

Socrates' Divine Sign: From the *Alcibiades* to Olympiodorus¹

François Renaud

1. An ancient approach to an elusive issue

What is the nature and function of the divine sign of Socrates as both lover and educator, in the *Alcibiades* in particular? The importance of the divine sign is as undeniable as its elusive character. According to both Plato and Xenophon,² the divine sign led to the charge of impiety (*asebeia*): Socrates was accused of not acknowledging the ancient gods of the city and of introducing new, private ones (*daimonia kaina*).³ The accusation presupposes the opposition between the gods that the city officially recognised and the vague, apparently private daemonic forces that Socrates introduced. In the dialogue bearing his name, Euthyphro simply assumes that Socrates' divine sign provides the ground for Meletus' accusation of introducing new divinities (*Euthph.* 3b5). Moreover, Socrates seemed to have complete trust in the sign and its counsel (*Ap.* 40a8-c3; *Euthd.* 272e1-4). In Plato's *Apology* (31c-d), the divine sign is presented as the reason why (*aitia*) Socrates turned away from political life, and therefore as the indirect reason why he opted instead for the philosophical life. Socrates presents his philosophical engagement as the mission he received from the god of Delphi (*ho theos*).⁴

The difficulties involved in understanding the exact nature of the sign are many. First, there are few references to the sign in Plato (and Xenophon), and those few references are vague, most often associated with phrases such as 'the daemonic (sign)' (*to daimonion* [*sêmeion*]), or 'the voice' (*hê phonê*).⁵ Secondly, Socrates readily speaks of the sign as something influencing his daily life and his relation to his fellow human beings (usually by hindering him from doing something), but he hardly ever speculates – at least aloud – about its underlying philosophical or conceptual implications. Thirdly, when discussing the theme of 'daemonic beings' (*daimones*), Plato hardly ever makes any explicit connections with Socrates' daemonic voice (cf. Hoffmann 1985, 421). Given these difficulties, it is not surprising that scholars have had little success in illuminating the meaning and wider implications of the divine sign.

Given the meagre textual evidence at our disposal, what kind of interpretative strategies is the reader to adopt? Are Plato's readers expected to

establish indirect, implicit connections between Socrates' divine sign and discussions about *daimones* and other fundamental questions about love and education? Most modern scholars refuse for methodological reasons to go beyond the explicit statements of the text, and consequently many argue that our knowledge of the divine sign must be limited to the fact that it is a phenomenon unique to Socrates, the irrational side of this otherwise eminently rational figure. The ancient interpreters, by contrast, supposed that Plato systematically taught by hints and riddles, and therefore fully took up the challenge of establishing implicit connections between statements about the sign and other general remarks made about *daimones* and other overlapping themes found in the Platonic corpus. The corpus known to them is similar to ours, apart from the inclusion of dialogues considered today to be *dubia* or *spuria*, among which, the *Alcibiades*. Most scholars today generally ignore the ancient Platonist interpretations. This is especially true of ancient interpretations of Socrates' mysterious divine sign, which interpretations most scholars deem to be fanciful. Indeed two recent books on Socrates' religious beliefs scarcely consider the ancient interpretations.⁶

The significance of the Neoplatonist approach to the dialogue generally lies in the central importance granted to the *Alcibiades* as the first dialogue to be read in the curriculum as prerequisite to self-knowledge. Olympiodorus of Alexandria (c. AD 500-565) is the author of the only fully extant ancient commentary on the *Alcibiades* (Proclus' is incomplete), offering an interpretation that is still worth considering.⁷ The merit of his commentary specifically lies in its ability to unite the daemonic and erotic aspects of Socrates' relation to Alcibiades.

2. The related context: Prologue (103a-106a) and climax passage (132d-133c)

In the *Alcibiades*, the divine sign (*daimonion ti*) is explicitly linked, perhaps even identified with (the) god (*theos*).⁸ At the outset Socrates declares to Alcibiades that the sign or the god – nothing human (*ouk anthrôpeion*) – is responsible (*aition*) for his approaching Alcibiades at last, after following and observing him in silence for many years (103a). The patient waiting demanded of Socrates by the god proved necessary in order for the young man to mature and become receptive to Socrates' pedagogical zeal, so that their discussion could be fruitful. The waiting over, the sign at last allows, indeed apparently incites, Socrates (*nun d'ephêke*, 'has now let me loose', or, 'has set me on') to speak to and court the young man. In the lengthy introductory speech, Socrates presents himself to Alcibiades as his only true lover, the first and most faithful, who remains attached to him while all the others have deserted him. This is because, as Socrates reveals later in the climax of the dialogue (132d-133c), he loves Alcibiades truly, meaning that he loves what Alcibiades truly is, namely

his soul, the higher, divine (*theion*) part of his soul (also characterised as god: *theon*, 133c5), as opposed to Alcibiades' other lovers who are only attracted to his body. Socrates is also his most indispensable lover, the one without whom it will be impossible for Alcibiades to realise his vast, indeed tyrannical ambitions. But Socrates can achieve this only with the help of the god (*meta tou theou*, 105e5), or 'god willing' (*ean theos ethelêi*, 135d).

3. Indirect exhortative function and identification of the *daimôn* with god

This brief summary of the prologue and the climax of the dialogue tells us that the divine sign is inseparable from the god, stemming from or even being identified with him. The sign no longer holds Socrates back, but apparently encourages him to speak to the young man as someone ready to accept his aid. As Socrates points out at the very end of the dialogue, with the help of god their relationship will be long-lasting. But despite what Alcibiades might wish, god's help ironically consists in philosophical, intellectual education of his true self, not in political training.

Two objections are at this point routinely raised by modern scholars against the *Alcibiades*' authenticity. First, in Plato the divine sign is exclusively apotrepetic, that is, always dissuading Socrates from doing something he is about to undertake and never pushing him to take any action, while in Xenophon the sign has both prohibitive and exhortative functions.⁹ Secondly, in Plato the divine sign is never explicitly identified with a *daimôn* or with a (the) god (*theos*). The expressions used to refer to the divine sign usually involve the adjectival sense of *to daimonion* as a shorthand implying *sêmeion* ('the daimonic sign'), and does not signify a god or even a *daimôn* (as substantive). I shall discuss these two objections briefly, not because I am particularly concerned with the question of authenticity *per se*, but because I wish to examine the implications of the *Alcibiades* in connection with dialogues that are unanimously agreed to have been written by Plato, as well as to explore the conceptual coherence that Olympiodorus attributes to the *Alcibiades* in conjunction with other dialogues taken together (such as the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*), especially concerning the divine sign.

Despite what some scholars have argued, there is textual evidence that suggests a link between the divine sign and positive exhortation. In Plato the divine sign sometimes does seem indirectly to encourage Socrates to act. In a passage in the *Theaetetus* (151a2-5) on his maieutic art Socrates claims that the sign sometimes forbids him to associate with certain people, while at other times it permits him (*eân*, the same verb as is used in the *Alcibiades*) to do so. In the *Phaedrus* (242b8-9) Socrates' sign also seems to spur him to action. There Socrates says: 'my *daimonion* forbids me to leave until I make atonement for some offence against the gods' (*ouk*

eâ apienai prin), that is, before he gives a second speech concerning the god Eros after giving a first inadequate description of him.¹⁰ Such passages suggest that the divine sign in Plato occasionally fulfils – indirectly – an exhortative function, presumably through the act of the god sending the sign.¹¹ Moreover, Plato does regularly link the divine sign (*to daimonion* [*sêmeion*]) and the *daimôn*, as the later Platonists assume. Socrates himself links the two in the *Apology* when cross-examining Meletus (26b-28a). There Socrates accepts the old popular belief that *daimonic* voices stem from a *daimôn*, that is, a god or half god: 'But if I believe in spiritual things (*daimonia*), it is quite inevitable (*pollê anankê*) that I believe also in spirits (*daimonas*)' (tr. Fowler).¹² Later in the *Apology* Socrates calls his sign 'the sign of the god' (*to tou theou sêmeion*, 40b1).¹³ Consequently it appears worthwhile to reconsider the late Platonist interpretation, which links the sign with both *erôs* and god. Let us recall very briefly the larger, pre-Platonic and Platonic context surrounding the notions of *daimôn* first, before examining Olympiodorus' interpretation of the divine sign in the *Alcibiades*.

4. Pre-Platonic and Platonic notions of *daimôn*

The Greek word *daimôn* could be translated alternatively as something divine or semi-divine, a divine power, or protective spirit, a god or even fate (lit. probably 'the one allotting fate'). Plato's conception of *daimôn* is far from monolithic, borrowing from old popular traditions while also inventing images and tales of his own. In Homer, the Greek word *daimôn* can be synonymous with *theos*. More commonly however it does not designate an individual god but rather the (vague) power of the divine.¹⁴ While *theos* most often signifies a particular god associated with a myth or cult, *daimôn* is typically used to designate a divine force that manifests itself in a particular situation and is not (yet) the object of a cult. A *daimôn* can be a personal protective spirit, such as in the case of Socrates' sign or 'genius.' It can also be a deceased hero such as those of Hesiod's Golden Age.¹⁵ The latter meaning prepares the way for the wide-spread conception of *daimôn* as an intermediary being, whether good or evil, between gods and human beings. In some Platonic dialogues, the word *daimôn* referred to the gods (*theous*) and heroes (*hêrôas*),¹⁶ in others to a divinised human being,¹⁷ in yet others to an accompanying *daimôn* leading the deceased souls to the Last Judgment in Hades.¹⁸ Moreover, in an important passage in the *Timaeus* (90 a-d), the word is used to refer to the sovereign, rational part of the soul, the 'divinity' (*daimona*) inhabiting us all, which god (*theos*) gave to each of us, and the cultivation of which constitutes the aim of human life. In a passage in the *Symposium* (202e1), a *daimôn* is an intermediary being between gods and humans (*metaxu esti theou te kai thnêtou*). This last meaning needs to be treated separately.

5. *Daimôn-erôs* in the *Symposium* and Olympiodorus

In the *Symposium* (202d-203a) Socrates has recourse to the notion of *daimôn* as an intermediary being (*metaxu*) in order to explain the nature of Eros. In this passage *daimones* are said to communicate human beings' prayers and sacrifices to the gods and to convey the gods' orders to humans. This notion of *daimones* as intermediary and benevolent beings is then applied to *erôs*, the desire for wisdom (*philo-sophia*) in the human soul (*psychê*), the force mid-way between utter ignorance and divine wisdom. Born of poverty and resourcefulness (*penia* and *poros*), Eros is said to be a great *daimôn* (*megas daimôn*), half mortal, half immortal, the striving that leads humans to the good.

The influence of the *Symposium* passage on later Platonism proved to be immense. It became the *locus classicus* on *daimones* and the starting point of an increasingly systematised demonology in Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism.¹⁹ Like his predecessors, Olympiodorus draws explicitly upon the *Symposium* passage, conceiving Eros and everything daemonic as an intermediary lying in the Middle (*to meson*). Since the soul itself is partially mortal and partially immortal, situated between god and mortal, Eros is the force uniting the contradictory impulses within the soul, analogous to the two horses in the *Phaedrus* (*In Alc.* 226.18-26). Thus, according to Olympiodorus, Socrates' *daimôn* is at once unique and universal, as it represents the highest rational activities of every soul. Socrates' *daimôn* is unique insofar as Socrates as an individual is exceptionally free from the contingencies of bodily life,²⁰ but this is also the reason why his *daimôn* is an *exemplum*, a universal model for all to follow. This is also why Socrates is in need of self-protection and self-restraint with regard to political life. Olympiodorus contends that there can only be one *daimôn* allotted to each soul, on account of the unitary character of life. Soul and *daimôn* thus more or less coincide.

6. A moderate defence of the universalisation of *daimôn-erôs*

What are we to think of this conceptual extension that links Socrates' private *daimôn* with a universal *daimôn-erôs*? Most scholars refuse to link Socrates' sign with the doctrine of *daimôn* in the *Symposium*. To be sure, for Plato the divine sign stands for the uniqueness of Socrates as someone out of place in the city (*atopos*) and banned by it. In a passage in the *Republic* (496c2-4) Socrates claims that the divine sign is something that has been granted so far to few or none before him. It can, however, be argued from this *Republic* passage that Socrates' divine mission, as expounded in the *Apology*, is to transform other human beings into philosophers, so as to make them similar to him by having them share his *daimôn* or one of the same kind. Can the late antique interpretation about a

common *daimôn-erôs* be shown to be defensible? Here are a few preliminary arguments in its favour.

In the *Symposium* Alcibiades praises Socrates as a daemonic man (*daimonios anêr*, 219c). His depiction of Socrates also contains striking similarities with that of Eros. As the incarnation of the lover of wisdom (*philo-sophos*), situated as he is between utter ignorance and divine wisdom, Socrates seems to appear as the 'great *daimôn*' Eros himself. Moreover, the *Phaedrus* more explicitly describes the philosopher as the true erotic human being (*erôtikos*), spurred by the power of Eros with his mind resolutely turned towards the good and the beautiful. In the *Symposium*, as elsewhere, Socrates himself claims to know nothing but matters erotic (*erôtika*).²¹ Further possible connections between Socrates' *daimonion* and philosophic *erôs* are to be found in the *Apology*. A passage referred to at the beginning of this paper (31c-d) links the divine sign with Socrates' choice of the philosophical life. There the sign is said to be the cause (*aition*) turning him away from political life. The *Republic* passage just referred to (496a-e) also presents the sign as indirectly responsible for his choice of the philosophical life (cf. Hoffmann 1985, 423-4). Finally, according to the *Apology* (similarly to the *Symposium*) the god's (or gods') care for humanity is made manifest in the person of Socrates: his life is guided by the Delphic god's commands through oracles, dreams and other means of communication (33c5-6; cf. 41c8-d2). Such passages testify to the affinities of Socrates' *daimonion* with philosophic *erôs*.²² In that sense his *daimôn* would be an analogical term for the Intellect.²³

7. The Socratic art of love

Benevolent love

Olympiodorus considers the *Alcibiades* to be an emphatically erotic dialogue (*erôtikos dialogos*) and Socrates to be an eminently erotic figure (*erôtikos*). As a divinely inspired lover, Socrates is beneficent (*euergetikos*) toward his favourites (*in Alc.* 21.5). His help consists in turning and leading his younger lovers, by means of dialectic, towards the good and the beautiful in their own souls.²⁴ To do this, Socrates must turn them away from the political life (*bios politikos*) and towards the philosophical life (*bios philosophikos*). The contrast between 'the two lives' in the *Alcibiades* is underscored by Olympiodorus: the great obstacle to Alcibiades' education is precisely 'the many' (*hoi polloi*), who have been his first corrupting teacher (*in Alc.* 221.9-16). As Socrates prophesies at the very end of the dialogue (135e), the greatest threat to Alcibiades is the attraction of the city (*dêmos*) and conversely Alcibiades' love for it. Socrates, by contrast, is radically self-sufficient, and indeed an image of divine self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*).²⁵

Erotic expertise

As an inspired lover (*entheos erastês*), Socrates couples knowledge and sympathy.²⁶ In the *Alcibiades* he is an 'erotic' teacher but also a dialogical one, leading his interlocutor to maieutic discoveries. This is why, according to Olympiodorus, the *Alcibiades* is divided into three successive parts: elenctic, protreptic and maieutic. Socratic expertise in the *Alcibiades* necessarily involves dialogue consisting in questions and answers between student and teacher, the only form of philosophical instruction.²⁷ This presupposes the active participation of the student, giving explicit approval at every stage of the dialogue. The Socrates of the Platonic *Alcibiades* contrasts with that of Aeschines,²⁸ in which the key factor in Socratic education is not expertise (*technê*), but divine dispensation (*theia moira*) alone.²⁹ Moreover, self-knowledge is inseparable from one's *daimôn*, for to know oneself means to see what one has in common with all other human beings through nature. The return (*epistrophê*), as the ultimate goal in education, is a reversion within oneself. Indeed to hold a discussion with Socrates means to discover the divinity of the intellect in oneself – the rational, highest part of one's soul – and thereby to become like the divinity itself.³⁰ The personal *daimôn* of Socrates, pure and authentic, is somehow the divine intellect made visible (cf. Pradeau 1999, 78, n. 2). The erotic expertise which Socrates possesses shows deep affinities with the doctrine of rational desire or philosophic *erôs*, presented by Diotima in the *Symposium*, although it may not be quite simply an illustration of it, as the ancient Platonists thought (cf. Joyal 2000, 52-5).

Illustration of the art of love

For Olympiodorus and the other later Platonists, the *Alcibiades* represents the introduction to self-knowledge, but it is also the dialogue *par excellence* on the 'art of love'.³¹ The late Platonists read the dialogue as an illustration of the Platonic art of love as elaborated in the *Symposium* as well as the *Phaedrus*.³² The favouring of the *Alcibiades* over the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* as the guide on the art of love, might be due to the fact that the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* emphasise the advantages to the lover, while the *Alcibiades* portrays the 'altruistic' concerns of the lover, that is, the educational benefits to be derived by the beloved. The *Alcibiades* presents Socrates as a wise man intent on establishing a long-lasting relationship based on love, by bestowing on the young man who is in need of help and capable of receiving his love all the benefits that his wisdom can provide him (Dillon 1994, 392).

In his *Alcibiades* commentary Olympiodorus sharply distinguishes an inspired lover (*entheos erastês*) like Socrates from the common, vulgar lover (*phortikos*), like those who have deserted Alcibiades. Olympiodorus identifies three important differences between Socrates and these other lovers (in *Alc.* 14.5). First, the common lover admires his favourites, while the inspired lover is admired by them. Secondly, the common lover quickly

leaves his love; the inspired one chooses a worthy object of love (*axieraston*) and remains faithful to him, accompanying him throughout. Thirdly, the inspired lover is divine-like (*theoeidôs*) and therefore an object of imitation, while the common lover only seeks sensation and bodily touch (*haphên*). On the last aspect, the *Alcibiades* displaying restraint in sexual matters contrasts with the *Theages*, in which bodily contact (*haphê*) seems surprisingly to take the place of argumentation.³³ Socrates' 'art of love,' as portrayed in the *Alcibiades*, consists in selecting the proper soul, that is, the object worthy of love (*axierastos*), namely a large-minded or exceptionally ambitious soul who despises bodily things. He awaits the moment when the young man is ready to listen to him and to participate with him in dialogue. He then teaches him the principle of philosophic *erôs* and self-knowledge. This encounter is meant to result in reciprocal love (*anterôs*), which indeed occurs at the end of the dialogue.³⁴

The service of the gods to the youth

There is a dictum by Polemo (c. 314-c. 270), the last head of the Old Academy, which we find in Plutarch's *Moralia* (*To an uneducated ruler*, 780d): 'Polemo used to say that love is the service of the gods in the care and salvation of the youth'.³⁵ This description of love as a close relationship between an older and a younger man explicitly links the erotic dimension of Socratic and Platonic education to its professed divine mission. John Dillon (1994, 390 n. 7) and Harold Tarrant (2006, 4) have drawn our attention to this dictum as a possible description of both the doctrine of the *Alcibiades* and the practice of education at the Academy under Polemo. Interestingly, the link between this dictum and the *Alcibiades* is confirmed by Plutarch's own interpretation of Alcibiades' relationship with Socrates and presumably of the *Alcibiades* too in a passage at the beginning of his *Life of Alcibiades* (4.4). There Plutarch optimistically remarks that Alcibiades had come to understand the real nature of Socrates' love for him: 'And he [sc. Alcibiades] came to think that the work of Socrates was really (*tôi onti*) a kind of service of the gods for the care and salvation of the youth'.³⁶ The last words are an exact quotation of Polemo's dictum (except for the position of the verb *einai*), although Plutarch does not mention him by name this time. The phrase *tôi onti* ('really') testifies to the truthfulness of Polemo's saying and of the conception of love underlying it, in Plutarch's eyes. According to this interpretation, the doctrine of the *daimôn-erôs* is inseparable from the care of the gods for humanity. In the *Apology* Socrates claims that his life has been guided by the god's commands (33c), and that, more generally, the gods do not neglect the good man, and this is why he interprets his divine sign's silence as meaning that his death must be a good thing (41d).³⁷ Thus, according to the *Apology*, the life of Socrates does seem somehow to fulfil a specific purpose in a divine plan (cf. Rist 1963, 16).

The rest of the passage from Plutarch's *Life of Alcibiades* also refers to

the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, and is worth quoting also because of its emphasis on the concrete, practical dimension of that education: 'Thus, by despising himself, admiring his friend, loving that friend's kindly solicitude and revering his excellence, he [sc. Alcibiades] insensibly acquired an 'image of love', as Plato says [*Phaedrus* 255d], 'to match love,' and all were amazed [*thaumazein*] to see him eating, exercising, and tenting with Socrates [*Symposium* 219e], while he was harsh and stubborn with the rest of his lovers' (tr. Perrin).³⁸ These remarks by an ancient reader of Plato, and no doubt of the *Alcibiades*, recall what was then most admired – and might indeed be most admirable – in the figure of Socrates, namely the harmony between what he thought (*logos*) and what he did (*ergon*), between thinking and life (Tarrant 2006, 8). The imitation of Socrates as *exemplum* will thereafter mean the call on everyone to strive to embody that elusive unity,³⁹ and the divine forces at work in him as an educator (cf. *Tht.* 176a5-b3).

Notes

1. I would like to thank Jeremy Hayhoe for his kind proof-reading of the text.
2. *Ap.* 26d-28a (for Plato's text I follow Burnet's text throughout unless indicated); Xenophon, *Mem.* I, 1.1-5 (ed. Marchant).
3. *Ap.* 24b8-c1: ἔχει δέ τι πως ὧδε· Σωκράτης φησὶν ἀδικεῖν τοὺς τε νέους διαφθεύοντα καὶ θεοὺς οὐδ' ἡ πόλις νομίζει οὐ νομίζοντα, ἕτερα δὲ δαίμονια καὶνά.
4. *Ap.* 30a5; 31a7-8; 33c4-7; cf. the Delphic oracle: *Ap.* 20d4-22e5; cf. Xen. *Apol.* 14.
5. E.g. *Ap.* 31c7-d1; *Alc.* I, 103a5-6; *Euthd.* 272e3-4; *Rep.* 496c3-4; *Phdr.* 242b8-c2.
6. Smith and Woodruff 2000; Destrée and Smith 2005.
7. In *Alcibiadem* (hereafter: *in Alc.*) (ed. Westerink). See Renaud (2008) for an account of Olympiodorus' general exegetical approach to Plato and Aristotle.
8. *Alc.* 103a5; 105b8, 105d5, 105e5, e7, 124c8, 127e6, 133c5, 135c5, 135d6.
9. The best-known passage in Plato on the strictly apotretic quality of Socrates' sign is in the *Apology* (31d3-4): αἰὲν ἀποτρέπει με τοῦτο ὃ ἀν' μέλλον πράττειν, προτρέπει δὲ οὐποτε. Cf. Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.4.14-15; 4.3.12; 4.8.5-6.
10. See Opsomer 1997, esp. 115-21, as well as Joyal's response (2001, 352-6).
11. The twofold aspect of the sign led some Ancients, such as Euclides the Socratic, to suppose that two different *daimones* were involved here; on this see Brancacci 2000), esp. 152-4.
12. *Ap.* 27c8-9: εἰ δὲ δαίμονια νομίζω, καὶ δαίμονας δήπου πολλὴ ἀνάγκη νομίζειν μὲ εἶναι. οὐχ οὕτως ἔχει; ἔχει δῆ.
13. See Bailly 2003, 106, n. 1.
14. See Liddell and Scott 1940, 365-6.
15. *Works and Days* 122ff. (ed. Solmsen et al.).
16. E.g. *Ap.* 27c10-28a1; *Phdr.* 246e6; *Rep.* 392a4-6; *Laws* 801e2-4, 818c1-3, 828b1-3, 906a7.
17. *Crat.* 398b5-c4; *Rep.* 540b7-c2.
18. *Phd.* 107d6; *Rep.* 620d8-9; *Laws* 877a6-b2.
19. E.g. Proclus on *Symp.* 202d13-e1: *in Alc.* 46.5-6 (ed. Segonds); Hermeias, *in Phdr.* 66.1-3 (ed. Couvreur).

20. According to Plutarch (*De gen. Soc.* 591e, ed. de Lacy and Einarsen), Socrates' divine sign corresponds to his *nous-daimôn*: his soul is less submersed in the body than those of other human beings.

21. *Symp.* 177d7-8: οὐδὲν φημι ἄλλο ἐπίστασθαι ἢ τὰ ἐρωτικά. Cf. 193e5-6; *Theages* 128 b2-4. Cf. Joyal 1995, 51.

22. See Mühl 1966, 249-51; Motte 1989, 217.

23. *in Alc.* 15.5-17.9. See Rist 1963, 16. Similarly in Plotinus the concept of *daimôn* is transposed to *erôs* as the activity of the human soul: *Enn.* 3 [50] 5, 3-7.

24. *in Alc.* 215.19: καὶ ὅτι ὁ ἔρως τοῦ καλοῦ ἐστίν, ὄντως δὲ καλὸν τὸ ἐν ψυχῇ.

25. *in Alc.* 55.20-3: ὅτι σπουδαῖος ὢν ὁ Σωκράτης αὐτάρκης ἐστίν καὶ τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ αὐταρκείᾳ συγγενής· ἐντεῦθεν ὡς ἐρωτικὸς οὖν σπουδάζει τῆς τοιαύτης αὐταρκείας μεταδοῦναι τοῖς παιδικοῖς καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ αὐταρκείαν τελειώσας ἀναγαγεῖν. Cf. *in Alc.* 42.14-15.

26. *in Alc.* 41.10-12: στοιχεῖα δὲ καὶ τεκμήρια ἐνθέου ἔραστοι λέγει δύο ταῦτα, ὅτι δεῖ τὸν ἐνθεὸν ἔραστὴν καὶ κρίσιν ἔχειν καὶ συμπάθειαν.

27. *Symp.* 209b-d; *Phdr.* 276a-277a; *in Alc.* 213.5-7: πρέπει γὰρ τῷ ἔρωτι καὶ ἡ ἀποκατάστασις, ἐπιστροφῇ ὄντι, καὶ τὸ διαλέγεσθαι τὸν ἔραστὴν τῷ ἐρωμένῳ· ὄργανον γὰρ κοινωνίας ὁ λόγος. τοῦτο δὲ τὸ διαλέγεσθαι πάλαι μὲν ἐνόει.

28. Aeschines Socraticus, fr. 52 (ed. Giannantonì).

29. Hoffmann 1985, 427; Joyal 2000, 82.

30. *Alc.* 127e-133c, esp. 132c-133c; cf. *Theaet.* 176a-b; See e.g. Renaud 2007, 238-41; Tarrant 2007, 10-12.

31. Dillon 1994, 388; cf. Alcinous, *Didaskalos*, 33 (ed. Whittaker).

32. Hermeias' and Proclus' exegetical procedure, like Olympiodorus', consists in explaining the *Phaedrus* in the light of the *Alcibiades* and inversely: Hermeias, *in Phaedr.* 207 (ed. Couvreur); Proclus, *in Alc.* 133.1-134.15 (ed. Segonds); cf. Dillon 1994, 388-90.

33. *Theag.* 130e2-3: πολὺ δὲ μάλιστα καὶ πλεῖστον ἐπεδίδουν ὅποτε παρ' αὐτόν σε καθοίμην ἐχόμενός σου καὶ ἀπτόμενος. By contrast see Agathon's remark in the *Symposium* (175c8: παρ' ἐμὲ κατάκεισο, ἵνα καὶ τοῦ σοφοῦ ἀπτόμενός σου) and Socrates' amused rebuff (175d3-e1). For the connection between the *Theages'* use of *synousia* and related vocabulary and the Academy under Polemo, see Tarrant 2006, 6.

34. *Alc.* 135e1-3; *in Alc.* 220.4: τοῦτο γὰρ τέλος τοῦ ἐρωτικοῦ, τὸ ἀντερᾶσθαι.

35. Πολέμων γὰρ ἔλεγε τὸν ἔρωτα εἶναι θεῶν ὑπηρεσίαν εἰς νέων ἐπιμέλειαν καὶ σωτηρίαν.

36. Plutarch, *Alc.* 4.4: καὶ τὸ μὲν Σωκράτους ἡγήσατο πρᾶγμα τῷ ὄντι θεῶν ὑπηρεσίαν εἰς νέων ἐπιμέλειαν εἶναι καὶ σωτηρίαν.

37. See Plutarch, *De Soc. gen.*, 593a-594a (ed. de Lacy and Einarsen).

38. *Alcibiades* 4.4: καὶ τὸ μὲν Σωκράτους ἡγήσατο πρᾶγμα τῷ ὄντι θεῶν ὑπηρεσίαν εἰς νέων ἐπιμέλειαν εἶναι καὶ σωτηρίαν, καταφρονῶν δ' αὐτὸς ἑαυτοῦ, θαυμάζων δ' ἐκεῖνον, ἀγαπῶν δὲ τὴν φιλοφροσύνην, αἰσχυρόμενος δὲ τὴν ἀρετὴν, ἐλάνθανεν εἰδῶλον ἔρωτος, ὡς φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων, ἀντέρωτα κτώμενος, ὥστε θαυμάζειν ἅπαντας ὁρῶντας αὐτὸν Σωκράτει μὲν συνδειπνοῦντα καὶ συμπαιδιῶντα καὶ συσκηνοῦντα, τοῖς δὲ ἄλλοις ἔρασταῖς χαλεπὸν ὄντα καὶ δυσχεῖρωτον, ἐνίοις δὲ καὶ παντάπαστι σοβαρῶς προσφερόμενον, ὥσπερ Ἀνὼτ' τῷ Ἀνθεμίωνος.

39. 215.15: τέλος τοῦ ἔρωτος ἡ ἔνωσις.

ALCIBIADES and the Socratic Lover-Educator

Edited by
Marguerite Johnson
and
Harold Tarrant



Bristol Classical Press

First published in 2012 by
Bristol Classical Press
an imprint of
Bloomsbury Academic
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square
London WC1B 3DP

Editorial matter and arrangement © 2012
by Marguerite Johnson and Harold Tarrant

The contributors retain copyright in their individual chapters.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication
may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or
transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic,
mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise,
without the prior permission of the publisher.

CIP records for this book are available from the
British Library and the Library of Congress

ISBN 978-0-7156-4086-9

Typeset by Ray Davies
Printed and bound in Great Britain by the
MPG Books Group, Bodmin Cornwall

www.bloomsburyacademic.com

Contents

Notes on Contributors	vii
Preface	x
Introduction	
<i>Harold Tarrant and Marguerite Johnson</i>	1
1. The role of <i>Eros</i> in Improving the Pupil, or What Socrates Learned from Sappho	
<i>Marguerite Johnson</i>	7
2. Socrates and Platonic Models of Love	
<i>Dougal Blyth</i>	30
3. The Eye of the Beloved: <i>Opsis</i> and <i>Eros</i> in Socratic Pedagogy	
<i>Victoria Wohl</i>	45
4. Plato's Oblique Response to Issues of Socrates' Influence on Alcibiades: An Examination of the <i>Protagoras</i> and the <i>Gorgias</i>	
<i>Reuben Ramsey</i>	61
5. Socratic Ignorance, or the Place of the <i>Alcibiades I</i> in Plato's Early Works	
<i>Yuji Kurihara</i>	77
6. Did Alcibiades Learn Justice from the Many?	
<i>Joe Mintoff</i>	90
7. The Dual-Role Philosophers: An Exploration of a Failed Relationship	
<i>Anthony Hooper</i>	107
8. Authenticity, Experiment or Development: The <i>Alcibiades I</i> on Virtue and Courage	
<i>Eugenio Benitez</i>	119
9. Revaluing <i>Megalopsuchia</i> : Reflections on the <i>Alcibiades II</i>	
<i>Matthew Sharpe</i>	134
10. Improvement by Love: From Aeschines to the Old Academy	
<i>Harold Tarrant</i>	147
11. Ice-Cold in Alex: Philo's Treatment of the Divine Lover in Hellenistic Pedagogy	
<i>Fergus J. King</i>	164
12. Proclus' Reading of Plato's <i>Sôkratikoî Logoi</i> : Proclus' Observations on Dialectic at <i>Alcibiades</i> 112d-114e and Elsewhere	
<i>Akitsu Taki</i>	180

Contents

13. Socrates' Divine Sign: From the <i>Alcibiades</i> to Olympiodorus <i>François Renaud</i>	190
14. 'The Individual' in History and History 'in General': <i>Alcibiades, Philosophical History and Ideas in Contest</i> <i>Neil Morpeth</i>	200
Appendix 1. Fourth-Century Politics and the Date of the <i>Alcibiades I</i> <i>Elizabeth Baynham and Harold Tarrant</i>	215
Appendix 2. Report on the Working Vocabulary in the Doubtful Dialogues <i>Harold Tarrant and Terry Roberts</i>	
a. The Working Vocabulary of the <i>Alcibiades</i>	
b. The Working Vocabulary of the <i>Theages</i>	223
Bibliography	237
Index to Platonic Works	251
General Index	252

Notes on Contributors

Dr Elizabeth Baynham is Senior Lecturer in Classics and Ancient History in the School of Humanities, University of Newcastle, Australia. She is the author of *Alexander the Great, The Unique History of Quintus Curtius* (Ann Arbor, 1998) and co-editor (with A.B. Bosworth) of *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction* (Oxford, 2000). Her interests include Greco-Roman historiography and Greek history, especially the era of Alexander and the Diadochoi.

Eugenio Benitez is Associate Professor in Philosophy and Classics at the University of Sydney. He is the author of *Forms in Plato's Philebus* (1989), and editor of volumes on Platonic myths and Plato's aesthetics. In recent years he has been primarily concerned with questions associated with the interpretation of Plato's dialogues.

Dougal Blyth is Senior Lecturer in Classics at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. He has published articles and contributed chapters on Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Aristophanes and Menander, and was a co-editor of *Power and Pleasure, Virtues and Vices* (Prudentia Supplement, Auckland 2001).

Anthony Hooper was an MPhil candidate at the University of Sydney at the time of writing this paper, and is now a PhD candidate at the same institution, writing his dissertation on immortality in the Presocratics and Plato. He has published articles on myth in Plato in *The European Legacy*, and on Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium* in *The Classical Quarterly*.

Marguerite Johnson is Senior Lecturer in Classics at the University of Newcastle, Australia. She specialises in Greek and Latin literature, especially the works of Sappho and Catullus. She is the author of *Sappho* (Duckworth, 2007) and co-author of *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Literature and Society: A Sourcebook* (Routledge, 2005). One of her current research interests is myth and fairytale in the ancient world, with particular focus on storytelling in Plato.

Fergus J. King has degrees from St Andrews, Edinburgh, and the University of South Africa. He is Rector of the Parish of the Good Shepherd in the

Anglican Diocese of Newcastle and Conjoint Lecturer in Theology at the University of Newcastle, and his current research includes the potential dialogue between Epicureanism and the Fourth Gospel. He is the author of *More Than a Passover: Inculturation in the Supper Narratives of the New Testament* (Peter Lang, 2007), and several articles on New Testament and missiological themes.

Yuji Kurihara received his doctorate in Ancient Philosophy from the University of California, Irvine, and is Associate Professor of Philosophy and Ethics at Tokyo Gakugei University. He has published numerous articles on Plato's epistemology and ethics in Japanese and English.

Joe Mintoff is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Newcastle, Australia. His primary research interests are in moral philosophy, specifically the theory of rational choice, the philosophy of Socrates, and ancient approaches to the question of how to live. His articles have appeared in *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, *Ethics*, and *Ratio*.

Neil Morpeth is Associate Professor at the University of Newcastle (English Language and Foundation Studies Centre), where he lectures in classical studies and traditions of thought. His published work reflects his wide interests in traditions of thought and their transmission across the ages, and includes *Thucydides' War: Accounting for the Faces of Conflict* (Georg Olms Verlag 2006).

Reuben Ramsey is a PhD candidate at the University of Newcastle, after completing an Honours thesis on Alcibiades. He is currently engaged in an analysis of the vocabulary of three plays by Aeschylus and *Prometheus Bound*, with particular reference to the potential dramatic force of repetition in these plays.

François Renaud is Associate Professor of Philosophy, Université de Moncton, Canada. Trained in both Classics and Philosophy, he has published mostly on Plato, his interpretation, and his Socratic legacy. His publications include *Die Resokratisierung Platons. Die platonische Hermeneutik Hans-Georg Gadamer's* (Sankt Augustin 1999), and he has coedited volumes on philosophic commentaries over the ages and Gadamer's response to Plato's *Philebus*. His current projects include a monograph on Plato's *Gorgias*, a co-authored book on *Alcibiades I*, and publications on Cicero's Platonism.

Matthew Sharpe teaches philosophy and psychoanalytic studies at Deakin University. He is the author of several publications addressing modern perspectives on classical philosophy, as well as work on contemporary philosophy.

Akitsugu Taki has degrees from Durham University and the University of Tokyo, and is Associate Professor in Ethics and Vice Dean in the Department of Environmental and Social Studies, Josai International University (Chiba, Japan). He has published philological papers on Plato, most recently on a scribe's replacement of Proclus' lemma in his commentary on the *Alcibiades*.

Harold Tarrant is Professor of Classics at the University of Newcastle, Australia. He is the author or co-editor of several books on the Platonic tradition in antiquity, including *Plato's First Interpreters* (2000), *Recollecting Plato's Meno* (2005), and (with Dirk Baltzly) *Interpreting Plato in Antiquity* (2006), all from Duckworth. He has more recently been involved in the production of a new English translation of Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus*.

Victoria Wohl is Professor of Classics at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on the literature and culture of classical Athens, spanning a variety of genres, poetic and prosaic. She is the author of *Intimate Commerce: Exchange, Gender, and Subjectivity in Greek Tragedy* (Texas, 1998), *Love Among the Ruins: The Erotics of Democracy in Classical Athens* (Princeton, 2003), and *Law's Cosmos: Juridical Discourse in Athenian Forensic Oratory* (Cambridge, 2010).