

## The Self-Seeing Soul in the *Alcibiades I*

Daniel Werner

When I am alone, and quite alone,  
I play a game, and it's all my own.

I hide myself  
Behind myself,  
And then I try to find myself

I hide in the closet,  
Where no one can see;  
Then I start looking  
Around for me.

I hide myself  
And look for myself;  
There once was a shadow  
I took for myself.

I hide in a corner;  
I hide in the bed;  
And when I come near me  
I pull in my head! (A.B. Shiffrin, 'Hide and Seek')

The final pages of the *Alcibiades I* contain one of the most memorable and compelling images in the Platonic corpus.<sup>1</sup> Socrates has spent a good part of the dialogue attempting to rouse Alcibiades from his uncritical self-satisfaction, and to instill a sense of the importance of self-knowledge. In an effort to explain *how* one pursues self-knowledge, Socrates draws a comparison between the eye and the soul (132d-133c). In the visual realm, if we wish to see our own eye then we must use some kind of mirror. In particular, *the eye itself* can serve as a kind of mirror, as the pupil reflects images back to the viewer. By thus looking toward someone *else's* eye—the very thing that it is—our eye can come to see itself. The same structure of self-reflexivity holds, Socrates claims, in regard to self-knowledge. In order for a *soul* to know itself, it too must 'look' outside of itself, toward something that reflects back what it truly is. We do so by looking toward another soul. And just as the eye must look specifically toward a pupil, which is the 'best' part of the eye (since it is the part with which we see), so too must a soul look specifically toward the rational and intellectual part of another soul, as that is the best and most divine part of the soul.

<sup>1</sup> The authenticity of the dialogue is a matter of some dispute. Although I take the arguments in favor of authenticity to be convincing—see esp. Annas 1985, 112-115—I do not aim to contribute to the debate. Translations of the *Alcibiades I* are from Hutchinson 2006 sometimes modified.

Socrates' analogy is an arresting one, and is surely the dramatic and philosophical climax of the dialogue (cf. Forde 1987, 236). For one thing, the analogy is an explicitly erotic one, inviting us to imagine a pair of lovers gazing intently into each other's eyes (cf. Gordon 2003, 13). Indeed, it is perhaps *only* in an erotic context that one would ever gaze so intently into another's eyes as to see one's own reflection. This eroticism is, in turn, a kind of culmination of the dramatic movement of the *Alcibiades I*, given the flirtatious interplay between Socrates and Alcibiades that characterizes the whole dialogue. On a philosophical level, too, the analogy seemingly promises a resolution of the very issue that has been present from the opening scene—what self-knowledge is, and how we can attain it. Here at last, if anywhere, we might finally get some concrete guidance as to what we need to *do* in order to fulfill the Delphic command ('know thyself', 132c). Yet it is precisely here that Socrates' imagistic gesture withholds as much as it reveals, leaving us to wonder about fundamental questions: What, exactly, is the 'self' that we are endeavoring to know, and what are we endeavoring to know about it? On a concrete level, *how* do we 'look' into another person's soul—what sort of look is it, and how does it reflect us back to ourselves? Why must the individual pursuit of self-knowledge be dependent on the presence of an other? What are the benefits of pursuing self-knowledge? Finally, is the kind of self-knowledge described here actually attainable?

Despite the fact that Socrates' analogy has attracted a fair amount of scholarly attention, there has not yet been an attempt to answer (or even to pose) these questions in a thorough and systematic way, and in a way that makes use of the dialogue as a whole (as opposed simply to the immediate context of the passage).<sup>2</sup> It is my aim to remedy this situation and to provide an in-depth interpretation of Socrates' analogy. Some have claimed that Socrates simply leaves his analogy as an intentional ambiguity, without indicating what it might mean on a more concrete level.<sup>3</sup> But I believe that such a view is mistaken, and that there are in fact a number of indications and clues in the course of the *Alcibiades I* as to the nature and significance of one's 'look' into another soul. I shall argue that the self-knowledge that we seek by looking at another soul has at least two dimensions, (1) a particular or personal one relating to knowledge of one's ignorance, limitations, desires, and character-type, and (2) a universal or impersonal one relating to the divine ground of all selfhood and being. The method whereby we pursue this look is to be found in none other than philosophical dialogue, which

<sup>2</sup> Commentators who have discussed the passage include: Annas 1985, 131-133, Blitz 1995, 355, Clark 1955, 238-239, Forde 1987, 236, Friedländer 1964, 237-238, Goldin 1993, 14-16, Gordon 2003, 12-13, Johnson 1999, 8-14, Johnson 2003, xvi-xvii, Lutz 1998, 124-125, and Scott 2000, 96-97.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Annas 1985, 133, who claims that the ideas broached at the end of the *Alcibiades I* are not developed but are left 'at the level of image and metaphor...Plato has, we feel, like Heraclitus, left us with sayings which are deep but dark'; and Johnson 1999, 10, who claims that the passage is 'simple in outline but mysterious in its depths, no doubt intentionally so'. (Also cf. Grote 1865, 357-358, who argues that Socrates professes to give a concrete solution to Alcibiades but ultimately fails to do so.)

can serve to mirror us back to ourselves. The unique characteristics of dialogue will in turn explain why the pursuit of self-knowledge—at least for incarnate humans—requires the presence of an other. Yet the *Alcibiades I* also contains a cautionary note, hinting that there are limits both to our ability to attain self-knowledge and to Socrates' own account of what self-knowledge is. In this way, the *Alcibiades I* will exemplify the central concept discussed in it and invite us to further reflection.

### Self-Knowledge and the Individual

Socrates' eye analogy is an attempt to explain how one might go about fulfilling the inscription on the temple of Delphi ('know thyself'). But as Socrates himself points out (128e-129a), a prior question must first be addressed: what *sort* of thing is the 'self' that we are endeavoring to know? After all, to paraphrase Meno's famous paradox of inquiry, if we have *no* idea what we are looking for, then it is unclear how we could ever initiate a search to find it (and, likewise, how we might ever realize that we had successfully found it). So, before attempting to understand how we might attain self-knowledge, Socrates must first offer at least a preliminary sense of what sort of 'self' is the subject of inquiry.

Two successive arguments immediately preceding the eye analogy prepare the way for an answer. In the first argument (127e-129a), Socrates offers a distinction between a *thing itself* and that which *belongs* to the thing. For example, shoes belong to but are not identical with the feet; so the skill (τέχνη) used in caring for one's shoes (shoemaking) is not the same as the skill used in caring for one's feet (athletics). As applied to the issue of self-knowledge, this necessitates that we distinguish the 'self' from what merely belongs to the self. In the second argument (129b-131a), Socrates pursues this distinction by way of the body-soul duality and the notion of use (χρησθαί). A user of a thing is different from—and rules over—the thing that is being used, as in the case of a cutter who is using a cutting tool. As applied to the question of the self, this suggests (or so Socrates claims) that a person is not identical with his or her body, given that we use and rule over our bodies. It follows, then, that the self is to be identified with the *soul*, and that we are nothing other than our soul.<sup>4</sup>

The logic of these arguments is suspicious—a fact to which Socrates himself calls attention, and the implications of which I will have occasion to consider in greater detail below. But for the time being, we can see that these two arguments do prepare the way for Socrates' self-seeing eye analogy, since the latter takes for granted that self-knowledge involves one soul coming to know itself by 'looking' into another soul. On the most basic level, then, to know ourselves is to know our soul. But what does that mean? Merely knowing *that* we are our soul can hardly be sufficient for possessing self-knowledge, for otherwise the fulfillment of the Delphic command would not be the 'difficult' matter that Socrates claims it is (129a). The key question, then, is what sorts of things we are (or ought to be)

<sup>4</sup> Socrates in fact considers but rejects a third possibility, the body-soul 'compound'.

endeavoring to know *about* our self, above and beyond knowledge of the bare fact that it is a soul.

One major aspect of the knowledge of the self involves what I shall call a *particular* or *personal* dimension, that is, knowledge of things that are unique to one's individual soul. This includes, on the one hand, a knowledge of one's ignorance(s), in an intellectual sense; and, on the other hand, a knowledge of one's character, encompassing such things as natural dispositions and temperaments, current desires, pleasures, pains, fears, and hopes, as well as other related character traits. Throughout the *Alcibiades I* Socrates makes it clear that, far from being a fluffy side matter, knowledge of such things is integral to a proper understanding of one's self. In several passages, for instance, Socrates emphatically declares the importance of knowing one's ignorance: it is a necessary precondition for all learning and discovery, since someone who already claims to know *X* has no desire to inquire into it (106d-e; 109d-110d); and knowledge of one's ignorance prevents the sort of harm that arises when, supposing ourselves to have knowledge that we lack, we act in a hasty and unstable manner, particularly in a political context (116e-118b). Clearly, then, knowledge of one's ignorance—the content of which is unique to each individual—is a central part of self-knowledge in the *Alcibiades I*.

In addition to talking *about* the particular or personal dimension of self-knowledge, Socrates also *dramatizes* it in the course of his conversation with Alcibiades. The *Alcibiades I*, that is, has a performative level of meaning as much as it has a discursive one. In the course of the dialogue Alcibiades presents himself as an excessively self-assured and ambitious young man, someone who is eager to take a leading part in political affairs but is also too impatient to follow any long-term course of preparation. Moreover, he shows no awareness of these character traits, and is a paradigmatic example of someone who lacks self-knowledge. Much of Socrates' task in the *Alcibiades I* is thus to help his interlocutor to know himself—to know, in particular, the nature of his own ignorance, desires, and character, since it is only by knowing these things that Alcibiades can hope to achieve genuine 'success' (political or otherwise).

This process begins right in the opening scene, where Socrates—acting much like a physician—offers an extended analysis of Alcibiades' character and a diagnosis of his faults. Consider the sorts of things that Socrates enumerates in his introductory speech: Alcibiades' haughty and dismissive treatment of others (103b); his extreme sense of self-sufficiency and independence (104a), owing to his grandiose claim to possess the greatest beauty, nobility, circle of friends, education, and wealth (104a-c); his sense of entitlement, as demonstrated by his conceited expectation that he will be immediately honored by the Athenians (105a-b); and his seemingly boundless ambition, such that nothing less than absolute power will suffice (105a-c). Socrates does not offer this litany merely as a way of browbeating or embarrassing Alcibiades. Rather, he is genuinely seeking to help Alcibiades to know himself, in this case with respect to the nature of the desires, hopes, ambitions, and values that are particular to Alcibiades' soul.

Indeed Alcibiades' response at 106a indicates that he himself does not recognize the true nature of his own desires and ambitions (or else is in denial about them), and stands to benefit from Socrates bringing them to light.<sup>5</sup> Thus the fact that the *Alcibiades I* begins in this way (with Socrates' speech and Alcibiades' cagey reply) suggests that, whatever else self-knowledge might entail, knowledge of *these* sorts of things (specific to each individual) is going to be an integral part of it. If Alcibiades cannot even recognize the nature of his own pride and ambition, then what hope can there be for him to arrive at other sorts of knowledge?<sup>6</sup>

Socrates' attempt to bring Alcibiades to a greater degree of self-knowledge, in the sense of knowing his own particular soul, propels much of the drama of the first half of the *Alcibiades I*.<sup>7</sup> Two further examples will illustrate the point. The first is the extended discussion of justice that occupies much of the first part of the dialogue. Although Alcibiades claims that he will be an effective advisor to the Athenians, he is initially unable to say what his expertise consists in, and eventually claims to be able to advise in regard to war and peace (106c-107d). But this in turn requires knowledge of justice, so as to know when, against whom, and for how long it is better (or worse) to wage war or make peace (107d-109c). Yet as Socrates effectively demonstrates, Alcibiades has no idea what justice actually is: for one thing, it seems impossible that Alcibiades could have ever discovered it on his own or learned it from anyone else, since he is unable to identify who his teachers were or when he possessed a genuine desire to know it (109d-112d).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, if he did in fact know what justice was, then he would have been able to defend his claim about the relation of the just and the advantageous against Socrates' sustained attack (or else would not have made the claim in the first place).<sup>9</sup> Whatever the logic of Socrates' arguments here might be, the

<sup>5</sup> Alcibiades does not admit to possessing the characteristics listed by Socrates, and would instead seem to prefer to deny them (ἐὰν μὴ φῶ, 106a5). But, recognizing the difficulty of persuading (πείθειν) Socrates, he acquiesces to what is said in wholly conditional terms (εἰ μὲν οὖν ἐγὼ ταῦτα διανοοῦμαι ἢ μή...εἰ δὲ δὴ ὅτι μάλιστα ταῦτα διανενοῦμαι, 106a4-7).

<sup>6</sup> As a number of commentators have noted, in the course of the dialogue Socrates deftly *uses* and *manipulates* Alcibiades' ambition—rather than just trying to tamp it down—as a way of goading the latter toward a more philosophical stance (Gordon 2003; O'Connor 1999). Socrates' opening speech is a case in point: he effectively 'pumps up' Alcibiades with a catalogue of everything that the latter desires, while simultaneously insisting that only he (Socrates) can provide the kind of help needed for Alcibiades to attain those desires and ambitions (105d).

<sup>7</sup> Following Friedländer 1964 and Forde 1987, I see the dialogue as being structurally tripartite: (1) a first half (up to 119a) in which Socrates endeavors primarily (by way of *elenchus*) to expose Alcibiades' ignorance; (2) a transitional section consisting of the 'royal tale' (119a-124b); and (3) a second half in which there is a new (or renewed) inquiry into the nature of self-care and self-knowledge (124b-end).

<sup>8</sup> He cannot have discovered it on his own, since doing so would have required the knowledge that he did not know it (a self-knowledge that Alcibiades seemingly never possessed); and he cannot have learned it from others, since no experts on the matter seem to be available.

<sup>9</sup> The passage, in brief, is this: Alcibiades claims that the just and the advantageous are entirely distinct from one another. In reply, Socrates argues that (a) what is just is καλός, (b) what is καλός is ἀγαθός, (c) what is ἀγαθός is συμφέροντα, and, hence, that (d) what is just is συμφέροντα. As Gordon 2003, 17-19 insightfully points out, Socrates' argument—whatever its logical merits or flaws

upshot is that Alcibiades—in his utter inability to respond to those arguments—is ignorant with regard to the very thing that he claims superiority. This throws into question both Alcibiades’ suitability as a political adviser as well as the entire educational and social system that produced him.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, as Socrates points out, Alcibiades does not *recognize* his ignorance, something that is not only ‘the most disgraceful sort of stupidity’ (118a) but also dangerous, since those who presume to have knowledge will act on it and will not defer to the expertise of others (116e-118b). So we see, once again, that knowing one’s ignorance is a crucial part of the self-knowledge that is the focus of the *Alcibiades I*.

A second example of the personal dimension of self-knowledge occurs in the so-called ‘royal tale’, Socrates’ speech regarding the (alleged) virtues of the Persians and the Spartans (120e-124b). Given the length of the speech and its structural position in the *Alcibiades I*, effecting the transition between the two main halves of the dialogue, we would expect it to play an important role in the dialogue. Yet we might understandably be confused about what that role is, given that the speech is a seeming paean to the very things, such as wealth and good looks, that Socrates emphatically declares to be irrelevant to one’s virtue and alien to one’s true self.<sup>11</sup> The puzzle here disappears once we realize that Socrates is using this speech for a specific dialogical end, namely, to promote Alcibiades’ self-knowledge and to help turn him in a more philosophical direction. Socrates knows the sort of person that Alcibiades is, and so crafts a speech that appeals to the very things that will move him: noble ancestry (120e-121b), public honor and recognition (121b-c), awe-inspiring power (121c), noble education (121d-122b), good looks (121d), and wealth (122b-123c). It is not that Socrates values these things, but that they are the basis of an effective rhetorical and psychagogic strategy.<sup>12</sup> However, Socrates’ aim in the royal tale is not just to move Alcibiades, but to move him *precisely by showing him who he is*. In this way (as Gordon 2003, 14-15 has noted) the royal tale offers Alcibiades a kind of image of himself, transposed onto the Persian and Spartan scene—here, in Socrates’ very speech, Alcibiades might come to recognize himself as someone

might be—is perfectly tailored for the kind of person that Alcibiades is. For Alcibiades is not going to be motivated to inquire into justice out of purely disinterested motives; rather, he must be convinced that doing so *is in his interest*, and this is precisely what Socrates’ arguments implies (since, according to the argument, justice is *always* advantageous). In this way, Socrates demonstrates a twofold knowledge of Alcibiades: first, a knowledge of Alcibiades’ ignorance (in regard to justice); and second, a knowledge of the sorts of considerations that might move Alcibiades (given his character-type).

<sup>10</sup> As Gordon 2003, 19 notes, Alcibiades is ‘the paradigmatic product of the Athenian democracy’s ruling class’, so to indict him as being ignorant is to indict his alleged teachers, including (most notably) Pericles.

<sup>11</sup> Note esp. 129b-132a where Socrates argues that neither one’s body nor one’s external possessions (e.g., wealth) are to be identified with one’s true self. Moreover, as Gordon 2003, 14 notes, even *within* the royal tale there is a note of dissent, as the mother of the king emphasizes *care and wisdom* (ἐπιμελεία τε καὶ σοφία, 123d) as the real riches, and not material wealth.

<sup>12</sup> There is also the fact that Socrates’ speech features prominent royal women (123c-124a), which no doubt appeals to Alcibiades’ seductive-erotic nature.

with a misplaced ambition for wealth, power, and recognition.<sup>13</sup> And if Alcibiades can arrive at this self-recognition, he will be better off because of it.

### Self-Knowledge and the Universal

We see, then, that a critical part of self-knowledge involves knowing things that are unique to the individual. Socrates says as much outright (in his emphasis on the value of knowing one's ignorance), and also shows it through his various attempts to bring Alcibiades to an awareness of the faulty nature of his desires, ambitions, and values. At the very least, Alcibiades must come to understand who he is as an individual, and why his current character-state will ultimately be an impediment toward the attainment of his goals. I have been at pains to emphasize these points because there is another line of interpretation—advanced by Annas 1985 and Johnson 1999 that I will call the 'universalist' view—according to which Platonic self-knowledge is wholly impersonal, involving objective facts about oneself and/or universal truths that transcend the individual self altogether. A major motive for this view (at least for Annas 1985, 121) seems to be the desire to distinguish the *Alcibiades I* from modern-day notions of the 'self', as nowadays we might think that self-knowledge is 'attained by means like thinking over one's past actions or by techniques like psychoanalysis'. I share the desire to disentangle Plato from modern-day assumptions, but I also think there is a false dichotomy involved in the universalist interpretation, as if the only alternative to a psychoanalytic understanding of the self is a wholly transcendent one. In fact, Socrates in the *Alcibiades I* seems to me to articulate a middle position: a notion of the self that does involve *unique* and *personal* qualities (one's desires, ambitions, and ignorances), but where those qualities are also *objective* in nature (insofar as the nature of one's soul can be externally diagnosed and verified).<sup>14</sup>

Yet while the universalist interpretation goes too far in excluding individual factors from the notion of self-knowledge, it rightly turns our attention to the fact that self-knowledge is not *merely* a matter involving individual characteristics, and indeed that the most *important* or *deepest* kind of self-knowledge involves elements that go beyond the individual (and are shared by all souls). There are in fact good textual grounds for this broader interpretation of self-knowledge. For one thing, it is implied by the very metaphor that Socrates employs. As Johnson 1999, 9 has well noted, when we look into another eye we do not simply see our own individuated eye with its distinctive color, but the *pupil*, which is the part of the eye that is shared—universally, without differentiating colors—with all other

<sup>13</sup> To my knowledge, she is the only commentator on the dialogue who has properly understood (or even attempted to understand) the dialogical role of the royal tale.

<sup>14</sup> Socrates seems to assume in the *Alcibiades I* that it is possible for an individual to be mistaken about the nature of his/her own soul, whereas an external observer might offer a correct assessment of it. Indeed the one strong knowledge-claim that Socrates makes in the dialogue occurs in his opening speech, as he is offering his diagnosis of Alcibiades' character: 'I know well (εὖ οἶδα) that this is your ambition—I'm not just guessing (οὐκ εἰκάζω) about it' (105c). Underlying this view is likely the assumption that knowledge and virtue always express themselves in right action.

eyes. This suggests a notion of self-knowledge as involving features that go beyond just the individual self.

Several other passages in the *Alcibiades I* similarly point toward a broader and deeper foundation. Especially notable are Socrates' oblique references to 'the self itself' (αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό, 129b1, 130d4). According to Socrates, the only way in which we can discover what *we ourselves* are (τί ποτ' ἔσμὲν αὐτοί, 129b2), with respect to our individual selves, is to discover what *the self itself* is (129b1-3, 130e2-3). This statement seems to set up a contrast between a particular self (αὐτὸ ἕκαστον, 130d4) and a general or universal self ('the self itself'). But what exactly is the αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό? The *Alcibiades I* does not resolve this question decisively, but the language in these passages suggests at least two possibilities. The first is knowledge of the soul *as such*, that is, knowledge of the nature of the soul considered apart from the individuating characteristics that arise in particular embodied souls. To know the 'self', in this sense, is thus to engage in the kind of broad psychological inquiry that we witness in other dialogues (like the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*), where Socrates investigates what sorts of parts (if any) the soul has, the immortality of the soul (or lack thereof), and so on. And the αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό might refer particularly to the *rational* part of the soul, the part of the soul that (like the pupil of the eye) all humans have in common and that defines us as human (cf. Annas 1985, 131). This psychological interpretation of αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό is suggested, again, by Socrates' very metaphor: just as an eye gains a reflection not just of itself but (potentially) of the *whole body*, so too can an other-regarding soul gain a reflection of itself in its totality, as a whole soul (Forde 1987, 236). Socrates' multiple references to σωφροσύνη in the dialogue (131b, 133c, 134a-c)—and, especially, his claim that self-knowledge and σωφροσύνη are inseparable—also suggest that knowing oneself involves moral psychology.

Yet there is a second sense of 'the self itself' beyond knowledge of soul. For consider Socrates' cagey remark at 130d3-6:

We should first consider what the self itself is. But in fact, we have been considering what a particular self is, instead of what the self itself is. Perhaps that will be sufficient, for surely nothing about us has more authority than the soul, wouldn't you agree?

The implication here is that even a general inquiry into the nature of ψυχή is insufficient for yielding complete self-knowledge, since ψυχή is connected to our particular self (αὐτὸ ἕκαστον) rather than 'the self itself'.<sup>15</sup> I suggest, then, that αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό must have a second sense, one that goes beyond even general knowledge of psychology. In this deeper sense, the αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό refers to a ground of the 'self' in the ultimate being or thing itself. Although he does not make the point explicitly, Socrates' phrasing here ('the X itself') makes it very

<sup>15</sup> When Socrates says that 'we have been considering what a particular self is', he is referring to the arguments just completed (viz., that the self is to be identified with soul, and not the body or one's external possessions).



likely that he is referring to a Form.<sup>16</sup> If so, then the *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* as a Form has a key causal role. ‘The self itself’ is ‘that which will be responsible for any thing’s being the very thing it is’, i.e., the fact that a thing is a ‘self’ at all, and hence also it is ‘that principle the apprehension of which is in every case necessary in order that one know a thing to be the self it is’.<sup>17</sup>

This dimension of *self*-knowledge is further revealed by a key passage in which Socrates makes reference to the divine. Just as an eye sees itself by looking toward the best part of another eye (the pupil), so too can a soul come to know itself by looking toward the best part of another soul. Socrates then elaborates on what this means (133c1-6):

Can we say that there is anything about the soul which is more divine than that where knowing and understanding take place? ...Then that region in it resembles the divine (τῷ θεῖῳ),<sup>18</sup> and someone who looked at that and knew everything divine (πάν τὸ θεῖον)—god and understanding (θεόν τε καὶ φρόνησιν)—would best know himself as well.<sup>19</sup>

This statement seemingly broadens the scope of self-knowledge even further, insofar as it is by knowing *everything divine* (including god) that we best know who we ourselves are. And in fact this is not the first time in the *Alcibiades I* that the divine has been made manifest—it is a recurring theme in the dialogue as a whole.<sup>20</sup> There are, for instance, a number of casual mentions of traditional Greek gods in the course of the dialogue.<sup>21</sup> But, more deeply, the divine is embedded in the overall structure of the *Alcibiades I*. Right in the opening scene Socrates’ *δαμόνιον* is prominent, as the stated cause of Socrates’ previous refusal to enter into conversation with Alcibiades (103a, 105d). Then, at the mid-point of the dialogue—immediately after the royal tale—Socrates again refers to his *δαμόνιον*, this time emphasizing its connection to self-care and philosophi-

<sup>16</sup> Others who interpret *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* as referring to the Forms include Allen 1962, Goldin 1993, and Friedländer 1964.

<sup>17</sup> Goldin 1993, 11. I am very indebted to his nuanced interpretation of the *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό*. Admittedly, the sense of Socrates’ statements here remains obscure.

<sup>18</sup> I accept (with Hutchinson 2006) the variant reading τῷ θεῖῳ, instead of τῷ θεῷ. Denyer 2001, 235-236 retains the latter, on the grounds that the former would make Socrates’ statement ‘pointless’. But there is no pointlessness or redundancy here: the claim that the rational part of the soul is *most* divine is distinct from the claim that the rational part *resembles* the divine. Whereas the first claim is laudatory—reminding us of the best part of ourselves—the second claim is humbling, reminding us that we are *like* the divine but not identical with it.

<sup>19</sup> Hutchinson 2006 emends θεόν (‘god’) to θεάν (‘vision’), but there seems to be little justification for doing so; indeed it is unclear what θεάν would mean in this context.

<sup>20</sup> *Contra* Gordon 2003, 22-23, who seeks to minimize the importance of the divine in the dialogue.

<sup>21</sup> There are references to the Muses (108c), Zeus Philios (109d), the inscription at the temple of Delphi (124a, 129a, 132c), as well as an unnamed god who makes an offer to Alcibiades (105a, b). Part of Socrates’ point here may be to shake up Alcibiades even more, and to show him the amount of ‘divine dispensation’ that is involved in educational efforts. (My thanks to the editor of *Ancient Philology* for this suggestion.)

cal inquiry (124c). Finally, in the closing pages of the dialogue, Socrates hints that it is ‘up to the god’ as to whether Alcibiades will be able to escape his present state of ignorance and arrive at a better state (135d; 127e). These strategic references at the beginning, mid-point, and end of the dialogue are no doubt meant to bring Alcibiades—and us as readers—to a wider frame of reference, and to an awareness that self-knowledge in some way involves the divine.<sup>22</sup>

But as was the case with Socrates’ references to ‘the self itself’, it is unclear what Socrates has in mind when he says that we must ‘know the divine’. To what do τὸ θεῖον (133c4, 5) and τὸ θεόν (133c5) refer? Many commentators claim (or assume) that God—a conscious, cognizing, all-powerful deity of some sort—is Socrates’ referent here. On this reading, then, it is by looking toward God (capital ‘G’) that we can come to know ourselves in the fullest sense.<sup>23</sup> As intriguing as this interpretation is, it strikes me as both unfounded and unnecessary. Indeed it is unlikely that Plato would, at the very end of the dialogue, insert in passing a quite radical theological claim—amounting to a kind of monotheist mysticism—that is out of keeping with the rest of the *Alcibiades I* as well as the other dialogues.<sup>24</sup> Nothing in the rest of the *Alcibiades I* has prepared us for such a claim, and it would be very odd for Socrates to drop the idea as soon as he introduces it.

I suggest, instead, that we might interpret the references to τὸ θεῖον and τὸ θεόν in light of Socrates’ earlier arguments, and in particular his earlier references to ‘the self itself’ (which I have suggested is a reference to the Forms).<sup>25</sup> Instead of pointing toward a conscious or personal deity, τὸ θεόν may simply be

<sup>22</sup> Indeed Plato is deliberately tantalizing in his presentation of this theme. In the initial passage (103a5-6), Socrates says that ‘later’ Alcibiades will learn about the power (δύναμιν) of his δαίμόνιον. At first glance it might seem (as Denyer 2001, 84 claims) that this promise is never fulfilled. But in fact the later references to the divine make it clear the power in question is precisely that which is enabling of self-knowledge.

<sup>23</sup> See, e.g., Clark 1955, 238-239, Friedländer 1964, 237, Johnson 1999 (*passim*), and Denyer 2001, 235-237. (Johnson 1999, e.g., claims that God is the ‘divine and universal soul’ [14], the ‘one self behind all human selves’ [15].) This interpretation might be bolstered if we knew for a fact that lines 133c8-17 of the text were authentic. For in those lines Socrates says the following: ‘Just as mirrors are clearer, purer, and brighter than the reflecting surface of the eye, isn’t god both purer and brighter than the best part of our soul? ... So the way that we can best see and know ourselves is to use the finest mirror available and look at god and, on the human level, at the virtue of the soul’. Yet these lines come to us from only one manuscript source (Eusebius), and accordingly most scholars have rejected them as a later Neoplatonist interpolation.

<sup>24</sup> Clark 1955 claims that the ‘God’ interpretation, as well as the disputed Eusebius lines, are consistent with the *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*, and in keeping with the latter dialogue she interprets ‘looking toward God’ to mean ‘looking toward the heavens’. But aside from the fact that this cosmological interpretation has no support from the *Alcibiades I* itself, it contradicts the *Phaedrus* as well, where Socrates says that the gods are ‘divine’ because of their relation to the Forms (249c)—a statement that implicitly denies the possibility of there being an all-powerful deity that is the highest reality. Denyer 2001, 235, for his part, argues that the notion of ‘likeness to God’ occurs in a number of other dialogues. But the passages he cites (like *Republic* 589d) involve references to the *divine*, and not (necessarily) to a ‘God’.

<sup>25</sup> The references to the αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό and to the θεῖον/θεόν are distinct, and commentators have not generally asked how they might be related.

a shorthand description of *the highest reality* and *that which is most real*.<sup>26</sup> In the context of the *Alcibiades I* and its discussion of self-knowledge and reality as ‘the self itself’, the Form could be that in virtue of which a given thing (or ‘self’) is what it is. This is indeed something divine, insofar as it is eternal, transcends the mutable human realm, and is the precondition for human cognition and speech. In urging Alcibiades to look toward ‘the divine’ and ‘the self itself’, Socrates is thus suggesting that self-knowledge—in its deepest sense—relates to a kind of ‘self’ (or principle) that is objective, transcendent, and impersonal; a kind of self that is distinct from the everyday, embodied self with which we are familiar.<sup>27</sup>

The self-knowledge intimated in Socrates’ self-seeing eye analogy thus has a twofold sense. On the one hand, we are endeavoring to know our self in its particularity, with respect to the ignorances, character, temperament, desires, pleasures, and pains of our individual soul. On the other hand, we are endeavoring to know the broader foundation of our selfhood, both in terms of knowing the nature of ψυχή as such and in terms of knowing the divine ‘self itself’ that underlies it. Now it is certainly true that the latter affords a *deeper* and *truer* understanding of ourselves, insofar as it reveals the ultimate cause of our self (cf. Annas 1985, 133, Johnson 1999, 15-16, and Scott 2000, 97). Yet *both* aspects of self-knowledge are still necessary to fulfill the Delphic command, as Socrates interprets it, and indeed they are inseparable. After all, Socrates’ entire point in the *Alcibiades I* is that his interlocutor will be unable to achieve any real political success without first gaining knowledge of justice and other general concepts related to politics; but Alcibiades will be unable to know *that* unless he first comes to recognize his present ignorance and failure properly to cultivate himself. And this point is perfectly general: we cannot attain the higher kinds of philosophical knowledge—including knowledge of ‘the self itself’—unless we first come to terms with ourselves in our present (particular) condition and arrive at a desire to know.<sup>28</sup> (If we do not know our various ignorances, then we will not have a desire to inquire; and if we do not know our character-types and dispositions, then we will fail to recognize the impediments that might stand in the way of our learning.) Conversely, if we achieve the higher kinds of knowledge, that will in turn enable us to better grasp our soul in its particularity. So while self-knowledge extends to ultimate being, it is not exhausted by that dimension; we

<sup>26</sup> Annas 1985, 132-133 is the only other commentator to have appreciated this point. By contrast, the commentators noted above have simply tended to conflate ‘the divine’ with ‘God’.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Annas 1985, 133, Goldin 1993, 15, Johnson 2003, xvii, and Scott 2000, 97. In this respect, the question of self-knowledge is not just ‘Who am I?’ but ‘What am I?’ (cf. Johnson 1999, 15).

<sup>28</sup> The Neoplatonist commentators on Plato show a keen awareness of this point. Both Proclus and the author of the *Anonymous Prolegomena* declare self-knowledge to be the foundation of all philosophy, and insist that we must know ourselves before knowing external things, including higher philosophical truths (Proclus in O’Neill 1965, 1-7; *Anonymous* in Westerink 1962, 48). Proclus further likened self-knowledge to the initiation and purification process of the Mysteries—the necessary first step before the ultimate vision can occur. Accordingly, both authors declare the *Alcibiades I* to be the dialogue with which students of Plato should begin.

remain embodied creatures, and the process of knowing ourselves must reflect that fact.<sup>29</sup>

### Self-Knowledge and Dialogue

We now have a sense (at least in outline) of *what* we are striving to know when we pursue self-knowledge, namely, an understanding of the self in both its particularity and universality. Nonetheless, this does not yet reveal *how* precisely we are supposed to pursue that understanding, despite that fact that Socrates' eye analogy ostensibly addresses that very issue. What, concretely, are we supposed to be doing when we 'look' into another soul? In what does the looking consist? And how does this look reflect us back to ourselves? I will now argue that it is through philosophical *dialogue*—in both its oral and written incarnations—that we can achieve the kind of self-seeing soul that Socrates describes.<sup>30</sup>

Dialogue is in fact a recurring and prominent theme in the *Alcibiades I*. Right in the opening scene, Socrates informs us that—as a result of his divine sign—it is διαλέγεσθαι, specifically, that he has heretofore avoided with Alcibiades (103a4, 105e7, 124c9). This of course sets up an implied contrast with Alcibiades' other suitors, who were interested in things other than conversation. Socrates then makes clear what he expects from Alcibiades, if their present conversation is to be a fruitful one: to engage in short question-and-answer, and not the kind of long speech-making to which Alcibiades is accustomed (106b). Elsewhere in the *Alcibiades I* Socrates lays out further necessary features of dialogue, including a willingness to be consistent (113e), to inquire in a cooperative spirit (119b, 124c, e), to accept *aporia* when it arises (116e), to persevere and not give up too easily (124d, 126d), and to take responsibility for one's statements (112d, 114e). Socrates makes a number of explicit claims regarding the power of dialogue, and draws an explicit connection between dialogue and self-knowledge: it is through dialogue that Socrates will be able to *show* or *prove* (ἐνδείξασθαι) to Alcibiades that the latter has the kind of character that Socrates described (106b2-4); it is through dialogue that both of them can *become better* (127e5-7); and dialogue will provide an 'antidote' (ἀλεξιφάρμακα, 132b2) against being harmed by the city.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Again, I emphasize this point because of the false dichotomy to which some previous commentators seem to have succumbed, as they have either elevated the divine/impersonal/transcendent element to an all-important status (Johnson 1999, Annas 1985) or have sought to minimize that element (Gordon 2003). But as I noted earlier, the fact that an eye can see the *whole* body reflected in another eye suggests that a soul endeavors to know the *whole* self reflected in another soul—and the 'whole' would include both particularity and universality.

<sup>30</sup> The idea that dialogue might be the key to understanding Socrates' analogy has been suggested before; see Annas 1985, 132, Gordon 2003, Johnson 1999, 9, and Scott 2000, 99-113. But this suggestion has mostly been left at a level of generality, and has not yet been explored in detail.

<sup>31</sup> On the medical analogy also cf. 131d2, where Socrates says that he will not leave Alcibiades until the latter is 'healed' or 'cured' (ἴη).

### Dialogue as Reflection

All of this suggests that Socrates' eye analogy ultimately points toward dialogue as the best method of gaining self-knowledge. But *how*, exactly, does dialogue enable us to see ourselves vis-à-vis another soul? There are, I think, three ways in which it does so. The first is what we have already seen in Socrates' varied attempts to lure Alcibiades toward a more philosophical stance. Socrates frames the royal tale (120e-124b) around Alcibiades' current values and ambitions—money, good looks, reputation, and power—as a way of trying to move the latter toward a better state. Likewise, Socrates' extended argument to prove the identity of justice and advantage (114e-116d) plays off of Alcibiades' current mindset, as Socrates recognizes that his interlocutor will not be moved to action unless he can be convinced that it is in his own interest (advantage) to do so (Gordon 2003, 19). In both cases, Socrates is effectively *reflecting Alcibiades back to himself*, revealing things that the latter does not yet see. And this corresponds well with the language used in Socrates' analogy, as one soul tries to see itself in another soul. In this case, Socrates holds up by discourse a mirror to his interlocutor, albeit a mirror that Socrates has fashioned in an attempt to imitate his interlocutor. Accordingly, we may call this type of 'soul-reflection' a *mimetic* one (i.e., a reflection based on one individual's μίμησις of another).<sup>32</sup>

Second, Alcibiades' *own* words and experiences in the course of the dialogue can potentially reveal to him the nature of his current self (in its particularity). Socrates emphasizes that, in the course of a dialogue, it is the *respondent* (Alcibiades) who is 'saying things' (λέγων)—i.e., making assertions—and not the questioner (Socrates) (112e-113b). Moreover, it is only by asserting things oneself that one can ever be persuaded of their truth (114e). Participation in dialogue therefore forces Alcibiades to take *ownership* over his statements as well as his intellectual and emotional reactions, for they are ineluctably *his*. Once Alcibiades learns to accept this ownership, he can gain a deeper understanding into the nature of his (current) self. We witness this process most dramatically in the first half of the dialogue, as Alcibiades gradually comes to grasp his ignorance regarding justice and virtue: he admits that he does not know what is 'better' in regards to war and peace (his presumed area of advising expertise), and that it is shameful for him not to know it (108e-109a); he admits that he does not know the nature of justice (113b-c), and instead is completely at a loss, unable to give con-

<sup>32</sup> I am inspired here by the notion of *mimetic irony* developed in Miller 2004 [1980] (a notion in turn adapted from René Schaerer). Miller describes how 'Socrates, faced with an interlocutor's resistance to self-examination, deliberately pretends to agree with the latter's own unexamined opinions and conceits while all along, by his tone and by carefully indirect statements, giving hints of his real disagreement...in opposing Socrates [the interlocutor] finds himself opposing Socrates' feigned agreement and admiration; that is, he finds himself coming into explicit disagreement with and criticism of his own opinions and conceit, and thus expressing not his own but Socrates' real views. In this manner what was at first perhaps a vague insecurity is transformed into an inescapable self-examination' (xxix). It is thus that the dialogues 'imitate or put on stage the encounter between philosophy and current opinion' (xxviii).

sistent answers (116e);<sup>33</sup> he concedes that he has been in a most shameful state for a long time, without knowing it (127d); and he even agrees with Socrates that he is guilty of the ‘most disgraceful kind of stupidity’ insofar as he claims to know what he does not in fact know (118a). Alcibiades comes to these realizations directly as a result of his conversation with Socrates, and specifically as a result of observing his own confusions and inadequate answers that are elicited by that conversation. It is thus that Alcibiades in interaction with another soul comes to be a spectator of his own soul, arriving at a greater understanding of his present state.<sup>34</sup>

Third, dialogue offers us an opportunity not only to grasp the self that we currently are, but also a better self that we might become. Though Socrates would be the last to claim omniscience or perfection, he does know that he is in a better state than Alcibiades. Accordingly, a large part of his aim in the *Alcibiades I* is to *show* this to his interlocutor, in word and in deed, and thus serve as a kind of philosophical role model (something of which the young Alcibiades is in desperate need). For example, Socrates goes out of his way to emphasize that *he too* is in need of education and cultivation, just as much as Alcibiades is—a statement that exemplifies the self-awareness that a philosopher ought to possess (124c). Likewise, Socrates’ willingness to challenge traditional values (money, fame, etc.) and authority figures (like Pericles, 118c-119a), and instead to defer to his δαίμόνιον, present Alcibiades a kind of mindset that is worth emulating. The Socrates-as-model dimension of dialogue also extends to the elenctic inquiry itself, as Socrates explicitly encourages Alcibiades to *imitate* him (πειρῶ ἐμὲ μιμεῖσθαι, 108b5) in the search for clearer definitions; while Alcibiades, for his part, asks Socrates to *lead the way* (ἐξηγείσθαι, 132b5) in the inquiry. The mimetic aspect of dialogue, then, involves not only Socrates’ mimesis of Alcibiades’ current self, but also—hopefully—Alcibiades’ mimesis of Socrates’ paradigmatic self.<sup>35</sup> By the end of the dialogue Alcibiades shows at least a preliminary interest in the latter project, promising to follow Socrates wherever he goes and to cultivate himself (135d-e).

If the above account of the nature of dialogue is correct, then the meaning of

<sup>33</sup> The issue of consistency is an important one, since disagreement—both *between* individuals and *within oneself*—is a sign of ignorance (111b-c; 126c-d). Alcibiades refuses to adhere to (or perhaps does not recall) previous arguments that remain in force (113e), a sign of his inconsistency.

<sup>34</sup> Proclus identifies some of the specific aspects of dialogue that promote self-knowledge: exhortation, dissuasion, refutation, elicitation, praise, and blame (in O’Neill 1965, 5-6).

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Scott 2000, 100. This in turn promotes Alcibiades’ self-knowledge, since to the extent that he grasps what Socrates *is* he also grasps what he (Alcibiades) presently *is not*. My account here differs from Miller 2004 [1980] and Gordon 2003, both of whom (rightly) emphasize the ways in which Socrates reflects Alcibiades’ *current* self (through mimetic irony), but neglect the ways in which Socrates also offers a vision of an *alternate* self. My account also differs from that of Aristotle, whose account of a paradigmatic ‘friendship for virtue’ places emphasis on the *similarity* of friends to one another and the notion of a friend as a ‘another self’ (*NE* viii-ix). Nothing in the *Alcibiades I* rules out the Aristotelian kind of friendship; it simply does not display it. (The Socrates-Alcibiades relationship depicted here would instead seem to correspond to Aristotle’s notion of a friendship among *unequals*, which falls short of the ‘complete friendship’ achievable by equals.)

Socrates' self-seeing eye analogy—and the concrete method involved in pursuing self-knowledge—are now coming into clearer focus. We can say, in sum, that our 'look' toward another soul involves a look at both *words* (λόγοι) and *actions* (ἔργα). The λόγοι include those of our dialogue-partner, who (like Socrates) can fashion a discursive mirror in a way that we ourselves cannot, and who might offer ideas and questions that reveal the limitedness (or correctness) of our present understanding. The λόγοι are also our own, as our verbal responses in the course of a dialogue reveal the present state of our understanding and character.<sup>36</sup> As Socrates notes, our self—the soul, who a person truly is—is distinct from the words that we use, just as a shoemaker is distinct from the tool (knife) that he uses; so when we engage in dialogue with someone, our λόγοι are a kind of tool directed from one soul to another soul (129b-c; 130e). Yet even if λόγοι are not identical with the self, it is also true that the words we use (and the way that we use them) are a *reflection* of the self, just as a shoemaker's choice of tool and manner of using it are a reflection of his skill level.<sup>37</sup> In this way dialogical λόγοι offer a path toward self-knowledge.

At the same time, our focus ought not be exclusively a discursive one, as the look toward *actions* is equally important for gaining self-knowledge.<sup>38</sup> As with the λόγοι, the actions in question are twofold: they are those of our interlocutor, whose behavior might supply a positive example for emulation (as with Socrates' calm manner of inquiry, or his righteous frustration with Alcibiades' 'stupidity' [118a], or his fear for the future [135e]) or a negative example for avoidance; and they are those of ourselves, since our intellectual and emotional responses in the course of a conversation might be revealing in unexpected ways (as with Alcibiades' feeling of being cornered [114d], or his newfound eagerness to attend upon Socrates [135d]). Naturally, from Socrates' point of view, the true λόγος and the right ἔργον are inseparable. This is why Alcibiades' declaration of newfound intellectual commitment is both welcomed by Socrates and met with skepticism, for it has yet to be tested in the light of day (135d-e). Socrates knows that words are not enough, and Plato's readers would have known exactly the sort of actions to which the real Alcibiades later succumbed.

### The Need for the Other

My account of the role of dialogue in the pursuit of self-knowledge has a further implication: that an individual's pursuit of self-knowledge *requires* the presence of another soul. This point is already implied in Socrates' analogy of the

<sup>36</sup> Again, I am interpreting the 'look toward another soul' in a broader sense, to include not only the words *of* the other but also our own words as elicited *by* the other.

<sup>37</sup> Λόγοι are imitations of our thought, and our thought constitutes much of our self. Λόγοι also relate to the issue of consistency, since those who truly understand something (at least in the case of simple objects and concepts) use the same words for it (111b-c).

<sup>38</sup> I take 'action' to encompass anything (beyond λόγοι) that is outwardly or physically expressed, including not only 'dramatic' doings (such as Alcibiades' drunken stumbling in the *Symposium*) but also emotional reactions or changes (whether or not they are externally visible).

eye. While Socrates acknowledges that one can use a typical (inanimate) mirror to look at one's eye (132e4), he seemingly discounts it in favor of the mirror-like pupil. But why? Would not an actual mirror be a better route to self-seeing than a mirror-like substitute? In fact there are real benefits that arise from having a 'second eye' (or set of eyes) in the equation: if we are using a glass mirror, then all we see is our eye as it is directly reflected; but if another person is present, our eye can see itself in a richer sense, as both a *reflected* object (our eye as reflected by the other pupil) and as an object *instantiated outside of itself* (the other pupil).

Likewise, involving another person in our pursuit of psychic self-knowledge brings benefits which are missing from a purely individual or private inquiry (or an impersonal reflecting source, if any such thing exists).<sup>39</sup> As my above account suggests, philosophical dialogue reveals both Alcibiades' current self and an alternate self (Socrates) that he might become. Socrates also varies his approach to Alcibiades in the course of the dialogue, alternately appealing to Alcibiades' ambition, *eros*, and sense of shame as a way of moving him to a more philosophical stance. All of these aspects of dialogue are things that Alcibiades could not (and likely would not) achieve on his own, thereby making philosophical dialogue essential to his attainment of self-knowledge.

One might object here that it is only Alcibiades and Alcibiades-type individuals who need the promptings of dialogue in order to pursue self-knowledge; by contrast, someone who is philosophically and morally mature (like Socrates) can dispense with interpersonal dialogue (or at least not rely on it so heavily). Indeed, one might think that philosophical cognition consists precisely in an 'internal dialogue' with oneself. Such a view, however, overstates the capabilities of the incarnate philosopher. While Plato does advance the idea that human thought consists in the soul having a 'silent conversation' with itself (*Theaetetus* 189e-190a and *Sophist* 263e), he is also consistent in emphasizing the haughtiness of incarnate claims to finality or certitude (including in the *Alcibiades I*, as we will see below). As such, even mature philosophers require an other, that is, an astute interlocutor who will challenge their claims in unexpected ways and be alert to biases and blind spots that one might overlook. (Not even a Socrates could claim to have complete awareness of all of his desires, for instance.) In this way, interpersonal philosophical dialogue possesses a level of fluidity and interactivity that make it essential for the pursuit of self-knowledge.

Thus far my account of dialogue has focused on the way in which it promotes knowledge of the self in its particularity, as exemplified by Alcibiades' growing awareness of his own ignorance and inadequacies, and by Socrates' twofold method of reflection (the reflection of Alcibiades' current character, and the presentation of a better alternative). But what about knowledge of the self in its uni-

<sup>39</sup> It is doubtful that there exists any such thing as a literal mirror for the soul, at least not in the way that a mirror exists in the visible realm. So Plato may be raising the problem of self-reflexivity, namely, the difficulty (and perhaps impossibility) of grasping oneself as an object in the way that others can grasp us. (Cf. the *Magna Moralia* 1213a16ff., which raises this problem explicitly, viz., that we cannot see what we are from ourselves.)



versal and divine aspects? In what way are we supposed to attain such higher-order knowledge? Indeed one might object here that if knowledge of the universal involves a direct grasp of the αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό, then we do not need dialogue with (or a look toward) another soul to attain it; instead, there would be a divine mirror that transcends the human realm and directly reflects the nature of the self in its deepest sense.<sup>40</sup> Dialogue would then become something secondary or perhaps even dispensable in the pursuit of self-knowledge. In fact, however, it is through dialogue that we come to appreciate our ignorance, and the pursuit and attainment of knowledge requires an initial desire to know, a desire that arises only when we recognize our own ignorance (106d-e; 109d-110d; 116e-118b). In this way, we cannot ascend to higher kinds of philosophical knowledge unless we first have engaged in some examination of our character, desires, and values (an examination that interpersonal dialogue promotes in uniquely effective ways). Alcibiades cannot hope to inquire into the nature of the αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό until he sees through his current superficiality and excesses.<sup>41</sup>

This is no doubt what Socrates has in mind when he advises Alcibiades to engage in *training* (γύμνασαι, 132b1; ἀσκεῖν, 120b8) and to *prepare himself* (παρεσκευασμένον, 120c1) and *learn what needs to be learned* (132b; 120b7) before entering politics.<sup>42</sup> The type of philosophical dialogue depicted in the *Alcibiades I* provides this training, as it forces self-examination and so (potentially) prepares the individual for more advanced kinds of inquiry.<sup>43</sup>

Even granting that the search for self-knowledge may require the presence of another, a question still remains: *Whose* soul are we supposed to be looking at? Would any soul do? Judging by the dramatic example of the *Alcibiades I*, the answer would seem to be, ‘look toward someone like Socrates’. Here we must observe that the model of inquiry depicted in the *Alcibiades I*—as in all of Plato’s dialogues— involves one interlocutor who is superior and philosophically advanced, and another interlocutor who is subordinate and philosophically inept or less experienced. Alcibiades indeed *needs* a Socrates, someone who perceptive enough to diagnose his flaws, virtuous enough to care for his improvement, and philosophical enough to possess the tools for effecting improvement. Were Alcibiades to turn toward a lesser soul—someone like himself, or worse—he almost assuredly would not gain an opportunity for the sort of substantive dialogue that can help lead him toward self-knowledge.<sup>44</sup> This is why Socrates takes

<sup>40</sup> For this view see Johnson 1999. Lines 133c8-17 of the text (the Eusebius passage), were they known to be authentic, might provide support for this view. But as I noted above (see n23), that passage is highly doubtful.

<sup>41</sup> Again, cf. the Neoplatonic commentators on this point (n28 above).

<sup>42</sup> A good analysis of these passages is in Scott 2000, 99-116 (who rightly interprets ‘preparation’ as referring to dialogue).

<sup>43</sup> Does this mean that philosophical dialogue is but a preliminary part of one’s inquiry into the self, such that it can ultimately be left behind? Such a view might be plausible if we (as incarnate humans) were capable of fully accessing the αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό. But as I shall argue below, we lack that capability.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Scott. Here I disagree with Johnson 1999, 9, who claims that ‘the important thing is that

pains to disparage Alcibiades' other suitors (131c-e), the *hoi polloi* (132a, 135e), and contemporary politicians like Pericles (118b-119a)—all of whom might be attractive to Alcibiades, but who will inevitably fail to promote his self-cultivation. Instead, Socrates presents himself as Alcibiades' only *true* lover (131c-e), and as the *only* one who can help him achieve his aims (105d).<sup>45</sup>

Admittedly, the superior/subordinate model of dialogical interaction presented in the *Alcibiades I* leaves a number of questions unanswered. For example, how we are supposed to find the right kind of soul—the soul to whom we are supposed to direct our 'look'—in the quest for self-knowledge? Alcibiades is clearly in no position to be able select an appropriate partner on his own; for as Scott 2000, 96-97 notes, the ability to discern a wise soul presupposes the very wisdom and self-knowledge which Alcibiades is lacking. It would seem, then, that the initiation of the inquiry depends largely on Socrates taking the right kind of interest in him, as well as on a certain element of luck (like having a chance meeting in the street).<sup>46</sup> But why would someone like Socrates take an interest in an Alcibiades in the first place, and commit himself to the project of furthering someone else's self-knowledge? Socrates is not likely to further his own self-knowledge in the encounter, or at least not to the extent that Alcibiades is, given the latter's inability to reciprocate fully. Here we can only speculate that it is Socrates' recognition of the potentiality and ambition of Alcibiades that requires his intervention.<sup>47</sup>

### Self-Knowledge and the Written Dialogue-Form

My central claim has been that philosophical dialogue is the method that Socrates has in mind when he suggests looking toward another soul as a way of

the other person be a friend or lover'. Simply being one's friend or lover is not enough, since there are many *bad* friends and lovers. It is no doubt possible that, were Alcibiades to spend time with someone like himself, he could come to see himself in the other. But in that scenario, the important thing is for him to *dislike* what he sees—an evaluative stance that requires a *better alternative* as a frame of comparison (and, hence, the presence of a Socrates). Moreover, it is not enough for one's dialogue-partner to contribute unknowingly to the pursuit of self-knowledge; a more active stance is required.

<sup>45</sup> Socrates' bold claim here is plausible (barely) only if we interpret it as a contingent claim, i.e., as a claim about the present availability of the right kind of philosophical lovers in fifth century Athens. As a logical claim it is patently false; for presumably another philosopher *like* Socrates would serve Alcibiades' interests just as well. For those of us who no longer have access to Socrates, a Socrates-like figure is presumably what we are supposed to be looking for.

<sup>46</sup> This should not bother us, given how large a role luck plays in matters of *eros*. Alcibiades could very well take it upon himself to approach someone who has a reputation for wisdom—but of course reputations are often poorly founded.

<sup>47</sup> But to whom, then, should Socrates turn when he wishes to pursue his own self-knowledge? Presumably it is to another like-minded philosopher, that is, to an intellectual peer and equal. If this is right, then we should regard the superior/subordinate model of dialogue depicted in the *Alcibiades I* as just one possible instantiation of the method of pursuing self-knowledge. Another, more philosophically rich model of dialogue would involve a meeting of two or more 'mature' philosophers, and would offer ever more complex routes to self-knowledge. Such a model of dialogue is nowhere depicted in Plato's works, but is instead left open as a tantalizing prospect for those who are able to cultivate themselves in the way that Alcibiades does not.

gaining self-knowledge. In arguing for this claim, I have so far focused on the kind of dialogue that is *depicted* in the *Alcibiades I*, that is, oral conversation between two or more individuals. But there is another kind of dialogue present here, the kind of dialogue that the *Alcibiades I* itself *is*, namely, a written text. What I now wish to suggest is that it is through this text that we as readers can be drawn into the process of self-examination, just as Alcibiades is drawn into the process by Socrates. In this way, the *Alcibiades I* itself (as well as the other Platonic dialogues) can serve as a mirror for *our* souls, and thus offer a means of attaining self-knowledge.<sup>48</sup>

On one level, the *Alcibiades I* promotes the reader's self-knowledge in ways that are parallel with the experiences of its namesake interlocutor. Just as Socrates uses various discourses (like the royal tale and the justice-advantage argument) to hold up a mirror to Alcibiades—reflecting the latter's current character and values—so too do the discourses of the *Alcibiades I* hold up a mirror to *us*. We all have a little bit of Alcibiades in us, even if only in passing moments; for who has not experienced ambition, or a desire for recognition, or an unjustified claim to certainty (cf. Proclus' remarks [in O'Neill 1965, 5])? Socrates' psychagogic discourses therefore speak as much to us as to Alcibiades, enabling us to recognize ourselves (or aspects of ourselves) and to be spectators of ourselves.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, as the very experience of participating in dialogue proves to be instructive for Alcibiades, so too might our experience of reading the *Alcibiades I* prove to be instructive for us. After encountering Socrates' arguments we too might arrive at moments of *aporia*, which would in turn lead us to be more cognizant of our ignorance. We too might feel an element of shame or frustration, which might propel us to further inquiry. Finally, just as the man Socrates offers a model of a 'better self' to Alcibiades, so too does the character Socrates offer a compelling image to us. In comparing ourselves (favorably or unfavorably) to him, we are forced to consider who we presently are, who we are not, and who we want to be.

In all of these ways, then, the experience of the reader runs parallel to the experience of Alcibiades. But there is more. For as external spectators of the dialogue we have a perspective on it that the interlocutors do not, and there are layers of meaning uniquely available to us. In the case of the *Alcibiades I*, the most prominent example of this are the dark lines with which the dialogue ends (135d-e):

*Alcibiades*: We're probably going to change roles, Socrates.  
I'll be playing yours and you'll be playing mind, for from this

<sup>48</sup> This is not a new idea; in antiquity it was first suggested by some of the Neoplatonist commentators on Plato (see Proclus' commentary on the *Alcibiades I* [in O'Neill 1965, 4-5, 7]; and the *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy* [in Westerink 1962, 48]). Curiously, however, this idea has largely been absent among modern commentators on the dialogue (though cf. Miller 2004 [1980] for a discussion of the idea generally).

<sup>49</sup> As Miller 2004 [1980], xviii put the point, 'the dialogues essentially put some element of the audience itself on stage...the nonphilosopher, in hearing the dialogues, is presented with his own attitudes and opinions, dramatically objectified'.

day forward I will never fail to attend on you, and you will always have me as your attendant.

*Socrates:* Then my love for you, my excellent friend, will be just like a stork: after hatching a winged love in you, it will be cared for by it in return.

*Alcibiades:* Yes, that's right. I'll start to cultivate justice in myself right now.

*Socrates:* I should like to believe that you will persevere, but I'm afraid—not because I distrust your nature, but because I know how powerful the city is—I'm afraid it might get the better of both me and you.

The reader knows, as neither of the interlocutors does, the actual fate of both men. Alcibiades would become involved in a series of disastrous military campaigns and allegations of religious desecration, and would ultimately be exiled and murdered. Socrates would also meet his end at the hands of the Athenian democracy, executed on charges of corruption and impiety. Ultimately, then, the 'powerful city' would indeed 'get the better' of both men, regarding them (for different reasons) as dangerous to the established order (on the concluding lines, cf. esp. Gordon 2003, 28-29). For us as readers these lines give an added meaning to the dialogue, and serve as a cautionary note. Alcibiades may indeed seem resolved here to cultivate himself, but *we* know that he will fail to do so; and by being aware of that failure, we are also given a warning as to the negative consequences of our *own* failure. This should give us an added impetus to further the project of our own self-knowledge and self-care. At the same time, the example and fate of Socrates warn us that no amount of self-knowledge can protect us from the vicissitudes of the social-political reality, and hence that our notion of 'success' will need re-definition.

In addition to being able to observe the drama as outsiders, we have a privileged perspective in another way, insofar as we can question, re-examine, and extend the arguments of the dialogue in ways that the two interlocutors do not. Socrates makes a variety of controversial claims in the course of the *Alcibiades I*, such as the identity of justice and advantage, and the identity of self and soul. Although Alcibiades is too inept to object, we as readers have the ability to go back through the text and consider whether Socrates' arguments are as conclusive as they seem. In doing so, we are engaging in dialogue in a deeper way, and thereby advancing our own self-knowledge. This also applies to aspects of the *Alcibiades I* that are ambiguous or unclear, including the *self-seeing eye analogy itself*. To examine Socrates' image—as I have been doing—is to raise questions about what the 'self' is, whether and how the self can be known, and why knowledge of the self matters. Such questioning is itself a kind of dialogue (with the text), one that forces self-examination upon us in a unique way.<sup>50</sup> In this sense,

<sup>50</sup> For an especially insightful discussion of role of imagery in the dialogues, see Gordon 1999 (esp. ch. 6). She notes, rightly, that engaging with the imagery of the dialogues is a characteristically Platonic task.

the indirect and tantalizing nature of Socrates' imagery is no accident, since it serves to provoke the reader to pursue the very thing (self-knowledge) that is being discussed.

Admittedly, dialogue with a real person is potentially a much better way of pursuing self-knowledge than is dialogue with a text. This is because oral dialogue involves a level of interactivity and reciprocity that is missing from one's engagement with a written text.<sup>51</sup> In particular, while our engagement with a written text can promote a process of self-questioning, the text itself forever remains a 'silent partner' that is incapable of serving as an external check on that self-questioning. Written dialogue is not thereby precluded from playing a role in one's pursuit of self-knowledge, but it is given something of a subordinate role. Still, subordinate or not, Plato's written dialogues may offer a crucial opportunity for our own examination. For while, ideally, we would all find a Socrates-like figure with whom to have philosophical dialogue, such intellectual and moral exemplars are not easily or always found.<sup>52</sup> Written Platonic dialogue thus offers something to the reader who may be bereft of true lovers, in the same way that Socrates offers something to Alcibiades. And in one way, at least, the written *Alcibiades I* offers an advantage over the oral conversation depicted in it, namely, insofar as it *promotes a second-order awareness and illustrates the very idea that it is propounding*. Although (within the dialogue) Alcibiades achieves a preliminary, first-order awareness of his own ignorance and inadequacies, he does not yet conceptualize the difficulties involved in trying to rectify the situation and coming to terms with his 'self'. We as readers, however, are aware of the fact that *Alcibiades does not see himself as we see him*; and this, in turn, brings to our attention the very problem of the 'self' as a possible object of knowledge. In this way, a written dialogue—in virtue of the reader's ability to have a bird's eye view and to go back and re-examine earlier text—can exemplify and dramatize ideas in ways that many oral conversations do not, and so offer us a powerful provocation toward self-knowledge.

#### The Limits of Self-Seeing and the Limits of the *Alcibiades I*

Socrates' image of the self-seeing eye, as I have been interpreting it, has an explicitly psychagogic purpose. For Alcibiades and for the reader the image offers a vivid indication of the importance of self-knowledge, as well as a preliminary suggestion as to how to attain self-knowledge. If Alcibiades continues to engage in dialogue with Socrates, he can potentially gain a deeper understanding of his self in both its particular and universal aspects. Likewise, if we as readers

<sup>51</sup> This is a point powerfully made in *Phaedrus* 274cff. For instance, a written text is incapable of defending itself, or answering our questions; and it says the same one thing forever.

<sup>52</sup> Scott 2000, 97 acknowledges this problem, and suggests that Socrates' reference to 'the divine' and 'the self itself' are a solution. However, while it is true that (as Scott notes) philosophical dialogue among friends must be guided by something beyond the human, it is also true (if what I argued earlier is right) that our access to the divine must be *prepared for* by way of interpersonal dialogue—and, hence, that the divine cannot simply be a substitute for it.

critically re-examine the text and follow its pointers, we too can be led in a direction of greater self-understanding. Yet alongside this optimistic strain of the text, the *Alcibiades I* also contains a cautionary note—an indication that things are not quite as straightforward as they might appear, and hence that our pursuit of self-knowledge should be tempered by an awareness of the nature of the endeavor. This cautionary note emerges in two ways.

First, there are indications that self-knowledge—of the sort to which Socrates' image points—is not actually attainable, at least not in a complete or adequate way.<sup>53</sup> Notice, for example, the cagey and tentative language that Socrates uses to describe the nature of the inquiry (129a):

*Socrates:* Is it actually such an easy thing to know oneself? Was it some simpleton (τις φαῦλος) who inscribed those words on the temple wall at Delphi? Or is it difficult, and not for everybody?

*Alcibiades:* Sometimes I think, Socrates, that anyone can do it, but then sometimes I think it's extremely difficult.

*Socrates:* But Alcibiades, whether it's easy or not, nevertheless this is the situation we're in: if we know ourselves, then we might be able to know how to cultivate ourselves (τῆν ἐπιμέλειαν ἡμῶν), but if we don't know ourselves, we'll never know how.

Socrates clearly does not think that a φαῦλος inscribed 'know thyself' at Delphi, since the command is associated with a god (124c; 132c). So the task is an exceedingly difficult one. Moreover, not only does Socrates avoid declaring self-knowledge to be attainable—his knowledge-verbs are participles (γνόντες...ἀγνοοῦντες, 129a8-9) that are conditional in nature—but he says that, even if it *were* attainable, it still would not guarantee knowledge of the ἐπιμέλειαν of the self (we 'might', τάχ', know the latter). The same tentative language occurs a few pages later, where Socrates asks, 'How can we get the clearest knowledge of our soul? If we know that, we'd probably know ourselves as well' (132c). Again we find a conditional participle (γνόντες, c8) as well as a note of caution ('probably', ὡς ἔιοικεν, c8). So the suggestion is that knowledge of the soul and of the self—at least of the 'clearest' (ἐναοργέστατα) sort—lies beyond human ability.

There are further reasons to think that self-knowledge is not attainable. For one thing, the problem of self-reflexivity—the fact that we can never literally see ourselves as an object in the way that others see us—makes the quest for self-knowledge an inherently problematic one. Socrates' very analogy shows an awareness of this problem, since in looking toward another eye or soul what we receive is an *image* or *reflection* of ourselves, and not the original reality. And images, as the dialogues repeatedly remind us, invariably involve some sort of distortion and

<sup>53</sup> This is a point that previous commentators on the *Alcibiades I* have neglected (though it is hinted at by O'Connor 1999, 43, 47, 49 and Scott 2000, 92). Most are silent on the issue, or else assume that it is attainable (e.g., Clark 1955, 238-239).

falsification of the original reality (cf. Johnson 1999, 9). So it is questionable whether we can ever have access to our true ‘self’.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, the fact that the pursuit of self-knowledge is always rooted in sociality (vis-à-vis the practice of philosophical dialogue) raises a further problem, namely, the problem of finding a suitable ‘other’ who can adequately reflect us back to ourselves. No other self or soul is perfect, not even Socrates; so if our attainment of self-knowledge depends (in part) on that other, then there is a limit inherent in the inquiry. It is perhaps for this reason that Socrates tells Alcibiades that they will become better ‘if god is willing’ (ἂν θεὸς θέλῃ, 127e6)—a reminder of the role of luck in one’s philosophical pursuits, and the always-imperfect contexts in which philosophy finds itself.<sup>55</sup>

The second cautionary note concerns the status of the *Alcibiades I* itself and its very account of self-knowledge. My tone might suggest that we can reasonably treat the various claims of the dialogue—like the claim that the self is the soul, or that there is an αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό—as final, in the sense that Plato would defend them as being true. But in fact the *Alcibiades I* (like most of Plato’s dialogues) disclaims its own authority, and raises doubts as to whether its account of self-knowledge should be treated as the final word. Again, notice the cagey language that Socrates uses to describe many of his own arguments and claims: the identity of τὸ καλόν and τὸ ἀγαθόν is said to be proven ‘from *this* argument’ (ἐκ γὰρ τούτου τοῦ λόγου, 116c5); Alcibiades’ claim about the ordinariness of the Persian king and Spartan generals is said to be false ‘on the basis of what is likely’ (ἐκ τῶν εἰκότων σκέψαι, 120d9-10); and knowledge of the αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό is that which will ‘perhaps’ (τάχ’, 129b2) enable us to know what we ourselves are. Perhaps most damningly, the entire argument that undergirds the self-seeing eye analogy—the argument to prove that the self is identical with the soul, and not the body or composite (129bff.)—is on rather shaky philosophical and logical grounds.<sup>56</sup> Socrates himself admits as much, saying that (130c8-d1), ‘If we’ve proven it fairly well (μετρίως) but not rigorously (ἀκριβῶς), that will do for us. We will know these things rigorously when we discover what we just now skipped over [the αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό], on account of it being a long inquiry.’

And again, at 132b7, Socrates says that they have ‘likely’ (ἐπιεικῶς) agreed as to what the self is. The *Alcibiades I* thus offers us a provisional proof that satisfies the demands of the moment—a proof good enough for Alcibiades, who fails to seek more precision—but hardly a complete or adequate or definitive way of

<sup>54</sup> This is true even (or perhaps especially) if our true self is the αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό, for there are plenty of passages in the dialogues that cast doubt upon the ability of incarnate humans to gain complete knowledge of the Forms.

<sup>55</sup> A reminder that perhaps hardly needs to be given, in light of the fate to which Socrates (and Alcibiades) would both succumb (alluded to in the final lines of the *Alcibiades I*).

<sup>56</sup> For example, Socrates appeals to a distinction between a user of a thing and the thing being used. But his most important example of this idea—that a self (soul) is distinct from the λόγοι that he/she uses (129b-c)—is questionable and undefended; indeed, might there not be a sense in which a soul *is* its λόγοι? Likewise, Socrates neglects the possibility of a soul itself being used or ruling itself (Johnson 1999, 5-6).

demonstrating the nature of the self. As such, the entire analogy of the self-seeing eye is itself brought into question, suggesting that we ought to determine if we can see it for ourselves.<sup>57</sup>

This result should of course have been expected all along, since it is in the form of an *image* that Socrates casts his analogy. Socrates offers no argument to show that the eye and the soul are analogous, and no doubt Plato would expect us (as readers) to notice that fact and call it into question (Scott 2000, 96; Johnson 1999, 8). It has been suggested by some commentators that the resort to imagery in the final pages of the *Alcibiades I* is a result of the inadequacy of Socrates' previous arguments, or else is a result of Plato's own inability to discuss self-knowledge in more 'rational' terms.<sup>58</sup> I think, however, that there is a better explanation for the use of imagery, namely, that *it offers an exemplification of the very phenomenon being discussed*. Just as the individual who seeks self-knowledge must have recourse to an image, inasmuch as what is to be known is imperceptible, so too the *Alcibiades I* itself resorts to an image. There can be no direct or unmediated access to the original, so the image should not automatically be discounted in favor of a more straightforward, argumentative account. The image has great heuristic and psychagogic value. When read in light of the whole of the *Alcibiades I*, Socrates' eye analogy points toward a model of what the self is and how to attain knowledge of that self (by way of dialogue). Arriving at this fuller picture requires that the *Alcibiades I* be re-examined and questioned in such a way that its layers of meaning manifest themselves. Engaging in this kind of dialogue with the text is a characteristically Platonic task, and should lead to the realization that the text is but a stepping-stone for our own process of self-examination, and is not intended as the final word. This very feature of the *Alcibiades I*, its disclaiming of its own veridicality and awareness of its own limits, allows it to foster the self-knowledge of which it speaks.

Department of Philosophy  
SUNY New Paltz  
New Paltz NY 12561

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, R.E. 1962. 'Note on *Alcibiades I*, 129B1' *American Journal of Philology* 83: 187-190.
- Annas, Julia. 1985. 'Self-Knowledge in Early Plato' 111-138 in *Platonic Investigations*. Dominic J. O'Meara ed. Washington DC: Catholic University Press.
- Blitz, Mark. 1995. 'Plato's *Alcibiades I* Interpretation 22: 339-358.
- Clark, Pamela M. 1955. 'The Greater *Alcibiades*' *Classical Quarterly* 5: 231-240.
- Denyer, Nicholas. 2001. *Plato: Alcibiades*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Forde, S. 1987. 'On the *Alcibiades I*' 222-239 in *The Roots of Political Philosophy*. Thomas L. Pangle ed. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

<sup>57</sup> The only other commentator (of whom I am aware) who properly emphasizes these metanarrative statements is Forde 1987, 235, 237. Annas 1985, 132 does well note that we should not surrender to the seductive imagery, but should press it for a satisfactory interpretation; even so, she leaves the status of the imagery itself untouched.

<sup>58</sup> Johnson 1999, 8 argues for the former, while Clark 1955, 239 argues for the latter.



- Foucault, Michel. 1988. 'Technologies of the Self' 16-49 in *Technologies of the Self*. Luther H. Martin et. al. edd. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Friedländer, Paul. 1964. *Plato: The Dialogues: First Period*. vol. 2. Hans Meyerhoff trans. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Goldin, Owen. 1993. 'Self, Sameness, and Soul in *Alcibiades I* and the *Timaeus*' *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 40: 5-19.
- Gordon, Jill. 1999. *Turning Toward Philosophy*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Gordon, Jill. 2003. 'Eros and Philosophical Seduction in *Alcibiades I*' *Ancient Philosophy* 23: 11-30.
- Grote, George. 1865. *Plato, and the Other Companions of Sokrates*. vol. 1. London: John Murray.
- Hutchinson, D.S. 2006. 'Alcibiades' 154-207 in *Plato on Love*. C.D.C. Reeve ed. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Johnson, David M. 1999. 'God as the True Self: Plato's *Alcibiades I*' *Ancient Philosophy* 19: 1-19.
- Johnson, David M. 2003. *Socrates and Alcibiades*. Newburyport: Focus.
- Lutz, Mark J. 1998. *Socrates' Education to Virtue*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Miller, Mitchell. 2004 [1980]. *The Philosopher in Plato's Statesman*. Las Vegas: Parmenides.
- O'Connor, David K. 1999. 'Socrates and Political Ambition: The Dangerous Game' *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 14: 31-52.
- O'Neill, William. 1965. *Proclus: Alcibiades I*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Scott, Gary Alan. 2000. *Plato's Socrates as Educator*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Smith, Nicholas D. 2004. 'Did Plato Write the *Alcibiades I*?' *Apeiron* 37: 93-108.
- Tarrant, Harold. 2007. 'Olympiodorus and Proclus on the Climax of the *Alcibiades*' *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 1: 3-29.
- Tarrant, Harold and Marguerite Johnson. 2012. *Alcibiades and the Socratic Lover-Educator*. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press.
- Westerink, L.G. 1962. *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*. Amsterdam: North-Holland.