰέναι ἐπὶ τὰ τῆς πόλεως."

[47] "ἐπεὶ εἴ γε πύθοιτο ὅτι Ἀλκιβιάδης οὗτος νῦν ἐπιχειρεῖ πρῶτον μὲν ἔτη οὐδέπω γεγονὼς σφόδρα εἴκοσιν, ἔπειτα παντάπασιν ἀπαίδευτος, πρὸς δὲ τούτοις, τοῦ ἐραστοῦ αὐτῷ λέγοντος ὅτι χρὴ πρῶτον μαθόντα καὶ ἐπιμεληθέντα αὑτοῦ καὶ ἀσκήσαντα οὕτως ἰέναι διαγωνιούμενον βασιλεῖ, οὐκ ἐθέλει, ἀλλά φησιν ἐξαρκεῖν καὶ ὡς ἔχει, οἶμαι ἂν αὐτὴν θαυμάσαι τε καὶ ἐρέσθαι· 'τί οὖν ποτ' ἔστιν ὅτῳ πιστεύει τὸ μειράκιον;' εἰ οὖν λέγοιμεν ὅτι κάλλει τε καὶ μεγέθει καὶ γένει καὶ πλούτῳ καὶ φύσει τῆς ψυχῆς, ἡγήσαιτ' ἂν ἡμᾶς, ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη, μαίνεσθαι πρὸς τὰ παρὰ σφίσιν ἀποβλέψασα πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα."

παρασκευὴν παρασκευασμένον, on the one hand, and the *exact opposite,* on the other. He does not mention the latter explicitly, but there is no need for it, since the first side of the either/or is worded in *negative* terms and therefore unequivocally indicates the second side – namely: ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ, μανθάνειν ὅσα μαθέσεως ἔχεται, ἀσκεῖν ὅσα δεῖται καὶ πᾶσαν παρασκευὴν παρασκευασμένον. In 123d-e Socrates speaks of the either/or between ἐξαρκεῖν καὶ ὡς ἔχει, on the one hand, and μαθόντα καὶ ἐπιμεληθέντα καὶ ἀσκήσαντα, on the other. To put it shortly, the unmistakable isomorphism between these various passages confirms the equivalence we have been talking about – that is, that Socrates is always *referring to the very same basic structure viz. to the very same either/or.*

Fourthly, these lines from 119a clearly confirm our previous interpretation: in the *Alcibiades Major* ἐπιμέλεια /ἐπιμελεῖσθαι (viz. ἐπιμέλεια /ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ) does not stand for any kind of care without further specification. And in particular it does not just stand for what might be termed *conservative* or *preservative* care (trying to *keep* what is already there, doing something about the *preservation of what one already has*, assuring that the ὑπάρχοντα remain ὑπάρχοντα). In this dialogue ἐπιμέλεια/ἐπιμελεῖσθαι (viz. ἐπιμέλεια /ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ) is always related to *improvement or betterment and expansion*. That is, it is always about acquiring more ὑπάρχοντα – or better ὑπάρχοντα – than those one already has. It is always about μείζω κτήσασθαι.

Finally, these lines emphasize the role played by *cognitive* ἐπιμέλεια *as an essential component or an essential requirement of all* ἐπιμέλεια *viz. of all* ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ. It is no coincidence that Socrates' first explicit mention of ἐπιμέλεια in the *Alcibiades Major* uses this word to refer to *cognitive* ἐπιμέλεια. As the rest of the dialogue shows, he does not mean that ἐπιμέλεια (all ἐπιμέλεια) is but cognitive ἐπιμέλεια. But he certainly wants to stress a) that Alcibiades' whole endeavour hinges upon the *cognitive* ἐπιμέλεια Socrates is referring to (and must therefore take the form of *cognitive* ἐπιμέλεια), and b) that there can be no real ἐπιμέλεια without *cognitive* ἐπιμέλεια or *cognitive* care (and indeed without *cognitive* care for everything the ἐπιμέλεια in question is about). In short, Socrates claims that the lack of *cognitive* ἐπιμέλεια – that is, *cognitive* ἀμέλεια or *cognitive* carelessness – seriously undermines and jeopardizes any kind of ἐπιμέλεια and in particular the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ. Ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ *without cognitive* ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ (care for oneself combined with *cognitive* ἀμέλεια viz. with cognitive *carelessness* or *neglect*) is nothing but ἀμελεῖν αὑτοῦ *(self-negligence or self-neglect) in disguise* – or, more precisely, ἀμελεῖν αὑτοῦ (*self-negligence* or *self-neglect*) *in the guise of* ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ (of care for oneself). And the point is that this holds true even for the *utmost*

care for oneself – viz. for the *most intense, most determined* and *most far-reaching form of care for oneself* – as in the case of Alcibiades.

5. Multi-layered ἐπιμέλεια and multi-layered ἀμέλεια First-degree, second--degree, third-degree ἐπιμέλεια; first-degree and second-degree *cognitive* ἐπιμέλεια. *Peripheral* vs *central* ἐπιμέλεια and ἀμέλεια αὑτοῦ

Earlier in this paper it was pointed out that the discussion of Alcibiades' cognitive equipment extends from 106 to 124. In a way this is true. But on the other hand, it should be born in mind that the discussion of Alcibiades' cognitive equipment and the exploration of his cognitive flaws *continue after* 124.

However, the point is that what is at stake *after* 124 is Alcibiades' understanding of the *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* in the new sense the word has acquired by now – and the fact that this understanding, too, is flawed and in need of improvement. Alcibiades has acknowledged that his original *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* was *cognitively* flawed – and that he must do something about it. In other words, he must do something about his attempt to change the ὑπάρχοντα/οὐκ ὑπάρχοντα-constellation defining him (i.e. he must do something about his *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ*). As a result, what we are dealing with now is, as it were, an *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι* of the *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* – that is a second-degree *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ*.

Or rather it is something more complex. At first, we were dealing with Alcibiades' original (i.e., his philotimic) *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ*. Then it turned out that the latter is *cognitively* flawed and in need of a particular kind of ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ – namely *cognitive* ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ. Now it turns out that the latter, too, is based on underlying *cognitive claims* – and that these too, are *cognitively flawed* and in need of *cognitive* ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ.

Let us take a closer look at this.

On the one hand what is taking shape here is what might be described as *multi-layered* ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ. For Alcibiades must 1) do something about 2) what he is doing about 3) his attempt to improve himself. We can therefore speak of <u>*first-degree*</u>, <u>*second-degree*</u> and <u>*third-degree*</u> ἐπιμέλεια αὑτοῦ. But, on the other hand, there is the difference between Alcibiades' *original* philotimic ἐπιμέλεια αὑτοῦ and what we have termed <u>*cognitive*</u> ἐπιμέλεια

αὑτοῦ. And the point now is that the latter turns out to be *twofold* – and that we can therefore speak of *first-degree* and *second-degree* <u>cognitive</u> ἐπιμέλεια αὑτοῦ.[48]

To be sure, first degree *cognitive* ἐπιμέλεια is but an *adjustment* of Alcibiades' original ἐπιμέλεια αὑτοῦ. And pretty much the same applies to second-degree *cognitive* ἐπιμέλεια. It is but an adjustment of first-degree cognitive ἐπιμέλεια – and therefore, it is but an adjustment of Alcibiades' original ἐπιμέλεια; it *belongs* to it – it is *just a new form of it*. But on the other hand, Socrates does no longer cross-examine Alcibiades about his philotimic and philonicic project (he does no longer explore his cognitive flaws concerning what the exercise of power, etc. is all about). He seems to concentrate on a new topic: on the *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* itself viz. on two questions: "τίνα οὖν χρὴ τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ποιεῖσθαι;"[49] ("but what are the sort of pains [of diligence or care] which are required?") and "Τί ἐστιν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι;"[50] ("what is the *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ*?": what is 'taking care of oneself'?).

In this connection, Socrates tries to show a) that Alcibiades does not really know what *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* is all about – that he is cognitively flawed in this respect too b) that he *is not aware of this,* so *that in this regard, too, he suffers from ἀμαθία* (i. e., that both his original *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* and his second-degree *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ*[51] are cognitively flawed),[52] so that c) even when he is willing and trying to do something about his cognitive flaws he is not aware that he also needs to do something about this particular cognitive flaw (namely his own understanding of *his οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς* and of the corresponding cognitive *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ viz.*), and therefore does *nothing about it.*

In other words, in this part of the dialogue our attention is drawn to the fact that Alcibiades' second-degree *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* (his first-degree *cognitive ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ*) suffers from *cognitive* flaws it is not aware of, i.e. that the second-degree *cognitive ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* is itself not immune to cognitive *ἀμέλεια* and *ἅττειν* – and indeed with regard to nothing less than the question: what is *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ*? And this does not just concern Alcibiades. It has a much wider scope. Socrates' point is that it is possible to see the need of a second--degree *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* (viz. the need of some cognitive *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ*) *while remaining blind to the fact that the latter, too,* is cognitively flawed and suffers from *ἀμαθία,*

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[48] The complex connection between the two sets of layers can be described as follows:
    a) *first*-degree ἐπιμέλεια αὑτοῦ is *not* specifically *knowledge*-related,
    b) *second*-degree ἐπιμέλεια αὑτοῦ = *first*-degree *cognitive* ἐπιμέλεια,
    c) *third*-degree ἐπιμέλεια αὑτοῦ = *second*-degree cognitive ἐπιμέλεια.

[49] 124b.

[50] 127e.

[51] That is, first-degree *cognitive* ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ.

[52] And flawed not only by ignorance but by *foolish* ignorance or *ἀμαθία* (by nothing less than οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς).

cognitive ἀμέλεια and ἄττειν. In short, the point is that the attempt to correct cognitive ἀμέλεια and ἄττειν (N.B. the attempt to correct the *flaw* owing to which one's own ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ is undermined by cognitive ἀμέλεια and ἄττειν) can be itself flawed and undermined by what we have termed <u>*second-degree cognitive ἀμέλεια*</u> or <u>*second-degree* cognitive ἄττειν</u>.

Here we touch on a decisive point. None of this means that the new object of Socrates' cross-examination (namely Alcibiades' understanding of ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ) is new in the sense that it did not play a significant role in Alcibiades' *first level ἐπιμέλεια αὑτοῦ* i.e. in his ambitious philotimic life project. In fact, the reverse is true. Socrates' point is that Alcibiades' awareness of the cognitive flaws undermining his original ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ (i. e. Alcibiades' awareness of his *cognitive ἄττειν* viz. of his *cognitive ἀμέλεια αὑτοῦ*) is still far from complete – and in particular that it is far from having reached the very core of his original ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ (viz. the cognitive scaffolding – the cognitive claims viz. the οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι or ἀμαθία – at the heart of his original endeavour).

In this respect, Socrates' cross-examination of Alcibiades' cognitive equipment resembles some descriptions of physical death, according to which it begins at first in the remoter members, those farthest removed from the central seat of life, and from there spreads itself gradually into the inward parts, until at last it reaches the heart. So does Socrates' ἔλεγχος of Alcibiades' cognitive self-confidence – the exploration of his cognitive flaws – begin at first in the extremities and remoter outworks of his philotimic and philonicic endeavour (viz. of his philotimic and philonicic ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ); it then spreads itself gradually until it reaches the true foundation and central point of it all.

This comparison highlights the form of the whole discussion between Socrates and Alcibiades in the *Alcibiades Major:* on the one hand, successive attacks – successive waves of assault, piling one upon the other and maintaining pressure upon Alcibiades; on the other hand, a particular kind of connection between what is at stake in each successive wave of assault – namely the fact that Socrates' ἔλεγχος of Alcibiades' moves from more *peripheral* knowledge claims to the *centrepiece* of his whole philotimic/philonicic endeavour (viz. of the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ Alcibiades' life is all about).

At the beginning of the dialogue Socrates and Alcibiades discuss things Alcibiades needs to know in order to make a big impression in the Athenian assembly and attract the greatest possible attention and admiration to himself. That is, Socrates evinces that Alcibiades needs some knowledge of the matters discussed in the Athenian assembly, that this kind of knowledge is indispensable if he wants to start a political career – and that without it Alcibiades cannot prevail in the assembly and will rather expose himself to public disgrace right at the start

of his political career (so that the latter will end as soon as it begins). What is more, Socrates shows that Alcibiades *does lack* this kind of knowledge: that his cognitive self-confidence stems from mere οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς – and that he therefore is bound to make a fool of himself as soon as he enters the political arena.

As the discussion unfolds Socrates' attack goes *deeper*. He shows that it is not only a question of being cognitively equipped to prevail over one's rivals in the Athenian assembly and therefore to start a political career: if Alcibiades wants to play an important political role both on the local and on the world scene, he must be cognitively equipped to deal with power (with the exercise of power) – that is, a) he must have real knowledge of the matters (issues and guiding principles) power and government are all about, and b) he must have sound knowledge of the relation of forces between his own state and other states viz. between himself and his external rivals or foreign counterparts.[53] But Socrates' point is that Alcibiades lacks both: that here, too, his cognitive self-confidence stems from mere οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς – and that therefore his philotimic/philonicic endeavour is a sure road to disaster.[54] In short, Socrates produces, as it were, an X-ray image of the cognitive scaffolding upon which Alcibiades' endeavour is mounted. He shows that it is composed of two main elements, namely a) cognitive self-confidence regarding his ability to *gain* political power and b) cognitive self-confidence regarding his ability to *use* political power and to cover himself in glory, etc. And on closer inspection it emerges that both a) and b) are totally unfounded, and that Alcibiades' life project viz. his ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ is anything but cognitively sound.

But this is not all. There is a further point, namely that what is at stake in all this are *different levels* of what Alcibiades needs to know in order to *carry out* his life project. In other words, what we are dealing with in this first part of the dialogue is a set of cognitive requirements that are indispensable for the *fulfilment* of Alcibiades' endeavour. In this first part of the dialogue, Socrates does not discuss *the endeavour itself,* nor does he examine a) whether it, too, entails cognitive requirements, b) whether Alcibiades cognitive self-confidence also concerns the cognitive scaffolding of the endeavour itself – and in this case c) whether the latter is sound or stems from mere οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι *οὐκ εἰδώς*. This can also be expressed by saying that in the first part of the *Alcibiades Major* everything Socrates and Alcibiades discuss has an *instrumental* character: it is basically a *means* toward an end. As a result, Socrates does not cross-examine the soundness of Alcibiades' *life project*: he sticks to the unsound character of

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[53] Cf. 119a-124b.
[54] Cf. *ibid.*

the cognitive scaffolding of the *means* and leaves out the cognitive scaffolding of the *aim* and Alcibiades' cognitive equipment with regard to the aim as such.

Let us take a closer look at this.

On the one hand, Socrates' 'radiological image of Alcibiades' endeavour shows that the latter is just the tip of an 'iceberg', and that its *cognitive* components (its 'cognitive scaffolding') too resemble an 'iceberg' and comprise both surface and deeper levels. And on the other hand, the 'iceberg' in question corresponds to the inner structure of Alcibiades' philotimic/philonicic endeavour – and in particular to the fact that some of its components serve as a *means* of pursuing an aim, while others play the role of the *ends or aims* for the sake of which the former are pursued. In other words, Alcibiades' philotimic/philonicic endeavour – his ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ – constitutes a *framework of means and ends*. And what is more, it forms a *hierarchical set of interconnected levels*, owing to which A serves as a means of pursuing B, B as a means of pursuing C, etc. Pretty much the same applies to the various components forming the *cognitive scaffolding* of Alcibiades' endeavour. And as a result, it is possible to realize the cognitive fragility of some of these components (and in particular it is possible to realize the cognitive fragility of the *more superficial* levels of the said 'iceberg' – i.e. the cognitive fragility of the *means*) without realizing the cognitive fragility of the *deeper* levels (i.e. the cognitive fragility of the *aims*) – and *a fortiori* without realizing the cognitive fragility of the *deepest* levels: that is, of the *core elements* and indeed of the *mainspring of it all*.

Now, this is what the middle part of the *Alcibiades major* is all about. On the one hand, what we are dealing with is no longer *simple ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* combined with *simple cognitive ἀμελεῖν αὑτοῦ*[55]. As pointed out above, what we are dealing with in this middle part of the dialogue is second-degree *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* – and this means that simple *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* ceases to be simple, for it is combined with some awareness of cognitive fragility and indeed with some amount of cognitive ἐπιμέλεια. But it should be borne in mind that the cognitive ἐπιμέλεια we are talking about does not go into the deeper levels: it only affects the *upper part* of the 'iceberg'. At deeper levels everything *remains unchan*ged. On the other hand, what characterizes this middle part of the dialogue is the fact that the relation of forces between cognitive *ἀμέλεια* and cognitive ἐπιμέλεια (between *cognitive* carelessness and *cognitive* care) *undergoes a progressive change*. Or, put another way, there are different stages in the development of second-degree *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* (we can also speak of third-level, fourth--level *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ,* etc). The difference between them has to do with the fact that the

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[55] And therefore, amounting to ἀμελεῖν αὑτοῦ *in the guise of ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ.*

awareness of cognitive fragility and the ensuing cognitive ἐπιμέλεια can reach *different levels of depth*. The middle part of the *Alcibiades Major* is all about deepening the level of cognitive ἐπιμέλεια or deepening what we have termed the second-degree *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ*. In other words, it is all about going deeper in the 'iceberg' of Alcibiades' philotimic/philonicic endeavour: it is all about reducing the remaining cognitive *ἀμέλεια* and extending cognitive ἐπιμέλεια to the deeper levels of the said 'iceberg'.[56]

6. ALCIBIADES' *COGNITIVE COLLAPSE* AND THE REMAINING '*POCKET OF RESISTANCE*': THE STRONGHOLD OF ἀμαθία/ἄττειν AND ITS CONNECTION WITH THE {αὐτός/τὰ αὐτοῦ/τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ}-STRUCTURE. THE PUZZLING POSSIBILITY OF AN 'ASTIGMATIC' ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ

In this regard, 124b[57] and 127e-128a[58] mark a turning point. Or rather the discussion from 124b onward paves the way for the extraordinary reversal 127e-128a puts in a nutshell.

But what is this reversal all about?

On the one hand, Socrates attacks what we have termed Alcibiades' second-degree ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ (that is, the 'revised version' of his original ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ – the one that acknowledges his cognitive ill-preparedness and that without cognitive ἐπιμέλεια his ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ is condemned to be nothing but ἀμελεῖν αὑτοῦ in disguise). On the other hand, Socrates points out that although Alcibiades now acknowledges his cognitive ill-preparedness and is willing and eager to correct his ἀμέλεια, this acknowledgement leaves out of its scope the very core of Alcibiades' philotimic/philonicic endeavor – namely the *primary purpose* for the sake of which Alcibiades is willing and eager to acquire the knowledge he lacks.

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[56] The point is that there are two *multi-layered structures*:
   a)   the multi-layered structure of *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ* (first-degree, second-degree, third-degree ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ, etc.), and
   b)   the multi-laired structure of *cognitive scaffolding*.
But the point is also that the two structures in question are interlinked, and indeed so much so that
   c)   on the one hand, the difference between *non-cognitive* and *cognitive* ἐπιμέλεια has to do with the fact that the former leaves its cognitive scaffolding (the multi-layered set of underlying knowledge claims) *altogether untouched* (from the cognitive point of view it is therefore nothing but ἀμέλεια and ἄττειν), while the latter tries to change the cognitive basis
   d)   on the other hand, the difference between α) first-degree, β) second-degree and γ) third-degree *cognitive* ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ stems from the fact that "α" does not go into the deeper levels (it only affects the upper part of the 'iceberg'), "β" goes deeper but not very deep, etc.
[57] "τίνα οὖν χρὴ τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν, ὦ Σώκρατες, ποιεῖσθαι; ἔχεις ἐξηγήσασθαι; παντὸς γὰρ μᾶλλον ἔοικας ἀληθῆ εἰρηκότι."
[58] "φέρε δή, τί ἐστιν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι – μὴ πολλάκις λάθωμεν οὐχ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι, οἰόμενοι δέ – καὶ πότ᾽ ἄρα αὐτὸ ποιεῖ ἄνθρωπος; ἆρ᾽ ὅταν τῶν αὑτοῦ ἐπιμελῆται, τότε καὶ αὑτοῦ;"

Socrates drives this point home by showing that Alcibiades' whole understanding of what is better (and what is worse)[59] – that is, his whole understanding of the guiding principles behind both a) his original ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ and b) his second-degree ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ (viz. his first degree *cognitive* ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ) is cognitively flawed (and nothing but a further instance of ἀμαθία) – and that Alcibiades is willing and eager to improve himself when he does not have a clue of what ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ is really all about (and his whole understanding of it is but οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς). In other words, Alcibiades is willing and eager to improve his cognitive equipment (more precisely: his cognitive equipment regarding the *means*) in order to fulfil the very same philotimic/philonicic life-project. He is not prepared to accept the idea that his relation to his *aims* (and in particular his understanding of his *primary purpose*) is as *cognitively flawed* as his alleged mastery of the means).

However, Socrates shows that Alcibiades cognitive equipment is *equally flawed in both cases* – and this means a) that there is a *cognitive scaffolding at the very core of Alcibiades' whole project* and that this *cognitive scaffolding* at the very core of Alcibiades' life project turns out to be nothing but *mere ἀμαθία* (οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς), b) that Alcibiades is not aware of this (otherwise it would not be ἀμαθία!), the result being c) that his second degree ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ is undermined by ἀμαθία (οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς) and continues to suffer from cognitive ἀμέλεια or cognitive carelessness. Put another way: Alcibiades is not aware that when he acknowledges his ἀμαθία viz. his cognitive ἀμέλεια (and is willing and eager to improve his cognitive equipment), the very thing for the sake of which he is willing to improve his cognitive situation (N.B: his cognitive situation regarding the means) – namely: his primary philotimic/philonicic purpose – is as contaminated with ἀμαθία as the cognitive components he is already trying to improve. In short, his awareness of ἀμαθία and his second--degree ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ are incomplete.

Now, the discussion between 124b and 127e-128a changes this. It spreads and deepens the *cognitive collapse* viz. the *cognitive 'bankruptcy'* within the framework of Alcibiades' endeavour. And this global change of view finds its full expression in 127e-128a, where the question "τίνα οὖν χρὴ τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ποιεῖσθαι;" (but what are the sort of pains – of self--improvement, diligence or care – which are required?") gives way to the question "Τί ἐστιν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι;" (what is this 'caring of oneself'?) and Socrates mentions a new

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[59] Cf. 124cff. We can express this by saying a) that Alcibiades acknowledges that he does not know *how* to improve himself (i. e. that he ignores the *means*), but also b) that he nevertheless remains convinced that he knows *what improving oneself* (the ὡς ἄριστος γενέσθαι, 124e1) is all about; in other words: he remains convinced that he knows the *aim*.

possibility of cognitive flaw and cognitive ἀμέλεια. He says: "φέρε δή, τί ἐστι τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι – μὴ πολλάκις λάθωμεν οὐχ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι, οἰόμενοι δέ – καὶ πότε ἄρα αὐτὸ ποιεῖ ἄνθρωπος;" ("Come then, what is this 'caring of oneself' – for we may perhaps not be taking care of ourselves, though we think we are – and when does a man take care of himself?").

In this important passage Socrates draws attention to the possibility of ἀμαθία (οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς) with regard to the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ itself. And, what is more, he is speaking of a *double* possibility, namely: a) the possibility of ἀμαθία regarding the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι as such, and b) the possibility of ἀμαθία regarding the 'oneself' as such (the one the 'αὑτοῦ' in 'ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ' stands for).

Socrates' point is, therefore, that – on top of everything else – the central self-reference at the very heart of Alcibiades' endeavor (N.B.: the central self-reference around which everything else revolves) can be blurred and distorted by ἀμαθία.

Let us take a closer look at this important development.

For Socrates, the 'what-question' regarding the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ – what is ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ? – is a key question, not least because it draws our attention to the connection between a) taking care of oneself and b) one's relation to oneself. That is what 127e--128a is all about: "φέρε δή, τί ἐστιν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι – μὴ πολλάκις λάθωμεν οὐχ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι, οἰόμενοι δέ — καὶ πότ᾽ ἄρα αὐτὸ ποιεῖ ἄνθρωπος; ἆρ᾽ ὅταν τῶν αὑτοῦ ἐπιμελῆται, τότε καὶ αὑτοῦ;[60] (Come then, what is 'taking care of oneself'? for we may, unknowingly, be failing to take care of ourselves, though we think we are – and when does a man actually do it? Does he take care of himself when he takes care of his belongings viz. of what belongs to him?)

In other words, it all has to do with the substantial link between the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ and its focal point – the *self*. Or, to be more precise: on the one hand, it all has to do with the substantial link between the cognitive requirements of the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ and the cognitive requirements of one's relation to oneself; on the other hand, it all has to do with the fact that the cognitive flaw (the cognitive ἄττειν) undermining Alcibiades' ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ (and for that matter our own) can also affect one's relation to oneself (that is, the focal point of the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ). Socrates reminds us of this in 129a-b. He says: "πότερον οὖν δὴ ῥᾴδιον τυγχάνει τὸ γνῶναι ἑαυτόν, καί τις ἦν φαῦλος ὁ τοῦτο ἀναθεὶς εἰς τὸν ἐν Πυθοῖ νεών, ἢ χαλεπόν τι καὶ οὐχὶ παντός; ἐμοὶ μέν, ὦ Σώκρατες, πολλάκις μὲν ἔδοξε παντὸς εἶναι, πολλάκις δὲ

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[60] 127e-128 a

παγχάλεπον. ἀλλ᾽, ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη, εἴτε ῥάδιον εἴτε μή ἐστιν, ὅμως γε ἡμῖν ὧδ᾽ ἔχει· <u>γνόντες μὲν αὐτὸ τάχ᾽ ἂν γνοῖμεν τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν, ἀγνοοῦντες δὲ οὐκ ἄν ποτε</u>. ἔστι ταῦτα."

It is very clear that Socrates is trying to make two points: first, knowledge of ourselves is a difficult thing; and secondly, regardless of whether knowledge of ourselves is easy or difficult, *care of ourselves* (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ) necessarily presupposes *knowledge of ourselves* – so that the lack of the latter undermines and compromises the former.

The second point is, of course, the reason why the first matters in this context. But Socrates puts the emphasis on the particular way in which ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ requires self-knowledge – namely the fact that it requires knowledge *of the self as such*: "φέρε δή, τίν᾽ ἂν τρόπον εὑρεθείη αὐτὸ ταὐτό; οὕτω μὲν γὰρ ἂν τάχ᾽ εὕροιμεν τί ποτ᾽ ἐσμὲν αὐτοί, τούτου δ᾽ ἔτι ὄντες ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ ἀδύνατοί που."[61] (Come then, in what way can the same-in-itself be discovered? For thus we may discover what we are ourselves; whereas if we remain in ignorance of it, we must surely fail).

Now, the cornerstone of Socrates' view on this matter is his claim about the difference between a) oneself (viz. one's self, αὐτός) b) τὰ αὑτοῦ (what belongs to someone – that is, one's 'belongings')[62] and c) τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ (what belongs to what belongs to someone – the belongings of one's belongings).

The following diagram illustrates this:
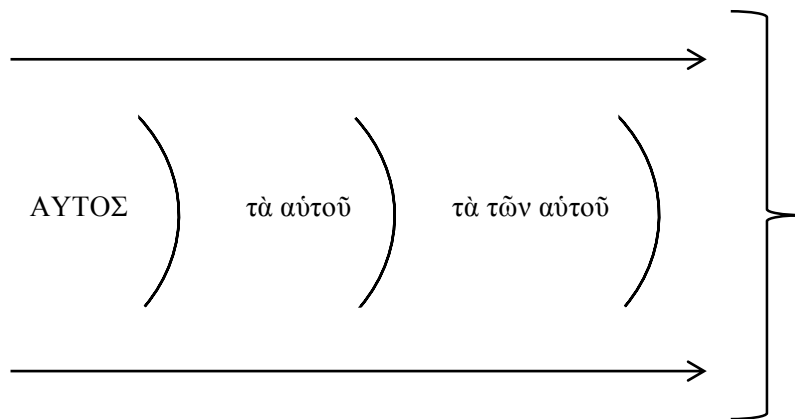
Socrates' description of this complex structure underlines three main points.

First, the realm of the self is intrinsically *complex*: it encompasses a *threefold* set of closely interconnected components.

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[61] 129b1.
[62] In the broadest sense of the word – namely in the sense in which our body, too, belongs to us.

Secondly the *epicentre* of the whole structure we are talking about is the '*self*' itself. Without it, there would be nothing of τὰ αὑτοῦ or of τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ. The 'self' itself gives rise to the other two components – so that they are intrinsically related to and dependent on it. The whole complex structure stems from the fact that the 'self' is able to *tinge*, as it were, other things, 'equating' them with itself, so that they *belong* to it (and become either τὰ αὑτοῦ or τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ). And the difference between τὰ αὑτοῦ and τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ has to do with the fact that something can belong to the 'self' either *immediately and directly* or *mediately* (because it *belongs to something belonging* to the 'self').

Thirdly, this complex structure opens the door to *confusion,* and in particular to confusion a) of τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ with τὰ αὑτοῦ, and b) of both τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ and τὰ αὑτοῦ with the *epicentre* viz. the *focal point* (the '*self*') they are intrinsically related to. In other words, the 'self' is always there (and it is always the 'real spring' viz. the centrepiece around which everything else revolves); but it can remain hidden under τὰ αὑτοῦ and τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ. The latter can masquerade as the 'self' – and this particular kind of '*identity theft*' brings about an *unfocused relation to one's 'self'*. In short, the structure we are talking about is of such a nature that it can suffer from a particular kind of '*astigmatism*' or '*focal error*'.[63]

Which brings us back to the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ. For Socrates' point is that all this applies to the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ and shapes its realm. On the one hand, there is a difference between a) ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ, b) ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τῶν αὑτοῦ,[64] and c) ἐπιμελεῖσθαι of τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ. On the other hand, here, too, there is room for a 'masquerade'. The ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ is not immune to confusion viz. 'identity theft' with regard to its focal point. In short, its intrinsic relation to the 'self' can be affected by the said 'astigmatism' or 'focal error', the result being that it *misses its own focal point* and therefore fails to fulfil its task.

And this, in turn, means that there are two different ways in which the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ can be *undermined and thwarted*, to wit:

a) because it fails to be real ἐπιμέλεια and turns out to be ἀμέλεια (neglect), and

b) because it misses the mark of the self (the focal point it is intrinsically related to) and fails to be ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ (i.e. because it turns out to be not ἐπιμέλεια αὑτοῦ, but rather ἐπιμέλεια of τὰ αὑτοῦ or even of τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ).

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[63] This is Socrates' (viz. the *Alicibiades Major*'s) version of Melville's "And yet self-knowledge is thought by some not so easy. Who knows, my dear sir, but for a time you have taken yourself to be somebody else? Stranger things have happened." Cf. H. MELVILLE, *The Confidence-man*, iv.

[64] See, for example, 128d: "(…) ἄλλη μὲν ἄρα τέχνη αὑτοῦ ἑκάστου ἐπιμελούμεθα, ἄλλη δὲ τῶν αὑτοῦ. φαίνεται. οὐκ ἄρα ὅταν τῶν σαυτοῦ ἐπιμελῇ, σαυτοῦ ἐπιμελῇ. οὐδαμῶς. οὐ γὰρ ἡ αὐτὴ τέχνη, ὡς ἔοικεν, ᾗ τις ἂν αὑτοῦ τε ἐπιμελοῖτο καὶ τῶν αὑτοῦ. οὐ φαίνεται." See also 134c.

We can also express this a) by speaking, as Socrates does, of a particular kind of οἴεσθαι Χ, namely οἴεσθαι ἐπιμελεῖσθαι <u>αὑτοῦ</u> (127e-128a)[65] and b) by distinguishing between α) the οἴεσθαι ἐπιμελεῖσθαι as such and β) the specific moment of the οἴεσθαι ἐπιμελεῖσθαι <u>αὑτοῦ</u>.

Having said this, it should be noted that the two components we are talking about are closely connected with one another. For both result from cognitive ἄττειν viz. cognitive ἀμέλεια – in one case with regard to the life-project in question, in the other with regard to the 'self' the said life-project is all about.

And this completes the picture.

Socrates' examination of Alcibiades' endeavor raises the possibility of complete interpenetration (*sit venia verbo – complete <u>Durchdringung</u>*) between ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ and ἀμελεῖν αὑτοῦ – viz. the possibility that the latter is disseminated throughout the former in such a manner that it thwarts and impairs all ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ and changes it into the very opposite. And, what is more, it raises the possibility of there being *several* components of cognitive ἄττειν and ἀμέλεια undermining and thwarting each moment of ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ – and changing it into its opposite.

7. *First-person* and *second-person* (viz. *third*-person) 'astigmatism'. The ellipse (viz. the polyellipse or n-ellipse) of Alcibiades' life project and of human life in general. Ἀμαθία, ἄττειν and the out-of-focus ellipse (polyellipse). Concluding remarks: ἄττειν and human life

But we must conclude. To follow the rest of the *Alcibiades Major* would go far beyond the scope of this paper. But there is something I would like briefly to mention before concluding.

One of the reasons Socrates' analysis of the complex structure of the 'self' – viz. of the {αὐτός/τὰ αὑτοῦ/τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ}-structure – is important is that it opens our eyes to the fact that there is still a *third* way in which Alcibiades' ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ (and for that matter our own) can be undermined and thwarted by cognitive ἄττειν and turn out to be the exact opposite of its face value (i. e ἀμέλεια: neglect). This third way has to do with the fact that Alcibiades' life

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[65] "(…) μὴ πολλάκις λάθωμεν οὐχ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι, οἰόμενοι δέ (…)" Socrates speaks of <u>οἴεσθαι ἐπιμελεῖσθαι</u> ἡμῶν αὐτῶν, with no further determination. But the context shows that what he has in mind is a counterpart to οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι <u>οὐκ εἰδώς</u> – that is, *sham* ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ or *conceit of ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ*. See also 132b: "οὐκοῦν τοσοῦτον μὲν ἡμῖν εἰς τὸ πρόσθεν πεπέρανται – ὃ γὰρ ἐσμέν, ἐπιεικῶς ὡμολόγηται – ἐφοβούμεθα δὲ μὴ τούτου σφαλέντες λάθωμεν <u>ἑτέρου τινὸς ἐπιμελόμενοι ἀλλ᾽ οὐχ ἡμῶν</u>." (underlining added).

project (his φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία-related life-project) is also intrinsically *other--related* (intrinsically related to *other people*), but in such a way that – due to ἀμαθία – it nevertheless *misses this second reference-point*.

Let us take a brief look at this.

At the end of the day, Socrates' exploration of the {αὐτός/τὰ αὐτοῦ/ τὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ}--structure' and the way he shows that both Alcibiades relation to himself and our relation to ourselves can be blurred and distorted by ἀμαθία (and indeed in such a way that it *loses sight* of the centerpiece everything is all about) applies not only to *oneself* (to the 'first person'), but indeed to the other main component φιλοτιμία and φιλονικία are all about – namely: *other people*. In other words, Socrates is clearly suggesting that pretty much the same holds true for the 'second' and 'third person'. In a way, φιλοτιμία viz. φιλινικία are all about the other human beings <u>themselves</u> – but the relation to them can be deflected by sham knowledge viz. ἀμαθία (οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι οὐκ εἰδώς), and indeed so much so that it is deflected from them *<u>themselves</u>* and gets stuck, as it were, half way (in τὰ αὐτοῦ or τὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ).

This can be illustrated by the following diagram:

In the *second* and *third* person
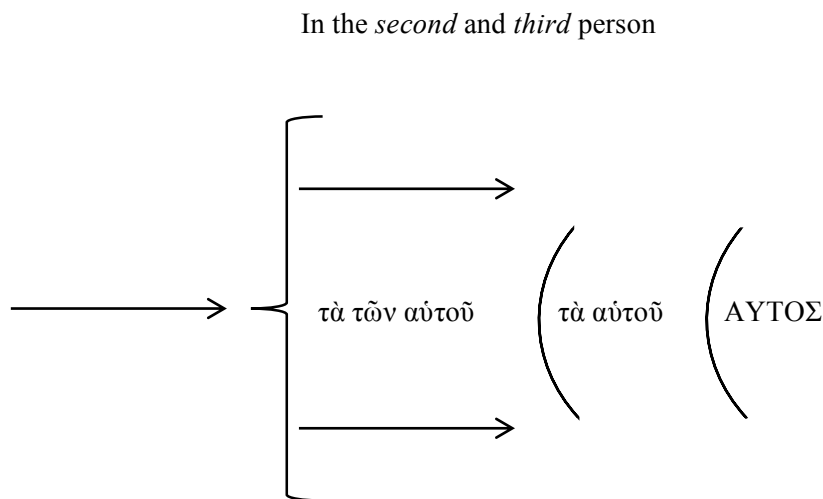
It is worthwhile insisting on this key topic, namely the *symmetry* between a) the first--person {αὐτός / τὰ αὐτοῦ/ τὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ}-structure and b) the second-person viz. third-person {αὐτός / τὰ αὐτοῦ/ τὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ}-structure.

We are emphasizing two facts: 1) that in the realm of "the other", too, there is a difference between τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ, τὰ αὑτοῦ and the self as the *focal point* both are intrinsically related to, and 2) in this case, too, it is possible to mistake τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ for τὰ αὑτοῦ and τὰ αὑτοῦ for the *focal point* – the self – everything else is all about. To be sure, the *Alcibiades Major* does not breathe a word about this symmetry. But the point is that it does not need to. For, *mutatis mutandis*, everything it says concerning the first-person {αὐτός / τὰ αὑτοῦ/ τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ}-structure manifestly applies to every other individual. And, what is more, Alcibiades' whole philotimic and philonicic life-project revolves around the other 'self' viz. 'selves' (and not around their τὰ αὑτοῦ, let alone τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ) – and this essential relation to the other 'self' viz. 'selves' is subject to the very same kind of 'astigmatism' or 'focus error' Socrates' analysis of Alcibiades' ἐπιμελεῖσθαι αὑτοῦ is all about.[66]

The symmetry we are talking about can be illustrated by the following diagram:
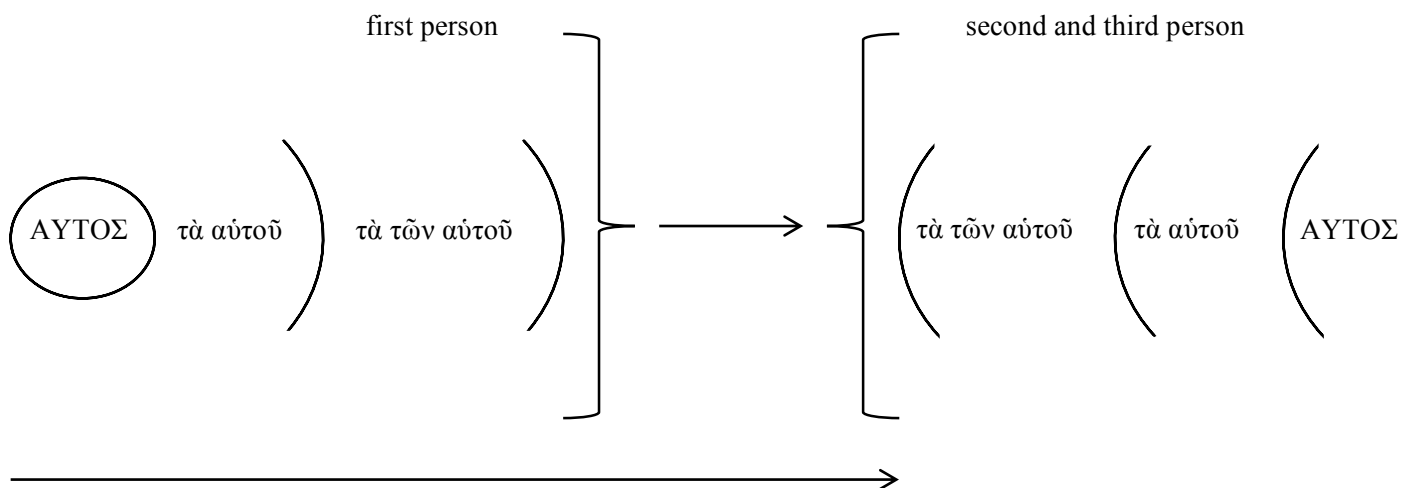
Hence, what is at stake in the *Alcibiades Major* is the possibility of ἀμαθία affecting and distorting at the same time the *two focal points of the 'ellipse'* (of the 'ellipse' of

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[66] As a matter of fact, Socrates hints in this direction when he asks Alcibiades whether the following is true – if someone is found to be a lover of Alcibiades' *body*, the person in question has fallen in love, *not with Alcibiades*, but with something belonging to Alcibiades: εἰ ἄρα τις γέγονεν ἐραστὴς τοῦ Ἀλκιβιάδου σώματος, οὐκ Ἀλκιβιάδου ἄρα ἠράσθη ἀλλὰ τινος τῶν Ἀλκιβιάδου. ἀληθῆ λέγεις (131c, underlining added). First, what is at stake here is someone else's relation to Alcibiades (i. e. Alcibiades *in the second-person* or the *third-person*). Secondly, Socrates is unmistakably applying the {αὐτός / τὰ αὑτοῦ/ τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ}-structure to 'intersubjective relationships' (to one's relation *to other people*). Thirdly Socrates is clearly suggesting that in this case, too, there is room for a *masquerade*. The point is not so much that there can be such a thing as love for Alcibiades' body, but that love for his body – i.e. love for *something belonging to* Alcibiades (τινος τῶν Ἀλκιβιάδου) – can be confused with love for Alcibiades *himself*. In short, Socrates is referring to the possibility of what might be described as *astigmatic* love.

φιλοτιμία/φιλονικία and indeed of the 'ellipse' of *intersubjective relationship*) – namely both *oneself* and the *other self*. The point being, on the one hand, that the 'ellipse' of Alcibiades' philotimic/philonicic endeavour has its two 'focal points' blurred and distorted by ἀμαθία – and on the other hand, that pretty much the same applies to the 'ellipse' of our own relation to ourselves and other people (that is, to the 'ellipse' of our life).[67]

Not least because of this the *Alcibiades Major* puts before our eyes one of the main characters of human life: the ἄττειν, the *ἀμελεῖν within the ἐπιμελεῖσθαι* – and, as pointed out above, the possibility that the latter is completely pervaded, undermined and thwarted by the former, so that ἄττειν turns out to be the *usual form of human life* – the form of '*life as usual*' – and the *Alcibiades Major* acts as a mirror, reminding us of this. Hence it is, perhaps more than any other book, a *speculum inconsiderantiae*: the mirror of our *hastiness*.[68]

But this is not all. In the final analysis, it all comes down to an *either/or*:

a) either we are able to fully perform the task of cognitive ἐπιμέλεια αὑτοῦ (i.e. to *complete* the cognitive cleansing or purification – the complete elimination of all cognitive ἄττειν – prescribed by Socrates), or

b) completing this task proves to be *out of our reach* and *impossible* – in which case ἄττειν (the particular kind of hastiness we are referring to: the *cognitive* ἄττειν the first part of the *Alcibiades Major* is all about) turns out to be nothing less than *the very form of human life*.

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[67] In the final analysis it would be more accurate to refer to a *generalized ellipse*, a *pollyellipse* or an *n-ellipse* allowing *more than two foci*. For the 'ellipse' of Alcibiades' philotimic/philonicic endeavour – and for that matter the ''ellipse of our life – has *three* focal points, namely 1) oneself, 2) the ἀγαθόν (the βέλτιον, the ἄμεινον), and 3) the other selves (so that the third focal point stands, in turn, for a *multiplicity of foci*). The *Alcibiades Major* is all about a) highlighting these *three* foci viz. their crucial role and b) pointing out that both the 'pollyellipse'' of Alcibiades' life project and the 'pollyellipse' of 'life as usual' have *all* their *three* 'focal points' *blurred and distorted by ἀμαθία*. It goes without saying that we employ the geometrical concepts in question very loosely and without rigor – as a means to convey the idea of more than two foci (and indeed of n foci).

[68] One of Lichtenberg's classical formulations might therefore serve as the perfect motto for the *Alcibiades Major*: "Ich übergebe euch dieses Büchelgen als einen Spiegel um hinein nach euch und nicht als eine Lorgnette um dadurch und nach andern zu sehen." G. C. LICHTENBERG, *Schriften und Briefe*, ed. W. Promies, vol. I: Sudelbücher I, München, Carl Hanser, 1968, D 617, p. 327. S. Tester (G. C. LICHTENBERG, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. S. Tester, Albany, N.Y., SUNY Press, 2012, 62) translates as follows: "I offer this book to you not as a lorgnette to observe others but as a mirror to observe yourself." But Tester's translation fails to render the contrast between "*hinein*-zu-sehen' and "*dadurch*-zu-sehen' viz. the twofold contrast between "*hinein/nach-euch*-zu-sehen" and "*dadurch/nach-andern*-zu-sehen" (between the lorgnette *through which* one observes others and the mirror *into which* one looks in order to see oneself).

APPENDIX I

What we are dealing with here is rooted in a particular semantic shade of ὑπάρχειν – namely, on the one hand, a) "to be already in existence" (LSJ, Cope/Sandys), and, on the other hand, b) ὑπάρχειν in a strong sense", as a "basis for" something (Pearson). Passow speaks of "*daseyn, vorhanden seyn,* zu jemandes Dienst od. Gebrauch, bereit seyn, zur Hand seyn". LSJ refers to this very same semantic shade ("existing circumstances", "present advantages", "possessions", "resources") and highlights the role played by the neutral plural participle. As Bond puts it, the verb "is used of resources that are available". And Goodwin summarizes the key point when he writes: "The fundamental idea of ὑπάρχω in this sense is best seen in τὰ ὑπάρχοντα, *the resources* or the *existing conditions*, i. e. *what is available*, *what one has to depend on*". See notably F. PASSOW, *Handwörterbuch der griechischen Sprache*, II.2, P-Ω, Leipzig, Vogel, 1831, *sub voce*, A. J. E. PFLUGK/R. KLOTZ/N. WECKLEIN (ed.), *Euripidis Tragoediae*, II, iii continens Herculem, Lipsiae,Teubner, 1877, on 695, E. M. COPE/J. E. SANDYS (ed.), *The Rhetoric of Aristotle* With a Commentary, vol. I, Cambridge, University Press, 1877, repr. Hildesheim/N.Y., Olms, 1970, 65, J. H. H. SCHMIDT, *Synonymik der griechischen Sprache*, II, Leipzig, Teubner, 1878, 539, A. C. PEARSON (ed.), *Euripides The Heraclidae*, Cambridge, University Press, 1907, on 351, E. S. FORSTER (ed.), *Isocrates Cyprian Oration*. Evagoras, Ad Nicoclem, Nicocles aut Cyprii, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1907, on Ev. 19, V. BUCHHEIT, *Untersuchungen zur Theorie des Genos Epideiktikon von Gorgias bis Aristoteles*, München, Hueber, 1960, 117f., W. W. GOODWIN (ed.), *Demosthenes on the Crown*, Cambridge, 1970, on § 1, 226 (Reiske) and on §95, 257 (Reiske), G. W. BOND (ed.), *Euripides Heracles*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981, on 695, A. M. PARRY, *Logos and Ergon in Thucydides*, N.Y., Arno Press, 1981, 74f., S. TSITSIRIDIS (ed.), *Platons Menexenos*. Einleitung, Text und Kommentar, Stuttgart/Leipzig, Teubner, 1998, on 237b2-3, N. LIVINGSTONE, *A Commentary on Isocrates' Busiris*, Leiden/Boston/Köln, Brill, 2001, on §4, p. 106, C. PEPE, *The Genres of Rhetorical Speeches in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2013, 177f., L COULUBARITSIS, Greek. Constancy and Change in the Greek Language, in: CASSIN/ E. APTER/J. LEZRA/ M. WOOD (ed.), *Dictionary of Untranslatables*. A Philosophical Lexikon, Princeton/Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2014, 415-423, in particular 423, and M. C. TAYLOR, *Thucydides's Melian Dialogue and Sicilian Expedition:* A Student Commentary, Norman, Oklahoma State University, 2019, on I.111.2.

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Sorge und Sorgen: zur zentrierten und dezentrierten ἐπιμέλεια im *Alcibiades Major*

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Für meinen Großvater José Armando†,
in dankbarer Erinnerung.

1. Problemstellung

Das Thema der Sorge wird im *Corpus Platonicum* wiederkehrend und nachdrücklich behandelt. Aus dieser Behandlung ergibt sich eine große, schwer zu umgrenzende Konstellation von Phänomenen, Fragen, Begriffen, Auseinandersetzungen usw. Das bedeutet, dass eine wirklich eingehende Untersuchung dieses Problems eine Analyse sowohl der verschiedenen Bedeutungsfelder, die in diesem Kontext bei dem *Corpus Platonicum* eine Rolle zu spielen haben[1], erfordern würde, als auch des komplexen „Bildes", zu dem sie jeweils beitragen und das sie schließlich abzeichen. In dieser Studie ist es aber nicht möglich, all diesen Aspekten Rechnung zu tragen; sie stellt sich die viel beschränktere Aufgabe, *nur ein einziges Problem* der komplexen Sorge-Fragestellung bei Platon und außerdem nur einen Dialog, den *Großen Alkibiades* (und zwar einen Teil dessen: 128aff.), zu untersuchen. „Sorge und Sorgen: zur zentrierten und dezentrierten ἐπιμέλεια im *Alcibiades Major*" – so lässt sich das hier in Frage Stehende zusammenfassen.

Was ist also das Problem? Auf welche Aspekte versucht dieser Titel hinzudeuten? Auf welche Phänomene will er mithilfe des *Großen Alkibiades* aufmerksam machen? Das hier zu behandelnde komplexe Problem kann man besser verdeutlichen, indem man es in zwei Hauptgruppen von Fragen einteilt: die eine betrifft den ersten Teil der Aussage – „Sorge und Sorgen" –, die andere den zweiten Teil – „zentrierte und dezentrierte ἐπιμέλεια".

1. In welchem Sinne (oder in welchen Sinnrichtungen) ist hier von Sorge – im Singular – und Sorgen – im Plural – die Rede? Was für einen Zusammenhang gibt es zwischen *der* Sorge

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[1] U.a. ἐπιμέλεια, θεραπεία, μελέτη, σπουδάζειν, κήδεσθαι, σκοπεῖν, φροντίζειν, γυμνάζειν, παρασκευάζειν, „ἐπιστρέφειν πρὸς δεῖνα", „τὸν νοῦν προσέχειν", „jemandem δεῖνα μέλειν", „πρὸς δεῖνα βλέπειν".

und *den* Sorgen auf der einen und zwischen der *den* Sorgen innewohnenden inneren *Mannigfaltigkeit* selbst auf der anderen Seite? Legt Platon genau denselben Wert auf beide Zusammenhänge oder, wenn man so möchte, haben die zwei Zusammenhänge denselben „Status"? Was ist die Bedeutung des „und", das *die* Sorge in Verbindung mit *den* Sorgen setzt? Geht es dabei nur um ein „plus", sodass im Grunde beide „Seiten" voneinander unabhängig sind und die Beziehung zwischen ihnen sich auf eine Art Anhang oder Hinzufügung der einen zu der anderen beschränkt – oder sollte man eher von einer Berührung, Verflechtung oder Abhängigkeit sprechen? Und wenn diese Alternative zutrifft, wie eng ist diese Veflechtung, „bis wohin" geht sie und wie ist sie beschaffen? Welchen Beitrag leistet eine so oder so geartete Verflechtung zum Verständnis des Zusammenhangs zwischen *der* Sorge und *den* Sorgen? Wenn das hier zur Diskussion stehende Problem unbedingt mit der Frage der Sorgen zu tun hat, dann heißt das, dass es möglich ist (oder wäre) zu identifizieren, „wie viele" Sorgen es gibt – oder hat diese Frage überhaupt keinen Sinn?

2. Während der erste Teil des Titels dieses Aufsatzes sich auf einen „quantitativen" Aspekt des ἐπιμέλεια-Problems bzw. auf die Frage der „Nummer" der – und Beziehung zwischen den – verschiedenen möglichen Formen der ἐπιμέλεια zu konzentrieren scheint (genauer dazu unten), stellt der zweite Teil auf den ersten Blick etwas ganz anderes dar, nämlich eine bestimmte „Qualität" der ἐπιμέλεια-Seinsweise bzw. eine Alternative zwischen verschiedenen Verfassungsmodi ihrer Bestimmung. Ist es wirklich so – und was bedeutet das? Was soll man unter „*zentrierten* ἐπιμέλεια" und „*dezentrierten* ἐπιμέλεια" verstehen? Wie kann ein scheinbar so einfaches, schlichtes, unmittelbares Phänomen dezentriert bzw. zentriert sein? Wie kann die Sorge ein Zentrum haben oder eher etwas Dezentralem, Peripherischem entsprechen? Ist dies eine starre, eindeutige Alternative (A vs. B) oder sollte man im Gegenteil von nur einem einzigen Zentrum und mehreren Formen der Peripherie bzw. von verschiedenen Zentren und auch verschiedenen Peripherien sprechen? Was deuten diese Ausdrücke – Zentrum und Peripherie – an und was sollen sie beschreiben? Ist das in ihnen auf dem Spiel Stehende so bedeutend, dass das erste Problem (bzw. die erste Gruppe der Probleme) wenigstens zum Teil ohne die Behandlung dieses zweiten nicht hätte aufgeworfen werden können?

Und schließlich: Welcher Bezug, wenn es wirklich einen gibt, lässt sich zwischen „1" und „2" bzw. zwischen dem Problem der Singularität/Mannigfaltigkeit der Sorge und dem ihrer Zentriertheit/Dezentriertheit erkennen?

Das Ausgeführte will nicht ein gründliches, vollständiges Panorama aller für unsere Studie relevanten Fragen angeben. Doch bietet es eine Ahnung von den Aspekten, mit denen diese Studie sich befasst und die der *Große Alkibiades* zur Entfaltung bringt.

2. Genauere Bestimmung des Problems. Erhebung einiger für das hier in Frage stehende Problem entscheidender Aspekte. Das spontane, alltägliche Verständnis dieser Aspekte und die daraus folgende Festlegung eines bestimmten „Verständnismodells" der Sorge

Um eine klarere, nähere Bestimmung des fraglichen Problems zu erreichen und das im *Großen Alkibiades* Abgezeichnete besser zu verstehen, lohnt es sich, die Aufmerksamkeit einigen einleitenden zum Kern des Sorge-Phänomens als solchen gehörenden Aspekten zuzuwenden. Zwar kann dieses Verfahren auf den ersten Blick wie ein Abschweifen vom Thema aussehen, doch (wie zu erkennen sein wird) sind es gerade diese Aspekte, die gewissermaßen den Boden bereiten, auf dem die Analysen des *Großen Alkibiades* beruhen, und die quasi dessen „implizite Rede" bilden.[2]

Zunächst einmal sei betont, dass die Sorge immer je eine bestimmte Beziehung mit etwas bzw. mit einem Erscheinenden impliziert – anders gesagt: das Sich-Sorgen-Machen, das Besorgt-Sein, das Sich-Kümmern usw. bringt innerlich ein „für X" bzw. ein „um X" mit sich, und in diesem Sinne ist das Sich-Sorgen-Machen, das Sich-Kümmern usw. von vornherein von einem *Für-etwas*-Sorge-Tragen oder von einem Sich-*um-etwas*-Kümmern usw. begleitet und mitbestimmt. Mit einem Wort: Das Phänomen der Sorge kommt erst dann vor, wenn es sozusagen nicht in sich selbst „eingesperrt" ist, sondern ihrer Sphäre ein Anderes bzw. ein so oder so geartet Erscheinendes eröffnet ist.

Aber mehr noch: Genau besehen reicht dieses In-Beziehung-mit-einem-anderen-Treten bzw. dieses Einem-anderen-eröffnet-Sein überhaupt nicht dazu aus, es als Sorge zu bezeichnen. Damit irgendeine Form der Sorge auftaucht, muss eine bestimmte *Spannung* bzw. ein bestimmtes *Streben* oder *Interesse* – ein *nicht gleichgültiges Verhalten einem X gegenüber* –

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[2] In diesem Zusammenhang ist auch Folgendes zu beachten. Die Analyse dieser Aspekte hat nicht lediglich den Charakter einer ersten Annäherung an das hier zu Behandelnde bzw. einer ersten Erhebung dessen, was es eingehender zu entfalten gilt. Damit aufs Engste verbunden wird auch der Versuch unternommen, Elemente des spontanen, alltäglichen Verständnisses der Sorge ins Bewusstsein zu heben. In diesem Sinne hat das Verfahren auch den Charakter einer *Hervorrufung* bzw. *Wachrufung* von etwas, das wenigstens zum Teil schon angeblich gelöst und erschlossen ist, weshalb es sich keinerlei Schwierigkeiten ausgesetzt sieht. Dies besagt zunächst, dass die durchzuführende Analyse ein bestimmtes „Modell" bzw. ein (spontanes, alltägliches) Verständnis der Art und Weise sichtbar machen wird, wie die Sorge „aufgebaut" sein muss. Wir sagen „muss", weil dieses Verständnis, wenn auch scheinbar anspruchslos und harmlos, doch schließlich eine sehr bestimmte, mit anderen Möglichkeiten hadernde, sie entschieden ausschließende Festlegung der Sorge-Natur bildet. Und das Ins-Bewusstsein-Heben dieses „Verständnismodells" ist andererseits insofern auch wichtig, als es uns gerade ermöglicht, besser zu begreifen, worauf der *Große Alkibiades* gleichsam „reagiert", was er sich umzuwandeln vornimmt bzw. worin diese Umwandlung besteht, welche Aspekte des gewöhnlichen „Verständnismodells" in der vom *Großen Alkibiades* vorgeschlagenen Verbesserung möglicherweise beizubehalten sind, kurz: welcher anderer, tendenziell gehemmten Möglichkeit, dem Problem ins Auge zu sehen, dieser Dialog die Tür öffnet.

schon „im Voraus" gesetzt sein. Diese Spannung ist der eigentliche Kern der Sorge: das, was jenem In-Beziehung-mit-einem-anderen-Sein zugrunde liegt, es ermöglicht und ein bestimmtes X zu einem möglichen Gegenstand *der Sorge* macht.

Wenn von Spannung oder Interesse die Rede ist, so neigt man dazu, einzig und allein an etwas *Positives* zu denken. Die Sorge habe also eine ganz positive Verfassung und betreffe nur das, was man will, anstrebt oder sich wünscht. Aber bei genauerem Hinsehen erweist sich diese Tendenz als beschränkt und irreführend. Diese Beschränkung und Irreführung bestehen darin zu übersehen, dass das Sorgen dahingehend eine negative Verfassung impliziert, dass es auch das, was man *nicht* will, *nicht* anstrebt, sich *nicht* wünscht, sondern eher zu *vermeiden* sucht, umfasst. Das Nicht-Wollen, das An-etwas-mehr-oder-weniger-Desinteresse-Haben usw. machen im Grunde insofern Sorgenmomente aus, als dass sie gerade *durch die Sorge* bestimmt werden und auf sie *als negative Momente ihrer selbst* zurückführen. In diesem Sinne beinhaltet jedwede Form des Nicht-Sorge-Tragens eine Möglichkeit der Sorge selbst oder sozusagen ihrer inneren Teilung zwischen dem, was *positiv*, und dem, was *negativ* (bzw. als ein nicht dem Feld des Nachzustrebenden oder des zu Verfolgenden Gehörendes, sondern dem des zu Vermeidenden oder des zu Fliehenden) *besorgt* werden soll.

Aber man muss ein Drittes hinzufügen. Der Art und Weise, wie das Phänomen der Sorge beschaffen ist, wohnt nicht nur eine schlichte Alternative zwischen positivem und negativem Interesse inne. Darüber hinaus zeichnen sich beide Termini dieser Alternative dadurch aus, dass sie innerlich aus *Mannigfaltigkeit* bzw. *Komplexität* bestehen. Dies bedeutet: Mit der uns prägenden Sorge verhält es sich so, dass sie sich nicht allein in einen positiven und negativen Horizont aufteilt, als ob jeder dieser Horizonte etwas Gleichartiges, Undifferenziertes oder gleichsam Flaches bildete. Nein. Aufs Engste mit dieser Aufteilung verbunden stellt die Sorge obendrein eine *Differenzierung* zwischen einem „Mehr" und einem „Weniger" innerhalb dessen dar, was als positiv (und so Interesse erweckend) und negativ (also verachtungswürdig) erscheint. Genauer ausgedrückt: Die Sorge lässt verschiedene *Erheblichkeits*- bzw. *Unerheblichkeitsgrade* zu und ihrem eigenen Sinne nach verlangt sie diese. Gerade diesen verschiedenen Erheblichkeits- und Unerheblichkeitsgraden ist es zu verdanken, dass die zweifache Struktur der Sorge jeweils nicht den Charakter eines undifferenzierten homogenen Horizontes ausmacht, sondern sich innerlich auf verschiedene, konzentrischen Kreisen ähnelnde Ebenen verteilt befindet, die uns sozusagen „näher" oder „ferner" sind, je nachdem,

ob die ihnen jeweilig zugeschriebenen Dinge für uns als wichtiger/weniger wichtig bzw. unwichtiger/weniger unwichtig erscheinen.[3]

In diesem Zusammenhang sei nun ein weiterer Aspekt mit Nachdruck betont. Das Ausgeführte besagt zunächst, dass die uns kennzeichnende Struktur der Sorge von Haus aus über eine Art „Karte" verfügt, die gerade dafür verantwortlich ist festzulegen, was (und in welchem Grad etwas) erheblich bzw. unerheblich sei oder wo jedes Ding sozusagen seinen geziemenden „Platz" habe.[4] Anders gesagt: Der Sorge wohnt gleichsam *eine bestimmte Deutung* (eine bestimmte Festlegung oder Identifizierung) ihrer eigenen „Fronten" inne. Diese umreißen so etwas wie einen „Interventionsbereich" und setzen in diesem Sinne eine „Karte" fest, die gerade ein bestimmtes Ganzes – das Ganze des „Sorgenbereichs" – auszudrücken berufen ist.

Aber diese „Karte" *ist und ist nicht* als eine „Weltkarte" zu beschreiben. Denn einerseits zeichnet sie sich dadurch aus, dass sie den Charakter eines *bestimmten, so oder so beschaffenen „Ausschnitts"* hat. Damit will man sagen, dass die Struktur der Sorge dazu neigt, *nicht allen möglichen Sorgengegenständen* Rechnung zu tragen. Nur auf diese und jene Dinge Rücksicht nehmend und von anderen möglichen Sorgengegenständen absehend bildet sie eher so etwas wie einen geschlossenen Bereich. Zwar kann dieser Bereich, was seinen Umfang betrifft, sehr verschieden sein: er kann sich auf eine kleine Nummer von Inhalten beschränken oder umgekehrt eine ausgedehntere, umfangreichere Natur haben; tendenziell ist jedoch dieser Bereich nie allumfassend, sondern bleibt „diesseits" des allgemeinen Spektrums der möglichen Sorge. In diesem Sinne pflegt die Sorge so beschaffen zu sein, dass sie sich letzten Endes sozusagen auf nur *ein kleines Gebiet der „Weltkarte"* der gesamten Sorge konzentriert und von den anderen, weit zahlreicheren Gebieten absieht. Genauer gesprochen: Indem die Sorge ein

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[3] In diesem Sinne sollte eigentlich von *zweierlei* „Systemen von konzentrischen Kreisen" die Rede sein: das eine dem negativen Interesse (oder Desinteresse) entsprechend und das andere dem positiven Interesse. D. h.: Die Struktur der Sorge ist so beschaffen, dass sie aus sich selbst heraus eine bestimmte Organisierung oder Anordnung dessen ausmacht, was als negativ in vierlerlei Graden zu betrachten ist, und auch dessen, was als positiv verstanden werden soll – und zwar so, dass diese zwei Organisierungen *zwei verschiedene, miteinander nicht zu verwechselnde Sinnhorizonte* bilden, die so ihre eigene Verfassung haben. Sie zeichen sich jedoch dadurch aus, dass sie auch in gewissem Maße *durcheinander hindurchgehen, miteinander verflochten sind und sich gegenseitig stützen*. All das wirft natürlich nicht nur die Frage der *inneren Organisierung* jedes dieser „Systeme" auf, sondern auch die Frage nach ihrer *Wechselwirkung*. Eine solche Erklärung würde jedoch den Rahmen, der dieser Studie gesteckt ist, weit überschreiten. Diesbezüglich ist auch Folgendes zu beachten. Die beschriebene komplexe äußerst differenzierte Verteilung braucht allerdings nicht bewusst zu sein; tatsächlich wirkt sie meistens nur unterschwellig, konfus und gibt den Anschein, bei der Verfassung der Sorge keine ausschlaggebende Rolle zu spielen. Immerhin bildet sie doch eine der Bedingungen der Möglichkeit jedes Sorgenmoments.

[4] Eine solche „Karte" ist zwar insofern wechselhaft, veränderlich, als sie sich nicht nur von Person zu Person unterscheidet, sondern auch in der Lage ist, sich im Laufe ein und desselben Lebens zu verändern. Dass dem so ist, tut aber der Tatsache keinen Abbruch, dass jeder von uns, wenn auch noch so unbewusst, fortdauernd eine (so oder so geartete, mit dieser oder jenen eigentümlichen Konturen gestrichelte) „Karte" besitzt.

bestimmtes Feld dessen, was zu verfolgen und was zu vermeiden ist, festlegt, legt sie *eo ipso* ein Außen fest, das gerade undifferenziert alles, was weder zu verfolgen noch zu vermeiden ist, sondern einfach keine Achtung gebietet, deckt. In diesem Sinne bildet das sich außerhalb eines bestimmten Sorgenfeldes Befindende nie etwas, dem man keine Bedeutung beimisst; bei der Setzung des Sorgenfeldes wird eher dieses Außen *mitgesetzt* als eine Art „Rest" bzw. als etwas, das absolut irrelevant ist oder überhaupt keine Rolle zu spielen hat.

Andererseits hängt damit ein wichtiges Phänomen zusammen. In der Tat ist die Struktur der Sorge so geartet, dass *sie doch einer „Weltkarte" ähnelt* und tatsächlich ein *umfassendes*, *sich überallhin erstreckendes Ganzes* bildet. Dies geschieht zunächst einmal deswegen, weil die sich mit der „Distanz" allmählich abschwächende Differenzierung des „Sorgenbereichs" allem anderen als einer Aufhebung der möglichen Sorgengegenstände außerhalb des so oder so festgesetzten Interventionsbereiches entspricht, als ob die Beziehung mit ihnen einzig und allein verschwände. Wie nebulös und unbewusst es auch immer sein mag, es bleibt ein untilgbarer Kontakt mit ihnen bestehen. Aber das ist noch nicht der Punkt, den es hier insbesondere zu betonen gilt. Dieser Punkt liegt nämlich darin, dass der hier oder da umrissene „Sorgenausschnitt" so geartet ist, dass er nicht als eine relative, mit anderen Möglichkeiten leicht zusammenwohnende Bestimmung angenommen wird. In der Tat wird er so verstanden, als bildete er etwas *Ausgezeichnetes*, etwas unserer Situation *höchst Angemessenes*: etwas, das an Genauigkeit und Richtigkeit hinter keinem anderen möglichen „Sorgenausschnitt" zurückbleibt. Die Bestimmung des so oder so beschaffenen „Sorgenbereichs" spiegle also die Verfassung *der Sorge selbst* wider, d. h. die eigentümliche Gestalt, die jeder übernehmen *soll* (*muss*), um nicht fehlzugehen und sozusagen den Faden dessen zu verlieren, was *wirklich* in den Sorgen in Frage steht. M.a.W.: Die eigentümliche Gestalt, die ein bestimmter so oder so artikulierter „Sorgenbereich" annimmt, fußt letztendlich auf einem *Anspruch*, und zwar einem *allumfassenden* Anspruch – dem Anspruch, die einzige angemessene Deutung des in der Sorge in Frage Stehenden zu liefern, sodass das Ganze der Sorge *„diesem"* festgesetzten „Bereich" entstamme und auf ihn zurückzuführen sei. Und so hat der Genauigkeitsanspruch eines bestimmten „Sorgenausschnitts" (bzw. der ausgezeichnete Charakter, den ein bestimmter „Sorgenausschnitt" für sich verlangt) gerade zur Folge, dass er imstande sein könnte, die wirkliche Struktur der Sorge überhaupt – d. h.: die Verfassung, die die Sorge von A bis O und für jeden scharfsinnigen Menschen haben muss – zur Entdeckung zu bringen.

Anders ausgedrückt: Jedem „Sorgenausschnitt" seiner eigenen Natur nach innewohnenden Begrenztheit zum Trotz trägt er doch insofern das Ansehen eines umfassenden Horizonts zur Schau, als er sich nicht in sich selber „geschlossen" befindet, sondern eher eine

innerlich *verbreitende, immer weiter ausdehnende* und „*unersättliche*" Seinsweise hat. Dies bedeutet: Der so oder so geartete Deutungsrahmen der Sorge errichtet eine Art von „*absolutem Imperium*" *seiner selbst* – und derart, dass er seinem eigenen Sinne nach nichts Geringeres als das Ganze ins Visier nimmt, sich auf es erstreckt und so letztendlich sich mit ihm verwechselt oder sich als es ausgibt. Und das ist der eigentliche Grund, warum die Königin den Spiegel danach fragt, wer die Schönste *im ganzen Land* sei, und sich überhaupt nicht damit zufrieden gibt, einfach die Schönste *im Land* zu sein.[5]

Der Komplexität jedes der berührten Aspekte wird das Dargelegte kaum gerecht. Daraus lassen sich jedoch einige wichtige „Stücke" zusammensetzen, die dem gewöhnlichen „Verständnismodell" der Sorge die Tür öffnen und eine bestimmte Antwort auf das in dieser Studie im Spiel befindliche Hauptproblem näher abzeichnen können.

Zunächst einmal ist zu betonen, dass das gewöhnliche „Verständnismodell" der Sorge von vornherein ein bestimmtes Verständnis der Art und Weise voraussetzt, wie die Singularität/Komplexität bzw. die Sorge (im Singular) und die Sorgen (im Plural) beschaffen sind und wie der Singular und der Plural sich ineinanderfügen. So zeichnet sich das normale Verständnis der Sorge dadurch aus, dass es ihr einen umfassenden, vereinigenden Charakter zuschreibt – und zwar so, dass genau besehen die Sorge aus dem Für-dieses-und-jenes-Sorge--Tragen usw. etwas bildet, das das Leben immerfort begleitet und es wie ein roter Faden durchzieht. Zeugnis dafür legt die „Agenda" eines Tages, einer Woche, eines Monats, eines Jahres und sogar die „große Agenda" des Lebens eines jeden von uns ab. Dies besagt also, dass das spontane Verständnis der Sorge immer eine konfuse Idee ihrer *Singularität* besitzt. Diese Idee besteht nämlich 1. in der Beständigkeit der Sorge bzw. in dem (mehr oder weniger verworrenen) Bewusstsein, dass sie nicht einfach weggehe, jeden Tag immer wieder auftauche und in diesem Sinne ein und dasselbe die Zeit hindurchgehende X bilde und 2. in der festen, entschiedenen Überzeugung, dass die Sorge unübersehbare, zahllose Formen von sich selbst umfasse, d. h., dass sie sich in sehr verschiedenen Momenten entfalten könne (bzw. denjenigen, die grob gesagt dem „Programm" der „Agenda" selber entsprechen) – sodass es auch in diesem Fall um ein und dasselbe von all diesen Momenten vorausgesetzte, sie alle ohne Ausnahme einschließendes X gehe. Mit einem Wort: Die Sorge wird normalerweise so verstanden, dass

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[5] D. h.: Die Perspektive der Königin ist so beschaffen, dass sie eine *ausgezeichnete Bestimmung* identifiziert hat, nämlich die Schönheit bzw. die körperliche Schönheit. Aber diese Identifizierung ist ihrerseits so festgelegt, dass sie mit einer Frage des *Umfangs* bzw. der *Ausdehnung* oder *Tragweite* (d. h.: der Frage „Bis wohin ist diese oder jene Identifizierung ausgedehnt?") aufs Innigste verflochten ist – und zwar so, dass es nicht nur eine Frage gibt, sondern auch eine *Antwort*: das, was die Sorge als superlativ identifiziert, hat einen *allumfassenden* Anspruch, es dehnt sich bis zum Ganzen aus („Wer ist die Schönste im *ganzen* Land?"). In diesem Sinne – und das ist gerade das Entscheidende – nimmt der „Ausschnitt" im Grunde die Identität des Ganzen selbst an.

sie einem *allgemeinen, formalen Phänomen* entspricht, das gleichsam einer *unbestimmten Mannigfaltigkeit* möglicher Gegenstände eröffnet ist.

Daraus lässt sich andererseits ersehen, dass das normale Verständnis der Sorge auch durch die mit aller Evidenz angenommene These der Mannigfaltigkeit gekennzeichnet ist. Die Sorge sei von Haus aus durch Mannigfaltigkeit bestimmt – und zwar so, dass eine solche Mannigfaltigkeit (d. h. die Tatsache, dass das Phänomen der Sorge von Grund auf etwas Komplexes, Vielfältiges bildet) in Wahrheit das Entscheidende bilde bzw. dass ohne sie die Sorge schlechthin nicht möglich sei. Aber mehr noch: In der Idee einer der Sorge innerlich zugrundeliegenden Mannigfaltigkeit *könnte* keine These über deren Bestimmung und Inhalt impliziert sein, sodass der Überzeugung der Mannigfaltigkeit zum Trotz dieses zweite Moment offengelassen bliebe. Es verhält sich jedoch andersherum. Fragt man, was unter dieser Mannigfaltigkeit zu verstehen ist, dann wird augenscheinlich, dass sie einen sehr bestimmten Inhalt hat: Sie bezeichnet nämlich die verschiedenen, in alle Richtungen weit verbreiteten „Anwendungspunkte", die *grosso modo* den den Alltag bevölkernden, sich mehr oder weniger wiederholenden Verrichtungen, Aufgaben, Verpflichtungen, Beschäftigungen, Engagements usw. entsprechen. Das Gesagte scheint zwar nicht mehr als eine Binsenwahrheit darzustellen; es weist aber doch auf ein bestimmtes, entschiedenes Verständnis der Art und Weise hin, wie das Phänomen der Sorge beschaffen ist. Diesem Verständnis zufolge seien es gerade diese Gegenstände, welche die Sorge als formales, allgemeines Phänomen differenzieren und so ihr einen konkreten Sinn verleihen. Demzufolge wird die Struktur der Sorge so verstanden, dass sie im Grunde eine *zerstreute, losgelöste* und gleichsam *zersplitterte* Seinsweise hat – das Zerstreut- oder Zersplittert-Sein, das gerade aus ihrer innigsten Verbindung mit (und Abhängigkeit von) dem in dem beschriebenen Sinne verstandenen Mannigfaltigen kommt.[6]

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[6] Was diesen Aspekt betrifft, zeichnet sich unser Verständnis des Sorge-Phänomens durch eine gewisse *Zweideutigkeit* aus. Denn einerseits legt es fest, dass die Verfassung der Sorge etwas ja Ständigem, Ununterbrochenem und in diesem Sinne gleichsam Allumfassendem entspricht, sodass das „Leben" als solches den Charakter eines Beschäftigt-Seins habe. Andererseits ist jedoch dieses ständige Beschäftigt-Sein so geartet, dass es in Wahrheit „Sorgeninseln" gebe, d. h. dass das Phänomen der Sorge auch eine zerstreute, intermittierende, unterbrochene Natur habe, sodass man sofort zugeben würde, dass es auch Momente gebe, in denen man der Sorge entrückt ist, und die Verrichtungen, Aufgaben, Verpflichtungen usw. aufhören und etwas völlig anders Geartetem Platz bieten, nämlich der Muße, Freizeit usw. Es ist dies nicht der Ort, diese Zweideutigkeit eingehender in Betracht zu ziehen. Es gilt nur zweierlei hervorzuheben: 1. dass beide Thesen – die These der Beständigkeit der Sorge und die ihrer Unterbrechung – sozusagen parallel zueinander verlaufen, ohne sich zu berühren, was also zum Teil bewirkt, dass sie an Sicherheit und Überzeugung gar nicht hintereinander zurückbleiben und dass man die Widersprüchlichkeit, die sie in der Tat enthalten, gar nicht bemerkt; 2. dass genau besehen die der Natur der Sorge von uns entschieden zugeschriebene Beständigkeit in der Tat gar nicht an Beständigkeit im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes Anteil hat. Denn aus der Nähe gesehen zeigt sich, dass das, was unserem Verständnis nach die Sorge bestimmt, eigentlich einer Art „Fischernetz" entspricht, wobei es natürlich ein Ganzes gibt, jedoch derart, dass dieses Ganze kein echtes *continuum* darstellt, sondern vielmehr ein von „Löchern" durchzogenes Ganzes bzw. ein X ist, das auch durch die Abwesenheit seiner selbst (d. h. durch die Anwesenheit dessen, was nicht mehr X ist, sondern etwas völlig anderes) mitgeprägt ist.

Wenn es tatsächlich so ist, wie hier dargelegt wurde, dann springt auch ein anderer wichtiger Aspekt ins Auge. Dieser Aspekt besteht nämlich darin, dass das normale Verständnismodell der Sorge immer je ein festes, entschiedenes Verständnis der Bedeutung des in der Sorge strukturell implizierten „für X" hat und so eine Antwort auf deren „wofür" bzw. „worum" bereits in sich trägt. Diesem Verständnis zufolge sei Gegenstand der Sorge *ein uns vor Augen Liegendes* oder sozusagen *ein von außen her kommendes, uns so oder so entgegengehendes, „da draußen" zu findendes X*. In diesem Sinne habe dieses X, um es so zu formulieren, ein „*objektives*" Vorhandensein (es bildet ein uns auf diese oder jene Weise vor Augen Liegendes oder entspricht gerade dem, was sozusagen in der „Agenda" steht). Dass man nachdrücklich dazu neigt, die Sorge anhand dieses Modells (wenn man so möchte: anhand des „Agendamodells") zu intepretieren, bedeutet aber zudem, dass sich die Sinnsphäre der Sorge von A bis O um das Erscheinende im „objektiven" Sinne dreht – und zwar so, dass es im Wesentlichen den gesamten möglichen Horizont der Sorge zu erschöpfen scheint.

An dieses „Agendamodell" anknüpfend kann man auf die andere Bildseite des Problems – d. h. auf die Frage nach der Bedeutung des Zentrum-Begriffs bzw. des Zentralen und Dezentralen (Peripherischen) – ein größeres Licht werfen. Genau besehen verfügt das gewöhnliche Verständnismodell der Sorge über einen bestimmten Begriff dessen, was diese Ausdrücke bedeuten sollen. Dieser Begriff liegt hauptsächlich in dem Folgenden. Von der gewöhnlichen Perspektive her betrachtet kann insofern von Zentrum und Peripherie (und d. h. auch: von etwas mehr oder weniger Zentriertem und umgekehrt von etwas mehr oder weniger in der „Peripherie" der Sorge Liegendem) die Rede sein, als sie in der Lage ist, *Wichtigkeits*- oder *Bedeutsamkeitsunterscheidungen* zu erkennen. D. h.: Das gewöhnliche Verständnis der Idee von Zentrum und Peripherie führt auf die oben erwähnte Struktur der Sorge bzw. auf die Art und Weise zurück, wie sie sowohl den Unterschied Wichtigkeit/Unwichtigkeit impliziert, als auch eine Art differenzierte Skala innerhalb der beiden Bestimmungen. Diesem Verständnis zufolge steht der Begriff „*Zentrum*" für das, was jeweils auf der Tagesordnung steht, d. h. für etwas *Bedeutsames* (bzw. für die verschiedenen möglichen Grade der Bedeutsamkeit). Und auf der anderen Seite wird das *Unbedeutsame* in seinen verschiedenen möglichen Graden genau als „nicht-zentral" bzw. als „*peripherisch*" bezeichnet.

Das Entscheidende bei alledem ist aber, dass diese Begriffe so verstanden werden, dass sie gerade *von der Mannigfaltigkeit her* ihren Sinn übernehmen. Und das besagt hier hauptsächlich ein Zweifaches. Erstens zeichnet sich die Sorge dadurch aus, *mehrere Zentren* bzw. *mehrere Peripherien* zu haben – d. h.: Sie hat jenen innerlich *zerstreuten*, *losgelösten* Charakter, der gerade ihrem Aufgehen im Mannigfaltigen (ihrer Orientierung an ihm)

entstammt. Zweitens verhält es sich mit solchen Zentren bzw. Peripherien so, dass sie tendenziell *nicht beständig, fest, gleichbleibend, unverändert* sind, sondern eher *wechselhaft, schwankend, veränderlich, metamorphisch* – genauso schwankend, veränderlich usw. wie das jeweils auf der Tagesordnung Stehende.[7]

In diesem Kontext ist noch ein anderer Punkt hervorzuheben, der eine weitere wichtige Voraussetzung des gewöhnlichen Verständnismodells der Sorge zutage bringt. Es wurde darauf hingewiesen, dass die Sorge prinzipiell nicht gleichartig, homogen ist. Wie oben gesagt wurde, gibt es verschiedene Erheblichkeitsnuancen. In diesem Sinne hat das spontane Verständnismodell der Sorge zwar ein ständiges Bewusstsein von ihrer *Heterogenität*. Wie seltsam und unpassend auch immer es klingen mag *liegt einer solchen Heterogenität aber doch eine tief eingewurzelte Homogenität zugrunde* – sodass sich die mit aller Sicherheit angenommene Heterogenitätsthese eigentlich auf eine untergründig wirkende, aber keinesfalls weniger entschlossen angenommene Homogenitätsthese stützt, welche in Wahrheit jene These als ein Moment von sich selbst umfasst und die eigentliche „Atmosphäre" ausmacht, in der sie (bzw. die Heterogenitätsthese) lebt. Dass dem so ist, ergibt sich aus dem Zusammensetzen einiger berücksichtigter „Stücke". Fragt man, was der These zur tatsächlich äußerst differenzierten, allerlei Gegenstände und Variationsmöglichkeiten in sich aufnehmenden Verfassung der Sorge zugrundeliegt, dann wird in voller Deutlichkeit erkennbar, dass aller angenommenen Plastizität der Sorgensphäre zum Trotz sie ja in ihrer Identifizierung des „Wofür" bzw. des „Worum" befangen und auf sie beschränkt ist. Das bedeutet u. a., dass alle möglichen Variationen, die angenommen und gestattet werden, eigentlich nur dem Inhalt der die Sorgen betreffenden „Anwendungspunkte" und der besonderen Gestalt und Tragweite des jeweils in Frage stehenden „Ausschnitts" entsprechen. Genauer ausgedrückt: Der Verfassung der Sorge wohnt in der Tat ein Spielraum unzähliger möglicher Variationen inne. Diese Variationsmöglichkeiten betreffen jedoch im Wesentlichen das „*Was*" – die verschiedenen, mit diesem oder jenem Erheblichkeits- bzw. Unerheblichkeitsgrade bewerteten „Anwendungspunkte", die den entsprechenden „Sorgenausschnitt" besetzen und ihm seine eigentümliche Gestalt verleihen –, nicht aber ein „*Wie*" bzw. *die Seinsweise selbst der Sorge*. Die Art und Weise, wie die Sorge als solche beschaffen ist bzw. sein kann, *bleibt immer dieselbe, hat für jeden genau die gleiche Identität* und erhält so *einen unerschütterlichen,*

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[7] Natürlich hat man eine Idee der *Beständigkeit* des Zentralen bzw. Dezentralen. Diese Beständigkeit entspricht aber bei genauerem Zusehen keiner Beständigkeit im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes und betrifft nichts Festes; sie hat, wohlgemerkt, einzig und allein mit dem *zyklischen Charakter* der Sorge zu tun, d. h. mit der Tatsache, dass meistens das Zentrale bzw. Dezentrale nicht *uno tenore* und nicht ein für alle Mal verschwindet, sondern erneut Aufmerksamkeit für sich verlangt.

unbestrittenen und zweifelsfreien Charakter aufrecht. Bei genauerem Hinsehen zeigt sich also, dass die Struktur der Sorge, aus ihrem gewöhnlichen Verständnis betrachtet, insofern ein grundsätzlich *homogenes*, *eindeutiges*, *glattes* Phänomen ist, als dass sie in Wahrheit irgendwelche Veränderungsmöglichkeiten *ihrer eigenen Natur* (bzw. ihrer Seinsweise, ihrer inneren Struktur, ihres Grundes usw.) ausschließt. Oder, wie man auch sagen könnte: Dem gewöhnlichen Verständnismodell zufolge gebe es überhaupt keine *„genetischen" Variationen* der Sorge.

Wenn dies wirklich zutrifft und einen Teil des Verständnismodells der Sorge treffend beschreibt, dann setzt ein solches Verständnismodell noch einen letzten Aspekt voraus. Genau besehen versteht es die Beziehung Interesse ←→ Gegenstand so, dass das Interesse im Grunde genommen gleichsam zu seinem Gegenstand hinzugesetzt wird und die Identität des betreffenden Gegenstandes nicht bedeutend beeinflusst, sondern eher sie im Wesentlichen unberührt bleiben lässt. Denn die Sorge soll lediglich diesen oder jenen bestimmten „Ausschnitt" ausmachen, und zwar so, dass X einem jeden von uns *als genau dasselbe X* – als das, was es gerade ist: X! – erscheint und nur in dem Maße Variationen ausgesetzt ist, als dass es seine eigene Identität durch und durch aufrechterhaltend zu dem einen oder anderen „Ausschnitt" bzw. zu der einen oder anderen „Architektur" der Sorge gehören kann.

Das Ausgeführte, auch wenn es den Analysen des *Großen Alkibiades* befremdlich scheint, spielt, wie zu sehen sein wird, eine wichtige Rolle zum Verständnis dessen, was sich in ihnen abzeichnet. Um die Analysen des *Großen Alkibiades* klarer zu begreifen, lohnt es aber noch, skizzenhaft *einen weiteren vorbereitenden Punkt* zu berücksichtigen. Dieser Punkt hat gerade mit der Bestimmung zu tun, die im *Großen Alkibiades* 127eff. als die wichtigste, entscheidendste erscheint, nämlich die des *Selbst*. Damit lässt sich m. E. der komplexe Rahmen allmählicher (und deswegen etwas deutlicher) zum Vorschein bringen, zu dem die in diesem Aufsatz zu behandelnde Passage des *Großen Alkibiades* gehört, obwohl sie nicht immer auf diesen umfassenderen Rahmen ausdrücklich aufmerksam macht. Bei der Auswahl an möglichen Wegen, die man einschlagen könnte, um Einsicht in diesen Punkt zu gewinnen, konzentrieren wir uns auf den *Phaedrus*, 229cff.

3. DIE VERSCHIEDENEN MÖGLICHEN „HAUPTRICHTUNGEN" DER SORGE – σκοπεῖν τὰ ἀλλότρια VS. σκοπεῖν ἐμαυτόν. DER EIGENTÜMLICHE, MIT KEINER ANDEREN BESTIMMUNG ZU VERWECHSELNDE CHARAKTER DER αὐτός-SPHÄRE UND DEREN VORRANGSTELLUNG

Im *Phaedrus*, 229cff. fragt Phaedrus Sokrates, ob er an den Mythos über Boreas und Oreithyia glaube. Sokrates antwortet – aus Gründen, die hier nicht zu erwägen sind –, dass das Fürwahrhalten oder die Diskreditierung dieses und anderer Mythen (wie die über Kentauren, Gorgonen, Pegasen und dergleichen) *sehr viel Zeit bzw. Freizeit oder Muße fordere* (πολλῆς σχολῆς δεήσει) und er diese überhaupt nicht habe (ἐμοὶ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὰ οὐδαμῶς ἐστι σχολή). Und Sokrates führt weiter aus, dass er – im Gegensatz zu dem, was sowohl die σοφοί (die solche Mythen in Frage stellen), als auch die πολλοί (die sich ihnen spontan und leichtgläubig anschließen) tun – nicht diese Dinge untersuche (σκοπῶ οὐ ταῦτα), die er für etwas ἀλλότριον (nicht eigen, fremd, nicht geziemend oder nicht angemessen) halte, sondern eher *sich selbst* (σκοπῶ οὐ ταῦτα ἀλλ᾽ ἐμαυτόν) bzw. was er für οἰκεῖον (eigen, geziemend, angemessen und in diesem Sinne betrachtenswert) halte. Mit alledem hängt eine Konstellation der Aspekte zusammen, die es jetzt, wenn auch noch skizzenhaft, eingehender zu erörtern gilt.

Zunächst einmal beschreibt Sokrates die Art und Weise, wie die σχολή gleichsam eine *Vervielfachung* des Sorgenhorizonts ermöglicht. D. h.: Der σχολή ist es zu verdanken, dass sich die Sorge nicht auf diejenige Form beschränkt, die die Perspektive der πολλοί und ihre Abstimmung (oder ihren Einklang) mit den Mythen bzw. ihr Auf-den-von-den-Mythen--festgelegten-Sinnesrahmen-gericht-Sein oder ihr An-ihnen-orientiert-Sein auszeichnet. Dem von der σχολή eröffneten, über sie hinausgehenden Horizont entspricht die *Möglichkeit des σκοπεῖν*, und zwar eine *doppelte* Möglichkeit: das die σοφοί betreffende σκοπεῖν und das an Sokrates' Beispiel zutage tretende „σκοπεῖν ἐμαυτόν". Damit weist Sokrates also auf *verschiedene mögliche „Richtungen" der Sorge* hin – und zwar so, dass 1. die πολλοί, 2. die σοφοί und 3. Sokrates für verschiedene Möglichkeiten stehen, die Struktur der Sorge, ihre Organisation und Orientierung zu verstehen.

In dem Fingerzeig auf die σχολή verbirgt sich indessen etwas Tieferes, Entscheidenderes. Von ihr her wird nicht nur, so könnte man sagen, der „freie", „ungebundene" Charakter der Sorge hervorgehoben, dem es gerade zu verdanken ist, dass die Sorge nicht unbedingt in einer einzigen möglichen „Richtung" gefangen ist. Hervorgehoben wird auch eine *Hierarchie* zwischen den verschiedenen möglichen „Sorgen", nach der die Sorge für den „αὐτός" bzw. das „σκοπεῖν ἐμαυτόν" eine *Priorität* oder einen gewissen *Vorrang* genießt. Diesen wichtigen Aspekt betont Sokrates nachdrücklich, indem er sagt, es sei *lächerlich*

(γελοῖον), andere Dinge – und d. h.: τὰ ἀλλότρια – zu σκοπεῖν, ohne *zuerst* den „αὐτός" bzw. das „οἰκεῖον" berücksichtigt zu haben[8]: „οὐ δύναμαί πω κατὰ τὸ Δελφικὸν γράμμα γνῶναι ἐμαυτόν· γελοῖον δή μοι φαίνεται τοῦτο ἔτι ἀγνοοῦντα τὰ ἀλλότρια σκοπεῖν." Aber in welchem Sinne soll man diese Idee der Priorität verstehen und mit welchen Aspekten hängt sie zusammen?

An allererster Stelle sei Folgendes betont: Treffen die Worte des Sokrates wirklich zu, dann hat das Nicht-in-Berücksichtigung-Nehmen des Selbst als einer möglichen „Richtung" der Sorge nicht nur zur Folge, dass man das gesamte Spektrum möglicher Sorge aus den Augen verliert und so nur zu einem Fragment dieses Spektrums Zugang hat. Darüber hinaus bedeutet es etwas Ernsteres – nämlich, dass man sozusagen so *überstürzt* handelt, dass eine wichtige „Etappe" unsachgemäß übergangen wird, ohne deren Mitberücksichtigung der Horizont der Sorge, mit dem man in Verbindung steht, gewissermaßen eine *fehlerhafte* Natur hat.[9] Es geht also nicht lediglich um eine Frage des Ausschlusses dieser oder jener „Sorgenrichtung", der dafür verantwortlich ist, dass man gleichsam zu eilig die mögliche Sinnsphäre der Sorge schließt und so andere Möglichkeiten unberücksichtigt lässt. Es geht auch um einen *„qualitativen"* Fehler, der schießlich der so angelegten Sorge einen *verzerrten*, *verfälschten* Charakter veleiht. Letzten Endes ist es gerade all dies, das in „γελοῖον" im Spiel ist. Bei alledem lässt sich so eine der Bedeutungen ersehen, die Sokrates der Idee der Priorität zuschreibt. Obwohl er es nicht ausdrücklich erwähnt und es außerdem nicht zur Entfaltung bringt, geht aus dem Ausgeführten tatsächlich hervor, dass „Priorität" als Ausdruck einer *grundlegenden, entscheidenden Bestimmung* zu verstehen ist, die man unbedingt berücksichtigen *muss*, wenn man nicht fehlgehen will.

Dies verfehlt aber noch andere Aspekte, die bei dem der Sorge innewohnenden Prioritätsbegriff eine nicht weniger wesentliche Rolle spielen. In der Tat könnte es sich mit dieser Priorität so verhalten, dass sie immerhin in einem Rahmen stattfände, wo es weiter möglich wäre, allen Formen der Sorge bzw. allen ihren möglichen „Richtungen" nachzugehen.[10] Sokrates weist jedoch auf das genaue Gegenteil hin. Ihm zufolge verhalte es

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[8] Oder, wie Sokrates in der *Apologie* behauptet, es sei *beschämend*, sich für andere Dinge zu sorgen, anstatt für die ψυχή. Vgl. 29d7-e3: „„Ὦ ἄριστε ἀνδρῶν, Ἀθηναῖος ὤν, πόλεως τῆς μεγίστης καὶ εὐδοκιμωτάτης εἰς σοφίαν καὶ ἰσχύν, χρημάτων μὲν οὐκ αἰσχύνῃ ἐπιμελούμενος ὅπως σοι ἔσται ὡς πλεῖστα, καὶ δόξης καὶ τιμῆς, φρονήσεως δὲ καὶ ληθείας καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς βελτίστη ἔσται οὐκ ἐπιμελῇ οὐδὲ φροντίζεις;"". Vgl. auch *Alkibiades I*, 123d: „(…) ὅτι χρὴ πρῶτον μαθόντα καὶ ἐπιμεληθέντα αὑτοῦ καὶ σκήσαντα (…)." (Herv. d. Verf.)

[9] Auf die Idee der *Überstürzung* weist *Alkibiades I*, 118b ausdrücklich hin: „διὸ καὶ ᾄττεις ἄρα πρὸς τὰ πολιτικὰ πρὶν παιδευθῆναι." Wie näher zu sehen sein wird, spielt sie aber eine noch wesentlichere Rolle als diejenige, die hier in Frage steht.

[10] Anders gesagt: Die These des Sokrates, es gebe so etwas wie eine „konstitutive Anordnung" der Sorge, ist – nur vom bisher Dargelegten her betrachtet – noch durchaus damit vereinbar, dass man sowieso imstande ist, jede

sich mit der uns kennzeichnenden Sorge so, dass sie von Grund auf einer Art *Beengtheit* ausgesetzt sei. Diese Beengtheit liegt nämlich in dem *endlichen, begrenzten Zeitraum des eigenen Lebens* bzw. in der Art und Weise, wie der Horizont, in dem die Frage der Sorge auftaucht, *nicht ein unbestimmt verlängerungsfähiger Horizont ist* – und zwar so, dass 1. man dazu gezwungen ist, diese *oder* jene „Richtung" der Sorge zu „wählen", und andere fallen zu lassen, und dass 2. sich die Sorge in einer derartigen Situation befindet, in der ein echtes Besichtigen aller möglichen „Richtungen" ihrer selbst abgeneigt ist. In diesem Sinne wird die von Sokrates erwähnte Priorität betreffs des „σκοπεῖν ἐμαυτόν" durch die Bestimmung der *Dringlichkeit* mitbezeichnet. „Priorität" weise also gleichzeitig auf etwas Grundlegendes, nicht zu Missachtendes *und auf etwas Dringendes* hin.

Aber mehr noch. Die fragliche Priorität des „σκοπεῖν ἐμαυτόν" scheint auf den ersten Blick auf gleicher Stufe wie andere möglichen „Richtungen" der Sorge zu stehen. So könne man alle drei „Richtungen", auf die Sokrates hinweist, in ebenderselben Weise übernehmen, ohne dass es irgendeine *Unausgewogenheit* zwischen ihnen gebe. Aber mit der Situation, in der von „σκοπεῖν ἐμαυτόν" bzw. von dessen Priorität die Rede ist, verhält es sich in Wahrheit andersherum. Um Einblick in diesen Aspekt zu gewinnen, muss man auf die Art und Weise zurückkommen, wie Sokrates den Unterschied zwischen οἰκεῖον (bzw. τὸ οἰκεῖον σκοπεῖν) und τὰ ἀλλότρια (bzw. τὰ ἀλλότρια σκοπεῖν) einführt und diese Begriffe beschreibt.

Aus der Nähe gesehen geht erstens hervor, dass Sokrates im Grunde genommen *nicht* eine Alternative zwischen drei möglichen Sorgenrichtungen anspricht. Denn die besprochene dreifache Möglichkeit der Sorgenrichtungen ist dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass sie eine bestimmte *Wesensverwandtschaft* zwischen der πολλοί- und der σοφοί-Perspektive impliziert – und zwar so, dass man zu Recht sagen könnte, es handle sich grundsätzlich nur um *zwei* verschiedene Sorgenweisen. Das, was diese *Affinität* zwischen ihnen ausmacht, hat gerade mit der Tatsache zu tun, dass sich beide – die πολλοί, sowie die σοφοί – um *ἀλλότρια* drehen oder sich an ihnen orientieren. D. h.: Trotz der eigentümlichen, mit anderen nicht zu verwechselnden Identität jeder dieser drei Sorgenweisen liegt ihnen doch ein wesentlicher Unterschied zwischen der πολλοί- und σοφοί-Perspektive auf der einen und der von Sokrates vertretenen Perspektive auf der anderen Seite zugrunde, der gerade die dreifache Alternative *aus dem Gleichgewicht bringt,* eine *wesentliche Trennungslinie* zwischen zwei ihrer Momente zieht und so die dem „σκοπεῖν ἐμαυτόν" entsprechende Sorgenweise isoliert lässt.

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der erwähnten „Richtungen" der Sorge zu umfassen und auf sie früher oder später den Blick zu richten, ohne ein Jota ihrer Verfassung zu verpassen.

Es kommt aber noch ein zweiter Aspekt hinzu, der die erwähnte Unausgewogenheit noch deutlicher betont. In der Tat zeichnen sich die sich an τὰ ἀλλότρια orientierenden Perspektiven dadurch aus, dass sie den Anspruch erheben, bereits das Wesentliche in Besitz zu nehmen. Auf der einen Seite ist das von Sokrates mit Nachdruck Betonte – die Sphäre des Selbst – immer je in deren Unternehmen impliziert, sofern es sich selbstverständlich um ein Unternehmen *von jemandem* handelt, der gerade diese oder jene bestimmte Sorge trägt. Auf der anderen Seite – und damit zusammenhängend – ist die *Wichtigkeit*, die er in Verbindung mit dem Selbst setzt, auch etwas, das die sich um τὰ ἀλλότρια drehenden Perspektiven wie ein Schatten begleitet und ihnen zugrundeliegt. Anders gesagt: Der Grund, warum diese oder jene Perspektive sich dem ἀλλότριον zuneigt, besteht genau darin, dass es sich als eine sinnvolle, preiswürdige und angemessene Unternehmung anbietet – und zwar so, dass sie gerade in der Lage ist, auf eine andersgeartete Perspektive (und die dazugehörende Sorgenweise) zu verzichten. Dass dem so ist, bedeutet, dass die auf der entgegengesetzten Seite des „σκοπεῖν ἐμαυτόν" liegenden Perspektiven von Anfang an voraussetzen, gerade *das Notwendige und Grundlegende* schon gesichert zu haben bzw. das, was man wirklich braucht und worin man seine Zeit investieren soll, um den richtigen Weg zu gehen. In diesem Sinne erscheint der Hinweis des Sokrates nicht nur *überflüssig*, *entbehrlich*, sondern auch insofern γελοῖον, als er auf etwas *bereits Gelöstes, Gesichertes* hindeutet.

Die ausgeführten Aspekte sind zwar nicht die einzigen, die eine tiefe Unausgewogenheit in die Erkenntnis der möglichen Richtungen der Sorge einführen und zu einer fortschreitenden *Erschwernis und Verengung* des dem „σκοπεῖν ἐμαυτόν" entsprechenden Standpunkts beitragen. Aus ihnen heraus lässt sich aber ersehen, wie *gehemmt*, *behindert* und *verborgen* die der Sorge um sich selber gewidmete Perspektive[11] zu sein pflegt, sodass sie ja in Bedrängnis gerät oder, wie im *Alkibiades*, 129a gesagt wird, etwas παγχάλεπον darstellt.

Daran anknüpfend kann man nun einem weiteren in der von Sokrates vertretenen Ansicht bei der Priorität des „σκοπεῖν ἐμαυτόν" mitschwingenden Aspekt auf die Spur kommen. Diesen Aspekt könnte man dadurch beschreiben, dass man sagt, der der Sorge um sich selbst entsprechende Standpunkt habe den Charakter eines *gehemmten Vorgangs*. D. h.: Die in den Worten des Sokrates thematisierte Sorge ist so beschaffen, dass sie *überhaupt nicht unmittelbar verfügbar ist*, als ob sie etwas schon uns vor Augen Liegendem oder leicht Sichtbarem entspräche, ohne Mühe zu verlangen. Nein. Die Sorge um sich selbst, die Sokrates ins Licht rückt, bildet *etwas noch zu Erlangendes*, etwas, das *noch gewonnen werden muss*,

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[11] Und d. h. hier: nicht nur die Durchführung oder Verwirklichung dieser Sorge, sondern auch – und das ist jetzt das Entscheidende – die reine Eröffnung und Anerkennung ihrer Möglichkeit überhaupt.

mehr: etwas, das – wie nahegelegt wird – *einen langen, durch mehrere Hindernisse erschwerten Weg* fordert und das erst nach einer *mühsamen Aufgabe* in Erfüllung gehen könnte.

Auf Derartiges weist, wohlgemerkt, die Formulierung des Sokrates in 229e hin: „<u>οὐ δύναμαί πω</u> κατὰ τὸ Δελφικὸν γράμμα γνῶναι ἐμαυτόν· γελοῖον δή μοι φαίνεται τοῦτο ἔτι ἀγνοοῦντα τὰ ἀλλότρια σκοπεῖν".

Mit dem Dargestellten halten wir in groben Zügen gleichsam ein „grundlegendes Schema des Sorgenbegriffs" in Händen, welches gerade das Problem der Sorge, das in diesem Aufsatz zu betrachten ist, in einem neuen Licht erscheinen lässt. Im Folgenden gilt es also, einige der verschiedenen Entwicklungen zu verfolgen, denen das Ausgeführte eine Tür öffnet. Dabei soll zuerst das bisher abgezeichnete Bild im Auge behalten werden:

Die Analyse des *Phaedrus*, 229eff. *isoliert* sozusagen die Sphäre des Selbst von allem, was ihr im engsten Sinne des Wortes nicht gehört, und verleiht ihr so eine eigentümliche, mit etwas anderem überhaupt nicht zu verwechselnde Identität. D. h.: Mit den Worten des Sokrates zeichnet sich *ein grundlegendes Anderssein* zwischen der Sphäre des *Nicht-Selbst* (bzw. der an sie gerichteten Sorge) und der Sphäre des *Selbst* (bzw. der an sie gerichteten Sorge) ab, der gerade ein Vorrang zugeschrieben wird. Damit rückt Sokrates gerade diejenige mögliche Sorgensphäre – die Sphäre des eigenen Trägers der Sorge bzw. des dem „Sich-für-etwas-Sorge--Tragen" innewohnenden „Subjekts" – in den Mittelpunkt, die in dem „spontanen", „automatischen" Verständnismodell der Sorge dazu neigt, in der Masse des Mannigfaltigen untergetaucht zu bleiben. Kurzum: Im *Phaedrus*, 229eff. lenkt Sokrates die Aufmerksamkeit auf diese eigentümliche Sphäre des Selbst hin und das Phänomen der Sorge wird gerade aus dieser Hervorhebung des Selbst heraus erforscht. Es handelt sich also darum, *das Selbst* zu berücksichtigen, sich um *das Selbst* zu bemühen, auf *das Selbst* aufzupassen, *das Selbst* nicht zu vernachlässigen usw.

Dabei betont der *Phaedrus* eine *Ambiguität* oder *Mehrdeutigkeit* dieses Selbst und der Seinsweisen der Sorgen, denen es zugewandt sein kann, und zwar so, dass das Selbst sich nicht unbedingt auf sich konzentriert, sondern sich auf etwas anderes bzw. auf τὰ ἀλλότρια richten kann – *und eigentlich neigt es gerade dazu*. D. h.: Das Selbst kann so beschaffen sein, dass es sich auf das Nicht-Selbst konzentriert, all seine Kräfte darauf orientiert usw.

Ohnehin weist Sokrates auf die Möglichkeit hin, diese Neigung und das von ihr festgelegte Verständnis der Sorgenverfassung so *zu wenden* oder *umzukehren*, dass sie

scheinbar keine Rolle mehr zu spielen hat und dass man sich endgültig *von ihr verabschieden* („χαίρειν ἐᾶν")[12] kann.

Trotz der Analysen des *Phaedrus*, 229eff., die gerade eine bedeutsame „Peripetie" in den vorhergehenden Verständnisrahmen der Sorge einführen und, wie gesagt, ein „grundlegendes Schema des Sorgenbegriffs" schließlich bereitstellen, lassen sie bei Licht besehen mehrere Fragen offen und dienen insofern genau als Ansatzpunkt. In diesem Sinne betont der Sokrates des *Phaedrus*, 229eff. zwar die zwingende Notwendigkeit, das Selbst unverwandt anzusehen, sodass man von so etwas wie einen *Imperativ der Sorge um sich selbst* („σκεπτέον σαυτόν", „βλεπτέον ἑαυτόν" usw.) sprechen kann; aber seine Rede hat sozusagen Auslassungspunkte und sagt kaum ein Wort darüber, *wie dieses Selbst letzten Endes beschaffen ist* und *worin die ihm entsprechende Sorge besteht*. Kann das Aufwerfen dieser Fragen der Sorge um sich selbst eine ganz neue Bedeutung verleihen? Aber mehr noch: Inwiefern bildet das „σκοπεῖν ἐμαυτόν" etwas *Grundlegendes*, inwiefern bildet es etwas *Dringliches*, inwiefern bildet es etwas *Gehemmtes* (d. h.: παγχάλεπον)? Wie ist letztendlich das Feld des Nicht-Selbst beschaffen? Was gehört zu ihm dazu? Was für eine Beziehung gibt es zwischen dem Selbst und dem Nicht-Selbst? Lässt sich diese Beziehung tatsächlich auf eine reine *Ausschlussbeziehung* reduzieren? D. h.: Ist das Gut-sein-Lassen (das χαίρειν ἐᾶν) hinsichtlich der ἀλλότρια wirklich absolut, endgültig? Und schließlich: Was hat all dies mit der Frage der Sorge/Sorgen und ihrem zentrierten oder dezentrierten Charakter zu tun?

4. DIE FRAGE NACH DEM ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι IM *GROßEN ALKIBIADES*, 128Aff. DIE DREITEILUNG DER SORGE – αὐτός, τὰ αὐτοῦ, τὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ BZW. ψυχή, σῶμα, τὰ τοῦ σώματος – UND DEREN INNERLICHE „QUALITATIVE" VERSCHIEDENHEIT

Im *Großen Alkibiades*, 128aff. wird auf das hingewiesen, was man als eine *Dreiteilung der Sorgenstruktur* bezeichnen könnte. Dieser Passage zufolge ist die Frage nach der Selbstsorge bzw. die Frage „Was heißt es doch, auf sich selbst Sorgfalt wenden und wann tut der Mensch dies wohl?"[13] mit der Anerkennung dessen aufs Innigste verbunden, was man vorläufig als *drei „Hauptregionen" oder „-Gebiete" der Sorge* beschreiben kann. Diese drei „Regionen" werden folgendermaßen gekennzeichnet: der αὐτός (das Selbst), τὰ αὐτοῦ (das zum

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[12] Oder: den Laufpass geben, Lebewohl sagen, gut sein lassen, aufgeben, verachten, verwünschen. Vgl. 230a1--2.

[13] Vgl. *Alkibiades* I, 127e-128a: „τί ἐστιν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι καὶ πότ᾽ ἄρα αὐτὸ ποιεῖ ἄνθρωπος;".

Selbst Gehörende) und τὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ (das zu dem, was dem Selbst gehört, Gehörende) oder anders die ψυχή, der Leib (σῶμα) und das zum Leib Gehörende (τὰ τοῦ σώματος). Was steckt aber in dieser Dreiteilung, worauf deutet sie hin?

Zunächst einmal betont sie, dass sich auch im Rahmen der Frage nach dem ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ein Unterschied zwischen dem, was man als „οἰκεῖον", und dem, was man als „ἀλλότριον" bezeichnen könnte[14], erkennen lässt, wobei dem οἰκεῖον (d.h.: derjenigen Sphäre, die das wirkliche Eigene betrifft) das Selbst entspricht und dem ἀλλότριον die anderen zwei Bestimmungen. Damit wird erstens der absolut irreduzible Charakter des Selbst irgendwelcher anderer Bestimmung gegenüber noch ausdrücklicher hervorgehoben als im *Phaedrus*. Das Selbst bildet insofern *das οἰκεῖον schlechthin*, als dass seine Sphäre gerade einer ganz einzigartigen, auf nichts anderes zurückführbaren und mit nichts anderem zu verwechselnden Bestimmung entspricht. Auf Anhieb müsste das uns zwar völlig befremden und sogar wie ein „Skandal" erscheinen, bei Licht besehen stellt es jedoch eine unweigerliche Wahrheit dar: Das Selbst ist *überhaupt nicht* mit dem Leib oder den κτήματα/πράγματα *lato sensu* zu identifizieren – und zwar derart, dass in der Tat *Hiob* (*ihm selber*) nicht einmal ein Jota weggenommen wurde (denn sein Leib und – geschweige denn – sein Eigentum, sein Landgut usw. *sind überhaupt nicht er selber*).[15] Dass dem so ist, wirft jedoch die Frage auf: Warum denn wird im Rahmen der Fragestellung nach dem Selbst bzw. nach der Selbstsorge auf das genaue Gegenteil (auf das Nicht-Selbst) überhaupt hingewiesen? Oder vielleicht genauer: Warum hält Sokrates es für nötig, auf τὰ αὐτοῦ bzw. auf die Sorge für τὰ αὐτοῦ Aufmerksamkeit zu lenken, wenn es gerade um *das Selbst* bzw. um das ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι geht?

Um diese Frage zu beantworten zu versuchen, sei zuerst Folgendes hervorgehoben. Das Wesentliche der Artikulation zwischen den erwähnten Bestimmungen scheint auf Anhieb in einer prinzipiellen *Trennung*, *Absonderung* oder *Unabhängigkeit* zu liegen (welche im Grunde

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[14] Um es anhand der Begriffe des *Phaedrus* auszusprechen.

[15] Andererseits scheint der erwähnte Identitätsbezug nicht zu stören und sogar nichts Neues herzubringen. Denn schon im *Phaedrus* wird alles, was nicht Selbst ist, gerade mit dem Nicht-οἰκεῖον identifiziert und in sein entgegengesetztes Feld geworfen. Bei genauerem Hinsehen zeigt sich jedoch, dass Sokrates sehr wohl auf etwas Neues, von dem bisher Dargestellten ganz Verschiedenes hindeutet. Diese Neuheit liegt darin, dass er im *Phaedrus* τὰ ἀλλότρια die unendlich zahlreiche Masse der Mythen, der wunderbaren Gestalten und des ganzen anderen weitverbreiteten Volksglaubens bezeichnete (vgl. *Phaedrus*, 229d6-e2: „(…) καὶ ἐπιρρεῖ δὲ ὄχλος τοιούτων Γοργόνων καὶ Πηγάσων καὶ ἄλλων ἀμηχάνων πλήθη τε καὶ ἀτοπίαι τερατολόγων τινῶν φύσεων·"), während jetzt das Fremde einzig in Zusammenhang mit τὰ αὐτοῦ bzw. τὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ steht. Das mag zwar als eine Vereinfachung des Problems erscheinen, bildet aber doch eine Entfaltung und scharfsinnigere Auffassung dessen, was in ihm in Frage steht. Indem Sokrates das Feld des ἀλλότριον in zwei Hauptbestimmungen aufteilt, *differenziert* er ja *die Sphäre des Nicht-Selbst* und lässt so dort, wo es eine einzige diffuse Vielfaltsebene gab, in der alles sozusagen über einen Kamm geschoren war und der keine genaue Bestimmung ihrer Identität und Zusammensetzung entsprach, *zwei bestimmte, klar von einander abgegrenzte Identitätsebenen* erscheinen (genauer dazu unten).

die im *Phaedrus* dargelegte Beziehung zwischen οἰκεῖον und ἀλλότριον kennzeichnete).[16] Zwar wird von τὰ αὑτοῦ gesprochen bzw. von einer bestimmten Zugehörigkeit und so von irgendeiner Verbindung. Aber Sokrates betont gerade die *nicht-Identität* zwischen A, B und C mit Nachdruck und besteht darauf, *sie voneinader sauber zu trennen* – sodass die Sphäre A eine ganz bestimmte, mit der des B und C nicht zu verwechselnde und von ihnen abgesonderte Identität hat, die Sphäre B ihrerseits eine ganz bestimmte, mit der des A und C nicht zu verwechselnde und von ihnen abgesonderte Identität hat und die Sphäre C schließlich eine ganz bestimmte, mit der des A und B nicht zu verwechselnde und von ihnen abgesonderte Identität hat. Demzufolge – das ist das Bild, das sich abzuzeichnen scheint – verhält es sich mit dem Nicht-Selbst bzw. mit dem, was dem Selbst zwar erscheint, sich aber außerhalb des Selbst *stricto sensu* befindet, so, dass es gerade den Charakter eines Außenliegenden im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes bzw. einer Bestimmung hat, die sich nicht in die Sphäre des Selbst einmischt und bei seiner Verfassung keine wesentliche Rolle spielt.

Damit ist aber nun ein bestimmtes Verständnis der Art und Weise aufs Engste verbunden, wie die von Sokrates erwähnten Sorgenmöglichkeiten, mit denen wir in Zusammenhang stehen, beschaffen sind. Diesem Verständnis zufolge ähneln sie einer Art „Lego-Spielzeug", das durch die Zusammensetzung dreier unabhängiger Bausteine zutage kommt – und zwar so, 1. dass die verschiedenen Sorgenmöglichkeiten eine *Alternative* (A *oder* B *oder* C) ausmachen und 2. dass das Ganze des möglichen Sorgenhorizonts nie und nimmer aus *einer einzigen Bestimmung* bestehe oder aus ihr herausfließe, sondern eher aus dem gemeinsamen Beitrag (bzw. aus der Ansammlung oder Kumulierung) der verschiedenen Alternativen kommen könne.

Dieser so verstandene Sachverhalt gerät aber ins Wanken, wenn man das Folgende berücksichtigt. Jede der drei aufgeführten Sorgensphären bildet von Haus aus etwas *Komplexes*, *Vielfältiges*. Dabei weist der *Alkibiades* auf etwas ganz anderes hin als eine reine Vielfältigkeit, als ob sie einem „Haufen" zerstreuter, losgelöster Bestimmungen entspräche (oder irgendwie einzig die Einheit hätte, die einer „Agenda" innewohnt). Denn diese Vielfältigkeit ist so beschaffen, dass sie zu einem und demselben *gemeinsamen Feld* gehört, das all seine Elemente ohne Ausnahme umfasst, durch sie alle hindurchgeht, sie als Momente von sich selbst vereinigt und so der fraglichen Vielfältigkeit eine bestimmte *Einheit* bzw. einen *einheitlichen Charakter* verleiht. Dass dem so ist, besagt, dass α, β oder γ (will sagen, die ἀλήθεια, φρόνησις oder

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[16] In dieser Hinsicht liegt der einzige Unterschied darin, dass die Sphäre des ἀλλότριον einen gespaltenen Charakter annimmt – im Wesentlichen bleibt ein allen möglichen Sorgensphären zugrundeliegendes *Trennungs- bzw. Unabhängigkeitsphänomen* bestehen.

ὀρθότης) nicht nur seine eigene Bestimmung hat, sondern darüber hinaus so geartet ist, dass es von Grund auf durch die Eingliederung in den der ψυχή eigenen, von ihr eröffneten Horizont als dessen Moment mitgeprägt ist – und zwar so, dass das, was α, β oder γ zu α, β oder γ macht, innerlich auf dieses Zu-einem-und-demselben-Horizont-als-Moment-seiner-eigenen--Bestimmung-Gehören zurückzuführen ist. Und mit dem σῶμα bzw. τὰ τοῦ σώματος verhält es sich ebenso. Einerseits sind die Hände oder die Füße so beschaffen, dass sie sich von vornherein durch das σῶμα vereinigt und in ihrem eigenen Horizont eingewurzelt befinden und so erst aus ihm heraus ihre eigentümliche Bestimmung erhalten. Andererseits zeichnen sich die Ringe oder die Schuhe von allem Anfang an dadurch aus, dass sie keine losgelöste Bestimmung haben, sondern gleichsam unter der Ägide von τὰ τοῦ σώματος stehen, in ihnen ihren eigenen Grund finden und ein Moment von ihnen darstellen.

In diesem Zusammenhang sollte man aber von Komplexität auch in einer anderen Hinsicht sprechen. Genau besehen verhält es sich mit der Komplexität, die jeder der drei Sorgenrichtungen innewohnt, so, dass sie kein gleichartiges, undifferenziertes Feld bildet, als ob sich α, β, γ, δ usw. darauf beschränkten, zu einem gemeinsamen X zu gehören. Nein. Jede der Bestimmungen, die zu diesem oder jenem gemeinsamen Feld gehört, impliziert eine *Differenzierung* hinsichtlich ihrer (mehr oder weniger) *Wichtigkeit bzw. Unwichtigkeit* mit. Genau dieser Differenzierung ist es zu verdanken, dass die Struktur der Sorge, die auf A, B oder C gerichtet ist, nie den Charakter eines undifferenzierten homogenen Horizontes hat, sondern sich innerlich auf verschiedene Wichtigkeits- bzw. Unwichtigkeitsebenen verteilt befindet. Und die so beschaffene Differenzierung ist gerade dafür verantwortlich ist, dass mir z. B. die Hand als eine *wichtigere* Bestimmung als der Finger erscheint, der Arm als die Hand, der Kopf als der Arm usw. Dieses Phänomen ist eigentlich viel komplexer, aber dieser flüchtige Hinweis muss hier genügen.

Aus dem Dargestellten lässt sich nun klarer ersehen, dass die vom *Alkibiades I* analysierte Frage des ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι auf *dreierlei Komplexitätsniveaus* Bezug nimmt – nämlich: 1. die Komplexität, die der Dreiteilung der Selbstsorge entspricht, 2. die Komplexität, die jeder der „Sorgenregionen" innewohnt, und 3. die Komplexität, die die differenzierten Wichtigkeits- bzw. Unwichtigkeitsebenen jeder dieser „Regionen" betrifft.

Und hiermit kommen wir der im *Alkibiades* zu findenden Ansicht einen Schritt näher. In der Tat impliziert das Ausgeführte, dass jede dieser „Sorgenregionen" (Selbst, Leib und das zum Leib Gehörende) *einer eigenen, ganz bestimmten Seinsweise der Sorge* entspricht – und zwar so, dass die in ihr in Frage stehende mögliche Variation im Grunde *nicht* diese oder jene vereinzelten Inhalte bzw. dieses oder jenes „Was" betrifft, sondern eher *einen bestimmten*

Beziehungsmodus mit ihm, der seiner Erscheinung zugrundeliegt, seine Erscheinungsweise aus sich selbst heraus ausmacht und so es zu dem macht, was es wirklich ist. Genauer gesagt: Wenn auch noch so unbemerkt, wohnt der Verfassung der ἐπιμέλεια bei uns auch ein „*Wie*" inne, das der Erscheinung dieses oder jenes einzelnen Erscheinenden gleichsam vorangeht und in ihr vorausgesetzt ist, sodass sich die Erscheinung von α, β oder γ von vornherein nicht in sich selbst gründet, sondern innerlich auf das „Wie" zurückführt, zu dem sie zugehört, und in diesem Sinne von ihm durch und durch abhängt. Oder, wie man auch sagen könnte, die Sorge sei so beschaffen, dass sie grundsätzlich der Idee der *Homogenität* abgeneigt sei. Mit ihr verhält es sich vielmehr so, dass sie ganz *verschiedene Grundverfassungen* in sich birgt und so ein *innerlich heterogenes Phänomen* ausmacht.

Das Ausgeführte bildet einen wichtigen Aspekt des hier in Frage stehenden Problems, der jedoch, wohlgemerkt, gegen das normale, gewöhnliche „Verständnismodell" der Sorge verstößt – und zwar so, dass er nicht nur unbemerkt zu bleiben pflegt, sondern sogar verzerrt und gleichsam ausgelöscht ist. Einerseits weisen die Analysen des *Alkibiades I* darauf hin, dass dem gewöhnlichen Verständnis zuwider die der Sorge innewohnende *Mannigfaltigkeit* – d. h. die Sorge *im Plural* – prinzipiell weder die weitgehenden möglichen „Anwendungspunkte" der „Alltäglichkeit" noch das Zugehören einer bestimmten Mannigfaltigkeit zu einem gemeinsamen „Feld" im engsten Sinne angeht. Unbeschadet dieser Möglichkeit legen die Analysen des *Alkibiades* nahe, dass die die Sorge prägende Mannigfaltigkeit im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes sozusagen „*hinter dem Rücken*" der im üblichen Sinne verstandenen Mannigfaltigkeit vonstatten geht und gerade *im „Wie" der Sorge* zu finden ist bzw. *in den verschiedenen Seinsweisen*, die es annehmen kann. Mit einem Wort: Die Sorge ist im Grunde insofern mannigfaltig, als sie *„genetische" Variationen* ihrer eigenen Verfassung mit sich bringt.[17]

Andererseits lässt sich aus den Fingerzeigen des *Alkibiades* ersehen, dass auch die These des spontanen „Verständnismodells" der Sorge, die Sorge werde ihrem Gegenstand einzig und allein hinzugesetzt, ohne dass seine Identität im Wesentlichen modifiziert werde, allen Boden verliert. Denn in der Tat verändert sich doch die Identität eines Erscheinenden je nach der Seinsweise der Sorge bzw. des „Wie", zu dem das fragliche Erscheinende gehört. Anders ausgedrückt: Weil die Sorge prinzipiell nicht eindeutig, homogen ist – und d. h.: weil es grundverschiedene Sinnhorizonte der Sorge gibt, die bestimmte Gegenstände an sich ziehen

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[17] Und zwar so, dass erst aus der Art und Weise, wie das spontane „Verständnismodell" der Sorge gleichsam ihre eigene Natur bzw. das sie wesentlich prägende „Wie" vergisst und so einen „Unabhängigkeitsanspruch" betreffs dieses „Wie" erhebt, sie überhaupt als etwas grundsätzlich Homogenes angesehen werden kann.

und ihre Erscheinung von einer grundlegenden Bestimmung her ausmachen –, stellen diese oder jene Sorgengegenstände gerade die Identität dar, die ihnen der jeweils in Frage stehende Horizont (das jeweils in Frage stehende „Wie") verleiht.

Das Dargestellte schafft nun die Grundlage für das Verständnis eines weiteren, noch wesentlicheren Aspekts. Diesen Aspekt kann man so ausdrücken, dass man sagt, die dreifache Struktur der Sorge habe nicht zuletzt auch deswegen mit Verschiedenheit zu tun, weil sie eine *Rangordnung* zwischen den identifizierten Seinsweisen der Sorge impliziere – und zwar so, dass die in dem ausgeführten Sinne verstandene Heterogenität der Sorge mit einer gewissen Aufteilung unter verschiedenen Wichtigkeitsgrundebenen verflochten ist. D. h.: Die hier ins Spiel kommende Heterogenität betrifft nicht minder die Art und Weise, wie einige „Sorgenregionen" bzw. einige Verfassungsweisen des „Wie" an *Wert* oder *Wesentlichkeit* hinter anderen zurückbleiben und so einen nebensächlichen, peripheren Charakter haben. *Genau in diesem Sinne* – und hiermit kommen wir dem Entscheidenden einen weiteren Schritt näher – kann man von *zentralen* und *dezentralen* Sorgen bzw. von bestimmten Formen des „Wie" sprechen, die mehr oder weniger im *Zentrum* der Sorge bzw. mehr oder weniger in ihrer *Peripherie* liegen.

All dies lässt aber noch unbestimmt, in welchem Sinne es wesentlichere oder weniger wesentliche „Sorgenregionen" gibt, worin die Beziehung Wesentlichkeit–Zentrum bzw. Peripherie besteht, wie der Zusammenhang zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie beschaffen ist, usw. Genau dem nachzugehen, ist die Aufgabe der nächsten Seiten.

5. DER BEGRIFF DER χρῆσις. DER BRUCH MIT DER ANFANGSTHESE EINER GRUNDLEGENDEN ISOLIERUNG/UNABHÄNGIGKEIT ZWISCHEN DEN VERSCHIEDENEN „REGIONEN" DER SORGE: DAS UNAUSROTTBARE, UNTILGBARE VORHANDENSEIN EINES *QUANTUM MINIMUM* VERFLECHTUNG. DIE STRUKTUR DER SELBSTSORGE ALS EIN KOMPLEXES ABHÄNGIGKEITSGEWEBE UND IHR INNERLICH „EXTROVERTIERTER" CHARAKTER. DAS SELBST ALS EINZIGES ALLGEMEINES ZENTRUM DER SORGE ÜBERHAUPT. DIE MÖGLICHKEIT DER VERWECHSLUNG UND DES IDENTITÄTSWECHSELS ZWISCHEN ZENTRUM UND PERIPHERIE UND IHRE FOLGEN: DAS AUFTAUCHEN VON MEHREREN ZENTREN DER SORGE. SORGE UND SORGEN, ZENTRUM UND ZENTREN

Man kann diesen Fragen auf die Spur kommen, indem man einen Blick auf den 129bff. erforschten Begriff der *χρῆσις* wirft. An diesen Stellen weist Sokrates u. a. auf den wesentlichen

Unterschied zwischen „ὁ χρώμενος" („der Gebrauchende") und „ᾧ χρῆται" („das, was er [d. h. der Gebrauchende] gebraucht") hin. Zu Anfang wird dieser Unterschied an einer Beziehung zwischen zwei Bestimmungen verdeutlicht: so unterscheide sich z. B. der redende Sokrates von dem λόγος, von dem er beim Reden Gebrauch macht. Ebenso bilde der Schuster etwas anderes als das, was er beim Schneiden gebraucht, nämlich das Werkmesser und andere Werkzeuge (ὄργανοι). Und genauso verhält es sich schließlich mit dem Kitharaspieler und dem, mit dem er spielt.

Diese ersten Beispiele bieten dann anderen ihren Platz an, in denen die bisher erörterte Beziehung entfaltet wird und sich als komplexer erweist. Denn bei näherem Hinsehen wird ja deutlich, dass z. B. die Beziehung zwischen dem Schneidenden und seinen ὄργανοι durch etwas anderes, gleichsam Dazwischenliegendes mitbestimmt ist. So impliziert das Schneiden nicht allein diese oder jene Werkzeuge, sondern auch die Hände und die Augen und alle leiblichen Bestimmungen, durch die (oder mit denen) der Gebrauchende seine Arbeit verrichtet und die so beim Schneiden eine wichtige Rolle zu spielen haben.[18] D. h.: Die Beziehung zwischen dem Gebrauchenden und seinem eigenen Leib ist so beschaffen, dass er auch *seinen Leib gebraucht* – und in diesem Sinne hat er ja dem Gebrauchenden gegenüber den Charakter eines großen, komplexen ὄργανον oder, anders gesagt, kann (soll) als eine besondere Form des „ᾧ χρῆται" dargestellt werden.[19]

Diese Beschreibung, wie vage und flüchtig sie auch scheinen mag, enthält doch wesentliche Aspekte, die es nun näher zu betrachten gilt.

Erstens betont Sokrates die Eigenartigkeit jedes der drei erwähnten Bereiche – und zwar so, dass der Gebrauchende bzw. das Selbst und all das, was schon außerhalb seiner Sphäre liegt – der eigene Leib und die Werkzeuge –, jeweils eine bestimmte, mit den anderen nicht zu verwechselnde Identität haben und so einen eigenen, spezifischen Bereich bilden. Doch bei genauerem Zusehen verhält es sich mit diesem Sachverhalt nicht genauso.

In der Tat deuten die Worte des Sokrates darauf hin, dass jede der fraglichen Sinnsphären – das Selbst, der Leib und die im engsten Sinne verstandenen ὄργανοι – *überhaupt nicht eine „geschlossene" Identität* besitzt, sondern im Gegenteil *eine etwas anderem eröffnete, mit einem „Außenliegenden" im Zusammenhang stehende Bestimmung* darstellt. Der Begriff der χρῆσις impliziert indessen noch etwas Tieferes. Ja, die hier in Frage stehenden Sinnsphären

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[18] Vgl. *Alkibiades I*, 129d: „{ΣΩ.} τί οὖν φῶμεν τὸν σκυτοτόμον; τέμνειν ὀργάνοις μόνον ἢ καὶ χερσίν; {ΑΛΚ.} καὶ χερσίν. {ΣΩ.} χρῆται ἄρα καὶ ταύταις; {ΑΛΚ.} ναί. {ΣΩ.} ἦ καὶ τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς χρώμενος σκυτοτομεῖ; {ΑΛΚ.} ναί. {ΣΩ.} τὸν δὲ χρώμενον καὶ οἷς χρῆται ἕτερα ὁμολογοῦμεν; {ΑΛΚ.} ναί."

[19] Vgl. 129e: „{ΣΩ.} οὐκοῦν καὶ παντὶ τῷ σώματι χρῆται ἄνθρωπος; {ΑΛΚ.} Πάνυ γε."

zeichnen sich darüber hinaus dadurch aus, dass deren Eröffnet-Sein durch *die Möglichkeit verschiedener Wechselwirkungen* mitbestimmt ist – und zwar so, dass die Bestimmung A nicht nur aus der Ferne der Bestimmung B „zuschaut", sondern vielmehr geht A zu B hin, führt zu ihm, erreicht es, mehr noch: geht durch es hindurch, greift in es ein, mischt sich in es ein. D. h.: Der grundlegenden Verschiedenheit zum Trotz, die jeder Sorgensphäre innewohnt, sind sie doch sehr weit davon entfernt, etwas absolut Isoliertem, in sich selbst Stehengebliebenem oder klar von einem „Außen" Abgegrenztem und Unabhängigem zu entsprechen. Ganz im Gegenteil: Sie sind so beschaffen, dass sie von Grund auf ein *quantum minimum* Zusammenhang, Einmischung, Verflechtung, gegenseitige Abhängigkeit implizieren.[20] Zusammenfassend kann man also sagen: Genau besehen zeigt sich, dass sich die Beziehung zwischen dem Selbst und dem Nicht-Selbst (oder, wenn man so will: dem οἰκεῖον und dem ἀλλότριον bzw. den ἀλλότρια) überhaupt nicht auf eine Ausschluss- bzw. Trennungsbeziehung reduzieren lässt; tatsächlich ist diese Beziehung dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass Selbst und Nicht-Selbst *miteinander Hand in Hand gehen*, und zwar derart, dass sie zum Teil gleichsam *ineinander eindringen* oder *durcheinander hindurchgehen*.

Dieser Sachverhalt bahnt nun den Weg für einen anderen, noch entscheidenderen, ohne den er eigentlich nicht so sehr ins Gewicht fallen würde. Ihn kann man an dem Folgenden deutlicher machen.

In der Tat könnte man die erwähnte Wechselwirkung so verstehen, als ließe sie die fraglichen Bestimmungen im Grunde unverändert. Und in Wahrheit hängt das eine nicht unbedingt mit dem anderen zusammen. Sokrates weist aber darauf hin, dass das grundsätzliche Eröffnet-Sein jeder der fraglichen Sorgensphären (bzw. ihre Fähigkeit, in einem anderen „außerhalb" ihrer selber Liegenden dazwischenzutreten) innerlich das mitimpliziert, was man als eine *Aneignungsfähigkeit des „ᾧ χρῆται" durch „ὁ χρώμενος"* bezeichnen könnte. So ist z. B. das Gebrauchen des σῶμα durch das Selbst so beschaffen, dass die Identität des Leibes irgendwie durch die des Selbst wesentlich mitbestimmt wird und so schließlich nicht allein durch seine eigene Bestimmung als solche gekennzeichnet wird, sondern auch durch *sein innerliches „Der-Bestimmung-des-Selbst-Gehören"*. In diesem Sinne tritt das Selbst nicht einfach deswegen in dem Leib dazwischen, weil es ihn gebraucht oder benutzt, sondern vielmehr, weil *es sich* – bei solchem Gebrauchen – *den Leib aneignet, ihn in Besitz nimmt* und

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[20] All dem entspricht zum Teil der im *Alkibiades I* in Frage stehende Begriff der χρῆσις bzw. des χράομαι, wobei er, abgesehen von aller Komplexität seines Bedeutungsfeldes, u. a. folgende Ideen impliziert: etwas gebrauchen, etwas manipulieren, X für Y benutzen, auf etwas so oder so wirken, Umgang mit etwas haben, etwas nahe sein, eine sehr enge Beziehung mit etwas haben. Weiter dazu unten.

auf diese Weise insofern dessen So-Sein verändert, als es ihm quasi den Charakter eines (d. h.: *seines*) „Dieners" verleiht und ihn um sich selber kreisen lässt.[21]

Damit hängt nun ein weiterer Aspekt zusammen. Aus der Perspektive des „ᾧ χρῆται" her betrachtet bedeutet das Gesagte, dass *das „ᾧ χρῆται" innerlich auf einen „χρώμενος" verweist*, und zwar so, dass 1. der Kontakt mit B und C bzw. mit den betreffenden Sorgensphären nie und nimmer einen absoluten Kontakt mit ihnen bildet, sondern von Haus aus *innerhalb eines „schon geöffneten" bestimmten Zusammenhangs* in Erscheinung tritt, und 2. dass der fragliche Kontakt mit dem „ᾧ χρῆται" auch nie und nimmer *das ursprüngliche Moment* der Sorge darstellt, sondern von vornherein *einen mittelbaren Charakter besitzt* oder *ein von etwas anderem vermittelter, diesem anderen entstammter Moment ist*. Mit einem Wort: Die Beziehung zwischen „ὁ χρώμενος" und „ᾧ χρῆται" beschränkt sich weder auf eine Gebrauchs- noch Zugehörigkeitsbeziehung im engsten Sinne des Wortes; sie bildet eher (wohlgemerkt) eine *Abhängigkeitsbeziehung*, d. h. eine Beziehung, nach der sich die Verfassung des gesamten Horizonts des „ᾧ χρῆται" (und d. h.: des ἀλλότριον bzw. des Nicht-Selbst) durch und durch auf einen „χρώμενος" zurückverweist und in ihm verankert ist. In diesem Sinne stellt das von Sokrates geschilderte Beziehungsgewebe der Sorge so etwas wie *ein komplexes, einheitliches Gewebe von Abhängigkeitsbeziehungen* dar – und zwar so, dass es nicht nur darum geht, dass B von A abhängt und dass C seinerseits von B bzw. von einem „direkten Zurück" abhängt, sondern vielmehr, dass auch C so beschaffen ist, dass es unbeschadet seiner privilegierten Beziehung mit B letztendlich auf A als *Grundansatz des Abhängigkeitsgewebes* zurückgreift.[22]

Damit eröffnet sich der Ausblick auf einen weiteren wichtigen Punkt. Genau besehen mündet die ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι-Frage darin, dass die Sorge des Selbst tatsächlich *die wesentliche Form der Sorge* bildet, die *fortdauernd alle andere Formen möglicher Sorge begleitet und in ihnen impliziert ist*. Dass dem so ist, bedeutet also, dass die mögliche

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[21] Darauf soll, wenn ich es richtig verstanden habe, die Bezeichnung der ψυχή u. a. als ἄρχουσα (130a) oder als κύριος (130d) zurückgeführt werden. Auf den ersten Blick scheint auch bei der Beziehung zwischen σῶμα und τὰ τοῦ σώματος dies nicht minder der Fall zu sein – und zwar so, dass das, was bestimmte πράγματα zu τὰ [πράγματα] *τοῦ σώματος* macht, gerade damit zu tun habe, dass diese πράγματα von dem σῶμα angeeignet werden, sich um ihn herum drehen und in diesem Sinne seine Diener ausmachen. Wie aber noch näher zu sehen sein wird, trifft das prinzipiell nicht zu.

[22] All dies lässt die im *Phaedrus* vorgebrachte These des Sokrates, es gebe eine *Priorität* oder einen *Vorrang* des Selbst bzw. des auf es gerichteten σκοπεῖν, in einem ganz anderen Licht erscheinen. In der Tat bildet das Selbst insofern ja etwas *Allererstes*, *Allerwesentliches* oder *zu tiefst Grundlegendes*, indem es gerade *die allgemeine Bedingung der Möglichkeit der Sorge* ausmacht, und in diesem Sinne *den wesentlichen Grund* darstellt, der allen anderen möglichen Formen der Sorge ohne Ausnahme zugrundeliegt und auf den sie innerlich zurückgewiesen sind – und zwar so, dass ohne die Berücksichtigung dieser eigentümlichen möglichen Sinnsphäre der Sorge, die die Sphäre des Selbst im eigentlichen Sinne betrifft, die Sorge für τὸ σῶμα oder die Sorge für τὰ τοῦ σώματος völlig ihren eigenen Grund verlieren.

Mannigfaltigkeit der Sorge (die Sorge *im Plural*) – von der Sorge für das jeweils in Erscheinung Tretende über die Sorge für den Leib bzw. die Sorge für das zum Leibe Gehörende bis zur Sorge des Selbst im Sinne des *genitivus objectivus* – im Grunde von der im Sinne des *genitivus subjectivus* verstandenen Sorge des Selbst abhängt oder innerlich auf sie zurückverweist. Aber das hängt andererseits mit einem zweiten Punkt aufs Engste zusammen. Tatsächlich besagt das Dargestellte, dass die Sorge des Selbst insofern einen *zentralen* Charakter hat, als sie alle anderen Formen der Sorge durchtränkt und deren Verfassungen – indem sie gerade Formen *der Selbstsorge* darstellen – ermöglicht. In diesem Sinne macht diese einzige Sphäre der Sorge ja das Wesentlichste bzw. Wertvollste, denn sie ist so beschaffen, dass sie gerade als ein „archimedischer Punkt" der Sorge dient, der so bei der „Architektur" des Ganzen, seiner Anordnung, Orientierung und eigentümlichen Verfassung die entscheidende Rolle spielt. Alles in allem: Die Analysen des *Großen Alkibiades* weisen letztendlich auf die Möglichkeit hin, dass es so etwas wie *ein einziges allgemeines Zentrum der Sorge überhaupt* gibt.

Mit alledem gewinnt man also zumindest eine vorläufige Antwort auf einige Fragen, die am Anfang dieser Studie gestellt wurden. Kommt die Sorge bei uns im Singular oder im Plural vor? Was bedeutet die Aussage, es gebe ein Zentrum (in) der Sorge? Und was ist die Beziehung zwischen beiden Fragen? Wenn die hier vorgeschlagene Deutung zutrifft, dann kann (soll) man von *einer einzigen Sorge* sprechen und ebenso von *einem Zentrum* bzw. von *einem allgemeinen wesentlichen Grund* oder einer Art *Urbestimmung der Sorge*, die alle anderen möglichen Sorgenrichtungen als deren Bedingung der Möglichkeit in sich konzentriert und auf sich zurückgreifen lässt – und zwar so, dass beide Aspekte (die Einheit der Sorge und ihre Zentriertheit) eigentlich die zwei Bildseiten ein und derselben Münze sind.

Dieser Tatbestand geht aber mit einem anderen Aspekt Hand in Hand.

Das Gesagte betont m. a. W. *die allgemeine Einwurzelung der Sorge in dem Selbst*, sodass alles „Außenliegende" auf es als dessen grundsätzliche Bestimmung zurückführt. Doch ist diese Tatsache noch sehr weit davon entfernt, eine befriedigende Beschreibung der Verfassung dieses Selbst und der ihm innewohnenden Sorge vorbringen zu können. Dieser Verfassung kann man näherkommen, indem man das Folgende in Betracht zieht.

Bei genauer Prüfung zeigt sich, dass die Behandlung des Sorge-Phänomens im *Großen Alkibiades* auf die Art und Weise hinweist, wie das Selbst, das das Zentrum der Sorge in dem oben erwähnten Sinne ausmacht, *eine innerlich ausstrahlende, extrovertierte Natur* hat, und zwar so, dass diese *Extrovertiertheit des Selbst* ein wesentlicher Bestandteil der Sorge bei uns ist. Ja, dem *Alkibiades* zufolge ist die Sphäre des Selbst so beschaffen, dass sie gleichsam „nach draußen" gerichtet ist und sich ihrer eigenen Natur nach in Beziehung mit einem

„Außenliegenden", mit ihm nicht Koinzidenten setzt. Das Selbst hat in diesem Sinne *eine wesentlich verbreitende, ausdehnende Identität*. Mit ihm verhält es sich so, dass es von vornherein *über sich hinausgeht*. Anders gesagt: Die Sphäre des Selbst hat nicht lediglich einen prinzipiell geöffneten, in sich überhaupt nicht verriegelten Charakter. Das Selbst fällt außerdem – und im Grunde – gerade insofern mit sich nicht ganz zusammen, als es seine eigenen „Arme" so weit ausstreckt, dass es das „Außer-sich" umfasst, umfängt, und zwar *das ganze mögliche Feld* dieses „Außer-sich", sodass der *terminus ad quem* seines Ausstreckens eigentlich nichts Geringeres als *der gesamte Horizont des Nicht-Selbst* ist. So verstanden – und das ist genau das Entscheidende – bildet das Nicht-Selbst nie etwas, das von seiner Stelle her dem Selbst entgegengeht und in Berührung mit ihm tritt, als ob es sich erst um einen Zusammenhang *a posteriori* handelte. Ganz im Gegenteil: Das Selbst bzw. der „explodierte" Charakter seiner Seinsweise ist so geartet, dass es von allem Anfang an diese Berührung mit der ihm entgegengesetzten Sinnsphäre ausmacht – und zwar so, dass das Selbst von Grund auf dieses „Das-Nicht-Selbst-Umschlingen", „Das-Nicht-Selbst-schon-in-sich-Tragen" ist.

Rückblickend kann man also deutlicher ersehen, dass a) die allgemeine Abhängigkeit von der Sphäre des Selbst (bzw. die prinzipielle Zurückführung jeder der erwähnten Sorgensphären auf das Selbst) und b) die absolute Extrovertiertheit des Selbst tatsächlich aufs Innigste einander zugehören. Denn das Selbst begleitet und prägt gerade insofern alles andere, als es in sich nicht abgeschlossen ist, sondern sich eher auf das Ganze ausdehnt. Und umgekehrt: Gerade weil das Selbst einen verbreitenden Charakter hat, kann es alles, was mit ihm nicht zusammenfällt, durchtränken.

Daraus lässt sich aber auch ein oben betrachteter Punkt genauer angeben. Tatsächlich ergibt sich aus dem Dargelegten, dass es in Wahrheit nicht nur ein *quantum minimum* Zusammenhang, Einmischung oder Verflechtung zwischen den identifizierten Sphären der Sorge gibt, als könnte ohnehin eine gewisse Trennung zwischen ihnen fortbestehen – gerade diejenige Trennung, die am Terminus „Gebiet" oder „Region" bzw. „Sorgengebiet(e)" oder „Sorgenregion(en)" nachklingt und nahegelegt wird. Der verschiedenen Sphären der Sorge eigentümlichen Seinsweise zum Trotz ist der Horizont der Sorge so beschaffen, dass das Selbst imstande ist, ihre Gesamtheit zu erreichen und in sich zu bergen – und zwar so, dass diese allumfassende und allgegenwärtige Bestimmung es ist, die aus sich selbst heraus diesen Horizont anordnet und sozusagen setzt.

Dies bildet einen Kernpunkt des in dieser Studie auf dem Spiel stehenden Problems, weshalb man ihn möglichst nachdrücklich und präzise betonen soll.

Das Ausgeführte bedeutet, dass die Sphäre des Nicht-Selbst immer schon im Schoß der Selbstsphäre liegt und einen wesentlichen Bestandteil von ihr bildet, oder genauer: Der αὐτός ist so beschaffen, dass er aus sich selbst heraus die Sphäre eines ἀλλότριον bzw. des dem αὐτός Gehörenden (τὰ αὐτοῦ/τὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ) ausmacht – und zwar derart, dass man sagen kann, dass das Nicht-Selbst von Haus aus einer *inneren Spaltung des αὐτός* selber entspricht.

Dass dem so ist, bedeutet andererseits auch, dass die *Vervielfachung* der Sorgen ganz anders zu verstehen ist als am Anfang dieser Studie nahegelegt wurde. Denn aus der Nähe gesehen geht ja hervor, dass sie nicht eine in der Mannigfaltigkeit der Gegenstände, die die formale Struktur des Selbst sozusagen konkretisieren, zu gründen ist, sondern von vornherein eine *innere Entfaltung der Selbstsphäre* darstellt. M.a.W.: Das Selbst bringt nicht nur das Nicht--Selbst ohne Weiteres zur Entdeckung, sondern *entfaltet* auch dieses Nicht-Selbst, *differenziert* es oder *teilt es in verschiedene Ebenen auf* – und zwar so, dass die fragliche Ausstrahlung eine Anordnung der verschiedenen Möglichkeiten des dem Nicht-Selbst zugehörenden „Wie" um das Selbst herum mitsetzt. Dies bedeutet: Das Selbst trägt die Möglichkeit seiner eigenen Heterogenität in sich und gliedert sie gerade nach ihrer Wesentlichkeit dem Selbst gegenüber auf, sodass die Formen der Sorge, die aus dem Selbst herausfließen, durch eine *funktionelle Distanz von ihm* mitbestimmt werden. So zeichnet sich der Leib dadurch aus, dass er etwas *von dem Selbst Entferntes* („πόρρω τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ") ist, und das zum Leib Gehörende bildet etwas, das seinerseits *noch entfernter von dem Selbst als der Leib* („ἔτι πορρωτέρω τῶν ἑαυτοῦ") ist.[23] Damit weist der *Alkibiades* darauf hin, dass sich die verschiedenen Formen der dem Feld des Nicht-Selbst entsprechenden Sorge im Grunde insofern voneinander unterscheiden, als sie bei der Verfassung der Selbstsphäre verschiedene Rollen zu spielen berufen sind, d. h.: sie stellen in dem Sinne etwas Näheres oder Entfernteres dar, dass sie gerade nicht in derselben Weise bzw. nicht mit derselben strukturellen Wesentlichkeit für die Identität des Selbst angeeignet werden: das Nähere prägt diese Identität weit mehr als das Entfernere. Und gerade dieser Differenzierung, die auf das Raummodell zurückgreifend die Verteilung des betreffenden „Wie" der Sorge auf verschiedene Wichtigkeits- bzw. Unwichtigkeitsebenen erklärt, ist es schließlich zu verdanken, dass man normalerweise z. B. den Verlust eines Rings viel gelassener hinnimmt als den eines Fingers. Beide gehören zwar mir, sind zwar meine, auf sie ist jedoch ein ganz verschiedener Wert gelegt, sodass das eine sozusagen mehr im Herzen des Selbst liegt als das andere (derb gesagt: der Ring ist „weniger meines" als der Finger).

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[23] Vgl. *Alkibiades I*, 131bff.

So weit, so gut. Aber wie verhält es sich mit der Frage der Peripherie der Sorge bzw. mit ihrem dezentralen Charakter? Was ist eigentlich damit gemeint?

Der bisher eingeschlagene Weg scheint darauf hinzudeuten, dass die Sorge insofern ein Element der Denzentriertheit impliziere, als die ausdehnende Verfassung der Selbstsphäre bzw. ihr innerliches Einbeziehen des ἀλλότριον (d. h.: eines differenzierten, so oder so angeordneten ἀλλότριον) in sich gerade eine Peripherie bzw. verschiedene peripherische, um das Selbst--Zentrum kreisende Formen der Sorge ausmacht. So verstanden ist also die Sorge so beschaffen, dass die Beziehung mit dem σῶμα und τὰ τοῦ σώματος immer durch das mehr oder weniger verschwommene Bewusstsein ihrer innerlichen Zugehörigeit zu (oder Einwurzelung in) dem Selbst begleitet wird, was also bedeutet, dass der Leib und das zum Leib Gehörende, wie vage und nebulös auch immer, genau als Teile – und zwar als zweitrangige Teile – einer umfassenderen und wesentlicheren Bestimmung angesehen werden.

Die Analysen des *Großen Alikibiades* legen aber etwas ganz anderes nahe und weisen auf ein radikaleres Verständnis der Artikulation zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie(n) hin. Diesem radikaleren Verständnis kann man an der Aussage des Sokrates in 128a auf die Spur kommen. So lautet sie: „Wohlan denn, was heißt es doch, auf sich selbst Sorgfalt wenden, <u>damit wir nicht etwa gar, ohne es zu wissen, nichts weniger als für uns selbst sorgen und es doch glauben</u> (…)?".[24]

Wenn das bisher Ausgeführte wirklich zutrifft, wie können wir doch das Selbst so vernachlässigen, es so in Vergessenheit geraten lassen, dass wir nicht mehr für es Sorge tragen und sogar das nicht erkennen?! Die Worte des Sokrates heben zumindest fünf Aspekte hervor: 1. dass die Möglichkeit besteht, *überhaupt nicht für das Selbst zu sorgen*; 2. die Art und Weise, wie diese Vernachlässigung des Selbst *in einer unbewussten, unbemerkten Weise* (λάθωμεν) geschieht, woraus sich ergibt, dass *das Selbst bedeckt und vergessen wird*; 3. dass es bei alledem eine Art *Verwirrung* gibt, die gerade eine *Verwechslung* des Selbst mit etwas ermöglicht, das nicht das Selbst ist; 4. dass man trotzdem glaubt oder der festen Überzeugung ist, dass man sich *gerade um das Selbst kümmert*, sodass 5. das Selbst bzw. ein bestimmtes Verständnis des Selbst es ist, was der fraglichen Verwechslung zugrunde liegt und in diesem Sinne *für sie verantwortlich ist*.

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[24] Vgl. 127e-128a: „φέρε δή, τί ἐστιν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι – <u>μὴ πολλάκις λάθωμεν οὐχ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι, οἰόμενοι δέ</u> (…);" (nach der Übersetzung von F. Schleiermacher, in: *Platon: Werke*, Bd. III: *Phaidon. Das Gastmahl. Kratylos*, Hrsg. von Gunther Eigler, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990).

Das Folgende versucht, wenn auch noch skizzenhaft und vorläufig, diese fünf „Stücke" zusammenzusetzen.

Der Hauptpunkt liegt von Neuem in der ausstrahlenden, verbreitenden Natur des Selbst, d. h. in der Art und Weise, wie es in sich ein „Außer-sich" setzt und in diesem Sinne so beschaffen ist, dass seine eigene Identität innerlich durch dieses „Außer-sich" mitbestimmt wird. Diese nach „draußen" geworfene Verfassung des Selbst impliziert ihrer Natur nach, dass das Selbst nie mit sich koinzidiert, sondern, wie gesagt, über sich hinausgeht, das „Außer-sich" in seinem eigenen Herz trägt und so wesentlich dieses „Außer-sich" – und d. h.: etwas, das prinzipiell von dem Selbst bzw. von dem Zentrum der Sorge abweicht und entfernt – mitsetzt.

Dass dem so ist, eröffnet nun der Möglichkeit eine Tür, dass die Verbindung mit dem Zentrum *schwächer*, *starrer*, *empfindungsloser*, *nebulöser* oder *betäubter* wird – und zwar so, dass die Beziehung des Zentrums mit sich selbst gerade durch diese „Betäubung" geprägt wird. M.a.W.: Die Art und Weise, wie das Selbst sich nach „auswärts" beugt bzw. von sich entfernt, setzt das Selbst einer Art *Unschärfe sich gegenüber* aus, und erlaubt es, dass es sozusagen *kurzsichtig* oder sogar *blind für sich* wird. Aber was bedeutet das?

Die konstitutive „Extrovertiertheit" des Selbst bringt die Möglichkeit mit sich, dass *es sich mit dem Nicht-Selbst identifiziert* und *sich anhand dessen bzw. durch es versteht*. D. h.: Die formale, ständige, umfassende Struktur der Sorge ist so beschaffen, dass sie ihrer Beständigkeit zum Trotz Veränderungen, Variationen von sich zulässt. Und eine Möglichkeit solcher Variationen besteht gerade darin, dass das Selbst bei seinem innerlichen „*Sich*-nach- -außen-Werfen" sozusagen gerade da – „*draußen*" – *verharren kann*. Dieses „Draußen- -Verharren" soll dahingehend nicht so verstanden werden, dass das Selbst schlicht und einfach „aufgehoben" wird. Wie gesagt, es bleibt immer dieselbe Struktur der Sorge bestehen – und zwar so, dass der gesamte Horizont der Sorge untilgbar gerade auf das Selbst weiter zurückführt. Dies geschieht jedoch in einer Weise, die das Selbst gleichsam *zu dem Nicht-Selbst bekehrt, ihm nachgibt* und so *ihm verfällt*. In diesem Sinne sorgt das Selbst weiter *für sich*, aber durch eine (oder anhand einer) *Gleichung* (*aequatio*) mit dem Leib bzw. mit dem zum Leib Gehörenden, sodass das Selbst *sich als σῶμα* bzw. *als τὰ τοῦ σώματος auffasst*. M.a.W.: Das Selbst sorgt insofern für sich, als es durch die Gleichung mit dem Nicht-Selbst modifiziert wird, und zwar derart, dass die Beziehung mit der ganzen Sorgenerscheinung – das „Wie" der Sorge – gerade im Lichte jener Gleichung bestimmt wird. In diesem Sinne erscheint gerade das σῶμα bzw. τὰ τοῦ σώματος als *das Zentrum der Sorge überhaupt*, d. h. als das, was gerade in ihr in Frage steht (stehen *soll*, *muss*), alles andere als mehr oder weniger zweitrangig bzw. unbedeutsam an den Rand der Verfassung der Sorge verweist – oder, wenn man so möchte: als

das, von dem alles andere abhängt, aus dem alles angeordnet und festgelegt wird, an dem sich alles orientiert, um das sich alles dreht usw. In der fraglichen Gleichung liegt so die Möglichkeit eines *Rollenwechsels* oder eines *Wesentlichkeitsaustauschs* der in der Sorge implizierten Bestimmungen bzw. einer völlig umgekehrten Organisierung und Anordnung der „Sorgenarchitektur", und zwar so, dass *das Zentrum als peripherisch erscheint* und *das Peripherische als Zentrum.*[25]

Der erwähnten Gleichung zwischen Selbst und Nicht-Selbst ist es also zu verdanken, dass das Selbst, gerade indem es *für sich* sorgt, gleichzeitig *so sich vergisst, so sich vernachlässigt* – so sich in λήθη eingewickelt oder von ihr bedeckt befindet (vgl. „λάθωμεν" in 128a) –, dass es in Wahrheit *für etwas anderes, von ihm ganz Verschiedenes sorgt.* Und daraus lässt sich die scheinbare Widersprüchlichkeit der Aussage des Sokrates in 127e-128a auflösen. Denn es ist ja durchaus möglich, dass man ü*berhaupt nicht für das Selbst sorgt* und sich trotzdem gerade *um sich* bemüht und der festen Überzeugung ist, dass man gerade *für das Selbst* sorgt. Und so kann es durchaus vonstatten gehen, dass paradoxal *je mehr man dem Selbst gewidmet ist und für es sorgt, man desto entfernter von ihm ist.*

In alledem ist aber ein wichtiges Element mit enthalten, das noch nicht nachdrücklich genug betont wurde. Die Art und Weise, wie die ausgeführte Gleichsetzung zwischen dem Selbst und dem Nicht-Selbst vor sich gehen kann, beruht gerade auf einer *Unscharfsinnigkeit*, einem *Mangel an Akribie* oder, wie Sokrates sagt, auf einem *Unterscheidungsunvermögen* (κατιδεῖν).[26] D. h.: Das, was die Gleichung zwischen Selbst und Nicht-Selbst ermöglicht, ist eigentlich die Tatsache, dass das Selbst *nicht* über einen scharfsinnigen Standpunkt betreffs sich selber verfügt – und zwar so, dass es gleichzeitig *die fragliche Gleichung nicht erkennt bzw. nicht merkt* und <u>und</u> *dieses Nicht-Erkennen nicht erkennt*, sodass es mit ihm ganz in Frieden ist und *glaubt*, dass es nicht mehr und nicht weniger als *für sich* sorgt. Mit den Worten des Sokrates: die Struktur der Sorge ist so beschaffen, dass sie mit einem οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι (vgl. 128a: „οἰόμενοι") hadern muss und von ihm innerlich beeinträchtigt ist. Und im Grunde genommen ist es gerade dieser *grobe, nebulöse, unscharfe Blick auf sich* – der gleichzeig einen *Durchsichtigkeitsanspruch* sich gegenüber erhebt –, der der beschriebenen Verwirrung

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[25] Diesen wesentlichen Sachverhalt kann man auch an dem oben erwähnten Bild des Herrs und des Dieners – oder, wenn man so möchte, an einem der dem Begriffsfeld von θεραπεία zugehörenden Elemente verdeutlichen, wobei dieser Terminus und das ihm entsprechende Verb, θεραπεύειν, u. a. Folgendes bedeuten: dienen, (ver)ehren, verherrlichen usw. Der sich aus Unschärfe ergebende Identitätswechsel zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie hat zur Folge, dass gerade die Peripherie (d. h.: die Peripherie *als Zentrum*) *der Herr wird*, dem das Zentrum dient oder „gehorcht".

[26] Vgl. 133d-e: „οὐκ ἄρα πάνυ τι ὀρθῶς ὁμολογοῦμεν ὁμολογοῦντες ἄρτι εἶναί τινας οἳ ἑαυτοὺς μὲν οὐ γιγνώσκουσιν, τὰ δ᾽ αὑτῶν, ἄλλους δὲ τὰ τῶν ἑαυτῶν. ἔοικε γὰρ πάντα ταῦτα εἶναι κατιδεῖν ἑνός τε καὶ μιᾶς τέχνης, αὐτόν, τὰ αὑτοῦ, τὰ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ."

zugrunde liegt, die Verwechslung zwischen Selbst und Nicht-Selbst verursacht und so schließlich das ἐπιμελεῖσθαι zu etwas ἄφρον usw.[27] macht.

Damit hängt noch ein weiterer Aspekt zusammen. In der Tat bedeutet das Ausgeführte auch, dass *das Selbst – und nichts anderes als es –* gerade das ist, was sein eigenes Verfallen verursacht bzw. für die erwähnte Verwirrung und den daraus folgenden Identitätswechsel zwischen sich und dem Nicht-Selbst *verantwortlich ist* (vgl. auch 134a: ἁμαρτάνεσθαι!). M.a.W.: Es ist genau der αὐτός, der aufgrund einer Vernachlässigung seiner selbst (aufgrund der Tatsache, dass er sich auf sich nicht konzentriert, seiner eigenen Verfassung nicht zuwendet, sondern sich übergeht und gleichsam in einer überstürzten, hastigen Weise sofort seinen Blick auf das Nicht-Selbst richtet) dem Nicht-Selbst nachgibt und so erlaubt, dass die Struktur der Sorge *tief astigmatisch* sein kann. Es ist der αὐτός schließlich, der *sich* in der Peripherie seiner selbst *setzt* und so *seine eigene λήθη bewirkt*, anders gesagt: Dem αὐτός bzw. der ἀμέλεια seiner selbst ist im Grunde genommen die Vervielfachung der Sorgen zu verdanken – und d. h. hier: die Umwandlung der ἀλλότρια bzw. der Nicht-Selbst-Sphäre in mögliche *Zentren der Sorge* in dem oben beschriebenen Sinne.

Aus alledem lässt sich die Artikulation zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie der Sorge besser verstehen, insbesondere die Frage ihres dezentralen Charakters. Das Ausgeführte weist diesbezüblich auf eine Art „Schachspiel" hin – und zwar so, dass man gleichzeitig von einem Zentrum der Sorge bzw. von einer einzigen allgemeinen Sorge reden und nicht reden soll. Denn in der Tat verhält es sich mit der Artikulation zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie der Sorge so, dass es von Grund auf und von einem Ende bis zum anderen einzig und allein *ein Zentrum der Sorge überhaupt* gibt. Aus den Analysen des *Großen Alkibiades* ergibt sich aber, dass dieses Zentrum so beschaffen ist, dass es doch das Auftreten *mehrerer, von ihm abhängigen, aber durch und durch von ihm verschiedenen Zentren* ermöglicht – und zwar so, dass letztendlich die Sorge *verschiedene mögliche Grundanordnungen oder -„Architekturen" von sich selbst* zulässt.

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27 Vgl. z. B. 134a, e.

6. DIE παγχάλεπον-SEINSWEISE DES ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι. DAS DEZENTRIERTE ZENTRUM BZW. DIE IN ἀμέλεια EINGEWICKELTE ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ

Von dem in diesem Aufsatz eingeschlagenen Weg aus lässt sich nun die These, die Auffassung des Selbst sei etwas *extrem Schweres* (παγχάλεπον, 129a), besser verstehen. Denn genau besehen hat die Wendung nach dem Selbst, die Aufmerksamkeit auf es, die Mühe, es nicht in λήθη geraten zu lassen usw. nicht nur damit zu tun, dass man sich zwar auf das Selbst nicht zu konzentrieren und ihm einen „schmalen", beschränkten Platz zu verleihen pflegt – aber sich ihm zuwenden kann, sobald man auf diese Zerstreuung hinweist. Nein. Der Zugang zum Selbst ist sehr viel gehemmter, sehr viel gehinderter – *sehr viel χαλεπώτερον*. Denn diese Schwierigkeit betrifft nicht lediglich „die Sorgen dieser Welt", die das Selbst „ersticken"[28], sondern auch – und im Grunde genommen – die Art und Weise, wie das Selbst *sich ersticken* kann, und so der schlafwandlerische, aber schuldige „Täter" seiner eigenen „Erstickung" wird.

Die παγχάλεπον-Seinsweise der Konzentrierung auf das Selbst impliziert also zumindest zweierlei. Einerseits beschreiben die Analysen des *Alkibiades* nicht nur eine reine Möglichkeit der Selbstvernachlässigung, sondern eher eine *grundsätzliche Tendenz* unseres Standpunkts – genau diejenige Tendenz, die sofort an die Oberfläche käme, wenn wir hören würden, Hiob (*ihm selbst*) würde gar kein Schaden zugefügt. Dass diese Aussage als skandalös erscheint, beweist, dass wir die Verfassung der Sorge tendenziell so verstehen, dass das Selbst immer je in einen Rahmen der Gleichsetzung zwischen ihm und dem ihm Gehörenden einbezogen ist.

Aber es kommt noch ein zweiter, noch wichtigerer Aspekt hinzu. Diese Gleichsetzung ist so beschaffen, dass *genau derjenige, der sie durchführt*, einen riesigen Widerstand gegen seine Auflösung leistet und dazu neigt, sich von dieser Auflösung abzuwenden. Darauf weist der oben erwähnte Durchsichtigkeitsanspruch bzw. das οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι hin, dank dessen das Selbst nicht nur die Beziehung mit sich „deckt", sondern darüber hinaus sich dieser „Deckung" nicht bewusst wird und die ἀμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ so versteht, als wäre sie eine ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ bzw. die ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ κατ' ἐξοχήν. Aber auch darauf weist genau besehen der Begriff der χρῆσις hin. Es ist dies nicht der Ort, diesen Aspekt eingehend zu behandeln. Dabei ist an dem χρῆσις--Begriff die Art und Weise zu ersehen, wie das „Leben" mit sich umzugehen pflegt. Er beschreibt insofern den normalen Zustand des „Lebens", als er nicht nur betont, dass das „Leben" gerade mit einem grundlegenden Phänomen der Beschäftigung oder Verrichtung

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[28] Mt 13, 22; Mk 4, 19.

(bzw. des Beschäftigt- oder Verrichtet-Seins) aufs Innigste zu tun hat, sondern darüber hinaus, dass dieses Beschäftigt-Sein auch nach etwas sehr Bestimmtem gerichtet ist und so ein sehr bestimmtes Verständnis seiner eigenen Natur impliziert. Diesem Verständnis zufolge habe das „Leben" genau mit ὄργανοι im weitesten Sinne des Wortes zu tun, also grob gesagt: mit „Dingen", die man in der „Außenwelt" findet (die Aufgaben des Alltags erfüllen, den Bus nehmen, Rechnungen zahlen, die Arbeit mit Kompetenz durchführen, Vorträge schreiben usw.). Und daraus ergibt sich gerade die Tendenz, das „hinter" dieser χρήσεις verborgene Zentrum, dem die gesamte „Strömung" der Sorge entstammt, zu vernachlässigen.

Aber mehr noch: Die Auflösung der fraglichen Gleichsetzung fordert ihrer Natur nach Erkenntnis, Scharfsinnigkeit (σοφία, τέχνη usw.) – und zwar so, dass die Wende nach dem Selbst mit einem Problem der Verdeutlichung oder Klärung aufs Engste verbunden ist, anders gesagt: der Imperativ der Selbstsorge („σκεπτέον σαυτόν", „βλεπτέον ἑαυτόν" usw.) ist *eo ipso* ein Imperativ eines noch fehlenden Wissens (γνῶθι σαυτόν!) und auch in diesem Sinne etwas, das noch Übung, Mühe, kurz: γυμνάζειν verlangt.[29] Dieser Mangel an Wissen im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes betrifft die Notwendigkeit, das der Sorge innewohnende komplexe System der Gleichsetzungen zu lösen, die das Selbst tendenziell „ersticken". Aber genau besehen betriff er sogar schon die beschriebene Struktur der Sorge: Wie kann man sich selbst vergessen? Wie muss eine Gleichsetzung beschaffen sein, um gleichzeitig eine Identität zu bilden und trotzdem einen Unterschied aufrechtzuerhalten? Warum neigt das Selbst strukturell dazu, einem Anderen zu verfallen oder zu frönen? usw. All diese Fragen bleiben im Grunde genommen unbeantwortet und sie stehen vor dem *Alkibiades* und vor uns Lesern immer nur noch als eine *Aufgabe*.

Wegen all dieser Aspekte – darin liegt genau das Entscheidende – ist das Zentrum der Sorge im Grunde noch ein *dezentriertes Zentrum*: ein Zentrum, das noch etwas Astigmatisches an sich hat und das so sich noch auf der Suche seiner selbst befindet. Oder, wie man auch sagen könnte: Wegen all dieser Aspekte ist das ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι zum großen Teil in ἀμέλεια eingewickelt, und zwar so, dass diese Einwicklung nicht nur komplex, aus mehreren Schichten bestehend ist, sondern auch etwas quasi Trügerisches, Verführerisches an sich hat und sich in die ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ einmischend sich immer wieder mit aller Kraft gegen sie sträubt.

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[29] Vgl. 132b: „γύμνασαι πρῶτον, ὦ μακάριε, καὶ μάθε ἃ δεῖ μαθόντα ἰέναι ἐπὶ τὰ τῆς πόλεως, πρότερον δὲ μή, ἵν᾽ ἀλεξιφάρμακα ἔχων ἴῃς καὶ μηδὲν πάθῃς δεινόν."

7. DER FORMALE CHARAKTER DES ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι-VORRANGS UND DIE VERSCHIEDENEN MÖGLICHKEITEN, DEN „IMPERATIV DER SELBSTSORGE" ZU VERSTEHEN

Dem bisher Ausgeführten liegt ein Problem zugrunde, das kaum berührt wurde, wenngleich es zum Kern der ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι-Frage gehört. Das Problem ist Folgendes:

Es wurde mit Nachdruck hervorgehoben, die gesamte „Architektur" der Sorge habe einen einzigen, ständigen „archimedischen Punkt", der alle möglichen Sorgenrichtungen begleite und auf den sie zurückzuführen seien. Diese Aussage hat inzwischen noch einen *formalen* Charakter. Und das Dargelegte kann insofern Anlass zu Missverständnissen geben, als es als *eine* – und *nur eine* – der in dieser noch formalen Beschreibung verschiedenen enthaltenen Möglichkeiten aufgefasst wird.

Die selbstbedingte Verfassung der gesamten Sorge bzw. die Art und Weise, wie die Sorge bei uns in Wahrheit von A bis O eine Sorge ἑαυτοῦ ist, kann man so verstehen, als wäre es also überhaupt unmöglich, Sorge *für etwas anderes* im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes zu tragen. So verstanden beschränke sich die Sorge auf das Selbst, und alle anderen Formen der Sorge – z. B. die Fürsorge bzw. die Sorge für die Anderen wie für sich selbst – seien sozusagen nur „verirrt" und sogar „illusorisch", sofern sie sich nicht dessen bewusst seien, dass das Selbst in sie hinein als deren Bedingung der Möglichkeit eindringt (bzw. eingedrungen ist). Die Sorge ἑαυτοῦ sei also in diesem Sinne – d. h.: in dem Sinne, dass es keine selbstfreie, dem Selbst entrinnbare Sorge gebe – *die einzige mögliche wirkliche Sorge*.

Wenn auch dieser Aufsatz so etwas nahelegen und eine durchsichtigere Analyse des Phänomens es bestätigen könnte, macht der *Große Alkibiades*, soweit wir sehen, diesen Schritt nicht. In der Tat lässt er dieses Problem offen, und was wir dort finden, hat eher den Charakter eines noch einzuschlagenden Weges oder eines ersten vorbereitenden Ansehens des Problems, dem es viel weniger ankommt, ein „Ergebnis" festzustellen, als den in der Vergessenheit des Selbst implizierten „Astigmatismus" aufzuheben und so einerseits den verschiedenen möglichen „Antworten" den Weg zu bahnen und andererseits so etwas wie ein „*Sanierungsprojekt*" in Gang zu setzen. Dabei öffnet der *Alkibiades* der Möglichkeit eine Tür, dass es tatsächlich keine andere wirkliche Sorge gibt als die des Selbst – und zwar so, dass *einzig und allein* für das Selbst gesorgt werden soll. Aber genau besehen ist in der Untersuchung des *Alkibiades* die Möglichkeit noch durchaus offen, dass dieses Selbst so beschaffen ist, dass es nie allein für sich sorgen kann (soll, muss), sondern auch für etwas anderes, das mit der Sphäre des Selbst *stricto sensu* nicht koinzident ist, sondern den *terminus ad quem* seiner Extrovertiertheit bildet. Was seinerseits die Frage aufwirft, bis wohin die Sorge gehen soll oder

muss: Soll (oder muss) sie auch den Leib einschließen, die πράγματα (das zum Leib Gehörende bzw. τὰ τῶν αὑτοῦ), den Leib *und* die πράγματα usw.? Dieses „Andere" muss aber nicht ausschließlich dem Inhalt der Selbstextrovertiertheit im engen Sinne des Wortes entsprechen; es kann ebenso *den anderen Menschen* wie auch mir selbst entsprechen – und zwar so, dass die *Fürsorge* nicht nur eine reine Möglichkeit der Sorge bei uns sei, sondern sogar eine im Imperativ der Selbstsorge liegende „Forderung".

Wenn ich es richtig verstanden habe, schließt das im *Großen Alkibiades* Erforschte all diese Möglichkeiten ein – und gewiss auch andere, die hier nicht erwähnt wurden. Dabei wird aber, wie widersprüchlich es auf den ersten Blick auch scheinen mag, aufs Nachdrücklichste betont, dass *es doch eine grundlegende unveränderliche, ständige Struktur der Sorge gibt*, die durch alle möglichen „Antworten" auf die konkrete Bestimmung des „Sanierungsprojekts" unbedingt hindurchgeht. Genauer: Der verschiedenen möglichen Variationen zum Trotz, die das fragliche „Sanierungsprojekt" annehmen muss (sofern es sich *nur noch* um ein Projekt handelt), ist ja doch *allein in der Sinnsphäre des Selbst stricto sensu* eine „Antwort" zu finden. Das Selbst ist der *einzige* „Ort", wo das „Sanierungsprojekt" anfangen und wo sein „Ergebnis" *entschieden* und *verwirklicht* werden kann (muss), sodass *erst aus einer Neugründung der Selbstsphäre* – und d. h. *erst aus dem ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἑαυτοῦ im ureigensten Sinne des Wortes – heraus* die Frage nach der (richtigen) Verfassung und Organisierung der Sorge beantwortet werden kann. In diesem Sinne – und das ist gerade das Entscheidende – ist *das Selbst ja das Grundlegende, die zentrale Bestimmung der Sorge*: das, woraus das Ganze stammt, worauf es sich stützt, wovon es abhängt.

THE CARE OF OTHERS IN *ALCIBIADES I*

Hélder Telo

Plato's analyses of care have sparked much interest in the last decades. The two main authors responsible for this are Patočka and Foucault. They refer back to Plato's notions of care of the soul and care of the self, respectively, in order to show how philosophy is essentially concerned with self-transformation. It is not only a way of attaining knowledge, but it should also shape one's entire life in a particular way. According to both Patočka and Foucault, this idea was developed by Plato and it played a decisive role not only in the history of philosophy, but also in European culture in general.[1] However, Patočka's and Foucault's analyses of care make few references to the care of others and do not discuss its structure or the problems it involves. For the most part, they regard care simply as something that occurs in isolation and that one exerts over oneself. This is most evident in Foucault, who constantly talks about the "work of the self on the self".

In fact, the case of Foucault is particularly relevant to the theme of this chapter. In his 1981-82 lectures at the Collège de France, entitled *L' herméneutique du sujet*, Foucault investigates the theme of self-care in Ancient philosophy and starts precisely with a discussion of *Alcibiades I*. He isolates the notion of care of the self as a form of self--constitution of the subject in its relation with truth. This naturally suggests that philosophy is conceived of in *Alcibiades I* as an entirely self-centered activity, even though that is far from being the case. Foucault himself recognizes this at times. Right at the beginning, he considers that self-care is associated with the Socratic care of others, but he does not develop this idea. He also mentions several times that self-care in *Alcibiades I* is subordinated to the care of others, insofar as Alcibiades has to care for himself in order to care for the πόλις. Political concerns are indeed at the center of this dialogue and of much of the Platonic corpus. However, Foucault does not say much about this. He does not specify what the political care of others consists in or how exactly it connects with Socratic care or with the other forms of

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[1] See in particular J. PATOČKA, *Plato and Europe*, translated by Petr Lom, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002, and M. FOUCAULT, *L'herméneutique du sujet*, Paris, Seuil, 2001.

caring for others mentioned in *Alcibiades I*. Foucault focus mostly on the structure of self--care and on its relation with self-knowledge and the structure of the subject in general.

This is not an isolated case. Many studies try to determine how the self and self--knowledge are conceived in the text and they often adopt a solipsist standpoint, paying no attention to the relation with others.[2] There are several notable exceptions to this tendency, though. Gill, for instance, argues that the text adopts an objective-participant perspective of the self and Joosse discusses the dialogical or interpersonal nature of self-knowledge and self--constitution.[3] However, these interpreters do not consider how self-care is intertwined with the care of others and, more specifically, how the care of others is conceived of in the dialogue. In fact, the Platonic conception of the care of others has been the object of little attention. It is true that here too there are some exceptions. Tilleczek, for instance, considers the question of self-care and care of others in the framework of the *Laches*.[4] Suvák, in turn, considers the question in more general terms, bringing it closer to the question of Socratic φιλανθρωπία.[5] However, these studies do not consider many aspects, including the important contribution of *Alcibiades I* to this question. Indeed, regardless of whether this dialogue was written by Plato or not, we find in it many important indications about how the care of others may be conceived of in Platonic terms. In particular, it shows how the question of the care of others intersects with themes such as virtue, τέχνη, politics, ἔρως, education or even the figure of Socrates and his trial. The way each of these themes is explored in *Alcibiades I* has been

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[2] See e.g. J. BRUNSCHWIG, La déconstruction du "connais-toi toi-même" dans l'*Alcibiade Majeur*, *Recherches sur la Philosophie et le Langage* 18 (1996), 61-84; D. JOHNSON, God as the True Self. *Plato's Alcibiades I, Ancient Philosophy* 19 (1999), 1-19; F. RENAUD, Self-Knowledge in the *First Alcibiades*, in: M. MIGLIORI & L. NAPOLITANO (eds.), *Inner Life and Soul*. Psychê in Plato, Sankt Augustin, Akademie, 2011, 207-223; B. RIDER, Self-Care, Self-Knowledge, and Politics in the *Alcibiades I, Epoché* 15 (2011), 395-413; P. REMES, Reason to Care. The Object and Structure of Self-Knowledge in the *Alcibiades I, Apeiron* 46 (2013), 270-301; C. MOORE, Alcibiades. Mirrors of the Soul, in: IDEM, *Socrates and Self-Knowledge*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, 101-135; T. TUOZZO, Two Faces of Platonic Self-Knowledge. *Alcibiades I* and *Charmides*, in: J. AMBURY & A. GERMAN (eds.), *Knowledge and Ignorance of Self in Platonic Philosophy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019.

[3] See C. GILL, Self-Knowledge in Plato's *Alcibiades*, in: S. STERN-GILLET & K. CORRIGAN (eds.), *Reading Ancient Texts*. Volume I: Presocratics and Plato. Essays in Honour of Denis O'Brien, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2007, 97-112; A. JOOSSE, Dialectic and Who We Are in the Alcibiades, *Phronesis* 59 (2014), 1-21; A. JOOSSE, Foucault's Subject and Plato's Mind: A Dialectical Model of Self-Constitution in the *Alcibiades*, *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 41 (2015), 159-177. For other interpretations that likewise stress the importance of the self's relation to others, cp. e.g. J. ANNAS, Self-Knowledge in Early Plato, in D. O'MEARA (ed.) *Platonic Investigations*, Washington DC, Catholic University of America Press, 1985, 111-138; M. BOERI & L. DE BRASI, Self-Knowledge in the *Alcibiades I*, the *Apology of Socrates*, and the *Theaetetus*. The Limits of the First-Person and Third-Person Perspectives, *Universum* 32 (2017), 17-38.

[4] See W. TILLECZEK, The Connection of the Care for Self and Other in Plato's *Laches*, *Pseudo-Dionysius* 16 (2014), at https://ojs.library.dal.ca/PseudoDio/article/view/4866/4383 (consulted January 2019).

[5] See V. SUVÁK, "Socratic Therapy as Taking Care of the Self and Others", in: IDEM (ed.), *Care of the Self*. Ancient Problematizations of Life and Contemporary Thought, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2018, 1-49.

the object of some attention, but their interconnection and the way they outline a global conception of caring for others has not been considered.[6]

The following analysis is an attempt to fill this gap. I will consider how the care of others is conceived of in *Alcibiades I*. This requires collecting and organizing many different indications given throughout the text, in order to determine the main aspects of the question. These aspects will not be considered in full detail, but I will try to determine their interconnection, the questions they raise and the answers they give (or at least allude to), thus providing a full picture of the problem. This will allow us to better understand the ways our life intersects with the lives of others, how we depend on each other, and also what the best way to care for someone is. It will also help correct the tendency to one-sided discussions of care we find in authors such as Patočka or Foucault.

1. THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF CARING FOR OTHERS

Before considering what *Alcibiades I* says about the care of others, it is important to make a few introductory remarks about the notion of care in general and about the care of others in particular.

The term most frequently used throughout *Alcibiades I* to express the idea of care is ἐπιμέλεια (along with the cognate verb ἐπιμέλεσθαι). In addition, there are several instances of the verb θεραπεύειν, as well as some other terms that have some connection with the idea of care, such as ἀσκεῖν (e.g. 120b), γυμνάζειν (132b) or πράγματα ἔχειν (119b). All of these are opposed to terms such as ἀμελεῖν (113c, 120b), ἐᾶν ὡς ἔχειν (119a) and ἀγαπᾶν (104e), which express the idea of letting something be or leaving it alone. As for the term ἐπιμέλεια, it can express several things. First of all, it can express the idea of tending to or taking care of someone or something. More specifically, it can denote the act of serving or treating someone. It can also denote the idea of managing or being in charge of someone or something. More generally, the term can designate the fact that one has a task or is engaged in something, as well as the fact that one's attention and concern is directed at someone or

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[6] For more or less separate discussions of each of these themes in *Alcibiades I*, see e.g. J. GORDON, Eros and Philosophical Seduction in Alcibiades I, *Ancient Philosophy* 23 (2003), 11-30, J. PARRA, Political Psychology in Plato's *Alcibiades I*, *Praxis Filosófica* 31 (2010), 25-44; J. WILBURN, The Problem of Alcibiades: Plato on Moral Education and the Many, *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 49 (2015), 1-36; A. HELFER, *Socrates and Alcibiades*. Plato's Drama of Political Ambition and Philosophy, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.

something. In sum, the term ἐπιμέλεια indicates that one has a positive relation to something and one tries to affect it in a positive way – i.e., one tries to improve it.

This is something that normally occurs in the social or intersubjective sphere. One is often concerned with others and one tends to intervene in their life (even if only by staying out of it). One affects the course of others' lives and they, in turn, affect one's own course of life. Naturally, these constant interventions raise the question of their value. One may help others or one may harm them. Care, however, is supposed to be a positive intervention and this means that, when it is directed at others, it is supposed to improve their life or render them better. It aims at bringing some good to others and if we define happiness as the possession of good things (as Socrates and Alcibiades do in the text), then care aims at making someone happy (or at least happier).[7] In this sense, it is opposed to neglecting or being indifferent to others (whereby one leaves others as they are) and even to a negative intervention (which harms or corrupts people, thus rendering them miserable or more miserable than they were).

All these kinds of action may affect either a particular other or a group of others, such as a political community. One may also relate to oneself in these different ways. One may care for one's own self, one may neglect it, or one may harm it. This is very important in the context of *Alcibiades I*. There is a common structure of care and many specific forms of it. Indeed, we could also include here the care of objects, of plants, of animals or of gods. Each of these forms of care poses its own problems (especially the care of gods), but we will not consider them here. We will focus exclusively on the care of persons – i.e., self-care and the care of others.

One may care for others or oneself, one may leave others or oneself as they are, or one may harm others or oneself.[8] These are meaningful possibilities in the context of one's life. In general, we all stand in need of care, because we are finite beings. We are not perfect or absolutely self-sufficient. Rather, we fall short of our desires and are lacking. Moreover, different people find themselves in different circumstances and (at least apparently) have different degrees of ambition.[9] Consequently, they have different kinds (or different degrees) of need, which call for different kinds or different degrees of care.

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[7] See 116b: "[ΣΩ.] Οὐκοῦν εὐδαίμονες δι' ἀγαθῶν κτῆσιν; [ΑΛ.] Μάλιστα."

[8] Cp. e.g. 119a: "τί οὖν διανοῇ περὶ σαυτοῦ; πότερον ἐὰν ὡς νῦν ἔχεις, ἢ ἐπιμέλειάν τινα ποιεῖσθαι;"

[9] I say "apparently" because according to several passages in the Platonic dialogues (such as Aristophanes' and Socrates' speeches in the *Symposium* or Socrates' palinode in the *Phaedrus*) we all aspire to a superlative or maximized good, even if we are not aware of it or settle for less. But let us leave this aside for now.

This is very clear in Alcibiades' case. At first, it may seem that he is self-sufficient or has everything he needs. He is beautiful, rich, and his family has powerful connections. It seems that he can do whatever he wants and does not need any care. However, he has huge ambitions. He wants to rule everybody and be universally famous.[10] This, according to Socrates, requires a huge amount of care – even if he does not realize it. Indeed, we are not always aware of our own state and of whether it allows us to attain what we desire. Consequently, we are not always aware of our need for care. We may be in a very bad state and not realize it. This appears to be precisely the case of Alcibiades.[11] This is why he needs help from others, not only in order to improve himself, but also to realize that he needs to improve himself.

One other problem results from our usual lack of transparency with respect to ourselves. We may not be explicitly aware of what we really want (or of what others really want) – i.e., our declared desires may not correspond to our real good and their satisfaction may not make us happy. This means that we may appear to care for someone (be it ourselves or another), we may appear to improve them, and at the same time fail to do so. We may leave them as they were or even harm them, without realizing it. This plays a very important role in *Alcibiades I*. Socrates constantly calls Alcibiades' attention to the idea of proper care and this becomes particularly clear in 128b, when he asks whether proper or correct care (ὀρθὴ ἐπιμέλεια) renders something better. Alcibiades agrees that the correct form of care must actually render something better, and not only appear to do so.[12] This also applies to self-care and to the care of others, and it implies that, in some cases, one may not even realize that someone is caring for oneself – or one may think that they are doing so when that is not the case.

We will see below how the care of others is open to these possibilities. However, in order to consider this, it is important to distinguish three important determinants of the care of others that are also determinants of care in general. Although these determinants are intimately connected, each of them raises its own set of questions, which must be considered separately.

The first determinant concerns what could be called the process or technique of properly caring for others. Indeed, one requires a certain expertise in order to intervene positively in the life of others. It cannot be done at random.

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[10] See 103bff., especially 105aff.
[11] See 127a: "(…) κινδυνεύω δὲ καὶ πάλαι λεληθέναι ἐμαυτὸν αἴσχιστα ἔχων."
[12] "[ΣΩ.] Ἆρ᾽ οὖν ὅταν τίς τι βέλτιον ποιῇ, τότε ὀρθὴν λέγεις ἐπιμέλειαν; [ΑΛ.] Ναί."

The second determinant concerns the effectiveness of one's intervention and whether one actually attains one's goal or not (i.e., whether one's care actually ends up improving others or not). Even if one does everything right and applies the proper technique, one's caring for others may still fail to improve them, insofar as there may be other factors restricting or preventing the benefits of one's intervention.

Finally, the third determinant concerns the motives that drive someone to care for somebody else. This may or may not be important to the process and its effectiveness, but it certainly affects one's commitment and the way one relates to the possibility of caring for another. We may then wonder whether there is a correct motivation for caring for others, which likewise raises the question of the moral value of this kind of care.

In sum, the care of others can be considered from three different angles – namely, its technique, its effectiveness and its motivation – and the perfect care of others will consequently require the correct technique, full effectiveness and possibly the correct motivation too.

As we shall see, we can find important indications about each of these three determinants in *Alcibiades I*. However, it is important to bear in mind that the text mentions several forms of caring for others and singles out a particular modality of care as the most proper form of caring for others. This modality of care is what we could call Socratic care. It consists in helping people examine themselves, and the problem of its value echoes throughout *Alcibiades I*, insofar as the text implicitly refers to Socrates' trial and the problem of his intervention in other people's lives. Socrates was accused of corrupting the young, but did he really corrupt them? Or did he improve them instead? And if he did not improve them, was this his own fault and the fault of his form of caring for others? Or were there other factors that prevented him from improving the people he examined?

These questions become particularly pertinent with respect to Alcibiades, given his well-known role in the downfall of the Athenian empire. Alcibiades greatly harmed the πόλις and everyone in it. He achieved precisely the opposite of what he wanted and, in this sense, his life seems to have been the most complete failure. What role did Socrates play in this outcome, then? Alcibiades came from a good family and had much potential. Was he deeply corrupted by his association with Socrates (as many seem to have argued), or was Socrates trying to improve him and failed only because of other factors, for which he was not responsible? Who or what really corrupted Alcibiades?

This question is, at bottom, one about the value of Socratic care or Socratic examination. What does such a care or such an examination do to one's life? Does it really

improve it? Does it make it better? Or does it harm it instead? And if this is the case, what kind of harm are we talking about?

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to determine what this examination consists in, what it is supposed to provide us, and whether it is effective in doing so. As for the intentions behind Socrates' form of care, they might not be so relevant at first, but they still raise the question of how one should relate to this possibility, and it is necessary therefore to consider them too.

We will consider all these questions below, but before doing so, we must first consider the different forms of care mentioned in *Alcibiades I*, as well as the role Socratic care plays within this group. This will allow us to understand why we have to focus our attention on Socratic care.

2. THE DIFFERENT MODES OF CARING FOR OTHERS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCRATIC CARE

During their conversation, Socrates and Alcibiades refer to several different forms of caring for others. In fact, both characters are essentially related to a particular form of caring for others. Socrates says that he is moved by an intense desire or romantic love (ἔρως) for Alcibiades, and this is not just any ἔρως. Later Socrates distinguishes between a love directed at the body of the beloved and a love directed at their soul (ψυχή), and Socrates' love corresponds to the latter.[13] He is interested in Alcibiades' soul. This determines the way he sees Alcibiades and how he deals with him. The latter point is important because love is not just contemplative. It includes a component of benevolence, which may be more or less authentic. One is thus concerned with the good of the beloved. Moreover, love also includes a component of beneficence, which means that one also tries to promote the good of the beloved. Socrates' love thus leads him to care for Alcibiades.

In order to understand this love and the form of care it engenders, one needs to bear in mind that the modality of love here at issue corresponds to a very particular cultural configuration: namely, pederastic love. This is an asymmetrical form of love, in which an adult male falls in love with an adolescent male, pursues him and tries to seduce him. If he is successful, he offers counsel and education in exchange for the younger party's favors. The

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[13] Cp. 131c-d.

educative component is therefore at the center of this modality of love, and this is very important for Socrates' intervention in Alcibiades' life. Right at the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates produces a kind of ἐρωτικὸς λόγος that follows the conventions of ancient pederasty. He extols Alcibiades' qualities, including his ambition. However, he quickly changes his approach, in order to emphasize the educative component. Afterwards, during the course of the dialogue, he goes on to show how Alcibiades is actually stupid and slavish, and hence urgently needs Socrates' help. As a result, they end up inverting their roles, and Alcibiades finally declares his intention to pursue Socrates from then on (just as lovers would pursue the beloved) and become his student.[14]

Socrates' intervention does not occur in a vacuum. It presupposes Alcibiades' ambition. Indeed, Socrates places a great emphasis on the fact that Alcibiades wants to be admired as much as possible throughout the world.[15] However, in order to attain this goal, he has to first convince his fellow citizens to let him rule them. This is important because ruling others constitutes a decisive form of caring for them. One has to ensure the safety and good management of the πόλις, or at least one has to appear to do so. Socrates therefore questions Alcibiades about how to do this. More specifically, he asks Alcibiades about his next step in the pursuit of fame. According to Socrates, Alcibiades intends to advise his fellow citizens, and this implies that he has some insight to offer on a subject matter that he knows better than others.[16] But what is this subject matter whose knowledge qualifies Alcibiades to advise and help rule the πόλις, and what insight does Alcibiades have into it?

Alcibiades tries to answer with the help of Socrates, and he explores various possibilities throughout the dialogue. This knowledge could concern war and peace, justice, what is advantageous; or reciprocal friendship and oneness of mind (ὁμόνοια). However, all these answers end up being rejected after examination. At the end, Socrates still considers that it might consist in imparting ἀρετή to the citizens, but he does not develop this idea and does not define ἀρετή.[17] In any case, the whole discussion of the different possible answers to the question of what one needs to know and be able to promote in order to rule the πόλις shows how complex the matter is and how little grasp Alcibiades has of it. In fact, Alcibiades tends not to distinguish between what really improves the πόλις and what only appears to do so. In order for him to be admired, he seems to think that he only needs to appear to take good care

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[14] See 135d.
[15] See 105a-c.
[16] See 106cff.
[17] Cp. 134bff.

of the πόλις. However, the possibility of ruling also raises the question of what the proper care of the πόλις is and how one can perform it. This question thus shifts the focus of the discussion from the individual domain to the public domain, although there is a strong connection between the two – not only because the πόλις is composed of individuals, but also because the rulers themselves are individuals and we may thus wonder how they care for themselves or how they are cared for by others.

We will return to this question below but, before doing so, it is important to consider some other forms of caring for others that are also mentioned while Alcibiades is trying to demonstrate his political competence. Some of these forms of care are intrinsically associated with virtues or have some relation to them. Justice, for instance, involves respect for others and for what is due to them, and it may require one to enforce justice in particular circumstances.[18] Courage, in turn, is required to save one's friends and one's city from dangerous situations, especially in war.[19] Later, mutual friendship and oneness of mind are also presented as virtues that allow people to be sympathetic to and supportive of each other, and thus help avoid conflicts.[20] However, the allusions to these forms of care and what they consist in are rather vague.

Somewhat more specific are the constant references to τέχναι such as cooking, sailing, medicine and so on. These τέχναι allow us to care for others in different circumstances and in different ways, and they require insight into how things work. If we acquire such an insight, we are then able to intervene in reality in such a way as to render life better for others and ourselves. Indeed, there are many things we need and we must either learn how to do them, or we must entrust ourselves to others and thus be cared for by them.[21]

It is important to note that the text does not simply mention different τέχναι, but it also establishes a ranking of τέχναι – i.e., it shows that some of them are more important than others. Their importance is directly related to the different domains of our life or our being. Socrates distinguishes between the self, the self's belongings (by which he means one's body), and what belongs to the self's belongings (i.e., one's possessions). Each of these domains is related to different τέχναι and these τέχναι are more or less important according to the domain they are related to (i.e., according to whether this domain is more central or more peripheral in the context of one's life). Furthermore, the more peripheral τέχναι depend on the

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[18] See 109bff.
[19] Cp. 115bff.
[20] See 126cff.
[21] For the idea of entrusting ourselves to others, cp. in particular 117c-e.

more central τέχνη insofar as they need to be guided by them. Consequently, even though the different τέχναι complement each other, they also provide the basis for a social division of work and different social roles in the πόλις (as Socrates and Alcibiades allude to).[22]

Finally, there is one other form of care, which was already mentioned above – namely, education (παιδεία). Throughout the text, there are several references to tutors, teachers or masters.[23] These are people who impart knowledge and shape someone's character. As such, they also care for others in a decisive manner. However, the text does not only mention positive forms of education, in which pieces of knowledge are supposed to be directly transferred to the student. As mentioned, Socrates' pederastic love for Alcibiades has a strong educative component, but the education in question does not consist in directly imparting knowledge to Alcibiades. Instead, Socrates relentlessly cross-examines him and helps him realize his own ignorance – i.e., Socrates performs an elenctic examination, and this constitutes a very particular form of education and care. Socratic care provides awareness of one's own limitations, which corresponds to the original idea of self-knowledge and to one possible sense of soundness of mind (σωφροσύνη).[24] Consequently, Socratic care provides a kind of knowledge and ἀρετή – and in fact a kind of knowledge and ἀρετή that are decisive for us. But why are they decisive?

We can understand this if we consider not only some aspects that are common to the different kinds of care mentioned above, but also the way these kinds of care relate to each other. Indeed, one central feature of these kinds of care is the fact that they all depend on knowledge. In *Alcibiades I*, this is perhaps less immediately clear in the case of justice, courage and friendship, though their relation to knowledge is also presupposed. This is why Alcibiades claims at different points in the text that he possesses knowledge of these things and is able to promote them in the πόλις. In the case of τέχναι, the importance of knowledge is obvious, as well as in the case of education (be it positive or Socratic) and pederastic love. As for ruling and governing the πόλις, Socrates constantly tries to show that one needs to know what this is all about or one needs to have the knowledge required to do so. In sum, all these forms of care will fail if one does not possess the required knowledge - i.e., if one does not know how to perform them. If one is ignorant, one will have to entrust matters to others and be ruled by them, or if one is falsely convinced one knows enough, one will make serious

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[22] For all this, see 131aff.

[23] See in particular 109dff. and 121dff.

[24] The notions of self-knowledge and σωφροσύνη play an important role in the final part of the dialogue (127eff.). For their association with the idea of knowing one's limitations, cp. e.g. E. WILKINS, *"Know Thyself" in Greek and Latin Literature*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Libraries, 1917.

mistakes, and as a result one's care of others will fail.[25] One will be neglecting or even harming others – and thus doing the exact opposite of what one wants.

Furthermore, we may know how to care for others in these particular ways, but if we do not know what is best for them, we may still fail to properly care for them. We must therefore know what others really desire in life or what is really good for them. Moreover, there is one other piece of knowledge that we need, even if it is not explicitly mentioned in the text: namely, we must know whether we should care for others or not, and to what extent. Socrates and Alcibiades, however, simply assume that we should care for others to a certain degree, and this is why they turn their attention to the knowledge that allows one to properly care for somebody else without discussing whether or not one should do so.

It is thus clear that all forms of caring for others depend on knowledge. However, it is important to bear in mind that these forms of care do not all have the same importance, and there are two in particular that become more prominent during the course of the dialogue, since in a way all the other forms of care mentioned above depend on them (and especially on the second one). The first of these two main forms of care is the declared theme of much of the dialogue: namely, ruling people or ruling the πόλις. This form of care affects all people of the community and should improve their lives – either by giving them orders and preventing them from making practical mistakes, or by rendering them more virtuous. Moreover, political care can influence how people relate to τέχναι, to education and even to love. Hence, it may influence in many different ways how people care for each other.

Nevertheless, political rule is not the most fundamental form of caring for others, because it still depends on another form of care – to wit, the form of education that corresponds to Socratic care. This form of care helps someone (and especially rulers or anyone hoping to rule) to notice any false knowledge claims that they may have, which is important because such knowledge claims can have bad consequences not only in their own lives, but also in the life of the community. One should not guide oneself and others based on such knowledge claims and, therefore, one should not rush into politics before being educated (as Alcibiades was trying to do).[26] In order to advise and guide others, one must acquire knowledge (especially knowledge of the most important things in life – τὰ μέγιστα), and this is not a simple task. It is not enough to pick up some things from one's teachers or from people in general. One must carefully examine one's beliefs and realize how much knowledge

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[25] Cp. 116eff.
[26] Cp. 118b: "(…) διὸ καὶ ᾄττεις ἄρα πρὸς τὰ πολιτικὰ πρὶν παιδευθῆναι."

one is lacking. Hence, Alcibiades needs Socrates and his form of caring for others. Alcibiades wants to care for the πόλις, but he himself needs to be cared for in the first place, because he has neglected himself or skipped the most essential stage of his ambitious project. He did not realize how much knowledge he lacked. Consequently, he did not care for himself and did not try to become virtuous and wise. This is precisely what Socratic care tries to correct.

Socratic care (i.e., Socratic examination) is thus very important for Alcibiades, and it is likewise very important for the πόλις in general, insofar as Socrates' attempt to care for Alcibiades is also indirectly a form of caring for everybody else. By improving Alcibiades, Socrates will supposedly benefit everybody in the πόλις and perhaps even people beyond it. Moreover, Socratic care also plays an important role in all other forms of care. In this sense, it is the most important form of care, and this is precisely why we will focus our attention on it. We will consider Socrates' care from three above-mentioned angles (namely, its process, its effectiveness and its motivation) and our consideration of the other forms of care will be mostly indirect.

3. THE PROCESS OR TECHNIQUE OF SOCRATIC CARE

Let us begin with the kind of process or technique used by the Socratic care of others. In order to consider this, we should focus on what is said in *Alcibiades I* about the notion of self-care. This notion plays a central role in the dialogue and the care of others can be better understood if compared to the care of one's self (even though it includes additional components), especially because the different ways of relating to our own self also determine the different possibilities of relating to someone else.

It is important to remark that at this stage we will not be considering whether or not self-care has precedence over the care of others, or how they connect to each other. The goal here is to see how the care of the self is determined, in order to understand how the care of others (understood as the care for the selves of other people) should be structured.

The discussion about self-care comes immediately after Alcibiades' realization of his defects and of how he will be unable to satisfy his ambitions if he does not undergo a deep change.[27] It becomes clear to him that he has to care for himself and the question, then, is how he should do it. Socrates calls attention to the possibility that we may often think we are

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[27] See 127d-e.

caring for our own self when that is not the case.[28] We may indeed try to care for ourselves in different ways and they may all seem to be a form of improving ourselves, but they are not necessarily so. As was already mentioned, Socrates distinguishes between our own self, our self's belongings (such as the body) and the things that belong to our self's belongings (such as our possessions in general).[29] The two latter are distinct from our self and caring for them does not therefore correspond to caring for our own self. This means that we will be fundamentally neglecting ourselves if we only try to attain bodily or material goods.

What is the self, then? As Socrates stresses, we need to know ourselves (in the sense of knowing our own self) if we are to properly care for this very self. In other words, we will only know what is good for us and what constitutes our happiness when we discover what or who we really are. Self-knowledge must guide self-care.[30]

After establishing this, Socrates tries to help Alcibiades identify the self. He calls attention to what they are doing: namely, talking with each other and using words. When they do so, they are something different from the conversation, the words and even the body that utters those words. They are something that uses the body, and this user of the body is then identified as the soul (ψυχή).[31] This is somewhat surprising. The Greek term originally refers to a mysterious entity, connected with eschatological questions. Now, however, it is primarily characterized as the user of the body (i.e., what rules or governs it) and, as such, it corresponds to one's self. Consequently, the ψυχή is what we need to care for if we are to care for ourselves or for another. All τέχναι and all forms of love will not properly care for someone if they do not care for their ψυχή, and the same applies to political rule and education. But what exactly characterizes the ψυχή understood as the user of the body? This is now the central question. The task of knowing one's self has become the task of knowing one's ψυχή. If one is able to do so, one will know one's self not only in the sense of knowing one's limitations, but also in a more substantial sense, which will involve knowing what is good or bad for oneself. Such knowledge will then constitute sound-mindedness (σωφροσύνη) in the strongest sense of the word.[32]

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[28] See 127e-128a: "φέρε δή, τί ἐστιν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι – μὴ πολλάκις λάθωμεν οὐχ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι, οἰόμενοι δέ (…)."

[29] Cp. 128aff.

[30] Cp. 127eff.

[31] Cp. 129bff.

[32] For the connection between self-knowledge and σωφροσύνη, cp. 131b (where σωφροσύνη is used more in the sense of knowing one's limitations, as mentioned in footnote 24 above) and especially 133c (where the word involves a deeper and more positive knowledge of oneself).

At this point, the conversation becomes quite obscure and perplexing. Socrates tries to supply a way of knowing one's soul. He establishes a parallel with how an eye can see itself and says that, just like we may look at someone else's eye and see the reflection of our own eye there, we may look at someone else's soul as if it were a mirror that offers us an image of our own soul. Moreover, in both cases we should look at the most excellent part of the object in question, which is where its excellence lies. In the case of the eye, this corresponds to the pupil, and in the case of the soul, it corresponds to where knowledge or wisdom is formed.[33]

Leaving aside all other aspects of this passage, it seems clear that, according to Socrates, the soul is essentially characterized by knowledge, and therefore the way to care for our own self and improve it is by developing our cognitive state. This will render us virtuous and allow us to avoid practical mistakes. We will act correctly and fare well or be happy.[34] Consequently, the care of others also has to help them acquire knowledge (and in fact knowledge of the most important things – σοφία). This is the only way of properly caring for them and helping them to be happy.

However, this still does not tell us how we can improve someone else's cognitive state and at first sight it may even seem that the text does not offer us any help in this matter. Socrates and Alcibiades do not expressly discuss how one can care for someone else's cognitive state. They do not even discuss how exactly someone may acquire knowledge in general. They only establish the need to do so. However, if we look at the dramatic situation, we can see that the entire dialogue consists of Socrates' attempt to improve Alcibiades' cognitive state and put him on the path to becoming wise. In other words, Socrates' attitude and behavior throughout the whole conversation is a form of care, based on a strong concern for his interlocutor – and, in particular, for his interlocutor's soul. He is interested in Alcibiades' intellectual progress and, assuming Socrates knows what he is doing, his care can be seen as an illustration of how to properly care for someone else. If we want to find what proper care for another person is, we need to consider what characterizes Socrates' care.

With respect to this care, one thing is immediately obvious: namely, that the method of care employed in the text corresponds to the dialectical and elenctic method we find in many other dialogues. This method is not designed to impart views, but rather to change the attitude of those that are subjected to it. More precisely, it is meant to make others realize how bad

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[33] See in particular 133b-c: "[ΣΩ] ἆρ᾽ οὖν, ὦ φίλε Ἀλκιβιάδη, καὶ ψυχὴ εἰ μέλλει γνώσεσθαι αὑτήν, εἰς ψυχὴν αὐτῇ βλεπτέον, καὶ μάλιστ᾽ εἰς τοῦτον αὐτῆς τὸν τόπον ἐν ᾧ ἐγγίγνεται ἡ ψυχῆς ἀρετή, σοφία, καὶ εἰς ἄλλο ᾧ τοῦτο τυγχάνει ὅμοιον ὄν; [ΑΛ] ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ, ὦ Σώκρατες. [ΣΩ] ἔχομεν οὖν εἰπεῖν ὅτι ἐστὶ τῆς ψυχῆς θειότερον ἢ τοῦτο, περὶ ὃ τὸ εἰδέναι τε καὶ φρονεῖν ἐστιν; [ΑΛ] οὐκ ἔχομεν."
[34] Cp. 133c.

their cognitive state is and thus to persuade them to care for themselves. Doing so may require one to continue being cared for (i.e., examined) by the examiner, but it also implies that one will come to actively seek out the knowledge one is lacking. This is something we do not do spontaneously, because we are normally convinced we already know the most important things. Our attitude can only change, therefore, if our ignorance is exposed and if we become ashamed of it – and this is what Socratic elenchus aims at.

Several features of this elenctic method are expressly mentioned or at least portrayed in *Alcibiades I*. For instance, the examiner should be attentive to the other and see what motivates him – i.e., what he thinks he wants. This determines the topic of the inquiry and the questions asked, and the other should then answer honestly and say what he thinks.[35] This is precisely what allows Socrates to show him his cognitive limitations.

In the case of Alcibiades, Socrates starts by considering his limited credentials. He has not learned much, and yet he does not seek more knowledge. His tranquility and resoluteness show that he is convinced he knows everything necessary for entering politics. However, when asked about the main aspects of this knowledge, he hesitates, quickly becomes muddled, and shows he is unable to give satisfactory answers. He says many things, but he ends up admitting that he does not know what he is saying.[36] This happens because Socrates reveals how his answers are inconsistent and contradict other views he also espouses. He therefore has to deny what he has said and find a new answer, which again produces the same result. This whole process is then characterized as a state of wandering about or rambling (πλανᾶσθαι), which is only possible if one does not know something and at the same time thinks one knows it.[37] Alcibiades is in such a state – i.e., he is not just ignorant, but he is marked by disgraceful stupidity (ἐπονείδιστος ἀμαθία), which makes him think he knows the most important things when that is not the case.[38] This is why being examined is useful for him. After the elenctic process, Alcibiades is able to perceive his ignorance and it is at this point that he understands the need to search for the knowledge he lacks.

This is not the only outcome of Socratic or elenctic examination, though. By undergoing such an examination, Alcibiades also gains a deeper understanding of his motivations and his true goals, as well as of what he needs to achieve them. Elenctic

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[35] See 127e: "[ΑΛ.] Τί οὖν τὸν αἰσθανόμενον χρὴ ποιεῖν, ὦ Σώκρατες; [ΣΩ.] Ἀποκρίνεσθαι τὰ ἐρωτώμενα, ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη· καὶ ἐὰν τοῦτο ποιῇς, ἂν θεὸς θέλῃ, εἴ τι δεῖ καὶ τῇ ἐμῇ μαντείᾳ πιστεύειν, σύ τε κἀγὼ βέλτιον σχήσομεν."

[36] See 127d.

[37] See in particular 117aff.

[38] Cp. 118a-b.

examination may therefore end up transforming his life project – i.e., he may realize that what he actually wants is something different from what he thought. Socrates may be aiming precisely at this. He may be trying to show Alcibiades that there are some things that are more important than fame or honor. The question then is whether or not he succeeds, and why. But before discussing the effectiveness of Socrates' care, a few further remarks are in order.

First, it is important to note that the way Socratic examination is depicted in the dialogue seems designed to produce a certain effect on readers. The latter may identify themselves with Alcibiades, insofar as they may likewise easily accept certain views without being able to fully account for them. Moreover, readers, just like Alcibiades, do not receive any positive answer to the main questions of the dialogue, and so they are invited to examine everything in detail and seek out their own answers. The dramatic situation thus amplifies the effect of explicit discussions about the need to care for oneself, which themselves appear to aim at persuading readers to further examine matters such as those that Socrates discusses with Alcibiades.

At any rate, it seems clear that the elenctic process motivates others (be it those directly submitted to it or readers of the dialogue) to acquire the knowledge they lack – and especially knowledge about the most important matters. This will allow them to guide themselves in life and also to guide others or care for them. Indeed, ruling others (just like the other forms of care we mentioned above) presupposes knowledge. Socratic care, insofar as it motivates us to acquire this knowledge, is essential for all other forms of care. It not only qualifies us to intervene in the life of others, but it also allows us to be more aware of what others actually need and of how we should care for them. We must focus on their ψυχαί and try to improve them, which is primarily done by mobilizing them to search for (and possibly find) the knowledge they lack. Socratic care is thus the deepest form of caring for others, and political care is a derived or secondary form of care. It may give some good commands (if one is knowledgeable enough and the others accept to obey), and it may also promote some ἀρετή – but in order to properly do so, a ruler must first go through Socratic care. Moreover, if we admit that happiness is somehow connected with achieving wisdom and becoming self--sufficient in cognitive terms, it is not clear how a ruler as such could help others become truly happy. Socratic examination seems to be a necessary condition for such a process, given our cognitive limitations, and it requires personal contact and intimate conversation. One has to persuade individual others that they need to search for the truth and this is the best help one

can give them – at least if one wants to render them free and self-sufficient persons. Otherwise, they will always need to be submitted to others as if they were slaves.[39]

4. THE DEGREE OF EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCRATIC CARE

We must now consider how effective Socratic care can be, as well as what determines its degree of effectiveness. To begin with, the text stresses several times that this form of care is not necessarily successful. It does not necessarily improve others or render them able to rule the πόλις, much less the world. At first sight, this limitation is not exclusive to Socratic care. All forms of care mentioned above may fail to improve others – either because one does not possess the knowledge required to perform them in an appropriate manner, or because one does not know what others really desire or what actually makes them happy. But these are not the only obstacles. To a greater or lesser degree, all these forms of caring for others require others to accept them and not resist them. In the case of Socratic care, this adds a new layer of complexity. It is necessary to persuade others not only to care for themselves, but also to submit to philosophical examination or philosophical care. However, others may refuse care, just as they can reject Socrates' attempts at persuasion, and this renders the effectiveness of Socratic care particularly problematic.

Let us look at this in more detail. First, one might not be interested in Socrates and simply refuse to talk to him. One might also be unable to follow what he says and the course of the discussion. Moreover, Socrates stresses that there is a right age for one to care for oneself. If one is too young or too old, this care will not be successful.[40] In the dialogue, Alcibiades seems to fulfill all these conditions, and he goes on to perceive his ignorance and the need to care for himself. He even promises to start following Socrates. Socrates, however, is cautious about this and, from the reader's standpoint, there are good reasons for such caution.[41] Alcibiades did not learn enough from Socrates and ended up not improving the πόλις, while contributing instead in a decisive manner to its downfall. This is very important for understanding the text. The whole dialogue has an apologetic tone and it tries to exonerate Socrates from any wrongdoing. The problem is not Socrates, but rather the fact that his form of care is not absolutely effective. It all depends on the ones that are being cared for. They

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[39] For this idea of slavery, cp. 135c.
[40] See 105e-106a and 127d-e.
[41] Cp. 135d-e.

have to be able to keep examining and, before being able do that by themselves, they have to submit to and be helped by the examiner. Their self-care thus requires much effort and insistence, but it is not easy to have such a commitment. It all depends on one's inner disposition. One needs to have the right inner disposition if one is to commit to examination in an appropriate manner. But what is the right inner disposition, then?

If we look at the dialogue, we find several meaningful indications about this. First, Socrates lauds Alcibiades' ambition as a requirement of self-care.[42] This is something that may stimulate him to become wise. However, Socrates also calls attention to the power of the πόλις.[43] People in general can affect and corrupt Alcibiades. This does not mean that these people will force him to become bad. Socrates stresses that Alcibiades (like many others before him) could become a lover of the people (δημεραστής), which would result in him becoming morally corrupt.[44] In his efforts to gain the admiration of others, he might accept other people's standards and start guiding himself by them. He could learn from them and simply try to gratify them. He could then think he is good enough to rule others and neglect his self-care. As he himself says, he may only need to defeat his rivals in public contests and others will then accept him as their ruler.[45] This (along with the idea that he may have learned decisive things, such as what justice is, from οἱ πολλοί) shows that Alcibiades is already strongly inclined to acritically follow the views of those around him.[46]

This is the real source of risk for the Socratic project. Alcibiades is not truly dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge. He is rather dominated by the love of honor (φιλοτιμία). It is true that this love of honor is what allows him to recognize the importance of knowledge (insofar as he needs it to attain his goals). However, the love of honor is also what may lead him to neglect philosophical examination, and thus render Socratic care ineffective. The only way to avoid this ineffectiveness, according to Socrates, is by developing himself enough and learning everything that he needs to know before coming into contact with the πόλις (i.e., before entering politics). Only this will render him immune to the power of the πόλις.[47] He will not be ruled by it. Instead, he will truly rule it.

It is therefore clear that our inner disposition is decisive, and this applies not only to the love of honor, but also to the love of gain (to use a concept from the *Republic*). One may

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[42] Cp. 105aff.
[43] See 135e.
[44] See 132a.
[45] See 119b-c.
[46] Cp. 110dff.
[47] See 132b: "γύμνασαι πρῶτον, ὦ μακάριε, καὶ μάθε ἃ δεῖ μαθόντα ἰέναι ἐπὶ τὰ τῆς πόλεως, πρότερον δὲ μή, ἵν᾽ ἀλεξιφάρμακα ἔχων ἴῃς καὶ μηδὲν πάθῃς δεινόν."

use these motivations to try to turn someone to philosophy, but they are also what renders other things attractive and may therefore lead someone to refuse Socrates' care and neglect the philosophical project. In fact, the text suggests that this is precisely why his care of Alcibiades failed. It is not that Socrates did not know how to properly care for him (i.e., how to properly examine him) or that he did not try. It was Alcibiades who refused to be cared for and improved.

We could of course wonder whether Socratic care is not based on some questionable assumptions that render it (and its effectiveness) likewise questionable. For instance, Socrates seems to assume that it is possible for us to become truly virtuous and wise. However, we might submit ourselves to this method of examination and fail to acquire any real knowledge – either because we are not talented enough, or because knowledge in the proper sense of the word is unattainable. If this is the case, we might still improve ourselves by becoming aware of our ignorance, and this may produce a certain degree of virtue. But the effects of our self--care would be limited, since we would not be able to acquire the knowledge necessary to properly guide ourselves (and others) in life. We would be liable to make many mistakes and there might not be anyone we can entrust ourselves to. We would thus stand in a constant need of care and, at the same time, be unable to find a form of care that could satisfy this need.

Moreover, even if we assume true knowledge is attainable, the structural importance of Socratic care (and the kind of commitment it implies) raises another important question. It may take many years or many decades for us to attain knowledge. In the meanwhile, we may not be able to care for others, our belongings or our belongings' belongings in any way. But other people and things in general may still require us to act and intervene. There may be an urgent need to care for something or someone, even if we do not know how to properly care for them. Should we then neglect others until we really know what we are doing? And what could be the consequences of such a neglect?

Socratic care and all that it entails is indeed a very demanding project and even if it is necessary for us to live properly, it still takes long to produce its full effect. The question, then, is whether we are in a position to wait for it to be effective. Should we suspend all other forms of care of oneself and others until Socratic care is fully effective? Or should we find another solution? And how reliable can this solution be, if we do not yet possess sufficient knowledge?

5. THE POSSIBLE MOTIVATIONS FOR CARING FOR OTHERS

Up until this point, we have discussed the technique of caring for others and its efficiency, but very little has been said about the possible motivations that lead one to care for another. To a certain extent, this may seem irrelevant, since what matters is whether we really improve others or not. But the motives for our trying to improve them have ethical implications and they may also affect the way we care for them. We therefore need to briefly consider our motivations and their meaning for the project of caring for others.

The text seems to admit several different motivations. Some of them are relatively superficial and do not require the other to really be improved, while others are deeper and more genuine. Let us start with the more superficial reasons. Some people care for others in order to be paid or to gain something from them. This is apparently the case of the sophists or of those statesmen that are flatterers of the people.[48] One may also want to be admired or honored by others, as is the case of Alcibiades. In both these cases, one is not really concerned with the happiness of these others.

The same does not apply to the deeper motivations alluded to in the dialogue. One of these is Socrates' declared motivation. He says that he loves Alcibiades and love (if genuine) implies benevolence. One desires the good of one's beloved. This is particularly so when one is in love with the other's soul. In this case, one desires that this soul be as good as possible (which in itself seems to be an essential condition for happiness). A different question, though, is whether this love is purely altruistic or whether one still expects to gain some advantage from it, such as being loved and cared for in return, or learn something from the other. Indeed, one is perhaps always in need of care, and Socrates himself admits that this also applies to him. He needs education and he can learn from others.[49] Socrates also stresses the importance of looking at others in order to see one's own soul and its central part, wisdom.[50] One should thus be interested in having wise friends, in order to better know oneself and more easily acquire knowledge. In fact, even if one's friends were not wise, one could still learn something while examining them and caring for them like Socrates does. It is therefore unclear whether Socratic care is motivated by genuine benevolence or by self-interest. Both

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[48] See 119a and 120b.

[49] See 124b-c: "ἀλλὰ γὰρ κοινὴ βουλὴ ᾧτινι τρόπῳ ἂν ὅτι βέλτιστοι γενοίμεθα. ἐγὼ γάρ τοι οὐ περὶ μὲν σοῦ λέγω ὡς χρὴ παιδευθῆναι, περὶ ἐμοῦ δὲ οὔ: (…)."

[50] See 132dff.

things may even be compatible, at least up to a point, and one's care for others may thus include some benevolence, even if it is not pure benevolence.

In this context, it is important to consider one other possible motivation, which is not expressly mentioned in the text, even though we find references to it in other Platonic dialogues. Caring for others can indeed be a sort of duty (i.e., something we understand we have to do when we acquire knowledge) and if this is the case, it is something we carry out in order to do what is correct or to be as good as we can be. However, since this possibility is not explored in *Alcibiades I*, let us leave it aside.

One thing we must consider, though, is why there is no mention of this possibility or any detailed discussion of the problem in the text. The reason for this is straightforward. Socrates is not trying to convince Alcibiades to care for others. He wants Alcibiades to care for himself, and in order to do so he only needs to appeal to Alcibiades' ambition and his self-interest. The care of others seems less problematic, and Alcibiades seems to be already engaged in it, insofar as he wants to intervene in the affairs of the πόλις. This does not mean that his motivation for doing so is genuine or good. He seems to be moved solely by his ambition. However, there are other possible motivations for trying to rule others (just as there can be several motivations for caring for others in general). For instance, one may be aware that one would gain benefits by living in a good πόλις and thus one tries to improve one's πόλις. One may also try to rule and improve others out of benevolence or duty. There may even be several motives at the same time. However, according to *Alcibiades I*, it is not clear whether there is one ultimate reason for engaging in politics – just as it is not clear whether there is one ultimate reason for caring for others in general. We find some indications in the text, but nothing conclusive.

This may cause problems. Both in the case of Socratic care and in the case of political care we may come to a point where our care of ourselves and our care of others are at odds with each other (i.e., we may be forced to neglect ourselves in order to care for others or vice--versa). Precisely this renders the question of our motivation for caring for others particularly pressing. Why should we care for them? Or, to put it differently, how do others relate to our own self? We saw that our belongings and our belongings' belongings are subordinate to the self (i.e., to our ψυχή), but what about the ψυχή of others? Is it also subordinated to our own self, or does it constitute a kind of second self, as important as the first? And if the latter is the case (i.e., if there is an extension of one's identity to others), is this restricted to some others

in particular (namely, those that are closest to us), or does it include the entire πόλις and even all human beings?

These are complex questions and they render it difficult to determine the place the care of others is to occupy in our own relation to ourselves. Nevertheless, this is something we have to do if we are to determine how we are to care for others. How much we dedicate ourselves to caring for them and the scope of this care depend on it. We may make a greater or lesser effort, and likewise we may care only for those that are talented and have promise, or we may care for the whole πόλις or even all humanity. It is true that Socrates seems to admit certain limitations to care in *Alcibiades I*. Socratic care seems to be solely focused on Alcibiades or, at best, on those that are more talented and more able to rule the πόλις. These in turn will care for others by determining their behavior and imparting some virtue.[51] However, Socrates may simply be adopting Alcibiades' aristocratic outlook, in order to be more persuasive. It is not clear what Socrates thinks and his conversation with Alcibiades actually raises (even if implicitly) the question of whether and to what extent we should care for others.

Finally, it is important to briefly consider a possible objection to a view mentioned above – namely, the view that the technique of caring for others and its effectiveness are independent from one's motivations. We saw that the most important technique of caring for others aims at leading others to care for themselves and seek out the knowledge they lack. In order to attain this goal, one needs to examine the other, but one's disposition towards the other and one's intentions do not seem to be relevant. Different motivations may produce the same result. There is, however, the possibility that one's self-improvement is not just confined to knowledge and the virtue that corresponds to it. It may be the case that we also need to love and be loved in order to live a good life and be happy. If this is the case, having real concern for the other and being the object of their concern may be necessary for one's self--improvement. However, it is not easy to conceive of this possibility in the framework of Platonic thought, and it is not easy to see what its implications might be.

One thing seems certain, though. Even if we need to love and be loved, this does not mean that knowledge and the Socratic kind of care that improves it are irrelevant. We still have to determine what genuine love is and how we might attain it. Moreover, love itself and

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[51] In this sense, it does not differ much from the kind of aristocratism that underlies the *Republic*. The only difference is that we find a justification for this in the *Republic* (namely, the different natural constitutions of individuals), whereas in *Alcibiades I* there is no express justification of this aristocratism. It is simply assumed that some are supposed to stand out and rule others.

its benevolence may require all other forms of care we mentioned (education, politics and τέχναι), and thus everything we saw will still be necessary. In sum, it is not easy to escape the need for Socratic care. We may of course think we do not need it, but this is only because we are like Alcibiades. We are full of knowledge claims, which are in most cases (if not all) entirely false. We may thus all be on the road to a colossal failure and in need of much care in order to escape such a disaster.

6. FINAL REMARKS

Regardless of its possible limitations, the conversation between Socrates and Alcibiades presents an elaborate picture of human life and of its relation to the possibility of care. People need to be cared for and they may care (or try to care) for themselves and others. The analyses above have focused on the care of others, and considered how there can be many different forms of it (some of which may also be directed at oneself and improve oneself). Each of these forms of caring (or trying to care) for others may use the proper technique or not (and if it does not use, it may end up harming the other). Moreover, they are not all on the same level. Since they all depend on knowledge and our relation to the latter is often problematic, the most important form of caring for others is the one illustrated by Socrates. As we saw, Socratic care tries to promote the search for knowledge by making us realize that we lack it. As such, it is an important condition for political care and for all other forms of caring for others. Human life depends on it and its effectiveness is crucial.

We therefore find very significant indications about the care of others in *Alcibiades I*. The dialogue outlines a particular understanding of what is involved in caring for others or of what is required to really improve them. However, there are also several questions for which we find no specific answer in the text. As we have seen, it is not clear why one should care for others. Moreover, despite stressing the human need for knowledge, the text does not specify exactly what the knowledge in question is and how one can acquire it. It mentions the importance of self-knowledge, but it is vague about what such self-knowledge consists in and how it relates with other forms of knowledge – such as political or technical knowledge. Another question about which the text is vague concerns what one should do before acquiring the knowledge one needs. This is particularly relevant in the context of one's relation to others. One must decide whether one intervenes in the life of others or not, or whether one

entrusts this intervention to someone else. Others may stand in urgent need of care and one may not be in a position to postpone it, but in acting without reliable knowledge one is exposed to the possibility of committing serious mistakes and making the life of others (as well as one's own life) miserable.

All this allowed us to paint an intricate picture of the care of others. This picture could have been even more intricate had we considered in more detail the complexity of self-care. Indeed, the analyses above were very brief and a closer inspection of what is said in *Alcibiades I* about self-care could help us better understand not only the general conception of care contained in the text, but also the full complexity of the care of others. At any rate, by focusing on the care of others, it has been possible to show that the discussion in *Alcibiades I* is not entirely self-focused and does not confine itself to the question of self-care and self--knowledge. We have seen how one's relation with others plays a central role in the dialogue and not just insofar as the dialogue is concerned with political questions. At the core of the care of others as presented in *Alcibiades I* we find Socrates and his way of caring, and this is the basis which allows us to reconfigure all other forms of care (be it political, erotic, educative, technical or simply what is involved in virtues such as courage or justice). As a whole, this complex system of caring for others shows how our life is constitutively related to others and we depend on one another in many ways.

Finally, it is important to mention that the indications about the care of others that we find in *Alcibiades I* could also be developed by comparing them with other Platonic dialogues and even with the Platonic corpus as a whole. Indeed, the care of others is a central question in the corpus. It is closely connected with Plato's conceptions of love, friendship, politics, education, virtue and τέχνη. In addition, it is especially important to define the figure of Socrates, who is described as having a philanthropic character. It might even help us understand the status of the Platonic corpus itself, insofar as Plato's texts seem to be designed to affect readers and somehow help them. Consequently, whether Plato wrote *Alcibiades I* or not, we can use it as a means to better understand some essential aspects of the Platonic corpus. In this sense, the above analysis of the care of others is not concluded. On the contrary, it is just a first step.

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