

SOCRATES ON VIRTUE AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE IN *ALCIBIADES I* AND AESCHINES' *ALCIBIADES*

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ABSTRACT: *The paper focuses on the concepts of virtue and self-knowledge in Alcibiades I and Aeschines' Alcibiades, which are marked by striking similarities in the way they discuss these themes and their interconnection. First of all, in both dialogues the notions of ἀμαθία and ἀρετή seem to be connected and both are bound up with the issue of εὐδαιμονία: Socrates points out that ἀρετή is the only source of true εὐδαιμονία and encourages Alcibiades to acquire it, stressing the need for a constant ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ. Thus, another common feature is the Socratic exhortation to pursue and achieve moral virtue, which is identified as a form of knowledge. Ultimately, in both accounts the chief means by which to contrast ἀμαθία is found in the care and knowledge of the self. The above arguments are to be considered within the particular frame of the paideutic relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades, which is itself portrayed in similar terms in the two texts. In both dialogues, the relationship is characterized as a form of erotic education and, moreover, Socrates himself links his paideutic activity to divine will. Yet, only in Aeschines' Alcibiades does this explicitly entail the idea that Socrates transmits virtue without resorting to any τέχνη or ἐπιστήμη. So while in both cases ἀρετή is understood as a kind of knowledge, in Aeschines' Alcibiades there seems to be a greater tension between this concept of virtue and its modes of transmission, which are "anepistemic".*

KEYWORDS: Socrates, Alcibiades, virtue, knowledge, paideia.

RESUMO: O artigo focaliza os conceitos de virtude e auto-conhecimento no Primeiro Alcibiades e no Alcibiades e Êsquine,

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1. See Dittmar 1912, 138 and 152.
2. *Ibid.*, 165.
3. The work is listed among the dialogues of Plato by all ancient doxographers and was used throughout late Antiquity as an introduction to Platonic thought (see Olympiodorus, *In Alcibiadem* 10.17-11.6 and Proclus, *In Alcibiadem Proim.* 11.15-17). Nonetheless, the authenticity of the dialogue has been debated at length by scholars: see, among others, Clark 1955, Arrighetti 2000, 21-29; Smith 2004, 93-97 and Renaud 2007, 226-229.
4. According to Smith, the strongest evidence against the authenticity of the dialogue is to be found precisely in the inconsistency between some passages of *Alcibiades I* and other doctrines we find elsewhere in the Platonic corpus: see Smith 2004, 100-106.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the concepts of virtue and self-knowledge in *Alcibiades I* and Aeschines' *Alcibiades*, through a comparative analysis which seeks to highlight analogies, differences and possible intertextual references between the two works. In order to do so, the analysis will be especially focused on some fundamental passages.

Striking similarities between the two dialogues were first noted by Dittmar, who interpreted them in his 1912 commentary as evidence for *Alcibiades I*'s dependence on Aeschines' work¹. According to Dittmar, the author of *Alcibiades I* – which, in his opinion, is a spurious dialogue written between 340 and 330 BC² – draws heavily on Aeschines' text; he does so, in particular, for all the themes that are not discussed in chapter 4, 2 of *Memorabilia*, the second chief source of his work. My primary aim in this paper is to show that the most striking parallels between the two dialogues are to be found with regard to the themes of virtue and knowledge, and in particular the close connection between the two. Leaving aside the controversial issue of the authenticity of *Alcibiades I*³, I will not focus on the problem whether the thesis Socrates expounds here conflicts or not with what is said in Plato's other dialogues⁴. Such a problem falls beyond the scope of this study, which is meant to outline the relation-

que são marcados por notáveis similaridades na maneira como discutem estes temas e suas interrelações. Em primeiro lugar, nos dois diálogos as noções de ἀμαθία e ἀρετή parecem estar relacionadas e ambas estão ligadas à questão da εὐδαιμονία: Sócrates assinala que a ἀρετή é a única fonte da verdadeira εὐδαιμονία e encoraja Alcibiades a adquiri-la, ressaltando a necessidade de uma constante ἐπιμέλεια éαυτοῦ. Assim, outra característica comum é a exortação socrática para perseguir e obter a virtude moral, a qual é identificada como uma forma de conhecimento. Por fim, em ambas as exposições o principal meio pelo qual contrastar a ἀμαθία é encontrado no cuidado e no conhecimento do eu. Os argumentos acima devem ser considerados dentro da estrutura particular da relação paidéutica entre Sócrates e Alcibiades, que é ela mesma retratada em termos similares nos dois textos. Em ambos os diálogos, a relação é caracterizada como uma forma de educação erótica e, além disso, o próprio Sócrates vincula sua atividade paidéutica à vontade divina. Todavia, somente no Alcibiades de Ésquino isto explicitamente implica a ideia que Sócrates transmite a virtude sem recorrer a qualquer τέχνη ou ἐπιστήμη. Assim, enquanto em ambos os casos a ἀρετή é entendida como um tipo de conhecimento, no Alcibiades de Ésquino parece haver uma tensão maior entre este conceito de virtude e seus modos de transmissão, que são “anepistêmicos”.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Sócrates, Alcibiades, virtude, conhecimento, paidéia.

ship between the two works with respect to these specific topics. Moreover, I will not be referring here to the most controversial sections of the dialogue (133c8-17 and 134d1-e7), the ones which have most been discussed in the debate on the authenticity of the text and which are typically invoked by those interpreters who consider the work spurious – since they are likely the result of a later interpolation.

The central importance of the issues of virtue and knowledge for Aeschines’ *Alcibiades* clearly emerges from a passage by Maximus of Tyre and a fragment of P. Oxy. 1608 col. I, which provide a good starting point for my investigation.

Maxim. Tyr. philosoph. VI 6: But the true punishment of Alcibiades was far more ancient, originating from a more ancient law and more ancient judges. When he left the Lyceum, was condemned by Socrates, and

proscribed by philosophy, then Alcibiades was exiled, then he was taken prisoner. O bitter condemnation, implacable execration, and lamentable wandering! The Athenians, indeed, afterwards entreating received him; but philosophy, science and virtue remain inaccessible and irreconcilable to those whom they have once exiled. Such, then, is science, and such is ignorance (φιλοσοφία δέ και ἐπιστήμη και ἀρετή τοῖς ἅπαξ φεύγουσιν ἄβατος μένει και ἀδιάλλακτος. τοιοῦτον ἢ ἐπιστήμη, τοιοῦτον ἢ ἀμαθία; transl. by T. Taylor).

P. Oxy. 1608 col. I fr. 1: “[...] to behave towards your parents as Themistocles is said to have behaved towards his own?“. “Please, speak kindly to me”, replied Alcibiades. “Is it necessary, according to you, that men do not know music before they become musicians, or that they’re ignorant about horse-riding before they become able to ride?“.

Both passages point to the relevance of the themes of virtue and knowledge in the dialogue and the second one, in particular, shows their close interconnection (φιλοσοφία δέ και ἐπιστήμη και ἀρετή). Furthermore, the two texts introduce relevant elements for a comparative reading of *Alcibiades I*. First, both disclose the strong link between the discussion of the above topics and the paideutic relationship between Socrates and the young man. Hence, it is within the framework of this relationship and according to its goals that the themes of virtue and knowledge find a place in Aeschines’ dialogue. Secondly, the fragment from of P. Oxy. 1608 col. I outlines some fundamental methodological aspects, as it brings up the issue of Socrates’ elenctic approach. Indeed, the first part of the fragment seems to be the conclusion of an objection raised against Themistocles for his behavior towards his parents. As Rossetti and Esposito⁵ have noted in their study on the two Papyri from Oxyrhynchus, this suggests that Socrates – against the backdrop of one of the crucial themes of the dialogue, the need for education – had developed a series of ἐλεγχοί by choosing the figure of Themistocles as a model. Presumably, Alcibiades had dared to state that he was in no respect inferior to the great politician, leading Socrates to draw his attention on the limits

5. See Rossetti-Esposito 1984, 27-29.

of this figure, starting with the observation that Alcibiades had been disinherited (see P. Oxy. 1608 col. I fr. 4). Socrates would seem to have drawn a provocative analogy – intended to serve as a moral exhortation – between Themistocles’ destiny and Alcibiades’ condition⁶, in such a way as to force the latter to contradict himself and call into question his previous statements. Alcibiades’ answer («Please, speak kindly to me») suggests that Socrates’ concealed exhortation has achieved its goal: Alcibiades finds himself at a loss for words. This, perhaps, is the reason why Socrates sharply changes the topic of the conversation and switches to the issue of the need for education and learning for all those who wish to acquire skills in a specific field⁷, be it music or horse-riding. In this way, the theme of knowledge is brought up in the conversation.

The above picture may further be enriched by examining two passages by Cicero (*tusc. disp.* III 32,77) and Augustine (*de civ. Dei* XIV 8.3) that more clearly illustrate the Socratic method and its effects. These passages describe the process by which Socrates leads Alcibiades to acknowledge his own ἀμαθία and the need for παιδεία and ἀρετή.

Cicer. tusc. disp. III 32,77: For what shall we say – seeing that Socrates, as we are told, convinced Alcibiades that he was in no true sense a man (eum nihil hominis esse) and that there was no difference, for all his high position (summo loco natum), between him and any poor porter (quemvis baiolum), whereupon Alcibiades was much distressed and implored Socrates with tears to teach him virtue and drive baseness away (ut sibi virtutem traderet turpitudinemque depelleret), – what shall we say, Cleanthes? Surely not that there was no evil in the cause which made Alcibiades feel distress? (transl. by J. E. King).

August. de civ. Dei. XIV 8.3: A story in point is related about Alcibiades, if I am not mistaken about the man’s name. For though he considered himself happy (beatus), he burst into tears, we are told, when Socrates in a discussion proved him how wretched he was (quam miser esset) since he was foolish (quoniam stultus). In this case then foolishness (stultitia) was the cause of this useful and desirable grief (utilis optandaeque tristitiae), the grief of a man who regrets that he is what he ought not to be (transl. by P. Levine).

According to Cicero’s account, Socrates demonstrates to Alcibiades how unworthy he is and that in spite of his noble birth he does not differ from your average *baiolus*, that is to say: from a δημιουργός. Thus Alcibiades, in tears, begs Socrates to free him from *turpitude* and – this being the crucial point – to teach him *virtus*. The parallel passage by Augustine completes this picture and enriches it with new elements. Alcibiades, according to this source, considered himself to be happy (*beatus*), before Socrates made him aware of being *miser*, i.e. wretched because *stultus*. As in Cicero’s account, the young man bursts into tears.

Both sources can be combined in order to create a unitary picture: Alcibiades, aware and proud of his noble birth, believes that this is a good enough reason for him to be filled with happiness. Socrates, however, at the end of an elenctic procedure that is not reported, shows Alcibiades just how wretched (ἄθλιος) he actually is, because true happiness is firmly based on the possession of virtue (ἀρετή) and Alcibiades has no knowledge of this (he is ἀμαθής). As a consequence, Alcibiades is quite worthless and does not differ from a δημιουργός. Now, with regard to this last assertion it is possible to draw a first parallel with *Alcibiades I*, where the same connection between ἀμαθής and δημιουργός can be found. Indeed, in 131a Socrates first states that «no physician, in so far as he is a physician, knows himself, nor does any trainer, in so far as he is a trainer»; he then goes on to add:

«And farmers, and craftsmen generally (οἱ ἄλλοι δημιουργοί), are far from knowing themselves (γινώσκειν ἑαυτούς). For these people, it would seem, do not even know their own things, but only things still more remote than their own things, in respect of the arts which they follow; since they know but the things of the body, with which it is tended».

Even aside from this first analogy, the ensuing discussion between Socrates and Alcibiades reveals further and deeper similarities. The text clearly shows that the kind of knowledge that δημιουργοὶ utterly lack is the self-knowledge and awareness of one’s own ignorance whose relevance Socrates

6. While the text is corrupt, this is what the very opening of the fragment seems to suggest: «[...] to behave towards your parents as Themistocles is said to have behaved towards his own?».

7. On this topic see Grenfell 1918, 20.

had stressed from the beginning of the conversation (117b-118b). I will not address the issue of the theoretical foundation of self-knowledge and its possible identification with the notion of self-consciousness, nor the issues pertaining to the so-called “paradigm of vision” and the metaphor of the mirror. For these issues in turn raise a series of problems that have widely been debated among scholars⁸ but which lie outside the purpose of this paper. In particular, these problems are connected to the interpretation of the “self”, whether in an individual or impersonal sense, as well as to that of the structure of the soul and of the relation between that part of the soul «which is the seat of knowledge and thought» (133c) and the deity. The point at issue is that self-knowledge – whose “self” is to be identified with ψυχή – is defined as σωφροσύνη in 131b4; as a consequence, no one who belongs to the δημιουργοί, who lack precisely this kind of knowledge, can be regarded as a σώφρων (131b). Indeed, σωφροσύνη – which according to Bearzi implies «un senso di saggezza tanto morale che intellettuale», is conceived as a form of self-knowledge and as preparatory to the practice of “taking pains over oneself”, since it is the knowledge of one’s own limits.

Further down in the dialogue Socrates sets out from the above assertion, which serves as the premise of a long chain of arguments (133c-135c) through which he leads Alcibiades to recognize that only virtue becomes a free man, while «vice is a thing that becomes a slave» (δουλοπρεπές ἄρ’ ἢ κακία; 135c). Socrates starts precisely with the claim that «self-knowledge we admitted to be temperance» (133c) and from this point onwards the dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades reaches some significant conclusions. First, a man who does not know will make mistakes and so he will do ill both in private and in public; as a consequence – and this is the first conclusion – he will be wretched (ἄθλιος; 134a), since «it is impossible to be happy if one is not temperate and good» (οὐκ ἄρα οἷόν τε, ἐὰν μὴ τις σώφρων καὶ ἀγαθὸς ᾗ, εὐδαίμονα εἶναι; 134a). It necessarily follows as a corollary that «it is the bad men who are wretched» (οἱ ἄρα κακοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἄθλιοι) as only

temperance, not wealth, can free from wretchedness (134b). At this point Socrates, who thus far has spoken about σωφροσύνη, explicitly introduces the concept of ἀρετή: if Alcibiades is to manage the city’s affairs properly and honorably, he must impart ἀρετή to its citizens; but as it is impossible to impart a thing that one has not, he must first «acquire virtue himself» (κτητέον ἀρετήν, 134b-c)⁹. Thanks to this slight change of terms¹⁰, Socrates formulates the same thesis again, but this time directly connects ἀρετή and εὐδαιμονία, so that the former becomes the precondition for the latter. As the effect of the lack of virtue in a state or a despotic regime is κακῶς πράττειν (135a), then – Socrates emphasizes once more – «it is not despotic power, my admirable Alcibiades, that you ought to secure either to yourself or to the state, if you would be happy, but virtue» (135b). Switching from the state to the individual, Socrates draws the last conclusion from his reasoning: the lack of virtue becomes a slave; virtue, instead, «becomes a free man» (ἐλευθεροπρεπές δὲ ἢ ἀρετή; 135c). After claiming that the man who lacks virtue is not only ἄθλιος, but also δουλοπρεπής, Socrates leads Alcibiades to the conclusion that he is on the same side as slaves (135c)¹¹.

A striking consonance between the two works begins to emerge by now. Both in Aeschines’ *Alcibiades* and in *Alcibiades I* the notion of ἀμαθία and that of ἀρετή seem to be interconnected and both are bound up with the issue of εὐδαιμονία. The idea shared by both dialogues is the following. As Cicero’s and Augustine’s accounts show, according to Aeschines’ Socrates there is no εὐδαιμονία without ἀρετή and this is why Alcibiades is actually ἄθλιος (*miser*), although he considers himself εὐδαίμων (*beatus*); his ἀθλιότης originates from his ἀμαθία. Similarly, in *Alcibiades I* Socrates puts forward the idea that the one «who does not know», the ἀμαθής, is ἄθλιος, whereas only the σώφρων καὶ ἀγαθός can be happy (134a-b). Moreover, as Alcibiades – according to Cicero – begs Socrates to teach him *virtus*, we may suppose that Socrates had previously encouraged the young man to pursue virtue and that he had tried to persuade him of the need to achieve it in

8. See esp. Soulez-Luccioni 1974, Bearzi 1995, Brancacci 1997, Renaud 2007, Napolitano Valditara 2007, and Palumbo 2010.

9. On the issue of the preliminary knowledge required of politicians, see also Plat. *Prot.* 319c and 320b.

10. The identity of the two concepts is not demonstrated. The idea is not found in Aeschines’ dialogue and might come from *Protagoras* (330b), as Dittmar suggests (see Dittmar 1912, 142).

11. See Xen. *Mem.* IV 2, 40, where Euthydemus states that he considers himself a δούλος.

order to be filled with happiness. This is precisely what he does in *Alcibiades I*, where he explicitly claims that the one who wishes to be happy must ἀρετὴν παρασκευάζεσθαι (135b).

Now, it is possible to further extend this analogy. It is worth stressing that the ἀμαθία at issue in *Alcibiades I* does not concern the knowledge of «the things of the body» (131b) – as Socrates clearly states – because this is the kind of knowledge δημιουργοὶ possess. Rather, it concerns some fundamental moral notions (δίκαιον, ἄδικον, καλόν, αἰσχρόν, κακόν, ἀγαθόν; 117a-b; see 118a and *Mem.* IV 2, 20-23). Alcibiades' ignorance of these notions is all the more serious not only because they represent «the greatest matters» (τὰ μέγιστα; 118a), but also – and especially – because Alcibiades is in the grip of the «deepest» ignorance (ἀμαθία τῆ ἐσχάτη; 118b): he *believe* he knows what he actually does not; that is to say, he lacks the self-knowledge advocated in the Delphic maxim (130e). Thus, if Socrates leads Alcibiades to acknowledge that he is not εὐδαίμων, since he has no knowledge of such relevant moral notions, it follows that Alcibiades had based his opinion on the possession of external goods. This is precisely what Socrates accuses Alcibiades of in his first speech (104a-c). Alcibiades' φρόνημα is based first of all on his beauty – on his awareness of being «foremost in beauty and stature» (κάλλιστός τε καὶ μέγιστος; 104a). Secondly – and this is an element that is dealt with in detail – Alcibiades is proud of his eminent γένος, of the fact that he belongs to the most famous family of the city and has Pericles as his guardian (104a-b; see *Charm.* 157d ff.); finally, Socrates mentions Alcibiades' wealth, although this is not the good he takes greatest pride in (104b-c).

It is now possible to draw a series of parallels with Aeschines' *Alcibiades*. First, in this dialogue too Alcibiades may have grounded his high opinion of himself on the possession of external goods and especially his noble birth – the fact that, as Cicero states, he was, *summo loco natus*. Secondly, Alcibiades expresses his own sense of superiority in the disdainful statement – recorded by Aelius Aristides (*de quatt.* 575) – that «no one was of any value» according to him: a position that can be compared

to a passage of *Alcibiades I* (104a), where Socrates blames Alcibiades for his overconfidence of having «no need of any man in any matter» (μηδενός δεῖσθαι). Thirdly, this remark is in line with the disdain for πολιτικοί expressed by Alcibiades in 119b: as even the city's politicians have gone into politics as amateurs, there is no need «to practise (ἀσκεῖν) and have the trouble of learning», because Alcibiades' natural powers alone (τῆ φύσει) are sure to give him an easy victory over these men¹². Another passage by Aelius Aristides suggests that in Aeschines' dialogue too Alcibiades must have expounded the idea that his φύσις was sufficient to provide benefits to his city, or at least that he must have more generally referred to the incompetence of πολιτικοί. Indeed, Aelius Aristides reports that Socrates did not «make it a matter of consolation for him (*scil.* *Alcibiades*) that he does not alone cohabit with ignorance (τῆ ἀμαθία συνοικεῖν), but that everyone who is a politician in the city is also in the same condition» (*de quatt.* 576-7; transl. by C.A. Behr).

A sharper examination of the issue can be carried out by considering some additional passages from Aelius Aristides (*de quatt.* 348-9), who reports the speech on Themistocles that according to Aeschines Socrates made in the presence of Alcibiades. First of all, the words of Socrates at the beginning of the passage are closely reminiscent of P. Oxy. 1608 col. I fr. 1, mentioned above: «Since you have dared to attack the life of Themistocles, consider the sort of man whom you thought that you must censure» (Ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν τοῦ Θεμιστοκλέους βίου ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι ἐτόλμησας, σκέψαι οἴω ἀνδρὶ ἐπιτιμᾶν ἡξίωσας). Whereas according to the previous source – as we have seen (*supra*, 2) – Alcibiades had declared that he was in no respect inferior to the victor of Salamis, here he goes so far as to reproach the great politician, as Socrates' words suggest. The issue of knowledge, however, only explicitly arises in the conversation in two later sections. After turning Alcibiades' attention to Themistocles' valor on the battlefield and to his merits in the eyes of the Athenians, Socrates states:

Ael. Aristid. de quatt. 348: And Themistocles was not disheartened by the present circumstances because

12. The issue whether politicians are great φύσει or μαθήσει is debated by also Plato in the *Protagoras* (319e ff.) and by Xenophon in *Memorabilia* (IV 2).

the Greek's position was far deficient in number of ships, infantry and money, while the king's was superior; but he knew that unless the king would surpass him in good advice, the other things, although so numerous, would not help him much. And he recognized that it was usual that that side prove superior (κρείττω) which had men more earnest in virtue (σπουδαιότεροι ἐν ἀρετῇ) in charge of their affairs. And then the king perceived that his position was weaker, on the day in which he met a man who was more earnest than he (ἢ ἡμέρα ἀνδρὶ ἑαυτοῦ σπουδαιότερω ἐνέτυχεν; transl. by C.A. Behr).

At the end of another praise of Themistocles' strategic skills and outstanding valor – such that no other man could «justly be cited as having the greatest power (μέγιστον δύνασθαι)» – the moral exhortation implied becomes clear:

Then consider, Alcibiades, that even for such a man knowledge, although so great (ἢ ἐπιστήμη τοσαύτη οὔσα), was not enough to avoid expulsion or disfranchisement by his city, but was insufficient. What then do you think it would be for bad men who take no care of themselves (ἐν μηδεμίᾳ ἐπιμελείᾳ ἑαυτῶν οὔσιν)? It is not remarkable if they can even be successful in small matters? (ibid.).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that Socrates explicitly ascribes all of Themistocles' achievements to his ἐπιστήμη, not his τύχη: «I attribute to that man knowledge as the cause of all his acts and I think that no fate had been responsible for these deeds» (προστίθημι ἐκεῖνῳ ἐπιστήμην πάντων ὧν ἔπραττεν καὶ μηδεμίαν οἶμαι τύχην αἰτίαν τούτων τῶν ἔργων γεγενῆσθαι).

A set of crucial concepts emerges from Socrates' speech – σπουδαιότης ἐν ἀρετῇ, ἐπιστήμη and ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ – which confirms the relevance of the themes of virtue and knowledge and, at the same time, allows us to draw a further analogy with *Alcibiades I*. Here, the theme of “taking care of oneself” is not only clearly dealt with by Socrates – who asks Alcibiades τί ἐστὶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι (127e) – but also reveals a close connection to the issue of (self-) knowledge,

in so far as the latter is the necessary condition for the former. Indeed, Socratic questioning comes to the conclusion that «if we have that knowledge, we are like to know what pains to take over ourselves (γνόντες μὲν αὐτὸ τάχ' ἂν γνοῖμεν τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν); but if we have it not, we never can» (129a). And this taking care of oneself essentially corresponds to the taking care of one's own soul, since the inquiry has revealed that neither the body nor the combination of body and soul is man: for the latter ultimately turns out to be nothing else than ψυχή (129b-130c).

Thus, another common feature can be stressed: the Socratic exhortation to pursue and achieve moral virtue. Moreover, the latter is identified in both dialogues as a form of knowledge: in Aeschines' *Alcibiades* the acquisition of ἀρετή requires μάθησις and ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ to be acquired (see *Mem.* IV 2, 20); similarly, *Alcibiades I* establishes a close relation between knowledge and virtue. Indeed, Socrates advises Alcibiades to resort to μάθησις and ἄσκησις τῆς ἀρετῆς as a means of countering the negative effects of popular approval (132a ff.; see *Mem.* I 2, 19; 23) and, furthermore, the first part of the dialogue is entirely devoted to showing that Alcibiades' natural dispositions are insufficient when not combined with ἐπιμέλεια, ἄσκησις and σοφία. The latter, in particular, is defined as ἡ ψυχῆς ἀρετή in 133b10 and this reveals the crucial role played by knowledge in the acquisition of virtue: for only education can make gifted young men achieve knowledge about moral values and, through it, ἀρετή.

Both works further provide a similar picture of the effect of Socratic exhortation on the young Alcibiades, who gives up his resistance. With regard to Aeschines' *Alcibiades* this aspect is evidenced not only by the passages from Cicero and Augustine mentioned above, but also by Aelius Aristides, who sketches a scene that reappears in several other sources. He reports that Socrates compelled Alcibiades «to weep with his head on his knees, having become disheartened because he had not even nearly prepared himself like Themistocles» (*de quatt.* 576). The young man has realized by now just how close-minded he had been and how far from

13. γνῶθι σεαυτὸν is presented as a means against ἀμαθία also in *Mem.* IV 2, 24.

Themistocles' παρρασκευή, the need for which he had rejected – as we have seen (*supra*, 6) – in *Alcibiades I* (119b). Therefore, Alcibiades surrenders to Socrates and gives in to his exhortations. The same episode is related by Plutarch (*quom. adul. ab am. intern.* 29 p. 69e-f), who writes: «In such manner Socrates tried to keep Alcibiades in check, and drew an honest tear from his eyes by exposing his faults (δάκρυον ἐξῆγεν ἀληθινὸν ἐξελεγχομένου), and so turned his heart» (transl. by F. C. Babbitt). Aside from the detail of Alcibiades' tears – also featured in Cicero's account – all sources provide much the same depiction of the effect of Socratic ἔλεγχος: *aporía*, confusion and frustration on the part of Alcibiades, who gives in to Socrates and – according to Cicero – begs him *ut sibi virtutem traderet turpitudinemque depelleret*.

Now, we can find a comparable display of self-awareness on the part of Alcibiades in the last section of *Alcibiades I*. As seen before (*supra*, 5), Socrates – after showing to Alcibiades that «vice is a thing that becomes a slave» (135c) – leads the young man to acknowledge that his own condition is δουλοπρεπής and that he is acting like a slave himself. When he feels that Alcibiades is about to give in, Socrates sums up the conclusions reached by his refutations and directly asks: «And do you now perceive how you stand? Are you on the side of the free, or not? (ἐλευθεροπρεπῶς ἢ οὐ)?». Alcibiades' answer reveals that the Socratic ἔλεγχος has achieved its purpose: «I think I perceive only too clearly» (135c). Only at this stage, in the final exchanges of the conversation, Alcibiades suddenly becomes aware of his condition and ceases to hold out against Socrates. From this point onwards, he is willing to follow Socrates (135d; see *Mem.* IV 2, 40) and to begin «to take pains over justice» (135e).

To sum up, the following series of analogies have emerged from the passages just examined. First of all, the sources agree in their portrayal of Alcibiades' reaction to the Socratic ἔλεγχος: the young man, proud of his noble birth and of his natural talent, is reticent when faced with Socrates' exhortation to acquire virtue and denies the need for ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ with regard to himself. Thus, Alcibiades' firm belief that he is εὐδαίμων – in so

far as he is endowed with external goods – is taken as the starting point in both dialogues. Against this opinion, Socrates points out that ἀρετή is the only source of true εὐδαιμονία and encourages Alcibiades to acquire it, stressing the need for an ever-during ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ. Through a long chain of stringent ἔλεγχοι, he leads Alcibiades to acknowledge his own unsuitableness for his ambitious political goal (see *Xen. Mem.* IV 2, 30-39). The sudden awareness of this condition stirs confusion in the young man's soul and undermines his pride. Finally open to moral exhortation, Alcibiades begs Socrates to teach him ἀρετή and to free him from αἰσχροτήτης. Ultimately, in both accounts the chief means by which to contrast ἀμαθία is found in the *care* and *knowledge* of the self – the Delphic maxim γνῶθι σεαυτὸν¹³ which in *Alcibiades I* becomes a sort of “sub-concept” of the more general concept of ἐπιμέλεια.

In addition to this set of similarities, a further remark may be made before moving toward a conclusion. The analysis conducted so far has revealed some striking similarities in the discussion on knowledge and virtue in the two dialogues, as well as a common setting of both themes within the framework of the paideutic relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades. Now, something more may be said about the *modalities of transmission* of virtue and knowledge within Socratic teaching. Particularly telling is a passage from Aelius Aristides' *De rhetorica*:

Ael. Aristid. de rhet. I 61-2: If I thought that I could be helpful through my art (τινι τέχνῃ), I should find myself guilty of much stupidity. But as it is, I thought that this had been granted to me by a divine portion in respect to Alcibiades (θεία μοῖρα ᾧμην μοι τοῦτο δεδῶσθαι ἐπ' Ἀλκιβιάδην). And none of this should be wondered at. [...] For many of the sick become well, some by human art, some by a divine portion (θεία μοῖρα). Those by human art, cured by doctors; those by a divine portion, desire leads to what will profit them.

Ibid. 74: Through the love which I had for Alcibiades (διὰ τὸν ἔρωτα ὃν ἐτύγχανον ἐρῶν Ἀλκιβιάδου) I had felt no different from the Bacchantes. For whenever

the Bacchantes become inspired, they draw milk and honey from sources where others cannot even draw water. And though I knew no study by which I might usefully educate a man (οὐδὲν μάθημα ἐπιστάμενος ὁ διδάξας ἀνθρώπων ἀφελήσαιμι ἄν), still I thought that by associating with him I would improve him through love (ξυνῶν ἄν ἐκείνῳ διὰ τὸ ἐρᾶν βελτίω ποιῆσαι; transl. by C.A. Behr)¹⁴.

The focus of the passage is the distinction between two ways by which one can make other people better: through μαθήματα and by awakening, through ἔρως, the desire (ἐπιθυμία) to pursue virtue. Socrates, we are told, follows the latter method. He denies that he possesses any art (τέχνη) or science (μάθημα) to benefit other people; if Socrates can help, it is only by divine dispensation and by the love for Alcibiades, so that he believes he can improve the young man διὰ τὸ ἐρᾶν, «through love». Indeed, just θεία μοῖρα he is able to arouse a ἐπιθυμία that he also calls ἔρως and that is to be understood as an impulse to achieve virtue.

These remarks may also be read in the light of Socrates' statement in *Apology* 33a that he «was never any one's teacher» (not even Alcibiades'), and – by extension – in the light of the charge of corrupting the youth directed against the philosopher, with regard to which he had adopted the above position. To this extent, the conversation between Socrates and Alcibiades was intended to provide an example of Socrates' relationship with the youth of Athens: a relationship based not on παιδείσις, but only on συνουσία. What emerges here is the idea of a παιδεία which does not consist in "teaching" (διδάξας), but in improving other people by means of simple "association" (ξυνῶν). Indeed, Socrates points out that his educational skills originate from a θεία μοῖρα, a "divine portion"; so that the resulting παιδεία is related to a form of ἐπιθυμία, a desire that corresponds to ἔρως. Ultimately, as A. Stravru states, «in Eschine è l'ἐρᾶν nella sua accezione anepistemica, a rendere migliore il prossimo grazie all'aiuto esterno di una "sorte divina"».

This point of view on παιδεία and on the transmission of virtue is confirmed by Plutarch's account:

Plutarch. vit. Alcib. 4 p. 193c-e: And he came to think that the work of Socrates was really a kind of provision of the gods for the care and salvation of youth (θεῶν ὑπηρεσίαν εἰς νέων ἐπιμέλειαν εἶναι καὶ σωτηρίαν). Thus, by despising himself, admiring his friend, loving that friend's kindly solicitude and revering his excellence (αἰσχυρόμενος δὲ τὴν ἀρετήν), he acquired an "image of love" (εἶδωλον ἔρωτος), as Plato says, "to match love" (ἀντέρωτα), and all were amazed to see him eating, exercising, and tenting with Socrates, while he was harsh and stubborn with the rest of his lovers. Some of these he actually treated with the greatest insolence, as, for example, Anytus, the son of Anthemion (transl. by B. Perrin).

First, this account too depicts Socrates' philosophical and educational activity as a «provision of the gods» for the youth, something which would appear to confirm Socrates' claim that he can improve Alcibiades only by a θεία μοῖρα, and that he does not possess any τέχνη or ἐπιστήμη for imparting virtue. Secondly, we find in this passage the idea that Alcibiades' moral improvement is due to a sort of "response" to Socratic virtue, which is at the same time a paradigm for the young man and the source of his feeling of inadequacy. Alcibiades feels ashamed when confronted with Socrates' ἀρετή, and this acts as a stimulus for virtue.

Moreover, in Plutarch's account too this "exchange" within the paideutic relationship is framed according to the dynamics of ἔρως. The erotic connotation of παιδεία is here confirmed: thanks to his συνουσία with Socrates, Alcibiades has an εἶδωλον ἔρωτος, an "image of love" that must be understood – according to the doctrine expounded in the *Phaedrus* (255d), and which Plutarch refers to – as the kind of love which reciprocates (ἀντέρωτος) the ἔρως of the lover towards the beloved. Thus, once again, Socratic education aims to awaken ἐπιθυμία in others: the impulse to achieve virtue that is necessary for self-improvement. As in Plato's *Symposium* (cf. 222a-b), this process occurs through

14. On the sequence of the two fragments in Aeschines' dialogue, see Joyal 1993; on the interpretation of the first passage see also Meiser 1912.

the transformation of the beloved into the lover – that is to say, by awakening in the ἐρώμενος the ἐπιθυμία that becomes an ἐραστής.

Now, as far as the idea of παιδεία and the issue of the transmission of virtue are concerned, here too it is possible to single out some relevant similarities to *Alcibiades I*. Most of these are found in the opening of the dialogue, where Socrates explains to Alcibiades the reason why he has sought him:

Alcib. I, 103a-b: Son of Cleinias, I think it must surprise you that I, the first of all your lovers (πρῶτος ἐραστής σου), am the only one of them who has not given up his suit and thrown you over, and whereas they have all pestered you with their conversation I have not spoken one word to you for so many years. The cause of this has been nothing human (αἴτιον οὐκ ἀνθρώπειον), but a certain spiritual opposition (τι δαιμόνιον ἐναντίωμα), of whose power you shall be informed at some later time. However, it now opposes me no longer, so I have accordingly come to you; and I am in good hopes that it will not oppose me again in the future. Now I have been observing you all this time, and have formed a pretty good notion of your behavior to your lovers (πρὸς τοὺς ἐραστὰς): for although they were many and high-spirited, everyone of them has found your spirit too strong for him and has run away (οὐδεὶς ὅς οὐχ ὑπερβληθεὶς τῷ φρονήματι ὑπὸ σοῦ πέφευγεν). Let me explain the reason of your spirit being too much for them (transl. by W.R.M. Lamb).

What follows this passage is the section I previously examined (*supra*, 6), where Socrates displays to Alcibiades the reasons for his φρόνημα. The passages shows that also in this case Socrates ascribes his educational activity to a “divine will”: while in Aeschines’ *Alcibiades* he found himself in love with Alcibiades for a “divine portion” and so in the position of improving him διὰ τὸ ἐρᾶν, in *Alcibiades I* what allows Socrates to seek Alcibiades and encourage him to pursue virtue is the end of divine opposition (δαιμόνιον ἐναντίωμα). Even though the deity here manifests itself in a “negative” way – that is to say, by ceasing to oppose Socrates¹⁵ – in both cases the Socratic educational “mission” is due to an αἴτιον οὐκ ἀνθρώπειον.

This is emphasized by the last reference to the deity at the end of the dialogue (135d), where Socrates says that ὁ θεός will decide whether Alcibiades’ education will be successful or not («if it be God’s will»; ἐὰν θεὸς ἐθέλη). Secondly, once again the relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades is characterized as a lover-beloved relationship, so that Socrates’ educational intent arises from his ἔρωσ for Alcibiades. Indeed, Socrates immediately introduces himself as Alcibiades’ ἐραστής at the beginning of his speech and, a little further on, he states: «if I saw you, Alcibiades, content with the things I set forth just now, and minded to pass your life in enjoying them, I should long ago have put away my love (πάλαι ἂν ἀπηλλάγμην τοῦ ἔρωτος; 104e)». In such a way, Socrates connects his ἔρωσ for Alcibiades to the possibility of – or rather *potentiality for* – moral improvement on the part of the young man. Furthermore, what is particularly telling is that also in *Alcibiades I* the Socratic παιδεία produces a role reversal that leads the ἐρώμενος – once the impulse to achieve virtue is engendered in him – to be driven by the ἐπιθυμία that belongs to lovers. Indeed, in the final section of the dialogue, when Alcibiades is finally fully open to moral exhortations and willing to achieve ἀρετή, he clearly states: «And yet I say this besides, that we are like to make a change in our parts (μεταβαλεῖν τὸ σχῆμα), Socrates, so that I shall have yours and you mine. For from this day onward it must be the case that I am your attendant, and you have me always in attendance on you» (135d). And Socrates’ answer is even more telling (135e): «So my love (ὁ ἐμὸς ἔρωσ) will be just like a stork; for after hatching a winged love in you *it is to be cherished in return by its nestling* (ὑπὸ τούτου πάλιν θεραπεύσεται)». One last feature that the two portrayals have in common is the depiction of the arrogance which Alcibiades shows towards all his lovers, except Socrates. This trait, highlighted by Plutarch («he was harsh and stubborn with the rest of his lovers»), is also mentioned in the opening of *Alcibiades I* («for although they were many and high-spirited, everyone of them has found your spirit too strong for him and has run away»; 103b) and reiterated by Socrates in the following lines:

15. This is in line with Plato’s interpretation of Socrates’ *daimonion*, as it is described in the *Apology* (31d; 40a), the *Euthydemus* (272e) and the *Phaedrus* (242b-c), where it has a merely dissuasive function. On the contrary, in Xenophon’s Socratic writings the *daimonion semeion* suggests to Socrates both what to do and what to avoid: see *Mem.*, I 1, 2-5; I 4, 15; IV 3, 12; IV 8, 1; *Apol.* 12-13.

«it is hard for a lover to parley with a man who does not yield to lovers (χαλεπὸν μὲν οὖν πρὸς ἄνδρα οὐχ ἦττονα ἐραστῶν προσφέρεσθαι ἐραστῇ; 104e)».

It is now possible to draw some conclusions from the investigation conducted thus far, by adding some fundamental differences to the several analogies observed. First of all, in both dialogues it is possible to note a certain degree of consonance regarding the themes of virtue and self-knowledge, and the interaction between the two. Both works focus on the competences required in order to become a πολιτικός; however, in *Alcibiades I* this subject is approached through a more detailed discussion of self-knowledge and the treatment of the soul, while the last passage by Aelius Aristides on Aeschines' *Alcibiades* – regarding the more general idea of βελτίον γίγνεσθαι on Alcibiades' part – does not seem to suggest any in-depth investigation of the matter. Rather, the text addresses a wider issue: the conditions for true εὐδαιμονία. This is the context in which, in both dialogues, the issues of virtue and self-knowledge are discussed along much the same lines, as already noted. By exposing the unfoundedness of Alcibiades' arrogant claim to happiness based on the possession of external goods, Socrates connects these themes to the wider issue of the pursuit of εὐδαιμονία, which he identifies with ἀρετή. Socrates then defines virtue as a kind of knowledge, conveying the idea that ἀρετή is not a natural gift, but something which requires exercise and commitment (παράσκευῆ in Aeschines), if one is to attain any *knowledge* of the fundamental ethical concepts.

The above arguments are to be considered within the particular frame of the paideutic relationship between Socrates and Alcibiades, which is itself portrayed in similar terms in the two texts. First of all, in both dialogues the relationship is characterized as a form of erotic education: Socrates, moved by his ἔρωσ towards Alcibiades, presents himself as his lover and then transforms his beloved Alcibiades into an ἐραστής through his work of education. In Aeschines' dialogue this transformation takes place – according to Plutarch – by engendering in Alcibiades a “reflection of love” or ἀντέρωσ, while

in *Alcibiades I* Socrates makes the young man go through an out-and-out role reversal. In both cases, Socrates arouses the necessary ἐπιθυμία aimed at moral improvement and the pursuit of virtue. Secondly, Socrates himself links his paideutic activity to divine will; yet only in Aeschines' *Alcibiades* does this explicitly entail the idea that Socrates transmits virtue without resorting to any τέχνη or ἐπιστήμη. If, as demonstrated in both cases, ἀρετή is considered a kind of knowledge (*supra*, 8) – making virtue an issue of ethical intellectualism – in Aeschines' *Alcibiades* there seems to be a greater tension between this concept of virtue and its modes of transmission, which are “anepistemic”. According to *Alcibiades I*, it is still possible to conceive of a kind of παιδεία leading to moral improvement through συνουσία alone, but only in a very general sense; that is to say: it is possible to argue that Alcibiades' progress towards virtue occurs within the framework of – and thanks to – Socratic dialogue, but this holds true for most of Socrates' interlocutors in the *logoi Sokratikoi*. What is missing is a clear reference to a kind of paideutic activity διὰ τὸ ἐρᾶν on the part of Socrates, that goes beyond the simple fact that the philosopher presents himself as Alcibiades' lover, or as being moved by ἔρωσ towards him. In other words, it is not possible to argue on the basis of the text that ἔρωσ is not only the driving force behind Socrates' educational action and what provides its framework, but the actual means for the transmission of virtue.

In conclusion, it is possible to observe that – if Dittmar is right in suggesting that *Alcibiades I* was written at least 50 years after Aeschines' dialogue¹⁶ – the author of *Alcibiades I* was clearly familiar with Aeschines' *Alcibiades*, as several passages of his work clearly betray first-hand knowledge of the dialogue. But even if – as Giannantoni suggests – we accept the authenticity of *Alcibiades I* and assume a different chronological relation between this dialogue and that of Aeschines, there is still a strong consonance between two works, which may even stem – according to the scholar – from common memories¹⁷. Moreover, some close similarities had already been noted by ancient commentators, as evidenced by a statement in Aelius Aristides' *Defence*

16. See Dittmar 1912, 174. According to his hypothesis, Aeschines' *Alcibiades* was written between 394-393 and 391-390 BC, while *Alcibiades I* was composed between 340 and 330 BC.

of the Four. The author here compares Aeschines' *Alcibiades* and *Alcibiades I*, affirming the superiority of Aeschines' Socrates, who was able to bring about the transformation of Alcibiades in a different and more efficient way. Aelius concludes that «although Aeschines was inferior to Plato in other respects, somehow he handled this matter in a better way» (*de quatt.* 577; transl. by C.A. Behr). Ultimately, then, regardless of our take on the issue of the authenticity of *Alcibiades I* and its chronological relation to Aeschines' work, it is undeniable that the two dialogues are marked by striking similarities in the way they discuss the themes of virtue and knowledge, and their interconnection.

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17. See Giannantoni 1997, 358. A degree of consonance between the two dialogues is also noted by Kahn, whose hypothesis is that Plato in the *Symposium* further developed some of the themes discussed in Aeschines' *Alcibiades* and *Aspasia*: see Kahn 1992, esp. 584. Some scholars have also pointed to the similarities which Aeschines' *Alcibiades* and *Alcibiades I* have with Plato's *Charmides*: see Effe 1971 and Soulez-Luccioni 1974, 197-200.

