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Politics in Socrates' Alcibiades

A Philosophical Account of Plato's Dialogue Alcibiades Major

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A Philosophical Account of Plato's Dialogue Alcibiades Major

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To my mother

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Part I
Alcibiades Major and Its Interpretation

Chapter 1
Introduction

Abstract *Politics in Socrates' Alcibiades* provides a political and philosophical account of Plato's dialogue *Alcibiades Major*. In this book I am going to argue that Socrates redirects Alcibiades' political ambition to rule over the Athenian people by generalizing the notion of argument. Accordingly, instead of straightforwardly arguing for the truth of the claim that Alcibiades is not yet ready to rule wisely over the Athenian people or himself, Socrates attempts to modify and humble Alcibiades' political ambition by appealing to his doxastic attitudes toward his natural abilities and knowledge to become a powerful ruler of the Greek people. Such attitudes include straightforward belief, e.g., Alcibiades believes his political competitors are amateurs, and alternatives to straight forward belief, e.g., Alcibiades is inclined to believe that he does not need to learn how to rule wisely because his natural abilities will be far superior to his political competitors.

Politics in Socrates' Alcibiades provides a political and philosophical account of Plato's dialogue *Alcibiades Major*.[1] In this book I am going to argue that Socrates redirects Alcibiades' political ambition to rule over the Athenian people by generalizing the notion of argument. Accordingly, instead of straightforwardly arguing for the truth of the claim that Alcibiades is not yet ready to rule wisely over the Athenian people or himself, Socrates attempts to modify and humble Alcibiades' political ambition by appealing to his doxastic attitudes toward his natural abilities and knowledge to become a powerful ruler of the Greek people. Such attitudes include straightforward belief, e.g., Alcibiades believes his political competitors are amateurs, and alternatives to straight forward belief, e.g., Alcibiades is inclined to believe that he does not need to learn how to rule wisely because his natural abilities will be far superior to his political competitors.[2]

A doxastic attitude that Alcibiades holds, and one that Socrates deftly disabuses him of throughout the dialogue, is that he does not have to cultivate himself to be competitive with the local, Athenian politicians. Alcibiades says as much in response to Socrates' concern that the view he has of his competitors is false.

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[1] Except where indicated, all chapter translations of passages from *Alcibiades Major* are taken from D.S. Hutchinson in Cooper (1997, 581–595).

[2] See Pinto (2001, 10–20) on types of beliefs and the attitudes taken toward them.

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> Well, if they were educated, then anyone who wanted to compete with them would have to get some knowledge and go into training like an athlete. But as it is, since they entered politics as amateurs, there's no need for me to train and go to the trouble of learning. I'm sure my natural abilities will be far superior to theirs (119b4–119c).

Socrates reminds Alcibiades that his true competitors are not Athenian politicians, but rather the Spartan and Persian kings. Socrates' vivid struggle to get a strong-willed Alcibiades to think clearly and humbly about his goals, accounts for some of the most compelling passages in Plato's corpus. Socrates' attempt to engender the right sort of beliefs in Alcibiades makes the psychological drama of *Alcibiades Major* second to none.

Each chapter of this book should be seen as both an exegetic reading of *Alcibiades Major* and as a distinctive contribution to a multidisciplinary approach to philosophizing. The book as a whole should be read as a topical commentary on the various themes explored in the dialogue. In each chapter, Socrates and his interlocutors model the workings of practical reason and belief formation and point the way to beneficial decision-making procedures on the topics under discussion. In arguing that Socrates generalizes the notion of argument, I show that the interpretation of *Alcibiades Major* is made richer and that such an interpretation avoids many of the methodological difficulties encountered by other types of interpretation.

My approach to the interpretation of the dialogue is guided by two assumptions:

(1) *Alcibiades Major is best understood as a self-contained dialogue that is a complete and comprehensive treatment of its topic*. Although other Platonic dialogues may help illuminate or confirm an interpretive claim in *Alcibiades Major*, my interpretive approach construes the dialogue as an answer to the question its subject matter raises. *Alcibiades Major* should be interpreted mainly from itself. One of the consequences of having the dialogue be interpreted from itself is that Alcibiades and Socrates introduce all the significant answers to the question at issue in the dialogue—"What is wise ruler ship?" All the proposals offered in *Alcibiades Major* are, if construed appropriately, the answer to the dialogue's "what is X?" question. The account of X is not a simple phrase or propositional knowledge. It might be fine if we could readily achieve such knowledge. But the subject matter of interest in the dialogue tends to be too complex to formulate into a phrase that can stand without much elaboration.

Often in the dialogues Socrates exaggerates how ready the typical craftsman or self-proclaimed knowledgeable interlocutor is to formulate a proposition or description of an art. The craftsmen may mentor the apprentice to skill in the art without ever having to say what the art is. Other commentators have addressed this point. Gonzalez (1998) makes a similar point about self-knowledge or a skill having too much complexity; it renders such skills irreducible to a set of propositions.

> In knowing a proposition about something, I can only know *that* certain things are true *of* it; therefore, any form of knowledge that does not have this character cannot have propositions as its content. But what would be some examples of this? One clear example is knowledge of a certain skill: knowing *how* to do something. There are many propositions that truly assert something about skiing, but *knowing how* to ski is not equivalent to knowing any or all of these propositions (8).

Gonzalez extends his nonpropositional reading to Plato's dialectic as a whole. I do not go as far as he does in claiming that, corpus wide, the knowledge provided by Plato's dialectic is nonpropositional. However, the dialectic on display in *Alcibiades Major* seems to focus on nonpropositional knowledge. The topics at issue in the dialogue are too complex to be reduced to a proposition or a set of propositions.

(2) *Socrates' method in Alcibiades Major is grounded in the* Socratic *belief that Alcibiades' decisions must often be made in the absence of definitive reasons*. Consequently, the Socratic method in the dialogue requires the use of procedures to enhance deliberation for more efficient and effective decision making. In fact, my treatment of the dialogue calls attention to an overlooked aspect of the Socratic dialogues. Namely, they are a natural source for the exploration of decision making. The Socratic dialogues anticipate many of the ideas, concepts, and procedures that, in the twentieth-century, came to be known as decision theory.

The significance of these assumptions for my argument is that they explain the procedures at work within *Alcibiades Major* to influence Alcibiades to desire self-perfection as opposed to choosing to pursue victory without limits. These assumptions also explain Socrates' approach within the dialogue to limit Alcibiades' demands on his arguments and to show why he is indispensable to the achievement of Alcibiades' political goals. Although my interpretative approach would be relevant to the interpretation of other Platonic dialogues, *Alcibiades Major* is particularly suited to the procedures of decision making: The Interrogative Model of Knowledge Seeking (IMKS), learning structures, frames, mathematical expectation and hypothetical arguments. These are some of the more prominent decision making procedures that are employed to interpret *Alcibiades Major*, and are on display throughout the dialogue.

The modern concept of frames, for example, has been underappreciated by Plato scholars. In addition to the dialogues promoting philosophical discourse, they illustrate the importance of framing questions to enhance the chances of achieving a desired end. In the decision making context, frames must be broad enough to clarify the situation, encompass the situation's goals, and highlight resources within the situation to limit the complexity of the subject matter under discussion. Framing effects occur in the dialogues when an interlocutor's preferences are affected by variations of a relevant cue or cues in options or outcomes. Socrates' willingness to speak to Alcibiades is determined by his preference for productive conversations. Socrates would have failed if he had tried to have a conversation with Alcibiades prematurely. He recognizes that Alcibiades has many of the external goods (e.g., good looks, health, wealth) that are needed to be a great Athenian leader. Socrates also recognizes that Alcibiades is presently unprepared to achieve political greatness. Alcibiades' willingness to consider Socrates' arguments is determined by his preference for flattery. He seems to enjoy Socrates' complimentary manner towards him. The success Socrates promises Alcibiades outweighs Alcibiades' impatience with tedious and difficult questions. Of course, Socrates' compliments will eventually turn to criticism. Frames can be persuasive precisely because they are reference dependent. The framing effects of *Alcibiades Major* function to influence the deliberative process under which Alcibiades' decision about the nature of his soul

takes place, and to modify the perception of the value he places on his political ambition within the pursuit of the virtuous life.

Frames and the other decision making procedures I discuss, prove to be dramatically necessary in smoothly moving the dialogue along to its conclusion. Socrates employs these procedures to compensate for his arguments' lack of thoroughness and to make his arguments less time consuming and more emotionally compelling. Often in Plato's dialogues Socrates tries to frame the initial encounter with an interlocutor in such a way that the ensuing conversation seems natural, obviating any need for a detailed justification for a dialogue's beginning or subject matter. Socrates' confession to Alcibiades at the beginning of *Alcibiades Major* illustrates this recurring pattern.

> I was the first to fall in love with you, son of Clinias, and now that the others have stopped pursuing you I suppose you're wondering why I'm the only one who hasn't given up …. I've been observing you all this time, and I've got a pretty good idea how you treated all those men who pursued you: they held themselves in high esteem, but you were even more arrogant and sent them packing, every single one of them. I'd like to explain the reason why you felt yourself superior (103a–104a1).

Socrates' claim that he has been observing Alcibiades helps guarantee that there is a subject matter to inquire into. Additionally, it is emotionally compelling knowing that Socrates has been observing Alcibiades. Without saddling the beginning of the conversation with a list observations accumulated during the time Alcibiades was being observed, Socrates' claim that he has been observing Alcibiades for "all this time" underscores the fact that Alcibiades is a human being with prejudices, interests and desires. The philosophical search for "what is political ambition" is situated in the life situation of Alcibiades. The reader of the dialogue can also have his or her own prejudgments, interests and desires put into play. Thus we have more than a dry treatise on a topic. Socrates addresses a type of interlocutor, but the interlocutor's individuality also matters. For example, in some cases, as with Alcibiades, Critias, Meno, and others, the reader can know what happens to them historically. So when Plato puts them into dialogues the reader sees that there is "intertextuality" of Plato with historians and other writers, and also the reader may be provoked to try to see if Socrates explains how the character depicted in the dialogue ends up living the history that we in advance know that they led.

1.1 What the Book's Argument Seeks to Accomplish

The aim of this book is to place my reading of *Alcibiades Major* among both ancient and modern readings of the dialogue. In the first three chapters I provide methodological and historical surveys of what prominent commentators have said about *Alcibiades Major* and how these commentators have interpreted the dialogue. In Chaps. 4–7 I interpret specific passages in relation to topical themes for the purpose of demonstrating how my reading of *Alcibiades Major* is in line with

modern commentators who take the dialogue's political, educational value and dramatic features seriously, while at the same time not ignoring that in some quarters *Alcibiades Major*'s authorship is still in dispute.

Since the nineteenth century the issue of authenticity has preoccupied most modern commentators of the dialogue, but from all reasonable evidence, commentators from the ancient world had no such qualms with attributing the authorship of *Alcibiades Major* to Plato. However, it is important to emphasize that the contribution of this book is not directly dependent on *Alcibiades Major*'s authenticity. Despite the fact that the question of authenticity needs to be left open within the limits of the book, scholarly attention has been devoted to the issue. Nicholas Denyer and Thomas Pangle, among others, do offer compelling philological and philosophical arguments for the dialogue's authenticity. Denyer's *Plato*: *Alcibiades* (2001) argues for the dialogue's authenticity by questioning the standard chronological ordering of the dialogues into early, middle and late. Each of these groupings are said to embody specific mannerisms both in terms of its literary style and philosophical content. The conventional view of the early dialogues (e.g., *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Charmides*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Euthydemus*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Ion*, *Menexenus*, *Hippias Minor*, *Hippias Major* and the first book of the *Republic*) is that they contain a Socratic philosophy that was advocated by the historical Socrates. These dialogues tend to focus on the definitions of ethical terms. The conventional view of the middle dialogues (e.g., *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic*, *Cratylus*, and *Phaedrus*) is that they contain a Platonic philosophy. These dialogues tend to focus on grand metaphysical issues such as the nature of numbers, knowledge, forms and the soul. The conventional view of the late dialogues (e.g., *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Philebus*, and *Laws*) is that they resolve in a more pragmatic way some of the issues raised in the middle dialogues. *Alcibiades Major* has many of the features that are found in each of the three chronologies. According to Denyer, commentators have deemed the dialogue inauthentic based upon the fact that it has affinities to each of the three clusters (22). He speculates as to why Plato might have mixed the various features from the early, middle and late dialogues into *Alcibiades Major*.

> Plato wished to show Socrates taking Alcibiades from his original and quite unphilosophical condition to a condition in which he is prepared, at least for the moment, to do some fairly serious philosophizing. These intellectual changes in Alcibiades, and in the sorts of conversations he is able to cope with, are reflected in the changes of literary manner, from 'early', through 'middle', to 'late' (24).

Thomas Pangle's *The Roots of Political Philosophy*: *Ten Forgotten Socratic Dialogues* (1987, 1–18) defends the entire Thrasyllan corpus as authentic. The Thrasyllan corpus, of which *Alcibiades Major* is included, consists of thirty-six Platonic dialogues that are arranged into nine tetralogies. The corpus is accredited to Thrasyllus, a court-intellectual and astrologer under Tiberius. The idea behind the tetralogies is to account for the diversity of literary style and philosophical content by grouping the dialogues according to their role within a Platonic education. Pangle's argument for *Alcibiades Major* having been written by Plato rests mainly

on the historical claim that its authenticity was not questioned in the ancient world, and that taken on its own merits, the dialogue seems worthy of having been written by Plato. Despite Denyer's and Pangle's efforts to offer arguments for the authenticity of *Alcibiades Major* to those who deny it, there are other commentators who emphatically deny the dialogue's authenticity. I, however, have been persuaded by Denyer's and Pangle's arguments that the dialogue was written by Plato.

Smith (2004, 93–18), among others, emphatically denies that *Alcibiades Major* is an authentic Platonic dialogue. Smith's argument is worth reviewing because it judges the dialogue to be inauthentic based on specific passages of the dialogue, whereas other commentators who deny the dialogue's authenticity base their arguments on subjective criteria such as their perception of the dialogue's style and structure. Smith's argument is that *Alcibiades Major*'s features are in opposition to genuine Platonic doctrines found in the canonical dialogues. If *Alcibiades Major* is accepted to be genuine, says Smith,

> …we will have access to a considerably greater understanding of Plato, given all of the additional information the dialogue provides. But if it is not by Plato, scholars' use of such additional information could encourage and even confirm false interpretations of genuinely Platonic materials. That the dialogue contains materials not included in the other (canonical) dialogues is, of course, not in itself any argument against its authenticity (96).

Smith acknowledges that because *Alcibiades Major* contains content that is not included in the canonical dialogues does not in itself demonstrate that it's inauthentic. He proceeds to argue, however, that the sheer number of passages in *Alcibiades Major* that are in opposition to Platonic doctrine renders the dialogue inauthentic. Smith cites several passages from *Alcibiades Major* in support of his argument. I will mention only one. At 105d2–e5 Socrates says that his daimonion is a god, and that god and himself are indispensable to the attainment of Alcibiades' political goals. The problem that Smith has with the passage is that it is explicit about the nature of Socrates' daimonion (i.e., that it is a god), whereas in the canonical dialogues Socrates "goes out of his way to be vague about what exactly lies behind these monitions, ordinarily identifying it only as a δαιμόνιον τι" (101). Some of the canonical dialogues mentioned by Smith are *Ap* 31c8–d1, 40a4–6; *Euthphr* 3b5–7; and *Phdr* 242c2. Smith cites other passages from *Alcibiades Major* that appear to be at odds with passages from the canonical dialogues. As I mentioned earlier, the contribution of my book does not depend directly on *Alcibiades Major*'s authenticity. The obvious line of attack against Smith's argument is that it assumes that Plato had doctrines that unify the so called canonical dialogues. My interpretation of *Alcibiades Major* does not rely on any such doctrines. I will discuss additional points about the scholarly debate regarding the authenticity of the dialogue in Chap. 3.

My treatment of *Alcibiades Major* differs from the attention given to it by past and present commentators because my interpretive principle has been that the dialogue is best understood when read in light of Socrates' methodological versatility. For this reason I have titled the book *Politics in Socrates' Alcibiades*. Each chapter has been designed to show the diversity of method Socrates employs to

change Alcibiades' beliefs and to bridle his arrogance. The book facilitates a kind of cross-fertilization of ideas from a variety of intellectual and political perspectives. Looking at the dialogue from various perspectives has garnered new insights into the dialogue from which other commentators may benefit. The course I have followed in pursuing the objective of the book has been motivated by one basic question: "What does *Alcibiades Major* intend to teach us?" I provide an answer to the question, and the answer is quite unique. For example, Socrates' conversation with Alcibiades invites us to consider five issues in *Alcibiades Major*: methodology, women, political decisions, priorities and listening. The dialogue is not limited to these five issues, but it cannot be seriously dealt with without reflecting on them.

Consider two examples. What does *Alcibiades Major* intend to teach us about listening. I provide an answer to the question in Chap. 7, "Listening to Plutarch's Alcibiades in Plato's *Alcibiades Major*." Whereas most commentators think that Socrates' conversation with Alcibiades was contrived to show that Alcibiades was morally corrupt prior to their meeting, there is evidence to suggest otherwise. I argue that Alcibiades' encounter with Socrates would have been beneficial if Alcibiades had listened appropriately to what was being said to him. Thus, the dialogue intends for us to see that listening can be a source of moral uplift or a source of moral corruption.

The other example concerns the Spartan and Persian Speech. The Spartan and Persian Speech is crucial to the dialogue, and women figure prominently in the speech. In Chap. 3, "The Philosophical and Political Structure of Plato's *Alcibiades Major*" and Chap. 4, "Listen, Alcibiades," I account for the prominence of women in the speech by arguing that women provide moral insight regarding male goals and achievement. The dialogue intends to teach us that Alcibiades' goals can be realized only by considering the opinions of him held by the mothers, daughters, and wives of his competitors. These are just two examples of the book's approach to what Socrates' conversation with Alcibiades may teach us in *Alcibiades Major*.

1.2 Existing Scholarship

In the context of ancient Greek political philosophy this book provides a novel perspective. To date, very few commentators have come close to interpreting the Socratic dialogues and *Alcibiades Major*, in particular, in the way this book proposes. In the interpretation of *Alcibiades Major*, I make use of concepts and ideas from various intellectual disciplines that are not traditionally discussed in the Socratic literature. As I have mentioned, ideas from decision theory and the concept of learning structures, figure prominently in the book. Consequently, the book will be limited to discussing those commentators who take an unorthodox approach to the interpretation of the dialogues and *Alcibiades Major* by applying concepts and ideas from disciplines outside of ancient philosophy and Socratic studies. However, even these commentators' efforts do not go far enough. For example, Michael Stokes's book, *Plato's Socratic Conversations* (1986), argues that the proper

starting point for any worthy interpretation of the dialogues must see the interlocutor's views as the sole force and motivation of the dialogue. On this reading, Socrates' role is merely procedural, so all of the questions in the dialogues "have the aim of eliciting the respondent's view and [that] any other purpose is, if present at all, of secondary importance" (30). Stokes' reading of the dialogues is misleading because it does not appreciate that Socrates' questions are goal-directed. Socrates' questions aim to move the interlocutor and the dialogue along to more pertinent and complex questions on the topic explored in a given dialogue. How he initiates the movement is captured by the concept of framing. Socrates' leading questions function as frames. In *Alcibiades Major* frames are instrumental to changing Alcibiades' beliefs.

Another scholar concerned with method and the nature of Socratic questioning is Ian Kidd. In his essay, "Socratic Questions" (1992, 82–92), Kidd argues that the *arche* or directional quality of Socrates' questions provides the sole force and motivation of the dialogues (90). Thus, according to Kidd, "the interlocutor's answers are no more than the matter or *hyle* on which [Plato] imposed the form of Socratic Questioning" (91). Although Kidd is correct to highlight the contrived nature of the Socratic dialogues, he fails to appreciate that the directional quality of Socrates' questions are motivated by the featured character of the interlocutor. Kidd misses the point that in most of the dialogues Socrates' questions are motivated by the interlocutor's intellectual conceit. Often the interlocutor proclaims expertise at something or has some interest in something. Socrates' ability to ask the interlocutor relevant questions, and to get him to consider relevant choices, results from what I call feedback mechanisms or learning structures. Not only do the interlocutor's responses to Socrates' questions exhibit his grasp of the topic under discussion, they in turn inform Socrates about how to handle such an interlocutor. Consequently, Socrates' questions should be seen as inferential. Kidd's essay is lacking in these sorts of observations.

There is a group of interpreters within the field of ancient Greek philosophy that call attention to the importance of belief formation and the types of decisions made by the interlocutor in the interpretation of the Socratic dialogues. These interpreters are Nicholas Denyer, Jaakko Hintikka and Mark Lutz. My interpretation of *Alcibiades Major* will not be limited to discussing the interpretations of these three interpreters. However, they do figure prominently in several chapters of the book due to their interdisciplinary approach to *Alcibiades Major*.

In his book, *Plato*: *Alcibiades Major* (2001), Denyer argues that the decision theorist F.P. Ramsey's concept of Mathematical Expectation explains Socrates' use of hypothetical questions and thought experiments in *Alcibiades Major*. Mathematical Expectation illustrates how strongly or to what degree a person holds a particular belief. According to Denyer, posing hypothetical questions and choices in the dialogue is a way Socrates has of reassuring himself of an interlocutor's philosophical potential. Unfortunately, Denyer mentions such questions and choices only in passing. In Chap. 5 I critically analyze these questions and choices by making relevant conceptual distinctions that Denyer overlooks.

Jaakko Hintikka's book, *Socratic Epistemology*: *Explorations of Knowledge-Seeking by Questioning* (2007), attempts to show that the Socratic elenchos has many of the same features found in the interrogative model of knowledge seeking. The model distinguishes between factual and strategic knowledge as they function within the context of a question-and-answer process. Hintikka argues that the content of the questions in a Socratic dialogue are deduced solely from the interlocutor's answers, similar to the deduction of answers offered by a participant in ordinary conversations. In other words, elenctic exchanges in the dialogues take place without Socrates having any sort of factual knowledge about the interlocutor or the subject matter under discussion.

Mark Lutz's book, *Socrates' Education To Virtue* (1998), takes *Alcibiades Major*'s dramatic features and educational value seriously, and provides an instructive approach to the interpretation of the dialogue. He construes the philosophical ideas entertained in the dialogue as having broad applications due to the role the dialogue plays within Socratic education as a whole. For example, Lutz views Socrates' commitment to getting Alcibiades to appreciate the role virtue can play in both his private and public life as analogous to the broader issue of liberal democracy's continuing concern with the role virtue should play, if at all, in moral, political and religious discourse.

1.3 Plan of the Book

Chapter 2, "Method and Structure in Plato's *Alcibiades Major*," evaluates Jaakko Hintikka's claim that the interrogative model is compatible with the Socratic elenchos. After explaining the function of the interrogative model, I argue that Hintikka's claim that Socrates lacks any sort of factual knowledge about a dialogue's interlocutor or its subject matter is blatantly false. Using Plato's *Alcibiades Major*, I show that the dialogues are contrived in such a way that Socrates is always in possession of pertinent, factual information about an interlocutor and a dialogue's subject matter. Contrary to Hintikka's claim, such information, "presuppositions," motivates the dramatic and philosophical movement within the dialogues and anchors the propositions introduced by Socrates in elenctic exchanges. Consequently, Socrates' strategic knowledge is shown to be derived from his comprehensive factual knowledge.

Chapter 3, "The Philosophical and Political Structure of Plato's *Alcibiades Major*," reviews the various treatments of *Alcibiades Major* among ancient, modern and contemporary scholars. It also seeks to highlight modern and contemporary themes the dialogue anticipates, such as feminism and, to a lesser extent, multiculturalism. The chapter will also show that it was in the nineteenth century that objections were first raised about the dialogue's structural features and authenticity. Such objections preoccupied most modern commentators of the dialogue, but from all reasonable evidence, commentators from the ancient world had no such qualms

about the dialogue's structural features or about attributing the authorship of *Alcibiades Major* to Plato.

Chapter 4, "Listen, Alcibiades," argues that the prominent role of women in the Spartan and Persian Speech has not been sufficiently appreciated. I remedy this by (1) laying out the context in which the speech is presented; (2) explaining what precisely the women of the speech say about Alcibiades' challenge to their men; (3) surveying and critiquing what ancient and modern commentators have said about the role women play in the speech; and (4) advancing a reading of the speech that unifies the sentiments attributed to each woman as expressed by Socrates. Part 4 of this chapter gives the women of the speech their due by showing that Socrates takes it for granted that the women provide insight regarding male goals and achievement. This insight, I argue, is acquired through female, familial relationships and the learning structures that result from such an environment. Socrates goes to great lengths to show Alcibiades just how indispensable women's insight is for his success.

Chapter 5, "Instances of Decision Theory in Plato's *Alcibiades Major*, *Minor* and in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*," discusses Socrates' use of hypothetical choices as an early version of what was to become in the twentieth century the discipline of decision theory as expressed by one of its prominent proponents, F.P. Ramsey. Socrates' use of hypothetical choices and thought experiments is a way of reassuring himself of an interlocutor's philosophical potential. For example, to assess just how far Alcibiades is willing to go to attain his goal of being a great Athenian leader, I employ Ramsey's concept of Mathematical Expectation. Mathematical Expectation operates on the assumption that it is not enough to measure probability; we must also measure the strength of our belief. Beliefs are significant in so far as they are action generating. Not all beliefs have causal efficacy, but a person's actions tend to be motivated by beliefs about an object or the satisfaction of desires. If a person's belief in X lacks enough doubts to cancel the belief out, the probability of his acting on this belief is higher than if his belief in X was plagued by a greater number of doubts. Alcibiades will be shown to hold strongly the wrong type of beliefs.

Chapter 6, "Eudaimonia: Happiness and Priorities in Plato's *Alcibiades Major* and Plato's *Apology*," argues that the principal themes of happiness and priorities found in Plato's *Alcibiades Major* are also found in Plato's *Apology*, rendering each dialogue a natural complement to the other. By first reading the *Apology* as a synoptic view of Socrates' orientation, and then reading *Alcibiades Major* as a specific illustration of Socrates' cross-examination, we begin to see that Socrates is arguing for a radical perspective regarding one's priorities: our lives should be directed at some ultimate end with other ends subordinate to it.

Chapter 7, "Listening to Plutarch's Alcibiades in Plato's *Alcibiades Major*," analyzes the "how to listen" tradition by employing conceptual categories taken from Plutarch's short treatise *On Listening* and applying them to *Alcibiades Major*. I argue that there are dispositional reasons why Alcibiades failed to listen appropriately to the moderating forces of the Socratic conversation. Alcibiades' failure to listen set the stage for his notorious public enterprises. The dispositions that

seriously hampered Alcibiades' ability to listen and benefit from the Socratic conversation are envy, excessive admiration and non-rhythmic listening. I explore each of these dispositions from Socrates' initial encounter with the ambitious youth to Alcibiades' reaction to the Spartan and Persian Speech to the conclusion of the dialogue in which we see a broken, submissive Alcibiades eager to listen and eager for a genuine education.

Chapter 8, the conclusion, addresses the importance of informal arguments in *Alcibiades Major*, and why the dialogue is relevant to modern readers. My hope is that *Politics in Socrates' Alcibiades* will engage a wide range of readers, including scholars, students of ancient Greek philosophy, decision theorists, political theorists and others working on more contemporary analytical problems in the history of philosophy.

Addenda one and two are thought-pieces. Accordingly, they are intended to suggest areas of possible research on *Alcibiades Major*'s and *Minor*'s connection to other Socratic dialogues. Addendum one is a brief list of topics discussed in *Alcibiades Major* and the *Apology* that merit scholarly attention. Addendum two reflects on the political theorist Michael Oakeshott's concept of intimations in relation to *Alcibiades Minor*'s discussion of knowledge, crafts and Socratic traditionalism.

Each addendum takes as their starting point themes discussed in Chaps. 5 and 6. As I mentioned earlier in this introduction in regard to interpreting and analyzing *Alcibiades Major*, by interpreting and analyzing *Alcibiades Minor*, I am not taking a position on the authenticity of the dialogue.

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Chapter 2
Method and Structure in Plato's *Alcibiades Major*

Abstract "Method and Structure in Plato's *Alcibiades Major*" evaluates Jaakko Hintikka's claim that the interrogative model is compatible with the Socratic elenchos. After explaining the function of the interrogative model, I argue that Hintikka's claim that Socrates lacks any sort of factual knowledge about a dialogue's interlocutor or its subject matter is blatantly false. Using Plato's *Alcibiades Major*, I show that the dialogues are contrived in such a way that Socrates is always in possession of pertinent, factual information about an interlocutor and a dialogue's subject matter. Contrary to Hintikka's claim, such information, "presuppositions," motivates the dramatic and philosophical movement within the dialogues and anchors the propositions introduced by Socrates in elenctic exchanges. Consequently, Socrates' strategic knowledge is shown to be derived from his comprehensive factual knowledge.

Recently within Platonic scholarship increasing attention is focused on the methodological issues the dialogues raise. This scholarship is motivated by one central question: *How does Socrates model rational knowledge seeking*? The answer to such a question will be crucial in determining the role Socrates, the interlocutor, and the reader play in the dialogues and in determining to what extent the dialogues' question-and-answer process is reflective of how decisions are made in ordinary conversations. Despite the fact that the recent turn towards methodological considerations is long overdue, the scholarship being produced fails to appreciate the methodological versatility employed by Plato. Commentators have especially overlooked the ways the Socratic dialogues model decision making strategies.

In order to correct these deficiencies I will review and critique the claims of three prominent commentators who offer interesting, but deficient, explanations of Socratic methodology. The commentators I have selected are worthy of discussion because their respective readings of the Platonic dialogues are influential. They each articulate, from a modern perspective, three different approaches to the interpretation of the Platonic dialogues that have been around since Plato's early interpreters.[1] In general, these commentators assume that the dialogues should be

[1] *See* Harold Tarrant's insightful book, *Plato's First Interpreters* (2000, pp. 1–26; pp. 44–52).

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interpreted in light of the role played by one of their structural features (e.g., the interlocutor's answers, Socrates' leading questions, or Socrates' strategic knowledge). Such interpretations end up overemphasizing one aspect of the dialogues while underemphasizing other aspects, such as the relationship between the dramatic and philosophical content within the dialogues. Consequently, I believe that the commentators should receive a critical evaluation.

The commentators I will be critiquing are Michael Stokes, Ian Kidd, and Jaakko Hintikka. In Sects. 2.1 and 2.2 I show how the respective positions of Stokes and Kidd render the dialogues lopsided and unphilosophical and, in principle, of historical interest only. Stokes places too much emphasis upon the interlocutors at the expense of Socrates; while Kidd places too much emphasis on Socrates at the expense of the interlocutors. I conclude these sections by arguing inter alia that Stokes' and Kidd's deficiencies can be overcome by appreciating how the reader of a Platonic dialogue is on par, dramatically, with the role played by Socrates and the interlocutor(s). In point of fact, the dialogues are provocative precisely because they are designed to force readers to consider their own solutions to the subject matter under discussion. The ambitions, desires, and prejudgments of the reader are put into play. As with Socrates' questions and the interlocutor's expressed views, the reader's questions and views are essential in generating urgency within the dialogue and moving the dialogue along to a conclusion. Such movement results from the various perspectives brought to bear in the interpretation of a Platonic dialogue. Consequently, the conclusions of a Platonic dialogue are negotiated settlements that are always subject to revision.

In Sect. 2.3, I discuss Hintikka's claim that the Socratic elenchus models many of the same features of the interrogative model of knowledge seeking. Hintikka characterizes the interrogative model as functioning within the context of questioning. The answers to such questioning are deduced solely from the interlocutor's answers, not from factual knowledge about the interlocutor or the subject matter under discussion. As a result, Hintikka claims that Socrates' insistence that he is ignorant rests on the distinction between factual knowledge and strategic knowledge. Socrates practices elenchus successfully because he has strategic knowledge (i.e. he knows which questions to ask), not factual knowledge (i.e. details about who, what, when, where, etc.). I take issue with such a distinction by arguing that if the Platonic dialogues are reflective of rational knowledge seeking through a question and answer process, and reflective of decision making strategies found in ordinary conversations, which I think they are, Socratic questions must be guided by presuppositions about the interlocutor and the subject matter of the inquiry.

My arguments will be illustrated by Plato's dialogue *Alcibiades Major*. This dialogue is worthy of examination because it is especially rich in psychological drama and philosophical content. *Alcibiades Major* lacks scene setting to introduce and justify its subject matter, so the dialogue immediately confronts the reader with a conversation between a reluctant, but arrogant, Alcibiades, and a probing Socrates. Such an abrupt start to the conversation between these two strong personalities proves to be fertile ground for exploring both self-knowledge and the pitfalls of overemphasizing the importance of Socrates or the interlocutor within the

dialogue. Moreover, there are three broad reasons why Socrates' line of questioning in *Alcibiades Major* should be a model for readers: (1) The dialogue teaches us to know ourselves, and that we are really rational soul. The soul is the true self (*auto*) that remains the same and remains the true subject of our actions, whereas the body becomes an instrument utilized by the soul. Consequently, true happiness is to know one's true self; (2) *Alcibiades Major* is a protreptic (*protreptikos*) dialogue. The word protreptic means to turn, to urge on, or to exhort. Alcibiades' gradual realization that he lacks the requisite knowledge to rule himself and the city properly forces him to reevaluate his prior commitments and goals. Witnessing such a reevaluation should urge the attentive reader to conduct an appraisal of the feasibility of his own goals and commitments; and (3) *Alcibiades Major* is a maieutic dialogue. Socrates draws out, as if he were a midwife of ideas, Alcibiades's ideas so that they may come to light. Alcibiades gives birth to the truth within himself that he does not have knowledge of the just and unjust, but supposes he does. The readers of *Alcibiades Major* should benefit from witnessing Alcibiades' inadvertent admission. It teaches us to be aware of the lack of consistency between our true beliefs and our professed beliefs.

In *Alcibiades Major* Socrates confronts a young, ambitious Alcibiades who cares more about what he has (e.g., wealth, family, honors) than about what he is. Alcibiades' ambition is to present himself to the Athenian people to show them that he deserves to be honored more than Pericles or any other politician that ever was. However, he is in no position to know better than the Athenians what they propose to discuss in the assembly. He is ignorant about affairs of state and ignorant about his lack of awareness. Socrates refuses to remain quiet in the face of Alcibiades' ignorance. It is Alcibiades' talents that blind him to the need of tending to his soul. Only through Socrates' private exhortation, not his guardian Pericles or his relatives, will Alcibiades come to see the great benefit Socrates is attempting to bestow upon him. First Alcibiades must be brought to see that the concern for the state of his soul entails a radical reorganizing of his priorities. With the help of Socrates, Alcibiades gradually becomes aware of his soul's urgent need of cultivation before all competing alternatives.

In many dialogues the interlocutor's presumptive knowledge of X motivates the conversation and determines the type of questions Socrates initiates. Just as often, and more importantly, the reputation of the interlocutor has preceded his conversation with Socrates, allowing Socrates' line of questioning to develop from a tentative familiarity with the interlocutor's point of view. In *Alcibiades Major* Socrates explains to Alcibiades that ever since Alcibiades was a little boy he has observed him because he was unable to talk to him, until now, due to his daimonic voice (103a–105a). Socrates has observed many things over the years regarding him, including the education he has received. The movement of the dialogue gains momentum after Alcibiades is made aware of the fact that his education has not equipped him to advise the Athenians on the issues discussed in the assembly (106d–107e12).

2.1 Stokes' Reading

The thesis of Michael Stokes' book, *Plato's Socratic Conversations* (1986), is that the interlocutors' views are the sole force and motivation of the dialogues. Any worthy interpretation of Plato must see the interlocutors as central to understanding a dialogues' subject-matter. Stokes claims that Socrates' role is to examine the interlocutor's views about his currently held moral beliefs and standards:

> Suppose that Plato intended to show that a certain typical person from a certain significant class habitually used ways of thought and expression which laid him open to such reduction or compelled him, in consistency, to adopt a Socratic view. Suppose, indeed, that all Socrates' questions are intended to elicit the respondent's answer, and no question is intended to inform us [the reader] or the interlocutor (28–29).

The interlocutor's views then serve as the basis for formulating further Socratic questioning in the dialogue. The interlocutor's views are habitual ways of thinking or expressions which eventually lead to self-contradiction or to the acceptance of Socratic propositions. Socrates elicits the interlocutor's inconsistent beliefs by asking questions. The interlocutor has the right to answer in the affirmative or the negative, but Socrates' questions "have the aim of eliciting the respondent's view and…any other purpose is, if present at all, of secondary importance" (30). Accordingly, on Stokes reading, Socrates' role is reduced to advancing a series of procedural questions designed not to alter the interlocutor's perspective by having him reflect on substantive doctrines, but rather to ensnare the interlocutor in his own faulty logic. Such a procedure implies that Socrates is more concerned with highlighting the interlocutor's inconsistent belief-sets than he is with the pursuit of truth on the topic explored.

As for gleaning Socrates' views from the sorts of questions he asks the interlocutor, Stokes speculates that Socrates' choice of which inconsistent beliefs he calls the interlocutor on may begin to "build up a picture of what Plato thought" (30). Another tool that may be of some help in determining the contours of Platonic thought, according to Stokes, is assessing Socrates' voluntary premises that are often without "obvious contextual necessity" (30).

However, the abrupt start of *Alcibiades Major* underscores a feature of the dialogues that is overlooked or ignored by Stokes. Socrates always seems to be in possession of information about his would-be interlocutors before he actually enters into conversation with them. Such information determines the aim and scope of Socrates' initial and subsequent questions. These questions tend to be grounded in substantive doctrines.[2] The logic of Socrates' questions entail goals; they are goal-directed questions. The interlocutor's character, on the other hand, provides the

[2] One example of what I have in mind is the belief that a human being is a rational soul, and that the body is merely an instrument that is utilized by the soul.

justification for Socrates framing the subject matter in the way that he does.[3] Once Alcibiades becomes aware of his ignorance, Socrates proceeds to ask him questions designed to further diminish his self-esteem by calling into question the pride he takes in his material possessions (see 120b10–124b). The interlocutor's beliefs and standards are not the sole force and motivation of the dialogues, rather what also motivates them is Socrates' assessment of interlocutors, like Alcibiades, that suffer from a false consciousness.[4]

A related point that Stokes seems to overlook or ignore is that the dialogues are in a certain sense contrived. Socrates' questions, we can assume, appear to be orderly and progressive because Plato wrote them that way. Even though Alcibiades' affirmative and negative answers in the opening scenes of *Alcibiades Major* portray a young man whose hubris might prove to be a stumbling block for Socrates' intentions, Alcibiades, like other interlocutors featured in the dialogues, holds to form by persisting in discussion and ensnaring himself in inconsistencies and eventually freely confessing his weaknesses to Socrates (106a2–110a).

Although the dialogues are contrived, they should not be seen as lacking flexibility. In the opening scenes of *Alcibiades Major* the views of the reader come into play as well. In these early stages of the dialogue, for example, two specific questions that confront the reader are: *What is more important for the attainment of political prominence—ambition and cleverness or wisdom and truth seeking*? and *Is knowing one's self a prerequisite for the attainment of political power*? The answers to these questions are indicative of the different perspectives that are

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[3] The modern concept of frames has been underappreciated by Plato scholars. In addition to the dialogues' promoting of philosophical discourse, they illustrate the importance of framing questions to enhance the chances of achieving a desired end. Framing effects occur in decision making when the decision maker's preferences are affected by variations of a relevant cue or cues in options or outcomes. Socrates' decision to speak to Alcibiades is determined by his preference for productive conversations. Socrates would have failed if he had tried to have a conversation with Alcibiades prematurely. Alcibiades' decision to answer Socrates' questions is determined by his preference for power. The success Socrates promises Alcibiades outweighs Alcibiades' impatience with difficult and tedious questions. On frames and their significance, see Simon 1986, p. 26.

[4] That Socrates is primarily concerned with the type of life entailed by an interlocutor's character is attested by Nicias' comments to Lysimachus in the *Laches*:

> You don't appear to me to know that whoever comes into close contact with Socrates and associates with him in conversation must necessarily, even if he began by conversing about something quite different in the first place, keep on being led about by the man's arguments until he submits to answering questions about himself concerning both his present manner of life and the life he has lived hitherto (187e6–188a, Sprague translation in Cooper, 665–686).
>
> The passage under discussion is not commented upon in Stokes' short treatment of the *Laches* (65). Unfortunately, Stokes' omission is symptomatic of his interpretive assumption that Socrates' role in the dialogues is merely procedural. Accordingly, Socrates has no stake in the conversation other than to formulate questions based upon the interlocutor's currently held beliefs. If Nicias' comments are an accurate portrayal of Socrates' questions, which I think they are, then Stokes' treatment of the dialogues tells only half the story.

brought to bear on the interpretation of a Socratic dialogue. Such perspectives are brought to bear by the reader, and they generate a sense of urgency and flexibility within the dialogue by mirroring how topics are discussed and decisions are made in ordinary conversations.

Given what we have argued thus far, Stokes renders the dialogues lopsided and unphilosophical. His interpretive method seems to presuppose an intellectual honesty on the part of interlocutors. In the case of Alcibiades, such honesty requires that Alcibiades' beliefs about his chances of becoming a great Athenian leader should be taken at face value. Socrates and the reader of the dialogue should be able to predict Alcibiades' choices by considering Alcibiades' stated views, without having to consider that Alcibiades may have a distorted view of his own leadership abilities. If Socrates' questions merely "have the aim of eliciting the respondent's [interlocutor's] view" all we need to know to understand the interlocutor is his straightforward series of answers to Socrates' questions and the choices opted for among those offered to him. Knowing how Alcibiades is inclined to construe the aim of Socrates' goal-directed questioning seems to be unimportant to Stokes. However, given Alcibiades' character, to understand him there must be an appreciation of the way his framing of Socrates' questions develops from his dramatic situation.

Alcibiades' character is reflected by his dramatic situation. Plato typically manages to have the interaction of the interlocutors in the dialogues somehow mirror the very the topic under discussion. Their words have implications for and are existentially connected with their intentions. When we witness the dramatic mirroring we are getting a penetrating glance at an interlocutor's most intimate thoughts, at least in terms of his dramatic portrayal within the dialogue.

Alcibiades' intention is to obscure the memory of the other generals and statesmen—to outdo Pericles' reputation and authority—once he concerns himself with public affairs. His deportment in the dialogue shows that he thinks he has the resources to accomplish such a feat. Socrates' description of his qualities seems to confirm Alcibiades' high estimation of himself. Alcibiades is said to be the "best-looking" (104a5); from "the leading family in your city [Athens]" (104a6–b1); to "have plenty of aristocratic friends and relations" (104b–b1); and to "have Pericles son of Xanthippus" as a guardian (104b3).

What is the relationship between Alcibiades' present situation, his chances of achieving his goals, and the role of the dialogue? To answer this question we have to have some awareness of the aim of Socrates' questioning and an awareness of who the questions are intended for. Stokes disregards the aim of Socrates' questioning. Instead he claims that the interlocutor's views should be given center stage. Consequently, the interaction between the reader's views on the topic explored, Socrates' goal-directed questioning, and the interlocutors' framing of the topic under discussion, is lacking in Stokes' reading of the dialogues.

If I have accurately characterized Stokes' thesis, a redeeming aspect of reading the Platonic dialogues in the way he intends is attention to interlocutors in their historical personalities and beliefs. Yet surely Plato intends for us to read the dialogues in a more comprehensive manner.

2.2 Kidd's Reading

The thesis of Ian Kidd's stimulating essay, "Socratic Questions" (1992, pp. 82–92), is that the *arche* or directional quality of Socrates' questions provides the sole force and motivation of the dialogues. Such questions are leading questions designed to arrive at a preconceived end, "but not necessarily a conclusion" (84). Reading the dialogues in this way, interlocutors can respond to Socrates' questions in the affirmative or in the negative, but a "yes" or a "no" is not an independent, autonomous response; rather it is Plato the writer who grants the interlocutors the permission to answer. According to Kidd, if the interlocutors' answers were autonomous and the dialogues were solely dependent on the interlocutors' views, the dialogues would be haphazard, like ordinary conversations. Instead the dialogues are "organically controlled" (85).

Kidd's approach to the dialogues emphasizes the directional quality of Socrates' questions over the answers given by the interlocutor. Consequently, Socrates' questions—particularly the last question "hanging in the air"—are the sole force and motivation of the dialogues (90). As for the function of the interlocutor's views, Kidd argues that "their answers are no more than the matter or *hyle* on which he [Plato] imposed the form of Socratic questioning" (91). In other words, the dialogues are contrived, and it is their contrivance that accounts for their orderly development.

I am in partial agreement with Kidd's arguments regarding the directional quality of Socrates' questioning. The issue I find problematic is his overemphasizing the directional quality of Socrates' questions, and thus downplaying the role the interlocutor and reader play in moving the dialogue along to a conclusion. In the closing remarks of his essay, for example, Kidd makes the following claims regarding the interlocutor's relationship to the dialogue form and the role of the reader:

> (A) It does not greatly matter in the *Symposium* who Diotima is; while 'Theaetetus' in the dialogue named after him is simply an intelligent young man, and Plato seems to be arguing mainly with himself. But the dialogue form is retained, and must then be for dialectical rather than for a purely dramatic purpose. (91)

and

> (B) The dialogue form illustrates the importance of three things: (1) the elicitation of latent knowledge, which requires prodding; (2) the testing in agreement of each step in the process of the developing argument as it occurs; (3) the direction of the argument. For the movement and development is not haphazard, but purposefully led.[5] (92)

[5] These interpretive assumptions are also on display in Kidd's short introduction to the *Laches*:

> "I see it [the *Laches*] less as a drama of character, where the beliefs of the generals Laches and Nicias are examined and tested (although certainly those of 'Laches' and 'Nicias'" are involved), than a dynamic dramatic philosophical dialogue orchestrated by Plato through the medium of his chief character Socrates to a problem which he feels that we (and he) should face" (85).

Commenting on the perspectives brought to bear on interpreting the significance of Socrates' questions, Kidd claims that:

> (B) …he [Socrates] involves us, his readers and himself. (91)
> But presumably the published…Socratic dialogues are mainly directed to the reader, to stimulate us to examine the flow of the argument, and face those ultimate questions to which we are led, for ourselves. (92)

Considering Kidd's position on the role of the interlocutor, it is difficult to see how the topic under discussion in the dialogues would otherwise be justified. If the interlocutor's views are no more than *hyle* given form by Socratic questioning, what motivates the directional quality of Socrates' initial questions in *Alcibiades Major*? Socrates knows precisely how to begin questioning such an ambitious young man because his questions are motivated by Alcibiades' character. Kidd misses the point that in many of the dialogues Socrates' questions are motivated by the interlocutor's intellectual conceit. The interlocutor is either a proclaimed expert at something or has some interest in something. Once the dialogue is under way, the conversation is eventually brought around to the "What is X?" question or "On account of what is X Y" because the interlocutor, along with Socrates' prodding, has established that X is something. Typically the interlocutor's initial confidence that he can answer the question without much reflection is dashed when he has trouble grasping the kind of answer that Socrates is requesting, and consequently an improper kind of definition is offered.

Kidd also misses the point that the dialogues are not merely concerned with exploring the "What X is?" question (i.e., courage, friendship, justice, etc.); they are equally concerned with exploring how the interlocutor frames the subject matter under discussion. Socrates seems as concerned with an interlocutor's subjective understanding of X as he is with getting the interlocutor to appreciate X's objective properties. In defense of this latter point, I again turn to *Alcibiades Major*. There comes a stage in the dialogue where Alcibiades is on the verge of admitting that he lacks the requisite knowledge to advise the Athenians. The knowledge under question is Alcibiades' understanding of justice. The elenctic exchange between Socrates and Alcibiades that will bring about Alcibiades' admission revolves around the issue of whether the just is advantageous (115a–118b). The aim of the elenchus is twofold: it gets Alcibiades to say that the just is always advantageous and it shows that Alcibiades' ambition is conventional.

Alcibiades holds that some just things are advantageous and some just things are not advantageous (115a); but all just things are admirable (*kala*, 115a4). Alcibiades supposes that it is always admirable to do just things but that one might come off much worse by doing them. The question Socrates asks Alcibiades is whether admirable things are good, or are some bad? Alcibiades believes some admirable things are bad, and some contemptible (*aischra*, 115a6) things are good. Alcibiades allows for doing admirable things from which one does not benefit. Socrates suggests the following illustration, which Alcibiades accepts: someone might stay alive in war through not trying to rescue friends or relatives. Trying to help is brave and admirable but could lead to wounds and death. Therefore, trying to save friends

is admirable inasmuch as it is brave, but bad inasmuch as it could bring death. Alcibiades' assent to the conclusion of the elenctic exchange indicates contradictory thoughts about his understanding of justice.

It turns out that Alcibiades is in the same state about justice as the many. As they disagree with themselves, so Alcibiades disagrees with himself. Alcibiades would not wander in his thinking about how many eyes or hands he has, which are things he knows, but he gives wandering answers about the just and unjust, admirable and contemptible, advantageous and disadvantages, which he does not know, but thinks he knows. The questions posed to Alcibiades echo the famous Socratic theme that the worst ignorance is ignorance of ignorance or conceit of wisdom. Alcibiades is not fit to advise the Athenians because he is ignorant about the most crucial issues pertaining to the rule of the city and to the rule of himself.

This elenctic exchange is also significant because it reveals Alcibiades' ambition is still quite conventional, although still quite enormous. Alcibiades is not so unusual that he disagrees with traditional moral notions and how these notions apply to existential situations such as death. His concern for self-preservation competes with Socrates' claim that an objective understanding of justice is a necessary and sufficient condition for the true statesmen. It is significant that Socrates' subsequent questions in the dialogue are not geared toward expounding on the nature of justice; rather they are designed further to elicit Alcibiades' faulty notions of what he needs to know to advise the Athenians. Consequently, we see that the questions in the elenctic exchange are tempered by the characters of the interlocutors in the dialogues, and Plato is not "arguing mainly with himself."

In addition to the problems I have mentioned, Kidd's overemphasis on the directional quality of Socrates' questions necessarily downplays the role of the reader in the dialogues. Although Kidd claims that the Socratic dialogues and their probing questions are mainly directed to the reader, he does not discuss how the reader should read the dialogues or the effect the reader has on the dialogues. The point I am getting at here is that Kidd fails to appreciate that the reader of a Platonic dialogue plays a significant role in the development of the dialogue. Unlike a philosophical treatise, the dialogue form is half of a dialogue's philosophical content. Consequently, a compelling interpretation of a Platonic dialogue does not result merely from knowing Plato's intent in writing a particular dialogue; such an interpretation may also result from the limitations of character or the foresight brought to bear by the reader of a dialogue. In the context of interpreting a Platonic dialogue, understanding the relationship between form and content is crucial for appreciating the role of the reader. Kidd is right when he says that the dialogues are "organically controlled," but he is wrong to think that Plato is the only one in control.

Kidd's overemphasis on the direction of Socrates' questions displays the same type of weakness seen in Stokes. It renders the dialogues lopsided and unphilosophical. With regard to the urgent concern generated by the interlocutor's answers and the reader's views bearing on the topic explored, Kidd's reading is unclear. Yet surely his discussion implies that the dialogues will have something to offer the contemporary, sympathetic reader.

2.3 Hintikka's Reading

In contrast to Stokes and Kidd, Hintikka focuses less on the dramatic role played by either Socrates or the interlocutor(s) than he does on the nature of the questions asked. Notwithstanding his minimal concern with the drama of the dialogues, Hintikka's account of Socratic methodology in *Socratic Epistemology: Explorations of Knowledge-Seeking by Questioning* (2007) argues that the elenchus should be construed as a presuppositionless interrogative process whereby rational knowledge seeking must be sought through a question and answer process. According to Hintikka, such a process is not limited to the dialogues because the dialogues also reflect how knowledge is sought, and choices made, in ordinary conversations (17–30 and 97–106).

Although I am delighted to see that Hintikka explicates the elenchus within the context of contemporary decision theory, his interrogative model typifies the aridness that characterizes many decision-making models. The models assume unbounded rationality on the part of the participants in decision making contexts. The deficiency of Hintikka's characterization of the elenchus lies in the claim that the elenchus operates without presuppositions both in terms of what the interlocutor presupposes and in terms of what Socrates presupposes. The following two passages summarize Hintikka's thesis:

> One reason why Socrates is asking yes-or-no questions is that they do not need presuppositions. They are the only questions that an *eiron* who professes ignorance can consistently ask. (96)

and

> To say that Socrates does not need any presuppositions in his inquiry amounts to saying that he does not need any factual knowledge in his enterprise. He does not need to know anything. Here we have an explanation of Socrates' ironic profession of ignorance. Such professions serve to highlight one of the merits of Socrates' method—namely, its freedom from presuppositions. (97)

My critique of Hintikka will (1) explain how the interrogative model works; (2) explain the Socratic elenchus and what it is supposed to accomplish; and (3) show that the interrogative model is incompatible as an interpretive approach to the dialogues because of the necessity of presuppositions for the effective use of the elenchus.

The interrogative model takes seriously Socrates' professed ignorance. Socratic ignorance justifies the yes-no questions he obliges the interlocutors to consider during a typical elenctic exchange, and is premised upon two types of questions—principle and operative (95). A principle question is usually a definitional one that orients the smaller or operative questions in a dialogue towards the elaboration of a concepts extension, e.g., friendship (*Lysis*), piety (*Euthyphro*), bravery (*Laches*),

law (*Minos*).[6] A conclusion is then reached as a result of logical inferences having been deduced exclusively from the interlocutor's answers to the yes-no questions (95). Hintikka's interrogative model further argues that the reason why the dialogues consist mainly of yes-no questions "is that they do not need presuppositions" (96). That is, the questions can be raised without any need for acknowledging or justifying the questions' presuppositions. The Socratic elenchus needs no factual knowledge of the sort that would indicate who, what, when, where, and why about the interlocutor or the dialogue's subject matter. However, the epistemic logic at work in the interrogative model does require that Socrates have strategic knowledge. Although Socrates does "not know anything," he knows which questions to ask during an elenctic exchange (97).

Hintikka concludes his discussion of the interrogative model and the elenchus by likening Socrates' strategic knowledge to logical knowledge of strategies of logical deductive reasoning. Similar to a trial lawyer cross-examining a witness, the response an interlocutor gives to Socrates' question requires Socrates to figure out which question to ask next or which proposition he should use as a premise of the next logical inference (98). For Hintikka, the elenchus is significant precisely because it highlights the distinction between factual and strategic knowledge.

I find the interrogative model to be at odds with the goal of the elenchus. That the interrogative model is incompatible with the Socratic elenchus is attested to by the elenctic process on display in the dialogues. The "standard elenchus" has been schematized in the following five steps:

(1) An interlocutor makes a statement or assertion (p) that gives Socrates a target for refutation;
(2) Socrates begins the refution by introducing propositions (q & r) which are not argued for but usually accepted by the interlocutor;
(3) Socrates then gets agreement that (q & r) $\rightarrow \sim$p (The argument brings about the negation (denial) of the interlocutor's original statement);

[6] Hintikka has in mind a question asked by Socrates that first seeks definitional content (e.g., a principle question), but then transitions into a yes-no question (e.g., an operative question). An illustration of such a question can be seen in the dialogue where Socrates questions Alcibiades' knowledge of the just and unjust:

> But surely it's disgraceful if when you're speaking and giving advice about food—saying that a certain kind is better than another, and better at a certain time and in a certain quantity—and someone should ask you, "What do you mean by 'better', Alcibiades?" [**principle question**] you could tell him in that case that 'better' was 'healthier', though you don't even pretend to be a doctor; and yet in a case where you do pretend to understand and are going to stand up and give advice as though you knew, if you aren't able, as seems likely, to answer the question in this case, won't you be embarrassed? [**operative question**] Won't that seem disgraceful? [**operative question**] (108e4–109a3).

(4) Socrates subsequently assumes that (p) has been negated and ∼p shown to be true (the interlocutor may withdraw agreement to q or r, but he hardly ever does);
(5) The interlocutor is shown to be in a state of aporia (i.e., confusion or perplexity brought about by having recognized he has inconsistent belief sets).[7]

The general idea behind the elenchus is first to get agreement from the interlocutor *that* the subject matter is before determining *what* it is. After having received agreement, if the interlocutor claims to know moral concept X, Socrates believes that the interlocutor should be able to give an account of X (the definition of X). The interlocutor often cannot give an account of X (that withstands refutation), so Socrates infers from the interlocutor's inability to say what moral concept X is that he does not know moral concept X. The Greek word elenchus (ἔλεγχος) means "to disgrace," "to refute," or "to examine" an interlocutor's pretense to knowledge. Only when the interlocutor is made of aware that the extent of his ignorance is in direct proportion to his steadfast claim to know X will his actions be more consistent and transparent to himself. The Socratic elenchus promotes self-awareness.[8]

Contrary to Hintikka's interrogative model, the effective use of the elenchus requires that Socrates begin with several presuppositions regarding the dialogue's subject matter and the dialogue's interlocutor(s). Such presuppositions are facts known about the interlocutor. The presuppositions get the dialogue off the ground and provide limits to the discussion within the dialogue. Step (2) of the elenctic process is crucial in this regard. Accepting the presuppositions Socrates introduces often proves fatal to the unsuspecting interlocutor because presuppositions are beliefs that the interlocutor holds to even more strongly than his avowed beliefs. Socrates is able to introduce presuppositions without justifying them because they are especially pertinent to the interlocutor's character. The presuppositions are based on endoxa to the extent that that the interlocutor has certain deep seated

[7] Vlastos' (1983, pp. 27–58) formulation of the elenchus is worthy of attention, but the recent scholarship on the elenchus better appreciates its sophistication. For example, Gary Alan Scott's book (2002), *Does Socrates Have a Method*?, is a collection of essays written by various scholars offering interpretations of the Socratic elenchus. One of the more compelling essays in the collection, written by Carpenter and Polansky (89–100), argue that the elenchus is not a particular method at all, but the Socratic dialectic generally. They show that there are a number of refutations, such as refutations of definitions, behaviors, proposed procedures, and substantive doctrines. Due to the variety of contexts in which refutations appears, Carpenter and Polansky conclude that any attempt to establish a general method or logic for the elenchus is futile. Robert Metcalf's (2004, pp. 37–64; esp. 41–46) interpretation of the elenchus is persuasive and very much in line with my interpretation. Metcalf emphasizes the *ad hominem* aspect of the elenchus that is on display in the *Crito*. Like Crito, Alcibiades in *Alcibiades Major* is one of the few interlocutors that explicitly reverses course in the span of the dialogue from having been initially skeptical of Socrates to feeling "shame" in the face of his arguments.

[8] The elenchus either deals with the result (shame) or the process (investigation). A version of the elenchus is found prominently in fragment 7 of Parmenides poem *Truth*. See Curd 1995, pp. 46–47.

beliefs. The endoxa are not just what the many or wise hold but most crucially what the interlocutor holds. Knowing which dialectical premises an interlocutor will accept or reject requires that the right type of questions be asked.[9] Like a good psychologist, Socrates can see and exploit the tensions in the belief set of the interlocutor. Only after the presuppositions are introduced can logical inferences be deduced exclusively from the interlocutor's answers to yes-no questions.

The opening scenes of *Alcibiades Major* provide a vivid illustration of Socrates' elenctic presuppositions at work. Socrates explains to Alcibiades that he was the first of Alcibiades' lovers and still is chasing him though all the others have stopped and given up. Moreover, Socrates has observed that Alcibiades resisted the other would-be lovers by being arrogant and holding himself in higher esteem than his pursuers. However, Socrates makes it clear to Alcibiades that his worldly advantages (i.e., good looks, wealth and prominent family, 104a–c) pale in comparison to his political ambition. Alcibiades is not content. Were Alcibiades as content and self-sufficient as he would have his pursuers believe, Socrates would have no interest in him. Socrates discloses to Alcibiades his real ambition:

> Alcibiades, if I saw that you were content with the advantages I just mentioned and thought that this was the condition in which you should live out the rest of your life, I would have given up on you long ago…. Suppose one of the gods asked you, "Alcibiades, would you rather live with what you now have, or would you rather die on the spot if you weren't permitted to acquire anything greater?" I think you'd choose to die. What then is your real ambition in life? I'll tell you. You think that as soon as you present yourself before the Athenian people—as indeed you expect to in a very few days—by presenting yourself you'll show them that you deserve to be honored more than Pericles or anyone else who ever was…. When you were younger, before you were full of such ambitions, I think the god didn't let me talk to you because the conversation would have been pointless. But know he's told me to, because now you will listen. (105a–e4)

Alcibiades does listen and, by doing so, confirms Socrates' assessment of his having grand political ambitions and lofty goals (106a2). Alcibiades' acquiescence also highlights Socrates' ability to see and exploit the inconsistencies in the belief set of the interlocutor(s). Likewise, Alcibiades' self-sufficiency and show of confidence is seen to be youthful posturing.

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[9] Smith's (1999, pp. 57–62) comments on Aristotle's discussion (*Topics* I. 1, 100b21–23) of dialectical arguments is further evidence that Hintikka has misconstrued the Socratic elenchus. Smith defines dialectical arguments as,

> …arguments directed at another person which proceeds by asking questions….Now, people are generally likely to answer in accordance with what they believe; therefore, dialectical argument can be described as based on the opinions of the person at whom it is directed. (60)
> Dialectical argumentation is precisely what the Socratic dialogues display. It is because the dialogues are highly contrived works of art that an efficient use of Socrates' and the interlocutor's time require that certain facts about the interlocutor's situation be presupposed by the questions Socrates asks him.

The presuppositions at work within the passage under discussion are: Alcibiades is not content with his advantages and his political ambition makes him receptive to how Socrates could be indispensable to the realization of his goals. This type of procedural refutation is unusual because its target is not a substantive doctrine or assertion or proposition offered by Alcibiades, rather its target is Alcibiades' behavior.[10] Procedural refutations often employ counterfactuals, thought experiments or hypothetical questions in order to render an interlocutor's goals and priorities transparent, and to assess the degree of commitment to the realization of his goals. Once the interlocutor's priorities and goals are made explicit, Socrates usually proposes a specific attitude and behavior that proves decisive to the interlocutor's eventual success. However, to the consternation of the interlocutor, Socrates' definition of success often differs from the interlocutor's.

By disclosing the immensity of Alcibiades' ambitions, Socrates makes clear that it is he, not Alcibiades' advantages, that offer him some chance for the influence he craves (105e1–4). Socrates' admission provides the motivation for the dialogue insofar as Socrates recognizes that Alcibiades does not as yet have such clear ambitions. Giving voice to Alcibiades' ambitions suggests that Socrates has enough factual knowledge about him to ask his questions strategically. In ordinary conversations presuppositions prevent the discussants from having to tread ground that would render the question and answer process inefficient and artificial. In most of the Platonic dialogues, assumed factual knowledge about an interlocutor makes it possible for Socrates to formulate pertinent, elenctic questions.[11]

Over the course of the dialogue Socrates introduces three themes that will give shape to Alcibiades' ambitions. Socrates convinces him that: his ambition must be clarified in order give birth to truth within himself (113a–114a5); his soul is the true "self" (*auto*) that remains the same and is the true subject of his actions, with the body as its instrument (128b–131b1); he must turn towards philosophy (132b–133d1).

Not only do the presuppositions get the dialogue off the ground, they provide limits to the discussion within the dialogue. The limits are established to prevent Alcibiades from lapsing into a sophistic stance (i.e., making long speeches and introducing irrelevant subject matter), and to encourage the protreptic experience of Alcibiades by having self-knowledge be the goal of his ambition. At 106a7–106b9

[10] Examples of procedural refutations are discussed in Carpenter and Polansky (2002, pp. 95–98). One such example is found at 120c–d in *Alcibiades Major*. Socrates employs two arguments to refute Alcibiades' view that his primary political competitors, the kings of Sparta and Persia, are no different from any other run of the mill politician. Socrates offers a *pragmatic* argument that highlights the bad consequences of Alcibiades' view of the kings; and he offers an argument to show that Alcibiades' view of the kings is *likely* to be false (95). Both of Socrates' arguments are designed to reform Alcibiades' behavior by having him appreciate just how formidable his competitors are. Socrates is attempting to prepare Alcibiades, both intellectually and characterwise, to compete.

[11] For example, *see* the opening scenes of *Gorgias*, *Ion*, *Greater Hippias*, *Menexenus* and *Timaeus*. The opening scene of the *Apology* is an interesting example because Socrates' assumed factual knowledge is not about a particular interlocutor but about the Athenians as a whole.

Socrates establishes the dialectical limits that will inform his questions to Alcibiades, while also showing Alcibiades the proper way to answer.

> Alcibiades: But supposing I really do have these ambitions [to be a great Athenian leader], how will you help me achieve them? What makes you indispensable? Have you got something to say?
> Socrates: Are you asking if I can say some long speech like the ones you're used to hearing? No, that sort of thing's not for me. But I do think I'd be able to show you that what I said is true, if only you were willing to grant me just one little favor.
> Alcibiades: Well, as long as you mean a favor that's not hard to grant, I'm willing.
> Socrates: Do you think it's hard to answer questions?
> Alcibiades: No, I don't.
> Socrates: Then answer me.
> Alcibiades: Ask me.

Before Alcibiades merely had to listen carefully (104d), now he has to answer questions through conversation, not through long speeches.[12] Socrates turns the questioning to what Alcibiades will say before the Athenians. The conversation revolves around three claims Alcibiades makes regarding knowledge, justice, and the soul. In response, Socrates limits Alcibiades' claims by making claims of his own regarding knowledge, justice, and the soul. Regarding knowledge Alcibiades believes he has the knowledge to speak to the Athenians and instruct them in their "own business" (107d). Socrates makes the counter claim that there was never a time when Alcibiades learned about justice, what the better tend towards, "or in keeping the peace or in waging war with the right people" (109a6).

Regarding justice Alcibiades claims that when the Athenians are conducting their business they are not, in fact, concerned with what is just so much as they are concerned with what is advantageous, and the just is not the same as what is advantageous (113d3). Socrates makes the counter-claim that the just is always advantageous. In making this claim Socrates argues indirectly that despite how the Athenians and other Greeks think of justice, Alcibiades must always see justice as advantageous and admirable (115–116e).

Regarding the soul Alcibiades tacitly claims that the user of a thing is not different from all the things he uses. A user cultivates what he uses, not his true self. Socrates makes the counter-claim that the user of a thing is different from all the things he uses because the soul is the true self. The body is an instrument of the soul.

Socrates' counter-claims, initiated by Alcibiades' inability properly to articulate his ambitions, appear in Socrates' elenctic exchanges directing Alcibiades' ambition towards self-knowledge. Not only do these counter-claims limit the conversation within the dialogue to themes applicable to Alcibiades, they highlight the factual knowledge Socrates has already gained by talking to him and by having observed his conduct prior to their conversation. This knowledge has guided

[12] The passage under discussion is also significant because it shows that Socrates' methodological preference for short speeches presupposes that such speeches are productive. It also argues against Hintikka's presuppositionless account.

formation of the questions to which the interlocutor answers yes or no. Once the facts are known about the interlocutor a determination can be made about what the facts entail and the direction of the discussion.

For the reasons I have elaborated, Hintikka's interrogative model is incompatible with the Socratic elenchus because it typifies the aridness that characterizes many decision-making models by claiming that the elenchus operates without presuppositions both in terms of what the interlocutor presupposes and in terms of what Socrates presupposes.

The Socratic dialogues and the Socratic elenchus, on the other hand, are reflective of rational knowledge seeking by a process of question and answer. They also reflect ordinary conversations. The dialogues are able to accomplish these two tasks because presuppositions are crucial to their functioning. Hintikka has not appreciated this point.

2.4 Conclusion

The methodological issues raised by Plato's dialogues highlight the enduring relevance of the Socratic approach to intellectual inquiry. Their question and answer process consists of several elements that make for a productive inquiry. One of these elements is the recognition of the importance of presuppositions. Another element is the recognition that the interlocutor, the reader, and Socrates have distinct roles within the dialogues. These work in tandem to make the Socratic elenchus productive and persuasive. Michael Stokes, Ian Kidd, and Jaakko Hintikka have not paid sufficient attention to the complexity of the dialogue form and what it might teach us about rational knowledge seeking. My reading of the dialogues has tried to account for some of the complexity.

I have presented the Socratic elenchus as an efficient and effective way of modeling rational knowledge seeking. Like ordinary conversations, the elenctic exchanges in the dialogues presuppose a degree of autonomy on the part of its participants. Socrates' line of questioning often seems pertinent to a particular interlocutor because he is well aware of the fact that the interlocutor has goals and ambitions or is reputed to be an expert at something. In turn, Socrates' line of questioning reflects his own goals and ambitions. In *Alcibiades Major* Socrates is trying to turn Alcibiades towards a greater awareness of his limitations. The reader, too, is a participant in the dialogues. His questions and prejudgments are essential in generating the urgency of the subject matter within the dialogue. Plato's dialogues force readers to consider their own solutions to the topics introduced in them. Consequently, the autonomy of a dialogue's participants requires that interpreters not exaggerate one aspect of a dialogue's structural features at the expense of other aspects. This chapter has been an attempt to show the advantage of avoiding any such exaggeration.

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Part II
Alcibiades Major and Women

Chapter 3
The Philosophical and Political Structure of Plato's *Alcibiades Major*

Abstract Given the ominous shadow cast by Alcibiades over Socrates' trial, the scholarly assessment of *Alcibiades Major*'s deserves to be revisited. The aim of this chapter is to critically review the various treatments of *Alcibiades Major* among ancient, modern and contemporary scholars. It also seeks to highlight modern and contemporary themes the dialogue anticipates, such as feminism and, to a lesser extent, multiculturalism. The review will also show that it was in the nineteenth century that objections were first raised about the dialogue's structural features and authenticity. Such objections preoccupied most modern commentators of the dialogue, but from all reasonable evidence, commentators from the ancient world had no such qualms about the dialogue's structural features or about attributing the authorship of *Alcibiades Major* to Plato.

Alcibiades is not mentioned by name in Plato's *Apology*, but the reference Socrates makes to Aristophanes' *The Clouds* during his defense underscores Socrates' awareness of the jurors' awareness that he is somehow responsible for the misdeeds of Alcibiades.[1] In Plato's dialogue *Alcibiades Major* Alcibiades is Socrates' sole interlocutor, and Socrates is in pursuit of him. What accounts for Socrates' pursuit is that he recognizes the outstanding nature (*phusis*) Alcibiades has is conducive to philosophy, but that Alcibiades is profoundly ignorant about the means by which he can fulfill his desire to be a great political leader. Accordingly, Socrates' task in the *Alcibiades Major* is essentially protreptic. It is through the Socratic conversation that Alcibiades' desire to rule Europe and Asia (105a–b) will be re-directed towards desiring to rule himself first by cultivating that part of his soul where reason rules and is most divine. In other words, *Alcibiades Major* is a profound rejoinder to those who claim Socrates corrupted Alcibiades. The dialogue focuses primarily on Alcibiades as a moral agent shaped by his own choices as a young man. Such choices, however, go beyond Alcibiades' consideration. *Alcibiades Major* not only

[1] Alcibiades was a leading politician who was elected to help conquer Sicily. During the Sicilian Expedition he was called back to Athens to stand trial for having desecrated statues of Hermes. However, he escaped to join the Spartans in their fight against Athens, and later he flees Sparta to consort with the King of Persia. See Thucydides' Peloponnesian War (6.6.2; 8.46.1–47).

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provides readers with a defense against the charges that Socrates corrupts the youth; it explores the relationship between philosophy and political life.

Given the ominous shadow cast by Alcibiades over Socrates' trial, the scholarly assessment of *Alcibiades Major*'s deserves to be revisited. The aim of this chapter is to critically review the various treatments of *Alcibiades Major* among ancient, modern and contemporary scholars. Whereas in chapter four I will focus on Alcibiades' pedagogical relationship with the women in the dialogue, this chapter highlights modern and contemporary themes *Alcibiades Major* anticipates, such as multiculturalism and feminism. The dialogue can be read both as a "classical counter-culture" corrective to the excesses and distortions of multiculturalism and as a feminine critique of male goals and achievement.

As noted in the introduction, the review will also show that it was in the nineteenth century that objections were first raised about the dialogue's structural features and authenticity. Such objections preoccupied most modern commentators of the dialogue, but from all reasonable evidence, commentators from the ancient world had no such qualms about the dialogue's structural features or about attributing the authorship of *Alcibiades Major* to Plato.

3.1 Alcibiades Major and Its Early Interpreters

Prior to the nineteenth century the dialogue *Alcibiades Major* was considered by ancient and medieval thinkers to be a primer for those interested in philosophy proper, and the Platonic corpus in particular.[2] The Middle Platonists (c. the first century B.C. through the second century A.D.) placed *Alcibiades Major* at the head of a number of reading programmes. In particular, the Middle Platonist Albinus wrote a short preface to the Platonic dialogues titled *Prologue to Platonic Philosophy*[3] which gives three explanations for the prominence given to *Alcibiades Major*: (1) It teaches us to know ourselves as a rational soul. The soul is the true self (*auto*) that remains the same and remains the true subject of our actions. Thus, we must see the body as the instrument of the soul[4]; (2) It is protreptik. The dialogue exhorts seductively Alcibiades and the reader to turn towards philosophy[5]; and (3)

[2] N. Denyer, *Plato*: *Alcibiades* (Cambridge 2001), pp. 14–15; cf. Alfarabi, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*. Mushin Mahdi translation (Cornell 1962), pp. 53–54.

[3] See J. Annas' Townsend Lectures on the Middle Platonist in *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* (Cornell 1999).

[4] This also accounts for the subtitle Thrasyllus has given the dialogue: 'On the Nature of Man'. True happiness is knowing one's true self. On Thrasyllus see H. Tarrant, *Plato's First Interpreters* (Cornell 2000), pp. 118–123.

[5] All of Greek philosophy was protreptic prior to Hellenistic philosophy—it proselytized. This idea is made delightfully clear by G. Vlastos, *Socrates*: *Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Cornell 1991), pp. 200–232.

The dialogue is maieutic. Socrates helps Alcibiades give birth to some truth within himself by drawing out and clarifying his ideas.

However, the authenticity of *Alcibiades Major* was called into question by the German theologian Ernst Friedrich Schleiermacher who deemed its literary quality unworthy of Plato. That Schleiermacher is aware of going against 900 years of special praise accorded to *Alcibiades Major* is acknowledged in the opening pages of his commentary.[6] He attributes the praise given to *Alcibiades Major* to learned authors, both ancient and modern, who themselves, 'unable to invent anything original', have preserved the 'honor and dignity' of learned men who have judged *Alcibiades Major* to be an authentic Platonic dialogue.[7] These learned men, according to Schleiermacher, only proceed in deference to the tradition that esteems the dialogue. He goes on to say that he will gain little from being the 'first to communicate doubts of this kind, and to explain the grounds of them', but it is imperative for him not to shrink from declaring his opinion on the merits of the dialogue.[8] As Schleiermacher explains, his challenge to the historical prominence of the dialogue is that *Alcibiades Major*

> …appears to us but very insignificant and poor, and that to such a degree, that we cannot ascribe it to Plato, even though any number of these who think they can swear to his spirit, profess most vividly to apprehend it in this dialogue.[9]

The specific reasons for Schleiermacher's negative reception of the dialogue reads like a list of complaints, but the list can be condensed into one major complaint: *Alcibiades Major* lacks uniformity in both literary structure and Socratic characterization.

Schleiermacher believed the dialogue contained genuine Platonic passages, which he does not provide an example of in his commentary, but he was adamant in his belief that the genuine passages are found amid many other "worthless" passages that read like little "broken dialogues."[10] Even among the Platonic passages, he felt as if their literary effect was perfunctory ("shell-like", 331), designed to echo other genuine Platonic dialogues. When Schleiermacher turns to the want of uniformity in the characterization of Socrates in *Alcibiades Major* his criticism is more pointed, but not as much as one would hope considering the influence of his ideas on subsequent commentators of the dialogue. That Socrates is not the Platonic Socrates found in Plato's genuine dialogues is witnessed, Schleiermacher believed, in the opening remarks Socrates makes to Alcibiades (103a–104c) and the depiction of Socrates converting Alcibiades in the course of the dialogue from a hubris-filled youth to a submissive sycophant.

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[6] E. F. Schleiermacher, *Introductions to the Dialogues of Plato* (New York 1836), pp. 328–336.

[7] Ibid., p. 328.

[8] Ibid., p. 329.

[9] Ibid., pp. 329–330.

[10] Ibid., p. 330.

In the opening pages of the dialogue Socrates tells Alcibiades that he has been observing him for some time, and that it was a divine being that prevented him from speaking to Alcibiades sooner. Schleiermacher found it unconvincing that Socrates would introduce himself with such a long speech, and utterly unworthy of him to admit that he had been observing Alcibiades for a long period of time.[11] As for Schleiermacher's complaint about the conversion experienced by Alcibiades in the course of the dialogue, he only mentions in passing that Socrates "does not show that he alone has the power of teaching Alcibiades what he stands in need of…."[12] This latter criticism reappears in other commentaries that are sceptical of *Alcibiades Major*'s authenticity.

Schleiermacher also found it un-Socratic that Socrates does not make the irony in his laudatory description more apparent in discussing the virtues and the riches of the Persians and Lacedaemonians in the Spartan and Persian Speech. Schleiermacher goes on to point out that the "statistical notices" displayed in dwelling upon the virtues of the Spartans, for example, is more in the manner of Xenophon than Plato. Additionally, he faults the characterization of Socrates as being eristic. Socrates constantly intrudes on the subject matter, "breaking off the subject shorter than is his custom" simply to shame Alcibiades.[13]

Schleiermacher concludes his commentary by speculating about the origins of *Alcibiades Major*. He believed that a student of Plato's may have gotten hold of a rough draft of the dialogue Plato rejected. Having deciding instead to distribute the ideas contained in it to other dialogues, Plato inserted "foreign additions," the effect of which is that it lacks uniformity.[14]

Schleiermacher's judgment of the dialogue as inauthentic was highly influential, and the dialogue soon fell out of favor. This is not to say that *Alcibiades Major* was declared inauthentic across the board at the time. A contemporary of Schleiermacher, the English utilitarian philosopher George Grote addresses some of the concerns Schleiermacher had about the inauthenticity of the dialogue, but found the dialogue (including the lesser known *Alcibiades Minor*) to be "perfectly Socratic both in topics and manner."[15] Grote concedes that *Alcibiades Major* is 'inferior in merit' compared to Plato's better known dialogues, but he accounts for its deficiency by speculating that it was probably an early production, having been written between 399 and 390 B.C.[16] A concern of Schleiermacher's that Grote echoes is the incompatible depiction of Alcibiades as inordinately insolent to Socrates' entreaties and the inordinate submissiveness towards Socrates ascribed to Alcibiades as the dialogue unfolds. Grote's response is that it is highly improbable to have such a conjunction in an interlocutor, but it attests to the larger point that "Plato attributes

[11] Ibid., p. 334.

[12] Ibid., p.331.

[13] Ibid., p. 333.

[14] Ibid., p. 336.

[15] G. Grote, *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates* (London 1867), p. 355.

[16] Ibid., p. 350.

to the personality and conversation of Socrates an influence magical and almost superhuman."[17]

Other prominent commentators have been tepid towards *Alcibiades Major* in light of Schleiermacher's comments, despite its prominence in the ancient world. For example, Paul Shorey acknowledges that it was once considered to be the best introduction to Platonic philosophy, but concerning its authenticity "it is inadvisable to dogmatize."[18] In spite of the disclaimer, Shorey's overall comments on *Alcibiades Major* indirectly weights in on the side of Schleiermacher due to his portrayal of the dialogue as a an exceptional case or a scholastic gloss on ideas convincingly expressed in Plato's other dialogues. Shorey comments:

> But if we attribute it to Plato we have to assume the improbability that he thought it worthwhile to elaborate a tedious, if scholastically convenient, summary of a long series of ideas and points that are better and more interestingly expressed in other dialogues, and that he repeats or quotes himself more often than in any other genuine work, and we must be prepared to overlook a few expressions which jar on the ear of any reader who knows intimately Platonic Greek.[19]

Shorey cites as significant two ideas in *Alcibiades Major* that he finds expressed more clearly there than in any other Platonic dialogue. The first is that the body is the instrument of the soul, which is the true self; the second is that as the eye can see itself only through reflection, so the mind best knows itself through the reflection of its thoughts in another mind.[20]

The now conventional reading of *Alcibiades Major* as a spurious Platonic dialogue, or at best, an incomplete work written by an immature Plato, held sway from the early nineteenth century (1836) up to the late twentieth century (1964). The commentator who seriously challenged the conventional reading with as much

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[17] Ibid., p. 354.

[18] P. Shorey, *What Plato Said* (Chicago 1933), p. 415.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid. Cf. Aristotle's treatment of this idea in *Magna Moralia* where the value of friends is considered:

> Since then it is both a most difficult thing, as some of the sages have said, to attain a knowledge of oneself, and also a most pleasant (for to know oneself is pleasant)—now we are not able to see what we are from ourselves (and that we cannot do so is plain from the way in which we blame others without being aware that we do the same things ourselves; and this is the effect of favor or passion, and there are many of us who are blinded by these things so that we judge not aright); as then when we wish to see our own face, we do so by looking into the mirror, in the same way when we wish to know ourselves we can obtain that knowledge by look-ing at our friend. For the friend is, as we assert, a second self. If, then, it is pleasant to know oneself, and it is not possible to know this without having someone else for a friend, the self-sufficing man will require friendship in order to know himself (1231a13–26 Translated by Barnes, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. II (Princeton 1984), p. 1950).

If this passage is modeled on *Alcibiades Major*, and the *Magna Moralia* is an authentic work of Aristotle, then this would be good evidence of the authenticity of *Alcibiades Major*.

positive enthusiasm for the merits of the dialogue and Plato's authorship of it as Schleiermacher expressed disdain and doubt, was the classical scholar and philosopher Paul Friedländer.[21] The uniqueness of Friedländer's commentary is that what was considered by previous commentators to be *Alcibiades Major*'s literary weaknesses and odd characterization of Socrates becomes a complex type of writing characterized by dramatic irony.[22] Friedländer's dramatic reading of the dialogue has yielded valuable insights and, as we will see in part two, has influenced subsequent commentators of the dialogue who are not concerned as much with its authenticity as they are with its educative value.

In order to maintain continuity in the historical progression of the readings of *Alcibiades Major*, I will structure my review of Friedländer's commentary as a response to the criticism offered by the previous commentators I have reviewed, and then I will discuss two ideas brought out by Friedländer that have set him apart from these commentators.

Friedländer begins his commentary by acknowledging that in "antiquity there was no doubt about Plato's authorship" of *Alcibiades Major*,[23] but that Schleiermacher was the first to regard it with strong antipathy as un-Platonic. As if to juxtapose the special honors given to the dialogue by the ancients, and Schleiermacher's comment that the praise attributed to it is due to unoriginal authors who wish to preserve the dignity and honor of learned men who judge the dialogue to be an authentic Platonic dialogue, Friedländer lists distinguished ancient authors who either used the dialogue as a basis for explaining Alcibiades' subsequent career, such as Plutarch,[24] Aristotle echoing the striking image discussed in *Alcibiades Major* (132e–133d) about the eye looking into another eye[25] or scenes from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* having been modeled after the dialogue.[26] In juxtaposing the reception of the dialogue in the way that he has, Friedländer places the burden of proof squarely in the lap of those commentators who follow Schleiermacher's lead in denying Plato's authorship of *Alcibiades Major*.

Friedländer continues his commentary by reiterating one of the more substantial criticisms Schleiermacher offers against reading *Alcibiades Major* as an authentic Platonic dialogue. Schleiermacher argued that several of *Alcibiades Major*'s opening episodes show a Socrates that is unagreeable and unworthy of Plato's Socrates. In the first episode Socrates confronts Alcibiades with a long speech which, in other Platonic dialogues, Socrates "hates," according to Schleiermacher[27];

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[21] P. Friedländer, *Plato*: *An Introduction*, Vol. II, trans. Hans Meyerhoff (Princeton 1964).

[22] See G. Vlastos, *Socrates*: *Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Cornell 1991), pp. 21–44; cf. Longinus, *On Great Writing* (*On the Sublime)* (Indianapolis 1991), trans. G. Grube, pp. 42–48 and L. Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago 1988), pp. 30–37.

[23] Friedländer, *Plato*, p. 231.

[24] Plutarch, "Life of Alcibiades," *Plutarch's Lives*, Vol. I, ed. and rev. A. H. Clough (New York 1992a, b), pp. 258–290.

[25] See Aristotle, *Magna Moralia*, p. 1950.

[26] Cf. Socrates' encounter with Glaucon III, vi–vii. 9.

[27] Friedländer, *Plato*, p. 334.

in the second episode Schleiermacher finds it unworthy and strange that Socrates admits he has been watching Alcibiades for some time but was prevented from talking to him by a divine being. Friedländer's reading of the opening remarks Socrates makes to Alcibiades is not framed, like Schleiermacher's, in relation to other standard Platonic dialogues and their portrayal of the Platonic Socrates, but instead is framed by an internal critique of *Alcibiades Major*. Friedländer's method of internal critique assumes that a close reading of the dialogue can provide its own answers to interpretative difficulties contained within the dialogue.[28] For example, Friedländer sees the initial encounter between Socrates and Alcibiades as "filled with a tension unequaled in Plato."[29] Such tension is due to the collision of two very proud persons. He argues that Socrates' opening remarks to Alcibiades is indicative of a pent-up erotic attachment that was born in the past, that is now able to unfold in the present, and the reader is in the unique position to witness it. The tension-filled beginning cannot be appreciated fully, Friedländer believes, without connecting it to how the dialogue ends. Friedländer cites Socrates' last words that the state may win out over him and over Alcibiades (135e) as complementing the tense beginning in the opening of the dialogue between the past and the present. Socrates' last words foreshadow the political career of Alcibiades and the death of Socrates. Consequently, Friedländer states that "the dialogue…ends with tension between present and the future."[30]

Friedländer's account of *Alcibiades Major*'s tension-filled beginning illustrates how the method of internal critique employs parts of the dialogue to assist in interpretative difficulties encountered in other parts of the dialogue. The method broadens the perspective brought to bear in offering counter interpretations to the type of criticism Schleiermacher offers. The function of a broader perspective is to discern how dramatic irony functions in *Alcibiades Major*. An example of how a proper understanding of dramatic irony can bridge an apparent lack of uniformity in a dialogue is exhibited by the different interpretations given by Schleiermacher and Friedländer of the Spartan and Persian Speech (120b–124c). Friedlander and Schleiermacher, as well as subsequent commentators, see the speech as significant to the interpretation of the dialogue. For the sake of clarity, I will briefly summarize the speech.

In the Spartan and Persian Speech Socrates tells Alcibiades that his true rivals are the Spartan and Persian kings, not men like Midias, the petty demagogue (120b). In the guise of Midias Socrates offers Alcibiades the possibility of neglecting himself, considering that even the women find Midias slave-like, before

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[28] This is not to say that other Platonic dialogues may not assist with interpretative difficulties. I am sympathetic to the position that the dialogues are self-contained. For the opposite position see T. Szlezák, *Reading Plato* (New York 1999), pp. 66–75. Szlezák argues that all the Platonic dialogues have "gaps" which can only be filled by Plato's unwritten doctrines. Cf. Kahn's denial of the "gaps" reading in his *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge 1996). Khan advocates a proleptic reading of the dialogues.

[29] Friedländer, *Plato*, p. 232.

[30] Ibid., p. 233.

illustrating the length to which he has to cultivate himself in order to compete against his true rivals. Alcibiades chooses to view the Spartan and Persian kings as his rivals and Socrates commences the speech by explaining to Alcibiades: that the kings' ancestors go all the way back to Zeus; the Spartan wives are guarded at public expense by ephors to ensure that their future kings are "descended from the family of Heraclidae alone" (121b–c); the Persian king is so formidable that the Persian wife is only guarded by her own fear since no one would even suspect the kings heir of being fathered by anyone except him; when the eldest son of the Persian king and heir to the throne is born all the king's subjects have a feast day, and from that day all of Asia celebrates the king's birthday; the young king is brought up by highly respected eunuchs in the royal household, and at the age of fourteen is entrusted to the "royal tutors" (122a); Persian wealth is splendid and luxurious; "and there is more gold and silver in Sparta alone than in the rest of Greece put together" (122e).

Socrates' illustration of the kings' prominence, of course, serves as a touchstone when compared to the opposite condition Alcibiades finds himself. By any scale Alcibiades' goods pale alongside the goods of the Spartan and Persian kings. So what accounts for Alcibiades choosing to view the kings as his true rivals? Socrates takes this question up at the conclusion of the speech by having the women in the lives of the kings wonder what Alcibiades could possibly have in mind for even thinking he can successfully compete with their men. Amestris, the Persian king's mother and widow of Xerxes, typifies the response the other women have regarding Alcibiades' audacity. She simply says, "I don't see what this fellow could be relying on, except diligence and wisdom—the Greeks don't have anything else worth mentioning" (123d).

Schleiermacher found the speech Xenophontic, not Socratic, because it dwelled superfluously on the riches of the Lacedaemonians and Persians without making it apparent to Alcibiades the irony in the speech's laudatory description. Friedländer, on the other hand, considers the Spartan and Persian speech to be the core of *Alcibiades Major*. Friedländer argues that the speech's "iridescent images" are designed to keep Alcibiades from falling below himself, considering he is all too willing to measure himself against local, Athenian politicians who are of no account.[31] The speech also functions, according to Friedländer, to accomplish two other ends: (1) It advocates the practice of "caring for oneself" (124c–135e) as the highest form of self-knowledge; and (2) It serves as a Socratic critique of Athenian educational practices where the care of the young is left to the most useless slaves (122b–d). Additionally, Socrates shows the outlines of a state dedicated to education in the guise of the four royal Persian tutors teaching the Socratic virtues to the heir of the Persian throne.

A general criticism of *Alcibiades Major* that runs throughout each of the commentators who are sceptical of the dialogue is that it is deficient in quality. Schleiermacher found it unworthy of Plato; Grote considered it an authentic

[31] Ibid., p. 236.

Platonic dialogue but an early production from an immature Plato; and Shorey all but says it is not authentic by commenting that it is improbable that Plato thought it worthwhile to elaborate such a tedious and scholastic summary of ideas found expressed more lucidly in other dialogues. The specific point of convergence for at least two of the commentators, Schleiermacher and Grote, and which hovers in the background of the third, Shorey, is the complaint that the depiction of Socrates' transformation of Alcibiades in the course of the dialogue from an overly confident youth to an overly submissive youth is incompatible with Plato's Socrates. Friedländer addresses this complaint by again showing Plato's use of dramatic irony in accounting for Alcibiades' transformation. He explains that there is no discrepancy between the conceitedness displayed by Alcibiades in the opening pages of the dialogue when he disdainfully concedes to answer Socrates' questions on the condition that Socrates can help him realize his ambition (103a–104e), and the submissiveness displayed by Alcibiades for the remainder of the dialogue once he has heard the Spartan and Persian speech. The portrayal of the transformation of Alcibiades, according to Friedländer, is not the weakening of authorial creative power; it is a moving and dramatic showing of a pupil's pride broken once he has been brought to "see his own emptiness before the superior strength of his master."[32] Consequently, the "prerequisite of listening and replying, quietly and objectively" has been fulfilled and self-knowledge can proceed.[33] Thus, the inner movement of the dialogue revolves around humiliation and submission, from the strong resistance of Alcibiades in the beginning to surrender at the end.

Having appraised Friedländer's commentary on *Alcibiades Major* as a response to the criticism of it by prominent commentators such as Schleiermacher, Grote, and Shorey, I turn now to two interpretative ideas discussed in Friedländer's commentary that are ignored by *Alcibiades Major*'s critics.

The first idea accounts for the lack of dramatic externals in the dialogue (e.g., no setting, no secondary figures) by arguing that in the person of Alcibiades the historical figure himself in both his "character and fate" comes to life in such a powerful way that his mere presence obviates any need for what Friedländer refers to as a "setting full of charm and symbolic meaning."[34] According to Friedländer, it is as if Alcibiades' infamous exploits become the backdrop of the dialogue. Friedländer's insight is significant because the sheer economy with which the dialogue focuses on Socrates and Alcibiades heightens the tension around which the dialogue revolves, and highlights where the dialogue's continuity lies.

The second idea is an extension of Friedländer's comments on the Spartan and Persian Speech. I explained that Friedländer thought the speech was the core of *Alcibiades Major* and its function is to keep Alcibiades from falling beneath himself

[32] Ibid., p. 236.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 232. D. Johnson, "God as the True Self: Plato's Alcibiades I," *Ancient Philosophy*, (1999), pp. 1–19 argues that the lack of dramatic externals in *Alcibiades Major* is in keeping with the teaching of the dialogue which is that the self is ultimately impersonal, rational and universal.

due to the stark choice it offers him between careful training and wisdom or being the best only among the local, Athenian politicians. The speech's additional significance is its use of myth as a motivator for Alcibiades to become more serious about a genuine education.[35] Friedländer believed that the Spartan and Persian Speech went beyond all the other mythical speeches in other Platonic dialogues due to its maturity in tying Alcibiades' ambition to the concept of caring for oneself, unlike the myth told in *Hipparchus* (228bff.), for example, which had very little effect on the unnamed interlocutor.

Overall, Friedländer's remarks on *Alcibiades Major* are a substantive endorsement of the dialogue's authenticity. As if to mock Schleiermacher's attack on the historical prominence of the dialogue, and other doubters who followed and continue to follow his lead, Friedländer concludes his commentary with a challenge.

> Among the minor dialogues of Plato, there is none in which such a moment—deeply saturated with what precedes and with what follows—is depicted with such irresistible power. Should we infer from this that someone else surpassed Plato? Or is it not rather Plato himself who is here surpassing his own previous achievements?[36]

3.2 Modern Commentators who take both the Dramatic Features and Educative Value of *Alcibiades Major* Seriously

For commentators who take *Alcibiades Major*'s dramatic features and educative value seriously, Friedländer's reading of the dialogue is a lesson on how the drama in a Platonic dialogue is inseparable from the philosophical issues the dialogue entertains. There are several commentators who follow Friedländer's approach to the dialogue.[37] Steven Forde's commentary on *Alcibiades Major* views the role of women in the Spartan and Persian Speech as central to understanding the dialogue as a whole, which echoes Friedländer's interpretation of the speech as the "core" of the dialogue. Due to his attempt to locate the precise role women play in Alcibiades' quest for a genuine education, Forde's interpretation of the speech takes us beyond Friedländer's. The last commentator I will review is Mark Lutz. Lutz's commentary on *Alcibiades Major* construes the philosophical ideas entertained in the dialogue as having broad applications because of its role within Socratic education as a whole. Lutz sees Socrates' commitment to getting Alcibiades to appreciate the role virtue can play in his private and public life as analogous to the broader issue of whether or not virtue should play a role in liberal democracy's

[35] Cf. Szlezák's, *Reading Plato*, pp. 96–99 discussion of Plato's use of myth and logos.

[36] Friedländer, *Plato*, p. 243.

[37] C. Bruell's, *On The Socratic Education* (Maryland 1999), pp. 19–38 commentary on *Alcibiades Major* will not be discussed, but his treatment of the dialogue should be grouped among the commentators I will be discussing.

moral, political and religious discourse. Fundamentally, Lutz views *Alcibiades Major*'s teachings as contributing to what he calls the classical counter-culture's corrective to ideological mass movements such as multiculturalism.

Forde's commentary on *Alcibiades Major* aspires to go beyond its immediate context. In general, it attempts to say something about the role of women in male achievement.[38] Forde's commentary begins by first acknowledging that the dialogue was held in the "greatest esteem in the Platonic school of antiquity;"[39] and secondly, refers the reader to Friedländer's commentary on the dialogue for a discussion of the tradition in the Greek school. Following the introduction there are no original insights in Forde's commentary leading up to the Spartan and Persian Speech that are worthy of discussion here, but his interpretation of the speech is insightful and will have significant implications for how he construes the remainder of the dialogue. Forde takes the position that the speech is the first part of a two-pronged strategy designed to persuade Alcibiades to pursue a genuine education. The first part of Socrates' strategy in *Alcibiades Major*, according to Forde, employs paradoxical argumentation and combative refutation (103a–120b), but it only manages to force Alcibiades into silence. The second part of the strategy employs the Spartan and Persian Speech as an incentive to get Alcibiades to perfect himself.

Forde argues that Alcibiades' self- perfection, which is called for by the speech, is dependent upon women's judgment, who, if they were in control of Athens, "alone might know how to despise Midias."[40] The normative assumption Socrates makes, according to Forde, which accounts for the prominence of women in the Spartan and Persian Speech, is that women are motivators and judges of male achievement. This line of reasoning is seen in Forde's interpretation of Socrates' account of the wealthy furnishings a trustworthy traveler witnessed who had been through the Persian king's court (123b–c). The traveler reported that he passed through many regions and tracts of lands, "which the locals called the 'the Queen's girdle' and another 'the Queen's veil.'" We are told that each of these tracts is named after the queen's wardrobe, and that each one is set aside to pay for the queen's finery. Forde finds it significant that the word designating each of the tracts pertaining to the queen's wardrobe is *kosmos* (order), and based upon Socrates' use of this word he draws the conclusion that "what we learn from the trustworthy traveler whom Socrates cites is precisely that the Persian domain is cast onto a very well-defined order; that order revolves somehow around the person of the queen."[41] Although Forde is not explicit in the passage under discussion, the 'somehow' is most likely the normative assumption he thinks Socrates makes in the speech regarding the role of women in male achievement. The Persian Queen judges

[38] S. Forde, "On the Alcibiades Major," in *The Roots of Political Philosophy*, ed. Pangle (Cornell 1987).

[39] Ibid., p. 222.

[40] Ibid., p. 229. See Denyer's, *Alcibiades*, pp. 168–169 interesting explanation of Socrates' reference to Midias' slave-boy hair styles.

[41] Ibid., p. 230.

whether or not the domain and her king are in the proper order. Towards the end of his interpretation of the speech Forde does move a little closer to explaining what exactly accounts for his belief that Socrates casts women as judges and, specifically, why Alcibiades' quest for a genuine education revolves around the person of the queen. Similar to the women knowing how to despise Midias, the Persian queen recognizes true superiority, which is the principle of her devotion and obedience, and if Alcibiades proves himself superior to the king she will give herself voluntarily to him. Forde concludes his comments on the speech as follows:

> In the very act of showing Alcibiades the most pleasing possible political prospect, Socrates cements his subjection to a new authority, the Persian Queen who as judge imposes conditions for his success.[42]

Although Forde's emphasis on the dramatic role women play in Alcibiades' quest for a genuine education is an interesting reading of the speech and deserves praise for its novelty, he does not adequately analyze how the women in the speech perform as judges or why Socrates even cast women in such a role. The women in the speech are judges of male achievement. Their judgments express a unique, modern sensibility that anticipates feminist modes of thought. Plato seems to assume in the Spartan and Persian Speech that women provide moral insight, which is the power or act of seeing into a situation with regard to standards of right behavior.[43]

Perhaps a contemporary audience might approach a discussion about the role of women in male achievement in terms of the popular cliché: *behind every great man is a woman*. The cliché seems to confirm Plato's assumption about the role women's moral insight play in any endeavour involving male achievement. When we look at the modern institution of marriage, for example, there are parallels between the judgments made about Alcibiades' desire to rival successfully the Spartan and Persian kings and the judgments exercised by wives in regard to their husbands. In both situations there is a standard of right conduct to be followed, for Alcibiades it is the genuine rulers and the Spartan and Persian kings, and for the husband it is the role of good provider.

In describing marriage and the transformative power of women's moral insight on husbands, George Gilder's book, *Men and Marriage*, gives a contemporary

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[42] Ibid., p. 232.

[43] The Milesian Aspasia is another example of the type of women we have in mind, and her much sought after moral advice echoes the advice offered to Alcibiades in the Spartan and Persian speech. Plutarch tells us that Aspasia was charming and that she emulated, from old Ionian times, the courtesan Thargelia. The fact that Aspasia strove to emulate Thargelia underscores the point we have been making that when it comes to standards of right behavior women operate according to precedence. We also learn from Plutarch that Aspasia presided over a political salon that included Socrates and her renowned statesman-lover, Pericles. It was thought that by keeping Aspasia company and heeding her words any man could succeed at what he set out to accomplish. For example, we hear of Lysicles, a sheep-dealer, a man of low birth and character, who achieved great things in Athens after having kept Aspasia company. See Plutarch, "Life of Pericles," p. 221.

description of what the *enemies' wives* were telling Alcibiades. He must rid himself of ignorance and become civilized:

> In creating civilization, women transform male lust into love; channel male wanderlust into jobs, homes, and families; link men to specific children; rear children into citizens…divert male will power into a drive to create. Women conceive the future that men tend to flee ….[44]

Gilder's comments on women's role in marriage and the civilizing affect it has on husbands foregrounds historical continuity that allows contemporary readers to appreciate Plato's assumption regarding the role of women in male achievement. Gilder's argument is that in webs of relationships between males and females, most notably in marriage, wives act as moral judges of their husbands, "spurring attainment of the highest male purposes."[45] In *Alcibiades Major*, Plato's thinking parallels Gilder in that he suggests the idea that the moral insight women disclose in judging male achievement is most effective in specific male/female relationships. With the exception of the general designation "the *women*" (see 120b–c) who judge men slavish who undertake the city's affairs without knowledge, the women judging Alcibiades in the dialogue are referred to as having familial, specific relationships (i.e., as mothers, sisters, or wives). Plato's distinction is important because it suggests two lines of thought Gilder pursues in arguing for the existence of moral insight women disclose in judging their husband's goals and achievements: (1) The civilizing role women as wives play through their moral insight is inscribed in their bodies; and (2) Due to this inscription wives display a singular, feminine moral sense rooted in intimacy and caring.[46] Marriage becomes the field

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[44] G. Gilder, *Men and Marriage* (Gretna 2001), p. 5.

[45] Ibid., p. 177.

[46] Recently we have seen the emergence of a distinctively feminine role in ethics expressed by feminists. The most prominent of these feminists is Carol Gilligan and her influential book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, 1993). Gilligan sets out to counter developmental psychology's privileging of masculine defense of justice and equality (i.e., rules and abstractions) as the highest level of moral development by privileging a feminine moral perception rooted in webs of relationships and responsibilities. I find Gilligan's argument for the existence of a feminine moral sense persuasive, but it fails to account squarely for the *origins* of a feminine moral sense. For example, Gilligan's introduction states the following about the intention of her book.

> The different voice I describe is characterized not by gender but theme. Its association with women is an empirical observation, and it is primarily through women's voices that I trace its development…. No claims are made about the origins of the difference described or their distribution in a wider population, across cultures, or through time. Clearly, these differences arise in a social context where factors of social status and power combine with productive biology to shape the experience of males and females and the relations between the sexes (p. 2).

Surely Gilligan equivocates in discussing the origin of the differences between the sexes because initially she says no claims will be made about the origins of the differences, but she goes on to tell us that these differences are due to social status, power and biology. In fact, Gilligan's book accounts for the differences between the sexes by the interplay of social status and power

in which the feminine moral sense vis-à-vis a husband's goals and achievements is given the greatest scope for judging.

The civilizing role women as wives play through their moral insight, according to Gilder, is accounted for by her breasts and womb which symbolize a female specific potentiality that extends through pregnancy, "childbirth, lactation, suckling, and long-term nurture."[47] For the woman who has gone through such experiences they prove to be critical psychologically. They are times of great emotions signifying life altering choices both on the personal level and societally. Even for the childless woman what her body represents is a powerful symbol because it is a continuous reminder of her unquestionable importance to herself and the community.[48] Although a woman may experience anxiety about her sexual role and how to perform it, she, nonetheless, takes her sexual identity for granted due to its importance and symbolism. Gilder's argument is shown to be most insightful when discussing the sexual identity of men in relation to their bodies. The male body has no civilizing role inscribed within it. "Masculinity," Gilder exclaims, "is at bottom empty, a limp *nullity*" [italics added].[49] Unlike the female body, a man's body is full of undefined energies in need of the guidance of culture. The masculine roles a male assumes are all cultural inventions, with the roles husband and father being the most enduring and productive of inventions for civilized life. Even the civilizing role males assume as fathers and husbands emphasize the primacy of women's sexual identity because men can only define and defend the extent of their sexual identities through external activity (i.e., male achievement).

Precisely because men can only externalize their male identities through activity, women as wives are in the unique position of perpetually judging their husbands' activities. The feminine moral sense assumes a civilizing role in the guise of wife and mother when we turn to the two most enduring cultural constructs available in defining male identity, that of husbands and fathers. The biological bases of men's sexuality identity, as Plato shows in *Alcibiades Major*, depend on men proving themselves by doing. Outside of marriage the single male has no enduring cultural script to follow, so the constant doing eventually provokes a sense of male dispensability. Men begin to see themselves as sexually optional. This sense of dispensability is the impetus that makes young males good soldiers, martyrs and

(Footnote 46 continued)
only, not biology. Each page of her book strenuously argues that women's moral sense is merely an equal counterpoint to masculine ideals and in no way connected to biology. However, there is a uniquely feminine moral sense rooted in webs of relationships and responsibilities but the Spartan and Persian speech seems to suggest that it originates in the womb and at the breast. In fact, as P. Cartledge, *Spartan Reflections* (Berkeley 2001), pp. 115–116 points out, the physical and intellectual side of a Spartan girl's education was to cultivate eugenic dispositions (i.e., strength, cast of mind, etc.).

[47] Gilder, *Men and Marriage*, p. 9.

[48] Cf. The discussion and its implications regarding the symbolic significance of femininity in *Alcibiades Major* (121b–c) on the length to which both the Spartan and Persian kings are willing to go in order to protect the chastity of their queens.

[49] Gilder, *Men and Marriage*, p. 9.

crusaders, but undesirables when it comes to marriageability.[50] Upon entering into marriage men must commit to a sense of futurity by adapting to a feminine requirement that demands long-term responsibility and discipline. Men must perform, and they perform best, and most confidently, when they are in a durable relationship with a woman.[51] Through marriage the limp nullity that characterizes masculine sexual identity is transformed; it is "conceived and experienced as having specific long-term importance like a woman's."[52] It is the women's judgment of a particular man, though, that enables the transformation to take place.

Gilder also underscores the civilizing role the wife's moral sense of intimacy and caring plays in transforming male sexual identity. After all, the role of the father is the product of marriage and other cultural contrivances, not biology. The fact that there is no biological basis for the father to be around when the baby is born attests to this claim. Only the mother has an easy and dependable connection to the child.[53] She is organically indispensable, both physically and emotionally. The father becomes an integral part of his child's life only when the mother acknowledges his paternity, and "his position must be maintained by continuous performance, sexual and worldly, with the woman the judge."[54] Thus, in *Alcibiades Major* Socrates and the Spartan and Persian women not only are teaching Alcibiades what a great statesman must know, they are also teaching him how to be a man.

Gilder's discussion of marriage between a man and a woman attributes immutable qualities to women that are grounded in their bodies. These qualities give rise to a uniquely feminine moral sense that is expressed quite vividly in the ability of women in marriage and *mutatis mutandis* various women in the Spartan and Persian Speech, to judge male performance. I maintain that the women in *Alcibiades Major* play the part of perpetuating traditional sexual roles (i.e., demanding that Alcibiades be a man of excellence who leads the people instead of a politician who slavishly "flatters" [κολαξ 120b5] the people), and that Gilder's contemporary perspective on male and female sexuality foregrounds Plato's sincere, but benign, point that when it comes to male achievement, women provide moral insight into what is needed and how best to get there.

Lutz's commentary on *Alcibiades Major* is a part of a larger project motivated by the question of whether or not there is room in liberal democracy for virtue.[55] This fascinating question is approached by Lutz with the assumption, made explicit by Friedländer, that the dialogue's educative value is inseparable from the dramatic presentation of the two participants, Socrates and Alcibiades. In other words, Lutz takes it for granted that the dialogue's form and content are not mutually exclusive.

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[50] Cf. The discussion of Alcibiades' sexual exploits and his demise caused by a lady of a noble house in Plutarch, "Life of Alcibiade*s*.".

[51] Gilder, *Men and Marriage*, p. 14.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., p. 7.

[54] Ibid., p. 13.

[55] M. Lutz, *Socrates' Education To Virtue*: *Learning the Love of the Noble* (Albany 1998).

Lutz's project envisages broad, practical applications for the type of Socratic education found in *Alcibiades Major*. According to Lutz, possible uses of Socratic education are listed.

(1) It may counter the inclination of democratic thinkers to dwell on the useful at the expense of contemplating the noble;
(2) It may counter the democratic tendency to focus on mass movements and the sweep of history at the expense of exceptional and influential actors;
(3) It may moderate democracy's fascination with the titillating and sensational rather than the charming;
and
(4) It may foster an appreciation for authentic human types as opposed to democracy's embrace of exaggerated, artificial and abstract characters.[56]

Lutz conceives the acceptance of the Socratic sentiments expressed in the list to be the first steps toward promoting a "classical counter-culture" that would challenge, for example, ideological mass movements such as multiculturalism. The Socratic challenge would not be in the form of invective, seeking to discredit all things modern. It would promote discourse, according to Lutz, about the role virtue should play in society.

> By reading "multicultural" authors with an eye to what they imply about justice and the rest of virtue, the Socratics would try to articulate their political claims.
> In the course of elucidating these claims, they would hope to provoke the writers of this literature…. In the best case, this would induce writers to compete with one another to guide the reading public.[57]

Lutz's advocacy of a Socratic education is brought to bear on his reading of several passages in *Alcibiades Major*. According to Lutz, the belief that *Alcibiades Major* plays a significant role in Socratic education as a whole, and contains educational correctives that are applicable to modernity, is affirmed by "Socrates knowledge of erotic matters" portrayed in the dialogue (9). Lutz argues, for example, that upon hearing how deficient he is compared to the Spartan and Persian kings, Alcibiades, under Socrates' prodding, finally feels erotic. Prior to the Spartan and Persian speech Alcibiades was complacent with himself, having thought that his nature was sufficiently noble and good. Once his confidence is shaken by the speech, there arises within him a "passionate desire to learn how to be noble and good."[58] Thus, Lutz draws two important effects from the speech on Alcibiades' quest for a genuine education.

> Firstly, it finally confirms… that erotic love depends on the *belief* that we lack something we need to be noble and good. Alcibiades loves what he believes he needs but lacks. Secondly, this speech marks the beginning of Alcibiades' education to virtue. By

[56] Ibid., p. 11. Lutz is endorsing Tocqueville's thoughts on the importance of the ancients. See A. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York 1969), pp. 472–474, p. 487, pp. 488–489, p. 525.

[57] Ibid., p. 13.

[58] Ibid., p. 119.

awakening him to his ignorance and need, he begins to desire to learn what is truly noble and good.[59]

The lesson for modernity of Alcibiades' awakening lies in awakening the love of the noble in modern man through a serious study of Socratic dialogues, and an appreciation of the teachings expressed in them. More modestly, Lutz concedes that the awakening may be kindled by exploring the classical heritage of modern modes of thought.[60]

There is one other idea expressed in the concluding remarks of Lutz's commentary that advocates for making *Alcibiades Major* applicable to modernity. The idea is an extension of the previous discussion dealing with Alcibiades' awakening. The closing passages of *Alcibiades Major* contains the arresting view that the eye can see itself only through reflection, so the mind best knows itself through the reflection of its thoughts in another mind. Similarly, the soul is unable to see itself by itself, but must look into the soul of another and especially into the place in the soul that knows (133aff.). Socrates shares this image with Alcibiades with the intention of exerting great influence over him because Alcibiades' political goals are said to be unattainable without cultivating the noblest part of himself. Consequently, Alcibiades must attach himself to Socrates if he wants a genuine education. The practical lesson for modernity that Lutz draws from Socrates' imagery is that the most compelling works produced by the best minds of any tradition are worth serious study. Traditions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism all contain lessons and thoughts capable of appealing to the best part of ourselves if approached sympathetically and honestly.[61] Great writing too would appeal to the best part of ourselves. According to Lutz, great writing, whether it is Western or non-Western, necessarily raises the most fundamental political and social questions, which eventually lead around to issues having to do with virtue and, at least in the West, its place within liberal democracy.

3.3 Conclusion

I have reviewed what prominent commentators have said about *Alcibiades Major*. Given the fact that Alcibiades' subsequent biography played a decisive, but indirect role in the conviction and execution of Socrates, such a review is historically significant. From Alcinous to Steven Forde to Mark Lutz, each commentator had something to say, both negatively and positively, about the dialogue's philosophical, political and educative value. However, it was with Friedländer's approach to

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid., p. 13. The operating assumption Lutz seems to make in advocating a Socratic education is that modern man would go about fulfilling his lack in the appropriate fashion once he is shown it exists. This assumption is not at all obvious.

[61] Ibid.

Alcibiades Major that the value of the dialogue was explained as being part and parcel of the dialogue's dramatic presentation. For example, both Friedländer and Forde appreciate the Spartan and Persian Speech but for different reasons. Forde rightly emphasizes the role of women in the speech but fails to appreciate the feminist themes it anticipates. Plato seems to assume in the Spartan and Persian Speech that women have and continue to play the traditional role of providing a uniquely, feminine moral insight. In addition to the discussion of male achievement and women, I cited social scientist George Gilder, who provides a contemporary perspective on feminine moral insight from the vantage point of men and marriage. It is within the domain of marriage that we moderns come closest to understanding Plato's assumption about the role a woman's moral insight plays in male achievement.

Lutz sees broad applications for the educative issues discussed in *Alcibiades Major*. His reading of *Alcibiades Major* construes Socrates' conversation with Alcibiades as embodying lessons about virtue and multiculturalism for liberal democracy.

Alcibiades Major's timeless insights and enduring relevance to contemporary issues revolve around its promotion of emotional and intellectual cultivation. One such issue I will address in chapter five is the extent to which Socrates will go in order to assess how strongly Alcibiades holds certain beliefs. How Socrates assesses Alcibiades will be shown to have some relevance to modern decision theory.

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Chapter 4
Listen, Alcibiades

Abstract The prominent role of women in the Spartan and Persian Speech in Plato's dialogue *Alcibiades Major* has not been sufficiently appreciated. I remedy this by (1) laying out the context in which the speech is presented; (2) explaining what precisely the women of the speech say about Alcibiades' challenge to their men; (3) surveying and critiquing what commentators have said about the role women play in the speech; and (4) advancing a reading of the speech that unifies the sentiments attributed to each woman as expressed by Socrates.

Women play a prominent role in the Spartan and Persian Speech in Plato's dialogue *Alcibiades Major*. In assisting his concern to help a reluctant Alcibiades see how he is at a disadvantage compared to his rivals, the kings of Sparta and Persia, Socrates introduces royal women outspoken in their disdain towards Alcibiades. They find it laughable that Alcibiades fails to appreciate what it takes to be a great ruler. Questions that arise regarding the women are: why would Plato cast women as judges of Alcibiades, and what might this suggest about the role of women in regard to male achievement, generally? It looks as if women may provide special insight regarding male goals and success.

It is mainly mothers and wives who deem Alcibiades unfit to challenge their husbands and sons. Plato seems to assume in the Spartan and Persian Speech that women play the role of providing a uniquely feminine perspective.[1] The rhetorical advantage of having women judge Alcibiades' fitness for political rule is twofold: (1) It is an efficient means for Alcibiades to gain practical lessons about political power. Such lessons derive from women being outside but in proximity to political power so as to gain insight regarding the requirements for ruling. (2) It does not compromise in fact Alcibiades' high estimation of himself because the women's

[1] Recently we have seen the emergence of a distinctively feminine role in ethics expressed by feminists.

The most prominent of these feminists is C. Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*: *Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge 1993). Gilligan sets out to counter developmental psychology's privileging a masculine conception of justice and equality (i.e., rules and abstractions) as the highest level of moral development by privileging a feminine moral perception rooted in webs of relationships and responsibilities. We find Gilligan's argument for the existence of a feminine moral sense persuasive, and complementary to our discussion.

A. Archie, *Politics in Socrates' Alcibiades*,
SpringerBriefs in Philosophy, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-15269-1_4

judgments are portrayed as merely hypothetical reflections skeptical of Alcibiades' political ambitions.

Having women judge Alcibiades, Socrates underscores the fact that women in the ancient world did not have nor were they interested in political power for themselves, but instead worked through their fathers, husbands and sons.[2] This point may also account for Alcibiades' willingness to accept the premise that women will judge him.

Compared to the standard scholarly discussions of the *Alcibiades Major*, it is unorthodox to construe the rhetorical advantages as I have. The usual reading of the role of women in the speech is that their judgments are intended to have the effect of making Alcibiades feel unmanly. Their low estimation of Alcibiades piques his interest precisely because of their lowly status as women. Accordingly, the standard reading construes the significance of women in the speech as deriving from their non-significance. However, this reading of the Spartan and Persian Speech is wrong because it ignores the point that the women judging Alcibiades are royal women.

The seriousness accorded to the role of women in other Platonic dialogues and in biographies of individuals from classical sources is seen in the way women are discussed as providing needed perspective to a male figure or on the topic under discussion in philosophical and literary contexts. For example, Diotima's philosophy of love in Plato's *Symposium* differs from the accounts of love in Plato's *Phaedrus* and in the *Republic*. Thus, Diotima seems to contribute an insightful, intellectual perspective to the *Symposium* through Plato.[3] The Milesian Aspasia is

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[2] This claim seems to be reinforced by M. Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth* (Baltimore 1986), pp. 80–94.

Cf. M. Lefkowitz, *Women's Life In Greece and Rome: A Source Book in Translation* (Baltimore 1992), pp. 38–73. Euripides echoes a similar view. *See* Grene and Lattimore, Euripides' "Suppliant Women" in *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, Vol. IV (Chicago 1959). Theseus' mother, Aethra, not Theseus, is asked by the mothers of the Argives heroes to bury their sons. Aethra successfully persuades These us to allow the burial to take place, and by doing so, mirrors the sentiment expressed by the chorus: "It's natural for women, if they are clever, to do everything through men" (40–1).

[3] Interestingly, feminist scholars treat Diotima with a degree of positive, intellectual objectivity that is wholly lacking in other commentators. For example, *see* A. Nye, "Irigaray and Diotima at Plato's Symposium," published in N. Tuana, *Feminist Interpretations of Plato* (Pennsylvania 1994), pp. 198–199. Nye argues that Diotima's philosophy of love is an autonomous, insightful contribution to the *Symposium*. In A. Cavarero, *In Spite of Plato: A Feminist Rewriting of Ancient Philosophy*, trans by S. Anderlini-D'Onofrio and Áine O'Healy (New York 1995), Cavarero argues that "… it is a woman [Diotima] who transmits the genuine teaching of Plato, and…far from being original or in some way rooted in the sex of the speaker, [Diotima's philosophy of love] are the words of Plato re-echoing in a female voice" (93). Nye and Cavarero echo our reading of the autonomous role played by the women in *Alcibiades Major*. M. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge 1986), p. 177 belittles Diotima by labeling her a 'mistress;' a woman with whom Plato has intellectual intercourse. D. Halperin, "Why is Diotima a Woman?", in Halperin's *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality* (New York and London 1990), p. 150 argues along the same lines as Nussbaum: "Gender [Diotima] enters the text of Plato's *Symposium*, then, not as it enters the text of Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*—not, that is, as a subject of inquiry in its own right—but as part of a larger figurative project whose aim is to represent the institutional and psychological conditions for the proper practice of (male) philosophy."

another example of the type of woman I have in mind, and her much sought after advice echoes the type of advice offered to Alcibiades in *Alcibiades Major*'s Spartan and Persian Speech. In "The Life of Pericles," Plutarch explains that Aspasia presided over a political salon that included Socrates and her renowned statesman-lover, Pericles.[4] It was thought that by keeping Aspasia company and heeding her words any man could succeed at what he set out to accomplish. According to Plutarch, Lysicles, a sheep-dealer, a man of low birth and character achieved great things in Athens after having kept Aspasia company (221).

In keeping with the seriousness accorded to the role of women featured in other Platonic dialogues, this chapter will: (1) Layout the context in which the Spartan and Persian Speech is presented in *Alcibiades Major*. The speech and the judgments of the women are a part of a pattern of Socratic hypothetical questions and scenarios designed to assess and critique Alcibiades' ambition, and to instill in him the desire to practice self-cultivation. (2) Explain what precisely the women of the speech say about Alcibiades' challenge to their men. (3) Survey and critique what commentators have said about the role women play in the speech. (4) Advance a reading of the speech that unifies the sentiments attributed to each woman as expressed by Socrates.

4.1 Context: Hypothetical Questions and Arguments and the Spartan and Persian Speech (103a–124b6)

The discussion between Socrates and Alcibiades leading up to the Spartan and Persian Speech revolves around two weak claims Alcibiades makes regarding his natural abilities and Athens' real competitors—the Spartan and Persian kings. In response, Socrates limits Alcibiades' claims by offering in the speech hypothetical judgments women would make regarding Alcibiades' natural abilities and the Spartan Persian kings.

Alcibiades' Natural Abilities (119b9–10): Alcibiades claims he does not need to train or trouble himself with learning to be a great politician because his natural talent "will be far superior" to the local, Athenian politicians. Socrates, through the judgments of the women, makes the counterclaim that Alcibiades overestimates his natural abilities because he compares himself to the lowest type of politician—Midias (120b–c2).

[4] Plutarch, "Life of Pericles", *Plutarch's Lives*, Vol. I, edited and revised by A.H. Clough (New York 1992), p. 221.

Athens' Real Competitors (120-a4–6): Alcibiades claims his real competitors, the Spartan and Persian kings—hardly differ at all from the other Athenian politicians. Socrates, through the judgments of the women, makes the counterclaim that the Spartan and Persian kings have exceptional natural abilities and excel at external goods (i.e., birth, wealth, friends, and family connections).

The Spartan and Persian Speech is motivated by Socrates' repeated failure to convince Alcibiades that it is indispensable for the aspiring politician to have a proper appreciation of his abilities and of his competitors. Socrates' failure illustrates the fact that refutations seldom change minds. Given that the particular form of an argument may have restricted persuasiveness, often what is needed is for the argument to be seen in a new perspective. The Spartan and Persian Speech will provide such a perspective

Despite Socrates' repeated attempts at hypothetical, refutative arguments, Alcibiades is still unprepared to see the need for education and the lengthy and taxing project of caring for himself. Socrates and Alcibiades have this exchange:

> Socrates: Very well. What do you propose for yourself? Do you intend to remain in your present condition or practice some self-cultivation (ἐπιμέλειάν τινα ποιεῖσθαι)?
> Alcibiades: Let's discuss it together (κοινὴ βουλή), Socrates. You know, I do see what you're saying and actually I agree—it seems to me that none of our city's politicians has been properly educated (ἀπαίδευτοι), except for a few.
> Socrates: And what does that mean?
> Alcibiades: Well, if they were educated, then anyone who wanted to compete with them would have to get some knowledge and go into training (ἀσκήσαντα), like an athlete. But as it is, since they entered politics as amateurs (ἰδιωτικῶς), there's no need for me to train and go to the trouble of learning. I'm sure my natural abilities will be far superior to theirs.
> Socrates: Good god, my dear boy, what a thing to say—how unworthy of your good looks and your other advantages. (ἀνάξιον τῆς ἰδέας καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν σοι ὑπαρχόντων,119a-c)

It looks for a moment as if Alcibiades is willing to be directed by Socrates, but then he turns away. Rather than aspiring to be superior to other politicians by taking the effort to be educated so as to know what he is doing, Alcibiades seems content to attempt surpassing the other politicians through his native abilities. Alcibiades seems to have lost sight of his overall objective of having his name and power be known far and wide because he supposes that he simply needs to surpass the local, Athenian politicians. Socrates compares the case to skippering a naval ship against the enemy. The skipper should try to surpass those he is warring against and not merely his fellow sailors. Alcibiades should be preparing himself to be better than his city's real competitors rather than his fellows, the real competitors being the kings of Sparta and Persia.

4.2 What the Women Say About Alcibiades' Challenge to Their Men

The Spartan and Persian Speech, proper, is framed by hypothetical judgments about men and what they aspire to achieve (120e6–124b6).[5] There are three instances in the speech where the judgments take place, one of which is directed at men in general who try to run the city's affairs without proper preparation, the other two are directed at Alcibiades' political aspirations. I will contextualize and discuss the most relevant passages, and reflect on what others have said about the prominence of women in the Spartan and Persian Speech.

4.2.1 Midias

The first mention of women as judges is prompted by Socrates' frustration with Alcibiades for taking the wrong competitors seriously. The conversation reaches the point where Socrates says:

> But no sir, you've got to keep an eye on Midias the cockfighter and such people—people who try to run the city's affairs with their "slave-boy hair styles" (as the women say) still showing on their boorish minds. They set out to flatter (κολακεύσοντες) the city with their outlandish talk, not to rule it. These are the people, I'm telling you, you've got to keep your eyes on. So relax, don't bother to learn what needs to be learned for the great struggle to come, don't train yourself for what needs training—go ahead and go into politics with your complete and thorough preparation. (120a7–c)

Little is known about Midias, other then he was an Athenian politician who is mocked in Aristophanes' *Birds* for being lower-class, an embezzler, and interested in quail fighting.[6] The women referring to politicians with "slave boy hairstyles" calls to mind the Athenian custom of slaves having their hair cropped short in order to make it easier to do menial work, but then trying to grow their hair long in order to conceal the tattoo often placed on the forehead to indicate those sold into slavery.[7] Considering Alcibiades' low estimation of the Athenian politicians, the juxtaposing of Alcibiades' laziness, in the supposed contest with Midias, is quite

[5] Ironically, as a large speech, The Spartan and Persian Speech seems to contradict the preference for dialectic expressed by Socrates at 106b. However, the majority of the speech consists of the personification of feminie perspectives regarding Alcibiades' lack of fitness to rule. Socrates preference for dialectic is consistent with The Spartan and Persian Speech because the speech does not present Socrates speaking solely in his own voice and own his own behalf. Likewise, the Law Speeches in Plato's *Crito* (50c3-54d) play a similar role as that of The Spartan and Persian Speech in *Alcibiades Major*. The Law Speeches, as expressed by Socrates, personify expert opinion on the negative consequences of Socrates' consideration of escaping into exile.

[6] M. Hadas, *The Complete Plays of Aristophanes* (New York and London 1981).

[7] Denyer, *Plato*: *Alcibiades*, p.168.

remarkable. It is as if the wives, with Socrates' full agreement, are warning Alcibiades that no one is more likely to be arrogant than a lately freed slave. Alcibiades' aristocratic prejudices are turned against him.

4.2.2 The Persian King's Mother

The second mention of women as judges comes towards the end of the Spartan and Persian Speech. Socrates has gone to great lengths to show Alcibiades how negligible his wealth is compared to Spartan wealth. But Spartan wealth is nothing compared to that of the Persian king. To give an idea of the Persian wealth Socrates refers to a trustworthy traveler's report that large tracts of land in Persia were named for parts of the Queen's wardrobe, and devoted to supporting it (123b–c). This discussion of the Persian wealth leads into the following claim:

> Now suppose someone were to say to Amestris, the king's mother and the widow of Xerxes, "the son of Deinomache intends to challenge your son; her wardrobe (κόσμος) is worth only fifty minas at best, and her son has less than three hundred acres (πλέθρα)[8] of land at Erchia." I think she'd be wondering what this Alcibiades had up his sleeve to think of competing against Artaxerxes. I think she'd say, "I don't see what this fellow could be relying on, except diligence and wisdom (ἐπιμελείᾳ τε καί σοφίᾳ)—the Greeks don't have anything else worth mentioning." (123c–d)

The point is that Alcibiades cannot be counting on his wealth in competing with Artaxerxes but can only be considering the care he must take of himself and his wisdom. Yet I have shown that Alcibiades does not suppose that he has to take much care of himself because his competitors, he thinks, differ hardly at all from other men (120c2–4).[9] Though he is but twenty years old and largely uneducated, he believes he can compete with the Persian king. But Socrates, referring to the Persian monarch's mother's judgment can hardly believe him:

> "What in the world could this youngster be relying on?" Suppose we were to reply, "Good looks, height, birth, wealth, and native intelligence (φύσει τῆς ψυχῆς)." Then, Alcibiades, considering all that they have of these things as well, she'd conclude that we were stark raving mad. (123e)

The case has been made that Alcibiades can hardly count on surpassing the Persian or Spartan kings by his personal advantages. Clearly he must take care of himself to seem to be competitive.

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[8] A *plethron* is approximately 10,000 square feet.

[9] Carpenter and Polansky, "Variety of Socratic Elenchi," in Gary Alan Scott ed., *Does Socrates Have A Method?* Rethinking the Elenchus in Plato's Dialogues and Beyond (Pennsylvania 2002), pp. 95–97 offer a compelling analysis of the intentions and types of argumentation employed by Socrates in the Spartan and Persian Speech. They claim the speech is (1) an argument that does not seek to refute Alcibiades by falsifying his belief that his competitors are no better than he is, but to demonstrate, on pragmatic grounds, that Alcibiades' belief has bad consequences; and (2) the speech further argues that Alcibiades' view is in fact a false view.

4.2.3 *Lampido, Daughter of Leotychides*

The third mention of women as judges is at the conclusion of the speech. Here Socrates speaks in his own voice as if generalizing the consensus on how the Spartan and Persian women feel about Alcibiades' lack of preparedness in competing against their men:

> Again, I think that Lampido, the daughter of Leotychides, wife of Archidamus and mother of Agis, who were all Spartan kings, would be similarly amazed if you, with your bad upbringing (κακῶς ἠγμένος), proposed to compete with her son, considering all his advantages. (123e–124a)

Socrates recognizes that it should be inglorious to Alcibiades that the women of his enemies should have a better appreciation than he does of what he needs to undertake to compete.

4.3 What Modern Commentators Have Said About the Prominent Role of Women in the Spartan and Persian Speech

Modern commentators on *Alcibiades Major* and the Spartan and Persian Speech typically offer very little discussion of the role of women.[10] Discussions that have noticed the role of women in the speech tend to find it peculiar, but not significant; if an account is offered it is quite questionable. Typical of the discussions that find the role of women in the speech peculiar, but insignificant, for example, is Nicholas Denyer's commentary on *Alcibiades Major*.[11] Although Denyer takes note of what the women say about Midias the cockfighter and politicians who flatter the city, he merely observes that Socrates gives a feminine pronunciation to the word "slave-boy hair style" (168). Denyer claims that women's speech was more conservative than men's, and had its characteristic pronunciations (169). We can plausibly infer from what Denyer has told us that because women's speech was conservative, women's judgments were conservative. As for the Persian king's mother's expression of disbelief about what Alcibiades could possibly be relying on to challenge her son, Denyer only says that "Amestris is represented as feeling disdain when she is represented as referring to Alcibiades, in his absence, by such a combination of the article with the demonstrative pronoun and his name" (188). Lampido's comment (see *Alcibiades Major* 124a) that she, too, would be amazed if

[10] P. Friedländer, *Plato: An Introduction*, Vol. II, Hans Meyerhoff trans. (Princeton 1964), p. 236 sees the Spartan and Persian Speech as 'the core of the dialogue,' but he makes no remarks about the role of women in the speech.

[11] Denyer, *Plato*: *Alcibiades*, pp. 168–169, p. 188.

Alcibiades tried to compete with her son considering Alcibiades' bad upbringing is left without remark by Denyer.

An example of the usual attention to the prominence of women can be seen in Steven Forde's short, but insightful commentary on *Alcibiades Major*.[12] Forde rightly sees the women's comment regarding Midias' "slave-boy hair style" as significant for Alcibiades' political aspirations (229). The challenge of Midias for Alcibiades is that entering into a contest with him is tantamount to Alcibiades' neglecting himself. For those politicians who are like Midias, Forde suggests, will prove successful most often because they create the illusion that their competitors need not try very hard to defeat them. Hence, the competitors become self-defeating. How can the Midias types be stopped? Forde's proposal is that by putting women in control of Athens they will know how properly to despise Midias (229). I am most sympathetic to Forde's insight that women may know how to despise the Midias types because it is in line with what I think is the operating assumption of the speech: women provide good insight regarding male achievement. I oppose, however, Forde's proposal that only if women are in power can they properly disdain unworthy politicians. To the contrary, the women in the speech, regardless of whether they are in power or not, are capable of knowing how to despise because of the position they are placed in relative to the expression of political power. Forde's subsequent remarks about the Spartan and Persian Speech exaggerate the need for women to be in power to have insight. For example, Forde claims:

> The word that Socrates uses to designate each of these [the queen's wardrobe] is kosmos, a term used often enough to designate at least ornamental or cosmetic furnishings but one whose primary meaning is "order" and one that in this acceptation is of great philosophical significance. Indeed, what we learn from the trustworthy traveler whom Socrates cites is precisely that the Persian domain is cast onto a very well defined order; that order revolves somehow around the person of the queen. (230)

I do not think it is clear that Socrates' trustworthy traveler is saying what Forde is claiming: the queen is at the center of the Persian domain. As Amestris' observation attests regarding the wide disparity in material wealth between Alcibiades and her son, it is the king's mother's summation of what she knows about Alcibiades and her son that makes her judgment about Alcibiades' likely failure so powerful. An observant woman, herself on the periphery of leadership, knowing what Amestris knew, would make the same judgment. Forde plausibly comments that the queens of Sparta and Persia recognize true superiority. Because of this recognition, the wives and mothers of the Spartan and Persian kings will judge Alcibiades fit to achieve his goal of being a great ruler only when he makes himself superior to their kings and sons (231–232).

[12] S. Forde, "On the Alcibiades Major", in Pangle, pp. 222–239.

4.4 Women and Moral Insight

That women provide insight regarding male achievement is taken for granted both by Socrates and Alcibiades. Women's judgments about boorish politicians and Alcibiades' potential frame the beginning of the Spartan and Persian Speech and the ending, but Alcibiades does not seem to mind. Being somewhat outside the direct competition themselves, women will not be challengers for rule against Alcibiades. They may thus have good vision and be believable to him. Women in the royal court seem a conservative element within the social order. When looking at the three instances of women judging, through Socrates' invocation of them, we find that the political behavior of politicians is judged according to real standards and Alcibiades is being judged in relation to the standard represented by the kings of Sparta and Persia. Each of these judgments tends toward conserving right behavior. Though Socrates offers the judgments for the women, we can readily believe that Socrates well reflects what insightful women would say in the situation.

Socrates is attributing to women in the Spartan and Persian Speech no inexplicable insight, after all Socrates is speaking for the women; rather the insight is developed within familial, female relationships. Such relationships are closely associated with the exercising of political power by the Spartan and Persian kings, but only indirectly as daughters, wives, and sisters. It is the indirectness of the women's positions relative to the Spartan and Persian kings that is the grounds on which their insight rests.

The proximity to power of each woman in the speech can be likened to learning structures. Such structures take account of two variables that affect what and how insight is acquired: the quality of feedback and the consequences of errors.[13] Quick and accurate feedback often facilitates quick and accurate insight (i.e., minimizing the cost of errors); whereas distorted and delayed feedback often results in failure to recognize the embrace of faulty opinions. Some environments are more exacting in terms of the detailed feedback and insight needed to make accurate judgments.

Members of royal families can surely be obtuse, but the position of the women in the speech seems productive of the judgments that result from a more exacting environment.[14] The women have gained a considerable amount of insight into what it would take for someone like Alcibiades to rival their men in the political sphere.

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[13] R. Hogarth, *Educating Intuition* (Chicago 2001), pp. 87–90.

[14] This claim seems to be justified by the fact that fear is the incentive that keeps the Spartan and Persian kings' wives from abdicating their responsibility to produce legitimate descendents. The Spartan king's wife is guarded at public expense to ensure their kings are "descended from the family of the Heraclidae alone" (121b7–10); the Persian king's wife is left "unguarded except by fear" (121b10–13). For the Spartan and Persian wives, it seems likely that in their marriages detailed feedback would be high and the cost of error would be high. Thus, their insight and judgments should be fairly accurate regarding what it would take to successfully rival their husbands, politically. Two modern examples of women gaining insight from their positions relative to men are wives of ambassadors (cf. H. Nicolson, *Diplomacy* (Washington DC 1988), pp. 2–40) and wives of headmasters at preparatory schools (cf. L. Auchincloss, *The Headmaster's*

Amestris and Lampidos' judgments, for example, reinforce Socrates' point that Alcibiades' bodily goods (i.e., health and good looks) and external goods (i.e., wealth, friends, family connections) measure up poorly compared to the kings'. What Amestris and Lampido suggest is that if Alcibiades is serious about his political ambitions, he must focus on what he has the most control over: the cultivation of knowledge within himself. Alcibiades must behave like a statesman.

The judgment made about Midias speaks broadly to the issue of Alcibiades' petty, aristocratic prejudices getting in the way of his needing to conduct himself in a stately manner. Midias is used by Socrates against the prejudice that Alcibiades expressed earlier that politicians of dubious and slavish backgrounds are not real Greeks (*see* 120b). Midias genuflects before and flatters the people, as the word *kolax* indicates. He desires to massage other people's self-esteem with the hope of benefiting himself. Ordinarily, the word *kolax* is used in reference to a private life, but in the Spartan and Persian Speech the term is extended to cover the demagogic activities of politicians. Alcibiades is being forewarned by the women not to continue down the course he is presently on, but to follow the course of the genuine statesmen by pursuing a genuine education. The women are implicitly praising what Alcibiades can become and blaming what he is presently on the grounds that true standards are such that if he accepts what Socrates offers he, too, can be formidable.

4.4.1 Amestris and Moral Insight

The judgment of Amestris, the Persian king's mother, regarding Alcibiades' wealth, accords with what I have been arguing. Alcibiades' intention to rival her son Artaxerxes is seen by her the way the women see flattering politicians, as the petty strivings of men who have "slave-boy hairstyles." Whereas before Socrates used what the women said about the slavish-minded Midias in relation to a standard of what it is to be a genuine statesmen, Amestris knows specifically what it will take for Alcibiades to be a formidable competitor in rivaling the Persian king. Here we may appeal to Aristotle's characterization of the magnanimous man in order to appreciate what it is that informs Amestris' bewilderment towards Alcibiades:

> The result of good fortune, however, seems to contribute to magnanimity. For the well-born and the powerful or rich are thought worthy of honor, since they are in a superior position, and everything superior in some good is more honored. Hence these things also make

(Footnote 14 continued)
Dilemma (New York 2007)). Nicolson and Auchincloss discuss the steep, social learning curve traversed by these wives.

> people more magnanimous, since some people honor their possessors for these goods. In reality, however, it is only the good person who is honorable. Still, anyone who has both virtue and these goods is more readily thought worthy of honor. (*EN* 1124a20–25, Irwin)[15]

Alcibiades may consider himself in supreme position for astounding the Athenians, but Alcibiades has proven deficient in all the assets possessed by the Spartan and Persian kings. He is superior in no goods Amestris recognizes as meriting honor (i.e., wealth, birth, power, intelligence). Consequently, the ways to greatness have seemingly been closed to Alcibiades, according to Amestris, and there is no room for finagling, but he must seek true worthiness.

4.4.2 Lampido and Moral Insight

The judgment of Lampido concludes the speech, and supplements the reaction of Amestris with the weightiness of tradition. Lampido speaks as one whose grandfather was a Spartan king, Leotychides; husband was a Spartan king, Archidamus; and her son is a Spartan king, Agis. In Lampido moral insight is distilled generationally. She, too, would be similarly amazed if Alcibiades were to compete with her son considering his bad upbringing. Might I conclude that, in fact, Lampido's judgment is the summation of what Socrates has been trying to convince Alcibiades of all along: the complacency with which he considers himself to be the equal of the kings of Sparta and Persia prevents his gaining knowledge by struggle and self-cultivation that is his only hope of competing with these kings.

4.4.3 Conclusion

I have argued that when it comes to Alcibiades' desire to achieve greatness, the assumption of the Spartan and Persian Speech is that women provide insight regarding male goals and achievement. Such insight may derive from being outside but in proximity to political power so as to gain cognizance of the requirements for ruling. I have not claimed that this type of insight is uniquely feminine, but it is the various positions of the women in the speech, and the insight they gain from such positions, relative to their men that make their judgments of Alcibiades so haunting. The daughters, wives, and sisters of the Spartan and Persian kings are in a better position than Alcibiades to know what it would take, if Alcibiades is serious about his intentions, to rival their men.

I also have accounted for why Alcibiades is not put-off by the women's judgments of him. Having observed the arrogance of Alcibiades, Socrates deftly introduces the Spartan and Persian Speech as one among several hypothetical

[15] T. Irwin, *Nicomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis 1985).

arguments. The cumulative effect of these arguments is to assess and critique Alcibiades' ambition and to alter his perspective towards himself: Alcibiades must couple his ambition with virtue.

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Part III
Alcibiades Major and Political Decisions

Chapter 5
Instances of Decision Theory in Plato's *Alcibiades Major* and *Minor*, and in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*

Abstract This chapter discusses Socrates' use of hypothetical choices as an early version of what was to become in the twentieth century the discipline of decision theory as expressed by one of its prominent proponents, F.P. Ramsey. Socrates' use of hypothetical choices and thought experiments in the dialogues is a way of reassuring himself of an interlocutor's philosophical potential. For example, to assess just how far Alcibiades is willing to go to attain his goal of being a great Athenian leader, we employ Ramsey's concept of Mathematical Expectation. Mathematical Expectation operates on the assumption that it is not enough to measure probability; we must also measure our belief to apportion our belief to the probability. In other words, it illustrates how strongly or to what degree a person holds a particular belief. If a person's belief in X lacks enough doubts to cancel the belief out, the probability of his acting on this belief is higher than if his belief in X was plagued by a greater number of doubts.

The context to which this chapter moves is to the assessment of Alcibiades' beliefs about his fitness to be a great Athenian leader. It is important that such an assessment take place because it will help explain the nature of Socrates' attraction to Alcibiades.

In *Alcibiades Major* we are meant to see the way Socrates, after a prolonged period of observation, pursues an ambitious young man who has easily dismissed his other pursuers with disdain. Alcibiades has political ambitions, but lacks the proper philosophical perspective that only Socrates can provide. Socrates notes that the other pursuers thought well of themselves, but there was not one who was not outstripped by Alcibiades' advantages and own estimation of himself. Socrates states, "You say that you don't need anybody for anything, since your own qualities are so great there's nothing you lack; I'll list them, starting with your body and ending with your soul" (104a–4, Cooper 1997a). The qualities that Socrates mentions are the young man's great looks and physical strength, his belonging to the leading family in the greatest Greek city, and his having relatives on his father's

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and mother's side who are among the best and willing to assist him were he to need assistance. Beyond his bodily assets and immediate family, Pericles whom his father left as guardian for Alcibiades and his brother, holds sway in Athens, in other Greek cities, and in many barbarian places. Given these advantageous, Alcibiades' conceit is that he is completely self-sufficient and is in need of no one.

Why would Socrates be attracted to Alcibiades in the first place? This question is one of the more interesting questions about *Alcibiades Major* and other Socratic dialogues that feature various interlocutors. An interlocutor merits a conversation with Socrates because he is *worthy*. In turn, what requirements must Socrates meet or what services must Socrates provide to a worthy candidate? A passage from Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, in which Socrates and Antiphon are discussing the proper way to bestow beauty and wisdom on others, illustrates the attitude Socrates assumes when befriending others that is on display in his approach to the young Alcibiades:

> …but we think that he who makes a friend of one whom he knows to be gifted by nature (εὐ′φυᾶ) and teaches him all the good he can, fulfils the duty of a citizen and gentleman. That is my own view, Antiphon. Others have a fancy for a good horse or dog or bird: my fancy, stronger even than theirs, is for good friends (φίλοι). And I teach them all the good I can, and recommend them to others from whom I think they will get some moral benefit. And the treasures of wisemen of old have left us in their writings I open and explore with my friends… (I. vi. 10–15, Xenophon 1997)

This passage not only reveals Socrates' approach to the cultivation of friendships once he enters into them, it also specifies a strict criterion for who becomes a candidate for friendship with Socrates (cf. *Apology* 23b–c and 33b–c on Socrates' ironic eagerness to present himself to the jury as the friendly interrogator of all Athenians). Namely, that candidate needs to be gifted by nature. It is clear from Socrates' opening remarks in *Alcibiades Major* that Alcibiades' gift is his nascent philosophical nature that Socrates recognizes in his enormous ambition to be a great political ruler. It is also clear that Socrates, having become interested in Alcibiades, seeks to cultivate a friendship in the manner Xenophon describes. What is not so clear is how Socrates, after his initial judgment that Alcibiades is sufficiently gifted and ambitious to pursue, corroborates his judgment.

Might there be a testing of the waters, so to speak, to assure him that Alcibiades is worthy before he attempts to bestow beauty and wisdom on him?[1] This chapter defends the position that Socrates confirms his initial judgment regarding the philosophical potential of a given interlocutor by posing various thought experiments in the form of hypothetical, counterfactual and imaginary choices and scenarios.[2]

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[1] Xenophon tells us that the critics of Socrates claimed he misjudged the natures of both Critias and Alcibiades by teaching them politics before prudence (*Memorabilia*, I. ii. 13–18).

[2] Thought experiments like counterfactuals have been discussed in relation to the variety of Socratic refutations (see, for example, Carpenter and Polansky "Variety of Socratic Elenchi" in Scott 2002, 89–100), but not as a technique to measure the extent to which an interlocutor is philosophically gifted.

How these choices function is to make an interlocutor's desires transparent and to assess degrees of belief as the bases for action. Socrates often makes use of these types of choices, which, interestingly enough, have come to be regarded as one of the key features of modern decision theory. I especially see the employment of decision theory choices and what they reveal about the nature of an interlocutor and his desires in the dialogue *Alcibiades Major*. I will also discuss general aspects of these choices in other Socratic dialogues such as *Alcibiades Minor*, and Xenophon's *Memorabilia*.

5.1 Decision Theory

Socrates' use of thought experiments in the dialogues as a way of reassuring himself of an interlocutor's philosophical potential aligns with the general thrust of decision theory as expressed by one of its prominent proponents, F.P. Ramsey (1978, 60–100), in his article "Truth and Possibility."[3] Ramsey's discussion of hypothetical choices as a means of measuring degrees of belief will be my focus because it sheds light on the function and type of choices Socrates offers to his interlocutors. It must be kept in mind that philosophical potential may be assessed by methods other than measuring an interlocutor's commitment to certain beliefs. Other methods of assessment might be judging the facility with which an interlocutor thinks abstractly; or judging the appropriateness of an interlocutor's character. However, measuring degrees of belief is the most effective means to assess philosophical potential because such potential tracks the extent to which one is prepared to act on his beliefs. Alcibiades' political ambition is to be a great ruler at home and abroad. In measuring Alcibiades' philosophical potential, the extent of his ambition is revealed.

Ramsey's article sets out a method to measure the degrees of beliefs and other psychological variables through their causal property, which is the extent to which individuals are willing to act on what they believe given hypothetical circumstances. Hypothetical circumstances are not concerned with actualized beliefs—beliefs presently at work in our thinking of them, but with dispositional beliefs, beliefs that would dictate actions in the appropriate circumstances.[4] According to Ramsey, beliefs can be assigned a magnitude or degree having a particular position in a sequence of magnitudes which determine the likelihood, given hypothetical choices, of our acting in one way as opposed to another. For example, we can

[3] Denyer 2001, 93 is the first commentator to see the relevance of Ramsey's discussion of hypothetical choices to *Alcibiades Major*. However, Denyer mentions such choices only in passing. Our treatment offers a comprehensive explanation of the types of choices contained in Ramsey's discussion.

[4] Cf. Aristotle's discussion of 'first' and 'second' activity in *De An*. 412a22–8 where he contrasts dispositional knowledge with actualized knowledge.

express full belief in a proposition by 1 ("The earth is flat"), full belief in its contradictory by 0 ("The earth is round"), and equal beliefs in the proposition and its contradictory by one-half ("The earth may be flat or round"). Magnitudes are quite simple to assign when an individual has no doubts about anything.

A more complex scenario may demand an individual to take account of various degrees of certainty in his beliefs (e.g., "I believe in Z two-thirds of certainty"). In order to account for the more complex scenario, Ramsey introduces what he calls Mathematical Expectation.[5] Mathematical Expectation governs all our behavior in so far as we consistently seek to maximize our own or other people's pleasure. How Mathematical Expectation expresses degrees of belief is illustrated by Ramsey in the following instance:

> I am at a cross-roads and do not know the way; but I rather think one of two ways is right. I propose therefore to go that way but to keep my eyes open for someone to ask; if now I see someone half a mile away over the fields, whether I turn aside to ask him will depend on the relative inconvenience of going out of my way to cross the fields or continuing on the wrong road if it is the wrong road. But it will also depend on how confident I am that I am right; and clearly the more confident I am of this the less distance I should be willing go from the road to check my opinion. (1978, 76–77)

The distance Ramsey is prepared to go out of his way to ask for directions becomes the measure of the confidence in his opinion, the Mathematical Expectation, because individuals conduct themselves in ways that consistently realize the objects of their desires. For Socrates and Ramsey, "maximizing pleasure" in the utilitarian sense is not the intended meaning of Mathematic Expectation. The proper way to construe "maximizing pleasure" is to interpret it as a proxy for various actions motivated by various conceptions of the good or what appears to be the good. Different ways of life are based on what appears pleasant to various individuals.

Ramsey's presupposition is that because the individual has certain beliefs about many things his actions will be determined according to the ranking of his beliefs. A belief entails choices and to offer an individual many choices is to reveal the individual's preference for possible worlds ordered hierarchically according to their perceived value:

> If we had the power of the Almighty, and could persuade our subject of our power, we could, by offering him options, discover how he placed in order of merit all possible courses of the world. In this way all possible worlds would be put in order of value… (78)

Schematically the choices offered would look like the following:

> Would you rather have world α in any event; or world β if p is true, and world γ if p is false? If, then, he were certain that p was true, he would simply compare α and β and choose between them as if no conditions were attached… (79)

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[5] For example, Ramsey formalizes Mathematical Expectation in the following way: Bob's degree of belief in *p* is *m*/*n*; then Bob's action is as he would choose it to be if he had to repeat it exactly *n* times, in *m* of which *p* was true, and the others false. In each of the *n* times Bob had no memory of the previous ones (76).

Ramsey's discussion of thought experiments presented as hypothetical choices are the type of choices Socrates is concerned with in *Alcibiades Major* and to a lesser extent in *Alcibiades Minor* and Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. Socrates, too, is concerned with degrees of belief, but not their measurability in magnitudes. Socrates is concerned with degrees of belief insofar as the choices he offers to Alcibiades will confirm or falsify Socrates' initial observation that Alcibiades has what it takes to benefit from Socratic friendship. Once Alcibiades begins to entertain the hypothetical choices offered to him, his desires are rendered transparent. Socrates then judges Alcibiades' desires as the potential basis for a virtuous life and, secondarily, great Athenian statesmanship.

5.2 Types of Hypothetical Choices

In Plato's dialogues the choices offered to interlocutors are outlandish and contrived, and often assume the tone of a catechism. I shall argue that there are three distinctive categories under which these choices are usually offered; I shall name them The Call of Ambition, The Limits of Ambition and The Transparency of Ambition.

The first category is The Call of Ambition. Under this category the hypothetical choices offered by Socrates to the interlocutor are concerned with establishing as fact from prior observation that an interlocutor is worthy of being befriended by Socrates due to the interlocutor's ambition. Contrary to Socrates' public personae, Plato's Socrates did not engage in discussion with all kinds of people. The evidence in support of the claim that Socrates' social circle was quite exclusive and highbrow is Plato's *Apology*. At 23b–c in the *Apology,* Socrates acknowledges that his questioning of others attracted the wealthy young to follow and imitate his methods. These wealthy, ambitious and aristocratic young people are those like Charmides, Critias and Alcibiades.[6]

When I speak of ambition I mean those overriding emotions or desires that cause an individual to act in a particular way repeatedly to achieve a particular end. I am not speaking of petty desires that are strongly felt and, as a result, cause an individual to act. The ambition Socrates has in mind is *grand*, political ambition. The rational in coupling desire and ambition is that they have similar structural features;

[6] Socrates says, So even now I continue this investigation as the god bade me—and I go around seeking anyone, citizen or stranger, whom I think wise. Then if I do not think he is, I come to the assistance of the god and show that he is not wise. Because of this occupation, I do not have the leisure (σχολὴ) to engage in public affairs to any extent, nor indeed to look after my own, but I live in great poverty because of my service to the god (τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ λατρείαν). Furthermore, the young men who follow me around of their own free will, those who have most leisure, the sons of the very rich (οί τῶν πλουσιωτάτων), take pleasure in hearing people questioned; they themselves often imitate me and try to question others. (23b–c).

they are both good-based. The most effective way to construe the motivational force of Alcibiades' desires and, by extension, his ambition, might be the following:

For any rational person to desire *a* is for her to believe *a* is good.

Unlike brute desires that lack any unifying order and that unreflectively accept visual appearances without checking upon objective standards, Alcibiades' desires seem to be a "locomotive power," a "progressive motion" that entails cognition or some awareness of the object of his desires as good.[7] In the context of *Alcibiades Major*, the object of Alcibiades' desires is political in nature; the charm of political rule is the natural object of his ambition.

The second category is The Limits of Ambition. The choices offered under this category assess the length an interlocutor is willing to go in order to satisfy his desire(s). One way to conduct such an assessment is to determine how strongly or to what degree he holds a particular belief. The significance of knowing how strongly an interlocutor holds a particular belief is that it allows Socrates, by offering hypothetical choices, to establish limits to the subject-matter of the conversation. In the Socratic conversation limits are established in order to prevent the interlocutor from assuming a sophistic stance (i.e., making long speeches and introducing irrelevant subject-matter), and to facilitate the protreptic experience of the interlocutor by having virtue serve as the goal of the interlocutor's ambition.

The third category is The Transparency of Ambition. The types of hypothetical choices offered under this category disclose the gulf between an interlocutor's true beliefs that are instantiated in his deeds, as opposed to his stated beliefs. The interlocutor often agrees to abide by Socrates' prescription to do what it takes to realize the goal of his ambition, arduous though it may be, but we then find the interlocutor acting as if he were oblivious of his agreement. In the dialogues the comedic aspect is often brought about by the interlocutor insisting that we take his words, speeches and intentions seriously, but he makes himself look foolish because his actions are glaringly at odds with what he professes.

5.3 Alcibiades Major

Of the many interlocutors found in the Socratic dialogues, Alcibiades' relationship with Socrates gives us a good opportunity to assess the categories of choices. Socrates' attraction to Alcibiades in the opening pages of *Alcibiades Major* is shown to be particularly strong. After a long period of observation, Socrates approaches Alcibiades with the intention of befriending him. Unlike the majority of the interlocutors featured in the Platonic dialogues who claim to have a strong,

[7] See Aristotle's *De An*. 433a9–30 and Polansky's 2007, 514–519 reading of these passages in his commentary on *De An*.

presumptive knowledge of X—(e.g. friendship (*Lysis*), piety (*Euthyphro*), bravery (*Laches*), etc.—Alcibiades makes no such strong claim. In *Alcibiades Major* Socrates' conversation with Alcibiades is generated solely on *ad hominem* grounds. From the opening pages of the dialogue to its conclusion, Socrates appeals not so much to reason in trying to make virtue the goal of Alcibiades' ambition, but to Alcibiades' aristocratic prejudices and emotions. The uniqueness of Alcibiades lies in a type of arrogance that is even more acute than the arrogance of his older pursuers. Alcibiades also has a psychological advantage over his pursuers, which also makes him unique in the eyes of Socrates; he is beautiful physically, from a prominent Athenian family, and has influential friends (104b5). Although Socrates eventually convinces Alcibiades that he is self-sufficient for all the wrong reasons (127d–e), that had allowed him casually to brush aside his eager pursuers, Socrates engages Alcibiades in conversation to confirm whether he is sufficiently ambitious to pursue and thus worthy to receive Socrates' friendship (104a–c). Given that Alcibiades' ambition for political rule is good-based, Socrates' method of measurement is to confront Alcibiades with questions designed to make transparent the intensity of his ambition. In addition to confirming his initial impression of Alcibiades through choices offered under the category The Call of Ambition, the following exchange between Alcibiades and Socrates brings into play the other two categories under which hypothetical choices are offered.

5.3.1 The Call of Ambition

After having gained Alcibiades' confidence by appealing to his conceit and sense of wonder, Socrates offers the following hypothetical choices to Alcibiades:

> Suppose one of the gods asked you, "Alcibiades, would you rather live with what you now have, or would you rather die on the spot if you weren't permitted to acquire anything greater?" I think you'd choose to die… And if that same god were then to tell you that you should have absolute power in Europe, but that you weren't permitted to cross over into Asia or get mixed up with affairs over there, I think you'd rather not live with only that to look forward to; you want your reputation and your influence to saturate all mankind, so to speak. (105a–c)

Alcibiades coyly admits (106a8) that Socrates is right regarding the presence of his enormous ambition. This brief exchange confirms the initial impression Socrates gained from observing Alcibiades as a young boy. In *Alcibiades Major* Socrates does not recount many episodes that might have given him the impression that Alcibiades was a promising youth with ambition. Although Socrates recounts an episode (110a–c) in which a young, brash Alcibiades accuses a playmate of cheating in a game of knucklebones. The episode is supposed to illustrate the point that even at a young age Alcibiades was confident that he had knowledge of justice and injustice despite not having been taught it or discovered it himself.

Plutarch, however, recounts several episodes that illustrate Alcibiades' budding ambition, which Socrates may have in mind.[8] Plutarch prefaces his remarks about Alcibiades' childhood by stating that the desire for superiority was the strong passion "of his real character" (Clough 1992, 259). We are told of Alcibiades being placed in such a difficult position while wrestling he bit his opponents' hand to gain the advantage. The opponent accused Alcibiades of biting like a woman; Alcibiades replied: "No… like a lion" (259). In another episode, while playing a game of dice with friends a loaded cart was to pass before the part of street Alcibiades intended to throw during his turn; he demanded the cart to stop but to no avail. Once the game was over Alcibiades having decided to teach the cart driver a lesson threw himself on the cart and dared the driver to drive on. The driver was so startled "…that he put back his horses, while all that saw it were terrified, and… ran to assist Alcibiades" (259).

Even if Socrates has these episodes in mind, how might this exchange between Alcibiades and Socrates employ elements of decision theory? First and foremost we see the use of thought experiments in the form of hypothetical choices. Socrates needs to establish as fact his prior observation that Alcibiades is sufficiently ambitious to pursue. Socrates cannot establish this fact by focusing on Alcibiades' actualized beliefs; he must focus on Alcibiades' beliefs as a causal property in determining what Alcibiades would do in the appropriate circumstances. In other words, Socrates must focus on Alcibiades' dispositional beliefs. Under the category The Call of Ambition I believe Socrates is not concerned so much with the content of choices of what is being offered as he is with the mere aspect of employing hypothetical choices as a method to gage Alcibiades' probable behavior in various circumstances. The category The Limits of Ambition will address the content of choices and Alcibiades' degree of belief in the choices offered to him.

5.3.2 The Limits of Ambition

The fact that Alcibiades would be willing to die if he could not achieve anything greater than what he already has or is prevented from ruling over the continent of Europe and Asia, suggests that Alcibiades will order his actions in such a way he thinks most likely to realize his ambitions. Ramsey's Mathematical Expectation seeks to clarify precisely what such an ordering entails. The distance Alcibiades is willing to go to acquire greater things is the measure of his ambition and the

[8] Gribble 1999, 214–215 points out that there are two genres in the Alcibiades tradition. The *first* tradition, typified in the writings of Thucydides and Demosthenes, focuses primarily on Alcibiades' bios or 'way of life' and how it influenced his civic attitude. The *second* tradition, the Socratics, focuses primarily on Alcibiades as a moral agent shaped by his own choices as a young man. Plato, the most notable figure of the Socratics, not only provides us with a defense for the charge against Socrates of corrupting the youth, he explores the relationship between philosophy and political life. Plutarch falls into the Socratic tradition.

confidence he has in his abilities. Otherwise the lack of these greater things, which would call for the necessity to remain content with what he has acquired up to this moment, would be a peculiar kind of death by proxy. A belief entails choices, and the choices Socrates offers Alcibiades reveal his preference for hierarchically ordered scenarios according to their perceived value in facilitating his ambition to attain greater things, as well as saturating all mankind with his influence and reputation.[9] Schematically, the hypothetical choices offered to Alcibiades by Socrates might look like the following:

> Would you rather have scenario α ('to live with what you now have') in any event; or scenario β ('to die on the spot') if ρ ('if you weren't permitted to acquire anything greater') is true and scenario γ (implied: Alcibiades is allowed to acquire greater things) if ρ is false?

If Alcibiades were certain that ρ was true, he would then choose, as if no conditions were attached, between α and β. Alcibiades seems to suggest that he would most likely choose β. (We say 'most likely' because Alcibiades will be shown to have inconsistent thoughts about death when we discuss The Transparency of Ambition.) The relevance of laying out the hypothetical choices as I have underscores Socrates' push to get Alcibiades to show, for all to see, the value he places on possible courses of various scenarios offered to him. We can infer from the value Alcibiades places on possible courses of the scenarios that he may be willing to do whatever it takes to realize his ambition. Alcibiades' ambition may be limitless, at least dispositionally. Socrates can now tailor his conversation to Alcibiades' enormous ambition by establishing limits beyond which the conversation is prevented from going. In limiting the conversation, Socrates offers Alcibiades other possible scenarios that entail different courses of action based on different rankings of beliefs.[10] These other possible scenarios can be thought of as Socratic counter-offers to Alcibiades' possible scenario preferences. For example, when we look at *Alcibiades Major* we see the conversation revolving around three weak claims Alcibiades makes regarding knowledge, justice, and the soul. In response, Socrates limits Alcibiades' claims by suggesting ideas of his own regarding knowledge, justice, and the soul. By stating that Socrates 'suggests' ideas accords with the methodological point emphasized at 113a–c in the dialogue, which is that Alcibiades admits and confirms, through conversation with Socrates, his lack of preparedness to rule. Accordingly, Socrates can still maintain that he is not making any specific claims about Alcibiades' preparedness.

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[9] The use of imaginary choices and scenarios offered by god was standard in the *Alcibiades* literature. Other examples in ancient philosophy of imaginary choices and scenarios as a method for assessing an interlocutor's priorities are Xenophon's *Mem.* 1.2.1 6 (105a5–6n); *Alcibiades Minor* 141a–b, 148a; and Plato's *Laws* 683b–c.

[10] E.g., Johnson 1999, 11–11 is basically discussing a possible scenario where Alcibiades' priorities are both limited and transformed by the realization that God is the true self. Cf. Annas 1999, 52–71 on the Middle Platonists' idea that humans become god-like by engaging in depersonalized, abstract thinking.

Knowledge (106b–113d): Alcibiades claims he has the general knowledge to go before the Athenians and instruct them in their "own business" (107d). Socrates makes the suggestion that there was never a time when Alcibiades learned about justice, what the better tend towards, or "in keeping the peace or in waging war with the right people" (109a6).

Justice (113d–118b): Alcibiades claims that when the Athenians are conducting their business they are not, in fact, concerned with what is just so much as they are concerned with what is advantageous, and the just is not the same as what is advantageous (113d3). Socrates makes the suggestion that the just is always advantageous. In making this suggestion, Socrates argues indirectly that despite how the Athenians and other Greeks think of justice, Alcibiades must always see justice as advantageous and admirable (115a–116e).

Soul (128–135e5): Alcibiades tacitly claims that the user of a thing is not different from all the things he uses. He is inclined to cultivate what he uses, not his true self. Socrates suggests that the user of a thing is different from all things he uses because the soul is the true self. The body is an instrument of the soul.

Socrates' suggestions, initiated by the type of hypothetical choices found under the category The Limits of Ambition, are essential features of Socrates' attempt to have virtue be the goal of Alcibiades' ambition. Not only do these suggestions curtail the length Alcibiades is willing to go in order to satisfy his desires by offering possible scenarios that may weaken his allegiance to particular scenarios and their concomitant beliefs, they highlight how strongly or to what degree Alcibiades holds particular beliefs.

5.3.2.1 The Transparency of Ambition

The aim of the last category under which hypothetical choices are offered, The Transparency of Ambition, is to disclose the gulf between an interlocutor's stated beliefs and his true beliefs. If Socrates can discern an interlocutor's true beliefs, he is in a better position to facilitate the interlocutor's turn towards virtue. The gulf between the two beliefs is either disclosed through the interlocutor's deeds portrayed dramatically or through contradictory statements made by the interlocutor. In the case of Alcibiades we learn, through the use of hypothetical choices offered to him, that he would rather die if he could not rule all of Europe and Asia. For Alcibiades instant death is preferable to the sheer possibility of being stuck with what he now possesses.[11] Even if you acquitted me now and did not believe Anytus, who said to you that either I should not have been brought here in the first place, or that now I am here, you cannot avoid executing me, for if I should be

[11] The parallel between what Alcibiades is willing to forfeit (i.e., his life) in order to *gain* power and what Socrates in the *Apology* is willing to forfeit (i.e., his life) in order to *practice* philosophy is revealing. In the *Apology,* Socrates self-reflectively entertains the counterfactual offer of being acquitted by the Athenians on the condition he cease investigating and practicing philosophy or be put to death:

acquitted, your sons would practice the teachings of Socrates and all be thoroughly corrupted; if you said to me in this regard: "Socrates, we do not believe Anytus now; we acquit you, but only on condition that you spend no more time on this investigation and do not practice philosophy, and if you are caught doing so you will die;" if, as I say, you were to acquit me on those terms, I would say to you: "Gentleman of the jury, I am grateful and I am your friend, but I will obey the god rather than you, and as long as I draw breath and am able, I shall not cease to practice philosophy, to exhort you and in my usual way to point out to any one of you whom I happen to meet: Good Sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the greatest city with the greatest reputation for both wisdom and power; are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation and honors as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul?" (29c–e1) Might Socrates' single minded ambition surpass that of Alcibiades'? However, when we review relevant passages of the elenctic exchange between Alcibiades and Socrates on whether the just is advantageous (113d–118b), we see that Alcibiades assents to the proposition that death is the worst possible thing that could happen to an aspiring, talented leader. The overall aim of the elenchos is to get Alcibiades to say that the just is always advantageous.

As I argued in greater detail in chapter two, Alcibiades holds that some just things are advantageous and some just things are not advantageous (115a); but all just things are admirable (καλὰ, 115a4). Alcibiades supposes it is always admirable to do just things but one might come off much worse by doing them. The question Socrates asks Alcibiades is whether admirable things are good, or are some bad? Alcibiades believes some admirable things are bad, and some contemptible (αἰσχρὰ, 115a6) things are good. Alcibiades allows for doing admirable things from which one does not benefit. Socrates suggests the following illustration, which Alcibiades accepts: someone might stay alive in war through not trying to rescue friends or relatives. Trying to help is brave and admirable, but could lead to wounds and death. Therefore, *trying to save friends is admirable inasmuch as it is brave, but bad inasmuch as it brings death*. Alcibiades' assent to the conclusion of the elenctic exchange indicates contradictory thoughts about death. This is significant because it reveals Alcibiades' ambition to be quite conventional, although still enormous. Alcibiades is not so unusual that he disagrees with traditional moral notions, and how these notions apply to existential situations such as death. His concern for self-preservation competes with his enormous ambition to exercise political power far and wide.

When comparing Alcibiades to other interlocutors in the Platonic corpus, it becomes clear just how conventional he is. Thrasymachus, for example, radically subverts (*Rep*. 348d–349a) the conventional conception of justice by arguing that the unjust are clever (wise) and good (virtuous); whereas the just are contemptible and just actions are indicative of weakness. Before Socrates recalibrates his argument to eventually mount a non-conventional defense of justice, which the remainder of the *Republic* demonstrates, he acknowledges that Thrasymachus' definition of justice does away with the conventional grounds on which a discussion can be had and an agreement reached on the nature of justice (348e4–7).

5.4 Alcibiades Minor

The following two Socratic writings, *Alcibiades Minor* and Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, illustrate the extent to which Socrates assesses degrees of belief of an interlocutor through hypothetical choices. They also illustrate the various philosophical settings in which such choices are presented. It should be kept in mind, however, that in discussing these two Socratic writings I am not compromising on my methodological claim made in the introduction about self-sufficiency and the dialogues, nor am I taking a position on the authenticity of *Alcibiades Minor* or Xenophon's *Memorabilia*.

In *Alcibiades Minor* we find the young, ambitious Alcibiades on his way to say prayers, encountering Socrates on the way. Eager to be of help, Socrates insists that it would be better for Alcibiades not to pray for anything specific, but, instead, like the Spartans, pray for what is good. Socrates' implicit claim is that human knowledge is fallible, we do not know what is best for us or what happiness is, and so it would be best not to pray for anything specific. The type of hypothetical choices found under the category The Limits of Ambition is prominent in *Alcibiades Minor*. Socrates relates a cautionary tale to Alcibiades about being careful of what he asks for in prayer because Alcibiades may "be praying for great evils when you think you are asking for great goods" (138b6–7). The tale is the story of Oedipus who inadvertently blurted out the prayer that his sons use arms to settle their inheritance, which eventually came to pass. Socrates then introduces the following hypothetical choices through a personified god:

> Suppose that the god to whom you are about to pray were to appear to you and ask you, before you began praying, whether you would be happy to be sole ruler of the city of Athens—or, if that seemed mean and tiny, were to offer you all the Greeks as well—or, if he saw that you regarded that too as insignificant unless the whole of Europe were included, were to promise you all of that plus simultaneous acknowledgement by the whole human race of the rule of Alcibiades son of Clinias. If that happened, I imagine, you will go home very happy and think you had come into possession of the greatest goods. (141a5–b1, Cooper 1997b)

Alcibiades agrees with what Socrates has just said, but Socrates queries Alcibiades whether or not he would be willing to give up his life in exchange for the territory and all of Greece; or if he were to receive these great goods, would he use them badly. Alcibiades quickly answers a definitive no (141c).

In *Alcibiades Minor* the hypothetical choices offered to Alcibiades by Socrates displays the limits of Alcibiades' Ambition and, consequently, establish limits to the subject-matter of the conversation. Alcibiades is still very ambitious as his responses to the hypothetical choices indicate, but it is not a reckless ambition. Alcibiades is willing to forgo the territory and rulership if it means giving up his life, or if it means gaining these gifts but using them badly. The caveat Alcibiades makes regarding the hypothetical choices offered to him reveal, at least dispositionally, that he recognizes that without knowledge there is no way to distinguish between precious and pernicious things. Of course, Socrates will be of some help in getting Alcibiades to distinguish between the two.

Due to the limits placed upon the subject-matter of the conversation, Socrates now is in the position to stress the idea that ignorance of the best is what is bad in the use of possessions and actions. There are many examples that Socrates furnishes to reinforce this idea. For example, if we were in a state of good archers and flute-players, good athletes and craftsmen, each one in possession of a particular skill, but none of which had the knowledge of what is best, that state would be "a hotbed of dissention and lawlessness" (146b1–2). The idea that Socrates is expressing is that skilled practitioners need knowledge of utility (ὠφελίμως, 146b10) in order to be a benefit to themselves and the community, the knowledge of how to apply their craft in the real world. Similarly, practical knowledge serves as the basis of virtue when it is acknowledged that the Spartans only pray that they receive what is good and noble instead of praying for anything more (148c–150b3).

Might this idea of practical knowledge functioning as the basis of virtue, resonate with Alcibiades? After all, the hypothetical choices offered to him under the category The Limits of Ambition revealed the length he is willing to go to be a great ruler. If he were to go before the Athenian people claiming to give advice on making war, like the orators claim to give advice on various topics, but was ignorant of what advice is best regarding war, might he fail to understand when to go, or for how long, and with whom? Alcibiades must not be an irresponsible intellectual, and Socrates concludes his discussion with Alcibiades by saying as much to him:

> For most people, then, it is an advantage neither to know nor to think they know anything, if they are going to do themselves more harm than good by rushing to do what they know or think they know—Very true—So you see it seems that I was quite right when I said that it looked as if other skills, if not combined with the knowledge of what is best, are more often than not harmful to their possessors. (146d1–e1)

5.5 Xenophon's *Memorabilia*

Xenophon's *Memorabilia*: (1) Can be placed within the tradition of apologetic writings that seek to vindicate Socrates from the charges brought against him in the *Apology*, and (2) Is designed to recount the positive philosophical influence, anecdotally, Socrates had on various acquaintances and friends through conversation (Gray 1998, 26–40). In Xenophon's discussion of Socrates' relationship with Alcibiades, we find most prominently the type of hypothetical choices offered under the category The Transparency of Ambition. Socrates is concerned with distinguishing between Alcibiades' stated beliefs and his true beliefs. Why Alcibiades assumes such importance even for Xenophon is because Alcibiades' subsequent career plays into the hands of those who accused Socrates of corrupting the youth (*see* Plutarch's "The Life of Alcibiades"), among other things. His accusers argued that Socrates taught his companions to scoff at established laws. Xenophon tells us that Socrates' accusers focused on Socrates' criticism of appointing public officials

by lot. Xenophon comments, "none would choose a pilot or builder or flautist by lot, nor any other craftsman for work in which mistakes are far less disastrous than mistakes in statecraft" (I. ii. 9–13). In fact, it was Socrates that believed the practice of choosing statesman by lot corrupted the youth, according to Xenophon.

Alcibiades' insolence and licentious behavior under the democracy is held up as being the result of the corrupting influence of Socrates. Although Alcibiades eventually brought great harm to Athens, Xenophon explains that it was due to his ambition that he came to associate with Socrates (I. ii. 14–17). With the exception of Critias, Alcibiades was unlike any other Athenian in his desire to control everything and outdo every rival in notoriety. What Alcibiades saw in Socrates was simplicity, independence, and moderation in all his pleasures. He observed that Socrates was able to do what he liked with any disputant. Xenophon concludes that the apparent reasons Alcibiades sought Socrates' company is because he wanted to benefit from Socrates' simplicity and knowledge. The real reason Alcibiades sought Socrates' company, Xenophon admits, is to gain proficiency in speech and action in order to realize his ambition.

Xenophon's talk of apparent and real reasons Alcibiades sought Socrates' company is concluded by him reflecting on the thought that the hypothetical choices offered by god to Alcibiades would confirm Alcibiades' real intentions (Xenophon mentions both Alcibiades and Critias, my focus remains Alcibiades):

> For my part I believe that, had heaven granted them the choice between the life they saw Socrates leading and death, they would have chosen rather to die. Their conduct betrayed their purpose; for as soon as they thought themselves superior to their fellow disciples they sprang away from Socrates and took to politics; it was for political ends that they had wanted Socrates. (I. ii 13–18)

Xenophon's reflections on Alcibiades' true reasons for associating with Socrates are somewhat unlike the other two examples taken from *Alcibiades Major* and *Minor*. It is not Alcibiades being offered hypothetical choices; it is rather Xenophon's hypothetical reflection that envisions hypothetical choices being offered to Alcibiades by god. I might argue that the choices do not make transparent Alcibiades' true desires, but they simply tell us the impression Alcibiades made on Xenophon. Yet we see the resemblance with Plato's presentation. The hypothetical choices offered by the god between death for Alcibiades or adopting the simple life of Socrates—with Xenophon concluding that Alcibiades would choose the former—render Alcibiades' true desires transparent in light of Alcibiades' biography.

Xenophon's hypothetical reflection is not an idle one. It dramatizes the gulf between Alcibiades' preferred reason for associating with Socrates, and the life he eventually led away from Socrates. For Alcibiades to prefer losing his life to imitating Socrates' life suggests a particular order of value in which various beliefs are ranked. Since Socrates values virtue most highly, to be appalled at the prospect of living Socrates' life seems to be a rejection of virtue. In the relevant circumstances, circumstances away from Socrates' influence, Alcibiades' actions would be guided by licentiousness and insolence (I. ii. 12–13). The tentativeness of Alcibiades' actions occasioned by relevant circumstances speaks to the dispositional

nature that hypothetical choices reveal. Perhaps Alcibiades would never act in such a manner, but given the choice accepted, there is a high degree of probability that Alcibiades will act in such a manner under the relevant circumstances.

5.6 Conclusion

An effective way of ascertaining an interlocutor's degree of belief is through assessing its causal force by determining the extent to which he will act on what he believes given hypothetical choices. The use of hypothetical choices as a method of measuring degrees of belief was explored by one of the prominent proponents of modern decision theory, F.P. Ramsey. Whereas Ramsey employs magnitudes to measure degrees of belief elicited by hypothetical choices and circumstances, we have found hypothetical choices similarly employed by Socrates, though without quantitative measurement, to assess various psychological states of an interlocutor. We have discussed three distinctive categories under which these choices are offered in relation to the figure of Alcibiades in *Alcibiades Major* and *Alcibiades Minor*, and Xenophon's *Memorabilia*. These categories are The Call of Ambition, The Limits of Ambition, and The Transparency of Ambition. The relevance of hypothetical choices can operate on many different levels, and in many different contexts.

By offering hypothetical choices Socrates confirms his initial impression that Alcibiades, as a child, had a nascent philosophical potential that now needs cultivation. We see Socrates employing hypothetical choices to limit his discussion with Alcibiades to certain themes and concerns. Socrates also renders Alcibiades' desires transparent by offering hypothetical choices that are designed to reveal his true beliefs as opposed to his stated beliefs or deliberate actions. Often the glaring difference between what an interlocutor professes in words and what he discloses in action, gives rise to bitter, comedic situations for the observer. We can point to several instances of the use of hypothetical choices in Socratic dialogues because it is an effective means of ascertaining the psychological momentum of the topics explored. Such an exploration should remind us that in Socratic writings, especially the Platonic dialogues, ideas and doctrines are not deracinated—they animate real lives for better or worse.

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Part IV
Alcibiades Major and Political Priorities

Chapter 6
Eudaimonia: Happiness and Priorities in Plato's *Alcibiades Major* and Plato's *Apology*

Abstract "Eudaimonia: Happiness and Priorities in Plato's *Alcibiades Major* and Plato's *Apology*" argues that the principal themes of happiness and priorities found in Plato's *Alcibiades Major* are also found in Plato's *Apology*, rendering each dialogue a natural complement to the other. By first reading the *Apology* as a synoptic view of Socrates' orientation, and then reading *Alcibiades Major* as a specific illustration of Socrates' cross-examination, we begin to see that Socrates is arguing for a radical perspective regarding one's priorities: our lives should be directed at some ultimate end with other ends subordinate to it.

Establishing priorities in life is central for understanding Socrates' conduct before the jury in Plato's *Apology*[1] and Socrates' approach to Alcibiades in Plato's *Alcibiades Major*.[2] Socrates, in *Alcibiades Major*, confronts an interlocutor that cares more about what he has (for example, wealth, power, honors, et cetera) than about

[1] Although Socrates defends his life, he does not wish merely to get off from the charges in any way that he can. Were this his objective he should bring his children into court, cry, beg forgiveness, promise never to do such things again. Rather than conduct his defense this way, he tries to make his defense as much like the usual conversation as he can so that the Athenians will be confronted with Socrates as he is, and they will have to decide whether they find him, as he is, guilty or not guilty. The best way to defend his life, Socrates thinks, is to display that life in the courtroom. Hence this dialogue really is a dialogue. For a denial that the *Apology* is a dialogue, see M. Burnyeat, "The Impiety of Socrates," *AncPhil* 17 (1997) 1–12.

[2] The texts of Plato's *Apology* and *Theaetetus* are those of J. Burnet, *Platonis Opera* (Oxford 1967) 1.17a–42a and 1.142a–210d respectively; and of Plato *Alcibiades Major* [*Alc 1*] is that of J. Burnet, *Platonis Opera* (Oxford 1967) 2.103a–135c.The source of the *Apology* translation is G. M. A. Grube; *Theaetetus*' translation is M. J. Levett, rev. Myles F. Burnyeat; *Alcibiades Major*'s translation is D.S. Hutchinson. All three translations, including the *Meno,* are contained in Cooper, John M. 1997. *Plato: Complete Works*. Baltimore: Hackett Publishing Company. The text of Xenophon *Memorabilia* is that of E. C. Marchant, *Xenophontis Opera Omnia*^{2} 2 (Oxford 1971]); and of Xenophon *Hellenica* is that of E. C. Marchant, *Xenophontis Opera Omnia* 1 (Oxford 1968). The translation of Xenophon is that of E. C. Marchant 1997, vol. 168: Loeb. The text of Aristotle is that of W. D. Ross, *Aristotelis Ars Rhetorica* (Oxford 1964) 1–191 (1354a1–1420a8). The text of Plutarch is that of K. Ziegler, *Plutarchi Vitae Parallelae*^{3} (Leipzig 1964) 1.2.226–274. The text of Thucydides is that of H. S. Jones and J. E. Powell, *Thucydidis Historiae*, vols. 1–2 (Oxford 1:1970, 2:1967).

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what he is. Alcibiades is a soul in need of cultivation and his soul merits attention before all competing alternatives. The task of reorganizing the interlocutor's priorities is facilitated by Socratic testing, exhortation, and examination. Socrates' criticism of Alcibiades' priorities in *Alcibiades Major*, and the Athenians' priorities in the *Apology*, is informed by moral reflection that is eudaimonistic. "Eudaimonism" is the idea that our lives should be directed at some ultimate end (that is, happiness) with other ends subordinate to it.[3] Once it is determined what happiness is, what should be sought is what contributes to happiness. In these two dialogues Socrates does not advocate a facile criterion for the proper ordering of priorities, but instead advocates by word and deed the best way to live.

In Plato's *Apology* there are two instances where Socrates addresses directly the issue of priorities. The first instance occurs after Socrates rejects his counterfactual reflection that entertains the possibility of acquittal on the condition that he cease his investigations and stop practicing philosophy (Pl. *Ap.* 29c6–e3). The second instance occurs after the jury finds Socrates guilty (36b3–d1). In both instances Socrates addresses broadly the issue of Athenian priorities, mainly by focusing on the priorities held by the citizenry as a whole. The discussion of priorities in *Alcibiades Major* will complement the broad discussion of priorities in the *Apology* because Alcibiades is specifically approached by Socrates with the intent of trying to reorder Alcibiades' priorities in order to assist him in the realization of his ambition.

6.1 Priorities and the *Apology*

In the presence of the Athenian jury, Socrates underscores the ordering of the priorities that inform his philosophical investigations and his general concern for the soul by presenting a counterfactual reflection. He entertains the possibility that the jury offers him an acquittal on the condition that he cease his investigations and stop practicing philosophy, or die. If he were acquitted on those terms, Socrates imagines himself to say:

> Gentlemen of the jury, I am grateful and I am your friend, but I will obey the god rather than you, as long as I draw breath and am able, I shall not cease to practice philosophy (φιλοσοφῶν), to exhort you and in my usual way to point out to any one of you whom I happen to meet: 'Good sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the greatest city with the greatest reputation for both wisdom and power; are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation and honors as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom (φρονήσεως) or truth, or the best possible state of your soul?' (Pl. *Ap.* 29d2–e3).

[3] On the role of eudaemonism in classical antiquity, see the authoritative treatment of the concept in G. Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca 1991) 200–32.

Socrates admonishes the Athenians to be ever vigilant in ordering all that they care about and to have the appropriate priorities in mind. What might this ordering of priorities look like? Consideration of a related passage (*Ap.* 29d7–30b4) reveals Socrates' standpoint in challenging the citizens of Athens for neglecting the right order through placing greater value on their personal possessions than their souls and thus attaching little importance to the most important things (for example, wisdom, truth and the soul), while cherishing inferior things (for example, wealth, reputation and honors). Socrates endorses the following claim:

> Wealth (χρημᾶτων) does not bring about excellence (ἀρετὴ), but excellence makes wealth and everything else good for men, both individually and collectively. (Pl. *Ap.* 30b2–4).

We can interpret this passage in several ways.[4] Either virtue makes wealth and other things good for humans collectively or privately; or virtue does not come from wealth, but from virtue comes wealth and all other goods for man collectively and privately. The ambiguity may be intentional to allow for both interpretations, but each interpretation is anchored in an order that prioritizes three types of goods: goods of the soul; goods of the body; and external goods. Goods of the soul revolve around the mutually entailing ideas of knowledge and virtue; goods of the body include qualities such as health and strength; and external goods include wealth and honors. Socrates believes in the greater value of the soul than of the body and its possessions. What Socrates suggests is that only the goods of the soul allow one to use the other goods well. Even if external goods are most necessary, they are not the highest since the soul is what uses the others. For example, when we consider that it may be true that the virtuous person is rich, presumably it is because such a person knows how to make do or do the best with what he has due to the moderating influences of the soul.

We are now in a better position to appreciate why Socrates admonishes the Athenians as single-mindedly as his counterfactual reflection attests. The very things that give Athens the reputation εἰς σοφίαν καὶ ἰσχύν ("for both wisdom and power," *Ap.* 29d8) blind it and make it νωθεστέρος ("sluggish," 30e4–5) with respect to the most important things (πλείονος, 30a2). Athens is blinded by its bodily goods and its possessions. Thus, the right ordering of Athenian priorities becomes the concern of Socrates' examination and exhortation of his fellow citizens.

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[4] See E. de Strycker and S. R. Slings, *Plato's Apology of Socrates: A Literary and Philosophical Study with a Running Commentary* (Leiden 1994) 138–41 on the various interpretations of the passage in light of the role played by the word χρήματα ("money, valuable possessions"). M. Burnyeat, "Virtues in Action," in G. Vlastos (ed.), *The Philosophy of Socrates: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Indiana 1980) 209–11 construes the passage as contributing to a larger discussion of the approach to moral philosophy exhibited by the Socratic concern for vice, virtue, and character (or being), and the modern concern for methodology and actions (or doing). Burnyeat (p.210) considers that χρήματα is not money simply, it is valuable possessions in the broadest sense of the word. Thus, virtue (being) is prior to actions (doing) due to its capability of "dominating and organizing the whole pattern of a man's life." Burnyeat's reflections reinforce the main lines of thought I have found in the passage.

Following the jury's verdict of guilty, Socrates again addresses the issue of Athenian priorities, and what role he played as a private citizen in trying to convince others to concern themselves with the state of their soul as opposed to the body and its possessions. Socrates explains that his counter-assessment must be commensurate with a life that has not been lived quietly nor concerned with what occupies the majority of Athenians: wealth, household affairs and political offices (*Ap.* 36b3–c1). The life that Socrates has tried to live is a life that has been useful, both to himself and to others:

> … I did not follow that path that would have made me of no use either to you or to myself, but I went to each of you privately and conferred upon him what I say is the greatest benefit, by trying to persuade him not to care for any of his belongings before caring that he himself should be as good and wise as possible, not to care for the city's possessions more than for the city itself, and to care for other things in the same way. (Pl. *Ap*. 36c2–d1).

Whereas Socrates admonishes the Athenians for their lack of priorities in ranking the three types of goods in his initial discussion, in this later passage we find Socrates reflecting on the worthiness of a life that is dedicated to the state of the soul. What is appropriate that someone like Socrates should suffer who, having the proper perspective towards conventional goods, has gone around persuading people to care for themselves before any of their things or for the things of the city before the city itself? Socrates is a friend of Athens and has tried to benefit it as much as possible by being useful. What might Socrates have in mind when he describes his conduct as being beneficial and useful? Socrates is expressing the idea that the virtuous soul, which is directed by wisdom, determines how we put bodily and external goods to practical use. Hence, virtue is useful and beneficial.[5]

In Plato's *Meno* we see Socrates considering the practical aspect of virtue in his discussion with Meno. The following exchange between the two amplifies Socrates' assumptions in the *Apology* regarding the practical effect that privileging the soul in the ordering of his priorities, and the soul's quest for virtue, had on his fellow Athenians and himself:

> [Socr.] So virtue is something beneficial? [Men.] That necessarily follows from what has been agreed. [Socr.] Let us then examine what kinds of things benefit us, taking them up one by one: health, we say, and strength, and beauty, and also wealth. We say that these things, and others of the same kind, benefit us, do we not? [Men.] We do. [Socr.] Yet we say that these same things also sometimes harm one. Do you agree or not? [Men.] I do. [Socr.] Look then, what directing factor determines in each case whether these things benefit or harm us? Is it not the right use of them that benefits us, and the wrong use that harms us? [Men.] Certainly. [Socr.] Let us now look at the qualities of the soul. There is

[5] Xen. *Mem.* 2.4–7 insists that Socrates' central characteristic is usefulness (esp. Xenophon's discussion of Socrates' approach to friendship); cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1.9.1366a36-38. V. J. Gray, *The Framing of Socrates: The Literary Interpretation of Xenophon's* Memorabilia (Stuttgart 1998) 10–11 n. 42 objects to Xenophon's claim that Socrates' primary characteristic is helpfulness or usefulness (ὠφελία, ὠφέλιμος) to his companions, but she does not explain why she objects to Xenophon's claim other than remarking that "Xenophon cannot leave the idea alone"(10).

> something you call moderation, and justice, courage, intelligence, memory, munificence, and all such things? [Men.] There is. [Socr.] Therefore, in a word, all that the soul undertakes and endures, if directed by wisdom, ends in happiness, but if directed by ignorance, it ends in the opposite? [Men.] That is likely. (Pl. *Men*. 87e3–88c4).

Socrates benefited the Athenians because his conversations, exhibited through testing, exhorting and examining, sought to persuade others to prioritize their lives in such way that all that they did, from the quotidian to the heroic, would take into account the positive, directing power that wisdom has on the soul. The passage under consideration is significant because it amplifies Socrates' statement in presenting his counterfactual reflection to the jury ("while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul," *Ap.* 29el–3), and it clarifies why Socrates proposes dining in the Prytaneum[6] as a counter-penalty to Meletus' assessment of death.

For the Athenians to disregard and not give thought to wisdom, the directing factor, is to disregard the transformative, beneficial effect wisdom can have on the soul. It is only through wisdom that the soul can bring to fruition, by striving towards the appropriate ends through the appropriate means, the power at which Athens is reputed to excel.[7] What Socrates' characterization of the transformative power of wisdom in the *Apology* (29d1–e3) and the *Meno* suggests is that wisdom has a particular type of nature. The presence of it in one's soul entails happiness; but even the mere thought of it sets one on the path of distinguishing the soul from what the soul uses (that is, the body and its possessions). Wisdom prioritizes the soul's goods (that is, the body and its desires). The nature of wisdom also goes some way in explaining why Socrates would propose dining in the Prytaneum as a counter-penalty.

The significance of Socrates' proposing such a penalty was that there was no regular penalty provided by the main charge brought against him,[8] corruption of the youth; so Meletus, the plaintiff, proposes death. Socrates, the defendant, is allowed to make a counter-penalty, which he does in a rather dramatic fashion:

> Nothing is more suitable, gentlemen, than for such a man to be fed in the Prytaneum, much more suitable for him than for any one of you who has won a victory at Olympia with a pair or a team of horses. The Olympian victor makes you think yourself happy; I make you be happy. (Pl. *Ap*. 36d5–e1).

Such a man is a man who has not lived a quiet life nor has concerned himself with what occupies the majority of Athenians. When we recall that the Prytaneum was the town hall of Athens where, among other things, Olympian victors were

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[6] On the various functions of the Prytaneum, see S. G. Miller, *The Prytaneion: Its Function and Architectural Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press1978) 7–9.

[7] Socrates says as much by voicing his objection, while presiding in the Council, to the Athenians wishing to try together the Ten Generals who had failed to collect the dead after the naval victory at Arginusae in 406 (Pl. *Ap.* 32a–c). Socrates is defending against the illegality of trying them *en masse*. Also he prudently thinks it foolish to kill your best generals in time of grave danger.

[8] Cf. T. C. Brickhouse and N. D. Smith, *Socrates On Trial* (Princeton 1989) 48–153.

celebrated upon their return home, we see Socrates' counter-penalty as commentary on justice as distribution according to worth or merit.[9] The true victors, like Socrates, have greatly benefited Athens by getting citizens to adopt a perspective toward themselves that takes seriously the state of their souls. The soul directed by wisdom is the standard of all values which in turn creates justice, good laws and right priorities in the city, which brings happiness to all. The Olympian victor, on the other hand, makes the Athenian seem happy because in the victorious wrestler, boxer, runner or chariot-racer he thinks he is witnessing the revelation of the victor's divine ἀρετή ("goodness, excellence").[10] The athletic ideal becomes the standard of all values in the praise of the Olympic victor, but the ideal can only be appreciated properly once it is seen as being subordinate to the role of wisdom in upholding the welfare of the city. Socrates' concern that his fellow Athenians maintain the appropriate priorities in their lives and the city as a whole makes him worthy of free meals in the Prytaneum.

6.2 Priorities and *Alcibiades Major*

In Plato's dialogue *Alcibiades Major*, we see Socrates' orientation towards Alcibiades complementing the general discussion of Athenian priorities found in the *Apology*, since Alcibiades embodies big ambitions and τὰ μεγάλα ("great qualities," Pl. *Alc. 1* 104a2–3) such as good looks, wealth, and a noble pedigree, with limited concern for the state of his soul. The characterization of Alcibiades recalls Socrates' admonishing of the Athenians for their lack of self-examination and complacency in being "of the greatest city with the greatest reputation for both wisdom and power," *Ap.* 29d7–8. In both dialogues we see the interlocutor concerning himself with bodily and external goods as opposed to the cultivation of wisdom within the soul. The difference between the two dialogues, a difference which makes them complementary, is that in *Alcibiades Major* Socrates shows how the proper ordering of priorities plays out in a specific interlocutor with a specific ambition.

We find again two instances in *Alcibiades Major* where Socrates addresses the issue of priorities. The first occurs in the opening pages of the dialogue where Socrates introduces himself to Alcibiades after having observed him for a period of time (*Alc. 1* 103a1–104c6). Socrates' introduction is designed to pique Alcibiades' wonder in order that he answer Socrates' questions. The issue at hand is why Alcibiades has been shunned by his pursuers. To Alcibiades' satisfaction, Socrates

[9] See A. Spawforth, "prytaneion," on S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (edd.), Oxford Classical Dictionary (Third Edition, Oxford 1996) 1268f. on the difference between the once-only invitation to dine (ξενία, δεῖπνον) in the Prytaneum and the highly honorific permanent maintenance (σίτησις) to dine in the Prytaneum. Socrates is requesting σίτησις.

[10] See C. M. Bowra (tr.), *The Odes of Pindar* (New York: Penguin Books 1969) 32, 69, 64, 106, 122.

ventures to list the many qualities Alcibiades considers himself to excel at, starting with his body and its possessions and ending with his soul. Socrates eventually explains to Alcibiades that his ambition of becoming a great Athenian leader can be realized only with Socrates' help (105d2–106a1). How Socrates can help brings us to the first instance of Socrates' discussion of priorities in *Alcibiades Major*. In the closing passages of the dialogue Socrates resumes his discussion of Alcibiades' qualities, not merely by listing them as he did initially to pique Alcibiades' interest, but instead by listing them in the proper order in which they should be seen. This is done by getting Alcibiades to see that the user or the craftsman is different from what he uses (127e9–13ld3). Thus, Alcibiades should appreciate that he is different from his good looks, family connections and influential friends, and that his true self, the soul, is in need of wisdom.

Socrates introduces himself to Alcibiades after having observed him for an unspecified period of time. Other suitors had pursued Alcibiades but they soon gave up after having concluded there was not much they could offer him to win him over. Socrates is the sole hold-out in the pursuit of Alcibiades. The tact Socrates employs to woo Alcibiades is to congratulate him by reviewing the qualities that made it so easy for Alcibiades to dismiss the other would-be lovers:

> You say you don't need anybody for anything, since your own qualities are so great there's nothing you lack; I'll list them, starting with your body and ending with your soul. In the first place, you fancy yourself the tallest and best-looking man around: and it's quite plain to see you're not wrong about that. Next, you think that yours is the leading family in your city, which is the greatest city in Greece: on your father's side you have plenty of aristocratic friends and relations who would be of service to you if there was any need; and on your mother's side your connections are no worse or no fewer. And you have Pericles son of Xanthippus, whom your father left as a guardian to you and your brother; you think he's a more powerful ally than [all those people mentioned put together]. (Pl. *Alc*. 1 104a1–b7).

The glaring omission of qualities pertaining to Alcibiades' soul in contrast to the glib description of both his bodily and external goods is significant.[11] Might Alcibiades pride himself only on his body and what pertains to it? After all, Socrates says he will list the qualities that made Alcibiades attractive to his pursuers but hard to get. In the omission we see Socrates gradually bringing to the fore the issue of priorities in Alcibiades' under-appreciation of the state of his soul.

The extent to which Alcibiades valued and excelled at the qualities that Socrates mentions is given more salience when we turn to Plutarch's characterization of Alcibiades. Plutarch compares Alcibiades' beauty to a plant because in each stage of his life, from infancy, youth and manhood, it blossomed, giving Alcibiades a grace and charm (Plut. *Alc.* 1.4.1–6.1). Alcibiades' speech was accented by a lisp which

[11] Interestingly, the omission goes without comment in Denyer [3] 85–88 as well as S. Forde, "The Ambition to Rule: Alcibiades and the Politics of Imperialism in Thucydides," in L.G. Rubin (ed.), *POLITIKOS* 2. *Educating the Ambitious: Leadership and Political Rule in Greek Political Thought* (Pittsburgh 1992) 223f. D. M. Johnson, "A Commentary on Plato's *Alcibiades*," (PhD diss. University of North Carolina 1996) 95f. briefly mentions the omission, but does not find it significant.

added grace and a persuasiveness to his rapid speech prompting Aristophanes and Archippus to take note of it in their literary works (1.6.1–8.4). From his youth on, Alcibiades was distinguished by ambition and superiority. Such distinguishing characteristics are illustrated by the story of Alcibiades obediently obeying his masters when he began to study, except for his adamant refusal to play the flute because one had to disfigure the face in order to play it and one could not talk while playing (2.5.1–7.1). It was due to Alcibiades' opinion that it was unbecoming of a free man to subject himself to such sordid practices that flute-playing ceased as a skill to be mastered as a part of a liberal education (2.7.1–6). What Plutarch tells us about Alcibiades' aristocratic familial origins and prominent friends underscores another facet of what Alcibiades excelled at. On his father's side Alcibiades was said to have descended from Eurysaces, the son of Ajax (1.1.1). On his mother's side Alcibiades was said to have descended from the Alcmaeonidae, a noble Athenian family prominent in politics whose first member was archon Megacles (*ca*. 632/1 BC), the father of Dinomache, Alcibiades' mother (1.1.2–3). It is reported that Clinias, Alcibiades' father, had a trireme constructed at his own expense, gaining honor in the sea fight of the battle of Artemisium during the Persian wars (1.1.3–5).[12] As for prominent friends, Alcibiades was raised by one of the most popular Athenian leaders during the fifth century, Pericles (1.2.1–3.1). Having Pericles as a guardian also enabled Alcibiades to benefit from the extensive network of ξενία ("guest-friendship") that Pericles enjoyed (cf. Pl. *Alc. 1* 104a4–b8).[13]

We are now in a better position to see that Socrates is, in fact, telling us that Alcibiades sends his pursuers packing because he sees himself excelling at all the conventional goods when compared to his pursuers, but that he fails to excel at the most important good, which directs properly the use of all conventional goods: cultivating wisdom within his soul. Reminiscent of his concern in the *Apology* for the "greatest" city of Athens with its reputation for both "wisdom" and "power," but blinded by disordered priorities due to the very conventional goods it excelled at, Socrates is concerned that the very goods Alcibiades prominently possesses will impede his combining a concern for his soul with his bodily goods and its possessions. For the city of Athens and for Alcibiades in particular, disordered priorities might even prove to be destructive if we are to take seriously Socrates' remarks

[12] On Alcibiades, see A. H. Clough (ed.), *Plutarch: The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans. Translated by John Dryden* (New York 1992) 1.258–60. The main classical sources detailing the public career of Alcibiades are Thuc. 5.43–8.109 and Xen. *Hell*. 1.1–2.1. Plutarch's recollections of Alcibiades are significant because (1) the post-classical world's image of Alcibiades is due to Plutarch's *Life*, and (2) Plutarch's recollections are a distillation of themes that span Alcibiades' private, youthful life through his notorious, public exploits. Plutarch captures what D. Gribble, *Alcibiades and Athens: A Study in Literary Presentation* (Oxford 1999) 214f. calls the "Alcibiades tradition." The first tradition, typified in the writings of Thucydides, focuses primarily on Alcibiades' βίος ("way of life") and how it influenced his civic attitude. The second tradition, that of the Socratics, focuses primarily on Alcibiades as a moral agent shaped by his own choices as a young man.

[13] See Gribble [13] 82–89; on ritualized friendships, cf. *OCD*[3] 611–13.

on those who excel at conventional gifts, reported by Xenophon in his *Memorabilia*. Socrates' remarks are that those who have natural endowments are in need most of learning and education. Otherwise, those who are most gifted, but without the knowledge to exploit what they excel at, "they become utterly evil and mischievous; for without knowledge to discern their duty, they often put their hand to vile deeds," *Mem.* 4.1.4.6–8.

After having listed the qualities Alcibiades excels at, Socrates brings to the fore the issue of priorities by explaining why he is the last hold-out in the pursuit of Alcibiades:

> … I hope to exert great influence over you by showing you that I'm worth the world to you and that nobody is capable of providing you with the influence you crave, neither your guardian nor your relatives, nor anybody else except me—with god's help, of course. (Pl. *Alc.* 1 105e2–5).

Socrates' desire to exert great influence over Alcibiades is not unlike Socrates' need to exhort, "test" and "examine" Athenian priorities in the *Apology*. Socrates deliberately refuses to remain quiet in the face of Alcibiades' ignorance. It is Alcibiades' great qualities that blind him to the need of tending to his true self, the soul. Only through Socrates' private exhortation, not his guardian Pericles or his relatives, will Alcibiades come to see the great benefit Socrates is attempting to bestow upon him. First Alcibiades must be brought to see that the concern for the state of his soul entails a radical reorganizing of his priorities, which bring us to the second instance of Socrates addressing the issue of priorities in *Alcibiades Major*.

Socrates' initial omission of the psychical qualities Alcibiades excels at becomes the topic of conversation once Alcibiades has been shown, through several episodes of the Socratic elenchus[14] (*Alc. 1* 106d–112e; 124c–127b10, especially in light of the discussion of "doing the things of oneself"), that reliance on his natural endowments without knowledge has not equipped him to give an account of the type of knowledge that would make it possible to advise the Athenians about their business, or distinguish between the things he uses or cultivates and cultivating himself. The root cause of Alcibiades' inadequacy in both regards is not recognizing the difference between the conventional goods he excels at and his soul as his true self. The soul as the topic of conversation, and Alcibiades' complete

[14] The type of refutation on display in these passages is what G. Vlastos (ed. M. Burnyeat), *Socratic Studies* (Cambridge 1994) 1–29 calls "standard elenchus." Alcibiades expects to go before the Athenians and to advise them on issues he knows βέλτιον ἢ οὗτοι ("better than they do," Pl. *Alc.* 1 106c9). Socrates presents two ways in which Alcibiades could have gained the knowledge that he is to advise the Athenians on: either he learned what he knows from others, or he discovered it himself. The refutation is designed to show that, in fact, (1) Alcibiades did not discover what he knows by himself because there was never a time in which he did not know what he claims to have discovered; he would not be willing to seek or learn what he supposes that he already knows; and (2) if he learned what he knows from the many, which he claims he did, there is no way in which he can be superior in knowledge to the many. For difficulties in Vlastos' account of elenchus, see R. M. Polansky, "Professor Vlastos' Analysis of Socratic Elenchus," *OSAPh* 3 (1985) 247–59.

ignorance regarding the soul as the true self, is on display in the following exchange between Socrates and Alcibiades:

> [Socr.] Well then, what does it mean to cultivate oneself—I'm afraid we often think we're cultivating ourselves when we're not—when does a man do that? Is he cultivating himself when he cultivates what he has? [Alc.] I think so, anyway. (Pl. *Alc.* 1 127e9–128a4).

Here we see Socrates confronting Alcibiades with the question, "What is caring for oneself?" He suggests that most suppose that they are caring for themselves, but instead are often caring for their possessions rather than the self. Socrates is making a distinction between the parts of the body and the things that the body puts on either to conceal or adorn itself. He illustrates this distinction with examples that resonate with Alcibiades' preoccupation with his conventional goods by asking him whether caring for things of the feet, such as caring for shoes, is the same as caring for the feet, or caring for a ring of the finger is caring for the finger. Alcibiades is not able to answer the question because he does not understand the distinction Socrates is making (*Alc. 1* 127e9–128b4). To help the matter along, Socrates clarifies what constitutes care. To care rightly for something is to make it better (128b5–10). The art that makes shoes better, or cares for shoes, is σκυτική ("shoemaking,"128b11–c2). By this art we care for shoes rather than feet, but we make the feet better by that art through which we make the whole body better, γυμναστική ("athletics," 128c2–d2). Thus, there are different arts by which one cares for oneself and by which one cares for the things of oneself (128d3–5).

Socrates is inviting Alcibiades not only to consider the art that would make himself better, but to appreciate that *care* necessarily prioritizes the way it goes about making X better in the same way as the soul prioritizes among goods of the body and its possessions. The order of priority, which goes from part to whole, is the topic of Socrates' questions:

> [Socr.] Now if we didn't know what a shoe was, would we have known what skill makes a shoe better? [Alc.] No, we couldn't have. [Socr.] Nor would we have known what skill makes a ring better if we didn't know what a ring was. [Alc.] True. [Socr.] Well then, could we ever know what skill makes us better if we didn't know what we were? (Pl. Alc. 1 128e4–11).

The assumption is that an art makes its subject matter better; the art of X makes X better, so the art of shoemaking makes shoes better rather than feet better. What is at issue is which art, if any, makes the self better. Socrates returns to the need to know oneself. Socrates asks if such knowledge is easy and for everyone, or difficult and not for all. Alcibiades wanders in his thought about whether such knowledge is for everyone or quite difficult (*Alc. 1* 128e10–129a10). Alcibiades' confusion connects with his ambivalence about caring for himself. Socrates goes on to say:

> Tell me, how can we come to know the self itself? Maybe this is the way to find out what we ourselves are—maybe it's the only possible way. (Pl. *Alc.* 1 129b1–3).

The ambiguity in the phrase "the self itself" is interesting. The most plausible reading for the argument being made, which is that the soul is the true self and must

be cultivated in order for one to direct properly the body and its possessions, is that "the self itself" is the best part of oneself: that is, the soul under the influence of wisdom.[15]

Socrates employs several other examples for Alcibiades to illustrate that the true self or soul is different from what the soul uses. One such example that Alcibiades seems to grasp is Socrates' distinction between τὸ διαλέγεσθαι ("discoursing") and τὸ λόγῳ χρῆσθαι ("using speech," *Alc. 1* 129b4–d3). Socrates illustrates the distinction by reflecting on what they are presently doing: that is, exercising λόγος to indicate what using is and what the self is. Using λόγος pertains both to the answerer and the questioner; but saying things, that is, discoursing, pertains more to the answerer. Thus, although the soul may use λόγος, perhaps to talk idly, or use λόγος to express itself in authentic ways, the soul is distinct from what it uses.

Socrates now turns to other things that get used, especially the body. In discussing the body we see that it is what he primarily distinguishes from the soul. It is this distinction that resumes his initial promise of listing Alcibiades' qualities starting with his body and ending with his soul (104a1–4). The remainder of the dialogue is concerned with the soul as the ἄχρουσα[16] ("ruling element," 130a3–4) of the body and its possessions.

Continuing his discussion of things that can be used, Socrates informs Alcibiades that the shoemaker not only uses his instruments such as knives but also uses his hands and eyes (129d4–e2). So the shoemaker will be different from the hands and eyes which he uses, and if a human being uses the entire body, the human will differ from this (129e3–8). The human uses the body and so differs from it. The question that remains is what then is the human? Socrates answers that the human is soul, and the soul rules the body by using it (129e9–130c7). The arts, on the other hand, that care for the body are caring for things of oneself rather than oneself. And the arts that care for possessions of the body are even further from caring for oneself. When Alcibiades exploits the conventional goods he excels at, he is caring

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[15] I am sympathetic to Denyer [3] 211–13 in emphasizing that the soul, the best part of oneself, is the Form of the body. D. M. Johnson, "God as the True Self: Plato's *Alcibiades* I," *AncPhil* 19 (1999) 1–19 argues that Socrates is not referring to a form or to the intellectual part of the soul but to God. The soul is identified with God. If Johnson's interpretation is correct, would it not suggest that *Alcibiades Major* may be the musings of a Middle Platonist? Although the Middle Platonists cannot be defined as a school, the idea of becoming like God unified their interpretation of Plato's texts. However, J. Annas, *Platonic Ethics, Old and New* (Ithaca 1999) 52–71 points out that the passage famous for this idea, and foundational for the Middle Platonists, comes from the *Theaetetus* (176a8–b2). Interestingly, Johnson does not mention the passage as indirect proof of Plato's authorship of *Alcibiades Major*.

[16] In the passage considered from the *Meno* (87e3–88c4), Socrates uses the Greek word ἡγουμένης ("guiding") to describe what the soul does in relation to conventional goods. It can direct harmfully or beneficially, depending on whether or not wisdom is present within the soul. In this section of *Alcibiades Major*, Socrates does not use the same word to describe the relation that the soul has to conventional goods (the body and its possessions). Although this is the case, the relation of the soul to conventional goods in both dialogues is to command, lead or rule them. The connotation in both dialogues is the same.

for the body rather than for things of himself. Socrates' purpose here is to discredit Alcibiades' preoccupation with conventional goods by reorienting his perspective towards the appropriate ranking of his priorities. This reorientation of perspective is captured in the following exchange:

> [Socr.] And isn't someone who takes care of his wealth caring neither for himself nor for what belongs to him, but for something even further away? [Alc.] I agree. [Socr.] So the money-earner is not, in fact, doing his own work. [Alc.] Right. (Pl. Alc. 1 131b13–c4).

There is nothing more conventionally good than money-making, and we see Socrates turning Alcibiades completely away from it and all the other goods he excels at. The only thing that Alcibiades is left with now is his true self, the soul, and its need for wisdom to rule appropriately the conventional goods he excels at. The prioritizing effect the rule of wisdom will necessarily have within Alcibiades' soul is again captured by Socrates' advice to the jury in the *Apology*:

> Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence makes wealth and everything else good for men, both individually and collectively. (Pl. *Ap*. 30b2–4).

6.3 Conclusion

Happiness and priorities are the overarching ideas that make Plato's *Apology* and *Alcibiades Major* natural complements to each other. It has been shown that Socrates' testing, exhortation, and examination is designed to facilitate the proper ordering of priorities both in the city and the individual. Athens excels at many conventional goods that distinguish it from other Greek and non-Greek city-states, but Athens is only apparently happy because it mishandles its conventional goods due to the lack of concern for the role of wisdom in upholding the welfare of the city. Alcibiades excels at many conventional goods that distinguish him from his fellow Athenians, but he sees his conventional goods as being the best part of himself. Under Socrates' guidance, Alcibiades is reluctantly brought around to the realization that the best part of himself is not the conventional goods he excels at, but his soul. Only the soul under the guidance of wisdom can rule effectively both the body and the city.

I have also noted the shared arguments in both dialogues due to their similar aims, and shared content due to their eudaimonistic perspective. What may be gained from pairing the *Apology* and *Alcibiades Major* is a better understanding of the challenge to philosophy that conventional goods pose. Hubris animated by wealth and power often perverts the ends that the virtuous life must seek. In both dialogues, we witness the resourceful Socrates using as means the interlocutor's love of wealth and power in order to reorient him towards true ends. The dialogues thereby are unified in the ability to communicate on various levels.

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Part V
Alcibiades Major and Listening Philosophically

Chapter 7
Listening to Plutarch's Alcibiades in Plato's *Alcibiades Major*

Abstract In "Listening to Plutarch's Alcibiades in Plato's *Alcibiades Major*," I engage the 'how to listen' tradition by employing conceptual categories taken from Plutarch's short treatise *On Listening* and applying them to *Alcibiades Major*. With a little detective work, I discovered that there are dispositional reasons why Alcibiades failed to listen appropriately to the moderating forces of the Socratic conversation. Alcibiades' failure to listen sets the stage for his notorious public enterprises. The dispositions that seriously hampered Alcibiades' ability to listen and benefit from the Socratic conversation are envy, excessive admiration, and non-rhythmic listening. I explore each of these dispositions from Socrates' initial encounter with the ambitious youth to Alcibiades' reaction to the Spartan and Persian speech to the conclusion of the dialogue in which we see a broken, submissive Alcibiades eager to listen and eager for a genuine education.

> His [Socrates'] words overcame him so much, as to draw tears from his eyes, and to disturb his very soul. Yet sometimes he would abandon himself to flatterers, when they proposed to him varieties of pleasure, and would desert Socrates; who, then, would pursue him, as if he had been a fugitive slave…. Cleanthes the philosopher, speaking of one to whom he was attached, says his only hold on him was by his ears….
>
> ("Alcibiades" in *Plutarch's Lives*, p. 262, Clough)

Plutarch's characterization of the young Alcibiades makes explicit a theme that is found throughout the writings that form the Alcibiades tradition. It was Alcibiades' inability to listen (ἀκούειν) appropriately to the moderating forces of the Socratic conversation that led to his notorious public enterprises.[1] Alcibiades did not listen to Socrates in the sense of obeying him, following his advice or, as the previous chapter pointed out, being guided by his conversation about the correct ordering of priorities. Listening as an important pedagogical stance necessary for human flourishing has not, however, received the scholarly attention it deserves. Although contemporary discussions of listening are not so common, the Graeco-

[1] On Alcibiades' behavior during the Peloponnesian War, see Thucydides' *The History of the Peloponnesian War* 6.27–29 and Arthur H. Clough's *Plutarch's Lives* "Alcibiades," New York: The Modern Library, 1992, pp. 258–290.

A. Archie, *Politics in Socrates' Alcibiades*,
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Roman world (c. first century B.C. through the second century A.D.) discussed it quite earnestly in the form of short treatises. Some writers dealing with this theme include: Pliny, Epictetus, Seneca, and Plutarch. Plutarch's short treatise *On Listening*[2] (ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΥ ΑΚΟΥΕΙΝ) is particularly compelling because its main argument is that there are dispositional reasons why young listeners may not benefit from what they hear.[3] Similar to Aristotle's general account of disposition in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Books II, III and VIII–IX), my specific use of the term accounts for the moral capacities that are actualized as tendencies to listen appropriately on the right occasions because one's moral character (hexis) has been habituated through moral activities; through the practice of listening or the cultivation of listening skills. A virtuous character is a trained state rather than simply a feeling or capacity or condition (diathesis). In fact, a state is not just a tendency to behave or listen in a way that avoids excess and deficiency relative to one's circumstances; rather it is a state that includes appropriate desires, feelings and decisions.

With the aforementioned in mind, this chapter focuses on Plutarch's treatise and Plato's dialogue *Alcibiades Major*, because Plutarch explains well the practical significance of listening as a powerful force for moral edification, and he also provides an argument for the claim that *how* one listens can be decisive in *what* is heard, which may explain why the supposed Socratic conversation did not have a lasting effect on Alcibiades, as his public career attests. Plutarch's treatise is divided into two parts. The first part discusses briefly the significance of listening in relation to the sense of hearing and surveys three dispositions Plutarch considers to be the main impediments to benefiting from what is heard. The dispositions are envy, excessive admiration, and non-rhythmic listening. It is the awareness, or non-awareness, of these dispositions on the part of the listener that proves to be as vital to moral education as listening is to speaking. The second half of the treatise discusses how these three dispositions lead to listening improperly. It is the second half of Plutarch's treatise that gives an impressive account of Alcibiades' failure to listen. In accord with Plutarch's account, Socrates' approach to Alcibiades in Plato's dialogue suggests that the young Alcibiades' disposition is characterized by envy, excessive admiration, and the inability to listen rhythmically when engaged in conversation. Consequently, the resourceful Socrates is forced to work with an awareness of the limitations of his interlocutor.

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[2] Except where noted, Robin Waterfield's translation is used. See *Plutarch*: *Essays*, New York: Penguin Books, 1992, pp. 27–50. The Greek text used for the translation is Frank Babbitt's *Plutarch's Moralia*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000, Volume I (Loeb Classical Library), 205–259.

[3] See *NE* I.3 1095ff. on the young listener's inability to listen properly to lectures on political science because he is inexperienced in the opinions political action is based upon; and because the young listener's tendency is to follow his passions as opposed to reasoned discourse. (When I refer to dispositions I am referring to *hexis prohairetike.* Cf. *NE* ii 1103a15–1103b on the forming of dispositions through choice and actions.).

7.1 Nicander

Plutarch's treatise is addressed to the teenager Nicander whose entry into manhood is officially marked by the wearing of the *toga virilis* or adult dress. Plutarch's concern is that the boy not forget that manhood is as much concerned with self-imposed discipline as childhood was concerned with listening to parents. Plutarch begins his treatise by telling Nicander that it was Theophrastus[4] who thought hearing was the most emotional of the senses because, unlike the degree of distraction visible, tasteable, or touchable objects cause, loud noises, like bad advice, resound in the mind at the expense of wholesome sounds. The importance of hearing, be it the most emotional of the senses or not, Plutarch tells us, is that hearing has the potential to be less emotional than the other senses, and thus more receptive to reason. Vice can affect the mind by entering the body in a number of ways, but virtue can only affect the mind through the ears, particularly the ears of the young (38A), if there has not been corruption due to flattery or negative remarks. Plutarch also mentions Xenocrates'[5] suggestion that it is less crucial for boxers to wear ear protectors to protect against punches, than for children to wear ear protectors to protect their characters against the corruption of words. Plutarch's position is somewhat novel perhaps because we might suppose sight the most impressionable of the senses when it comes to moral benefit and harm. Socrates' anecdote of Leontius in Plato's *Republic* (440a1–3) might typify this view. Leontius tried to resist his desire to look at the corpses but eventually could not fight off the desire.[6] However, Plutarch's position may not be novel after all, if we take into consideration that Hellenistic and Roman education was primarily oral (Marrou 1956; Martin 1996).[7]

Plutarch is attempting to arouse in Nicander, by mentioning Theophrastus (38A) and Xenocrates (38B3–6), an awareness of the significance of listening that may compel him to respond attentively to his education. The philosophical flourishing of Nicander is not only a reflection of his moral capacity to listen appropriately, but a reflection on the moral disposition of Nicander's parents. We know that Plutarch intends for Nicander's parents to be implicated in his moral development because we are told that Nicander's formative years were spent in a home that took philosophy seriously (*see* 37f3–6). Although the treatise does not tell us anything specific about

[4] This text is not extant.

[5] This text is not extant, but the topic of ear protectors is again referred to in "Table Talk," *Moralia*, 706c.

[6] The case of Leontius is a much discussed anecdote. Three reliable interpretations of the anecdote are George Klosko's *The Development of Plato's Political Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 65–80; Julia Annas' *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, pp. 126–128.; and for a general discussion of spiritedness in relation to Leontius, see Leo Strauss' *The City and Man*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1964, pp. 103–116.

[7] For a thorough discussion of Hellenistic and Roman education, *see* H. I. Marrou's *History of Education in Antiquity*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1956; and Thomas R. Martin's *Ancient Greece*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996, pp. 37, 43, 140–142.

the nature of Nicander's philosophical home, a home which formed a particular moral disposition in him, Plutarch still finds it necessary to warn Nicander that hearing is potentially a powerful source for corruption because of its manipulation of the emotions. Likewise, hearing is a powerful source of moral education due to its reception of rational arguments which regulate and discipline pleasure.

Plutarch makes it clear that moral dispositions affect the receptivity of what is heard because hearing is necessarily both a passive and an active power. The listener is cable of listening appropriately only to the extent that he has been habituated to be actively affected in a certain way. Aristotle's discussion of potentiality in Book IX of the *Metaphysics* and Chap. 8 of the *Categories* complements Plutarch's argument.

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle argues that there are certain characteristics that are passive potentialities residing within an entity's nature that are essential to the entity's being. For example, a certain passive power belongs to oil to be burnable, in addition to having the passive potential to be acted upon in a certain way (1046a19ff.). Some principles (non-rational power, 1046b1–2) of change work in one direction to produce a specific result. For example, heat merely heats other things or cold things cool. However, if something is the principle of change in another or as other, then correlated with it is something that is the principle of being changed by another or as other. The patient has the potentiality to be changed by the doctor, and in general the active power acts on something with passive potentiality. We can also speak of potentiality or power when things are resistant to change, especially change for the better. Each of the aforementioned examples used to explain active and passive power pertain to things that lack logos (rational powers) or those things or processes that have rational powers.[8] The example of the doctor, as a practitioner of a narrow subject matter that habituates a type of rational behavior, sheds light on the relationship between Plutarch's discussion of Nicander's potential receptiveness and the nature of virtue.

However, the moral virtues seem not to be rational active powers capable of contraries, even though they pertain to rational souls, since moral virtues are not principles of change in another or as other, and they are not capacities for opposites. The virtuous doctor is incapable of deliberately causing harm to his patient. The brave, moderate, just, and so on have the capacity to do things themselves, not primarily to change other things: moral virtues concern *action* (*praxis*) rather than *making* (*poiesis*), where making is producing something else. (In *Physics* vii 3 Aristotle emphasizes that these dispositions of character are in *relation* to bodily perceptions, i.e., pleasures and pains, and so the disposition is neither itself a quality

[8] On Aristotle's distinction between active and passive powers see: Polansky, R. 1988. "The Purpose and Argument of *Metaphysics* VI 3," co-authored with Mark Kuczewski, *Elenchos* 295–310; Reeve, C.D.C. 2000. *Substantial Knowledge: Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Indianapolis: Hackett; Ross, W.D. 1924. *Aristotle Metaphysics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Shields, C. 2007. *Aristotle*. New York: Routledge; and Witt, C. 2003. *Ways of Being: Potentiality and Actuality in Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

nor comes into being as an alteration, while knowledge is a relation to its subject matter. Moral virtues and knowledge are perfections or completions rather than qualities that undergo change.) Those persons with these virtues do not do contrary things but solely what accords with the virtue. The brave person tends to do brave things, and is "incapable" of doing cowardly things. Such dispositions are not potentialities for opposites because the virtues do not have narrow subject matters as do the arts: they do not involve merely knowledge but a shaping of character to aim toward the good and noble. The virtues rightly govern their own employment and regulate it because good character comes along with moral insight. Practical wisdom and moral virtue are interentailing (see *NE* vi 12–13). The arts do not similarly involve the character. A person may be very technically proficient while being a bad person (e.g., Nazi doctors).

Therefore merely having the art does not ensure any particular sort of performance. But the moral virtues come along with a commitment and development of the character, so that they are only capable of a good exercise or performance. Yet they are not like the one-way powers since we do have to choose to employ our virtues. We also have to choose to use artistic ability, but it can be used for good or ill purposes. Nonetheless, the arts are not neutral since gaining expertise at any art seems to demand some control of passions and some development of character. Because the art is somewhat limited in domain, the character involvement is not such as required for moral virtue. The moral virtues and practical wisdom ought to guide those potentialities that are the principles of change in another or as other, and surely action in accordance with virtue often causes change in other things. Though moral virtues and vices are one-way potentialities, they unlike the nonrational active powers involve deliberation and choice, and though they may lead to change in other things, unlike art they are not fundamentally principles of change in another or as other.

Aristotle's discussion in the *Categories* of potentialities further illustrates how the disposition of a listener may affect what he hears. His discussion leaves room for the active and passive power of an entity to be influenced by habituation (9a10–13). Aristotle explains that perceptual capacities (e.g., tasting and hearing) and the faculty of reason have the potential to be affected in certain ways (9a28–9b8). Bitterness produces a certain affection of taste; sound produces a certain affection of hearing. Depending on the way perceptual faculties have been habituated to appreciate certain qualities, they can either be open to certain affections or closed; they can either have or shun certain emotions (Kosman 1980).[9] More importantly, emotions cannot be adequately accounted for until we appreciate the cognitive and practical element in them. Fearing and desiring, for example, is related to fleeing

[9] L. A. Kosman, "Being Properly Affected: Virtues and feelings in Aristotle's Ethics," in Emélie Oksenberg Rorty (ed.), *Essays On Aristotle's Ethics*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980, pp. 103–116.

and reaching, respectively.[10] Consequently their [affections of the soul] definitions ought to correspond, e.g., anger should be defined as a certain mode of movement of such and such a body (or part or faculty of a body) by this or that cause and for this or that end. (403a25–27, trans. by J. A. Smith) in Barnes' (1984).

When Plutarch (38E5–9) discusses with Nicander the affect envy, excessive admiration, and non-rhythmic listening have, as dispositions, on what the listener hears, he seems to be echoing Aristotle's discussion of active and passive potentialities. Whereas Aristotle discusses potentialities mainly in the context of change, Plutarch's discussion of listening takes place in the context of addressing the listener as a whole: the intellectual, emotional and practical effects, and their discriminating ability to be either receptive or resistant to what is heard. Like Plutarch, Aristotle's orientation assumed that human beings were naturally rational and social beings (*EN* 1.7–9; 2.1–5), and that institutions and cultural practices provide the cognitive content and causal efficacy of emotions (EN 2.6–8). Knuuttila (2004, pp. 25–26) puts it nicely by explaining that for Aristotle, and by extension, Plutarch, acquired emotional paradigms play an important role in moral education.[11] The paradigms, says Knuuttila, is to train and encourage "young people to join in the emotional patterns of culture in such a way that the habits of feelings and emotions contribute to a good life (25).[12] Accordingly, emotional capacities of the soul are vital in the formation of emotional judgments and how such judgments help define the self (26).[13]

7.1.1 Envy

Plutarch first discusses the role of envy as it relates to hearing. The envious listener gets annoyed by the non-moral goods possessed by others. Plutarch explains that

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[10] This seems to be what Aristotle has in mind in *On the Soul*:

> Consequently their [affections of the soul] definitions ought to correspond, e.g., anger should be defined as a certain mode of movement of such and such a body (or part or faculty of a body) by this or that cause and for this or that end. (403a25–27, trans. by J. A. Smith) in Jonathan Barnes' (ed.)
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> *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. I, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.

[11] See Simo Knuuttila's excellent analysis of emotion in *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 24–31.

[12] Ibid., p. 25.

[13] Ibid., p. 26. De Sousa's treatment of emotions offers an interesting parallel to Knuuttila and Plutarch. He Argues that emotions can deliver objective axiological verdicts because they constitute perceptions of value or appropriateness (5–25). However, on De Sousa's model the status of rationality, and the relationship between reason and emotions, is unclear. See Ronald De Sousa's Sousa's *Emotional Truth*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

the envious listener is contemptuous of those he considers his equals because of their beauty, status within the community, wealth, and good fortune:

> It goes without saying that the presence of the vitriolic and malignant form of envy does no good to anything anyone does, and is an obstacle to all fine actions; but there is nowhere it is a worse colleague and adviser than in listening. (39D)

When the envious disposition carries over into a context in which it must listen it "scatters the mind," which impedes the listener from assimilating the content of what is being said. Here Plutarch engages in what amounts to psychological detective work. If we could peer into the mind of the envious listener, Plutarch speculates (40A–B), we would see that the listener is preoccupied with the following three things: himself, mistakes made by the speaker, and third person or audience receptiveness. Plutarch's speculation about the origin of the listener's envy aligns with the explanation of envy given by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* (1387b22–1388a28).[14]

In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle explains that the success of an individual, who happens to be our equal in other respects, is a reproach to us. Such an individual, wittingly or unwittingly, highlights the fact that it is our own fault we have missed the good in question (1388a17–20). It is the envious individual's realization of his failure that is the grounds for his feeling envy. Similarly the envious listener sees knowledgeable and articulate speakers as rivals, thus envy tinged with shame frames how he listens, and his response to what the speaker says.

The mind of the envious listener is simultaneously comparing its state with the speaker's mind, trying to determine which is better. To illustrate this point we need only extrapolate the envious listener's reaction to listening to a mathematician or philosopher demonstrating a complex proof. Such a proof would call for such qualities as knowledge, a lucid memory, sensitivity in making subtle distinctions and patience. The envious listener is not interested so much in the demonstration of the proof and the beneficial effects from having heard it as he is in whether or not his own mind is capable of displaying the same qualities. Next we see the envious listener focusing excessively on the mistakes made by the speaker. Remaining with our example of the mathematician or philosopher demonstrating a proof, the envious listener delights in the forgetfulness, hasty generalizations and impatience of the speaker. When the speaker misses the mark, makes a mistake in his proof, Plutarch adds (40B–E), the envious listener does not put himself in the position of remedying the deficiency by contributing positively to the topic in some novel way, he tallies the mistakes, as if keeping score, in order to detract further from what is heard. The envious listener is concerned with third person reactions or audience receptiveness insofar as he may become aware of the speaker's shortcomings. He voices disagreements by dwelling on the comments made by the speaker's detractors, and if this is ineffective in belittling the speaker, the envious listener insists that the proof at hand has been demonstrated better and more capably by

[14] See note 9: Aristotle, Volume II.

other mathematicians or philosophers. Fundamentally, Plutarch explains, the envious listener is motivated by an overriding desire for standing and recognition (40F1–5).

7.1.2 Admiration

For Plutarch, when the one who listens starts to admire what he listens to, the effect is the opposite of the effect when the listener envies the one he listens to. Whereas envy disregards content for superficialities, admiration, Plutarch warns, lacks a critical sense due to its eagerness and openness to assimilate what is said:

> Admiration is the opposite of contempt, and it is, of course, a sign of more reasonable and equable nature; all the same, it too needs quite a lot of caution (εὐλαβῶς), and perhaps even more. (40F)

Admiration signifies a character that poorly distinguishes between that which is precious and that which is pernicious in speech. Although admiration is not a vice for Plutarch, he suggests that an admiring listener needs to be cautious about philosophical argumentation and what it is conveying (41A–5). Plutarch is describing the prudence that should inform all intelligent listening. Simply to be excited about what a speaker is saying is not enough. It is possible to curb the corrupting influence of an uncritical admiration. Plutarch's practical suggestion (42A10–B10) is that upon the completion of hearing a speech or at the conclusion of a conversation we must ask ourselves whether we have been rewarded by the speech or conversation. For example, the listener might ask the following questions: "Am I now more confused after having talked with him?" "Did the speech provide me with moral insight?"

The thrust of Plutarch's suggestion is eudaimonistic because it asks the admiring listener to place what he has heard within the larger context of what constitutes a happy and virtuous life, and, in turn, to assess whether or not what was heard enhances or subtracts from such a life.[15] More importantly, the admiring listener must be aware of the moral effects of listening that are manifested in his conduct. Similar to learning an art or a sport by practicing them, listening may help one to become morally good. Good listening habits and the development of such habits is crucial to the listener and his moral education. Keeping in mind that eudaimonism is the paradigm for ethical reflection subsequent to Socrates, listening, for Plutarch, is a means to happiness. Once what happiness is has been determined, one should assess how listening can contribute to happiness. Listening is not so much about a criterion for choosing what to listen to, i.e., the best action, but about the best way

[15] For the three basic sorts of eudaimonism, and the position given to virtue in each position, *see* Gregory Vlastos, *Socrates*, *Ironist* and *Moral Philosopher*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, pp. 200–232.

to live. It is person centered rather than act centered. Although eudaimonism need not make metaphysical assumptions, healthy eudaimonism depends upon the belief that the universe generally supports the possibility of human happiness.

7.1.3 Non-Rhythmic Listening and Rhythmic Listening

Plutarch's characterization of non-rhythmic and rhythmic listening pertains mainly to listening to speeches or lectures. Nonetheless, Plutarch's outline of the responsibility of the listener vis-à-vis the speaker is instructive for the intimacy of conversation between two or more interlocutors. In grasping the phrase rhythmic listening, the contrasting phrase non-rhythmic listening acquires conceptual clarity in a way that a stipulated definition of the phrase cannot provide. What does rhythmic listening mean? It means that the listener first needs to recognize that he is not a passive listener whose knowledge is solely the result of external inputs, and that he must come to understand for himself. Merely having good notes or a knowledgeable teacher does not get the listener to learn. The listener has to play an active (rhythmic) role and really assimilate what is to be heard or known. Can we look for things we do not know? It is not like looking up a word that we are blank about but rather looking up a word that we have some notion how to spell. The process of defining a word parallels rhythmic listening. We have some initial notions that let us learn more or help us listen more effectively (all learning comes from prior learning). In the case of listening, such notions will be: have good manners, have a thorough understanding of a speaker's argument or point before critiquing his conclusion, relate what is being heard to one's current state of knowledge on the topic being discussed, etc. A listener's initial opinions of a speaker's topic turn into understanding when he really assimilates them (grasp causes or reasons why they are so).

Plutarch warns that people who non-rhythmically listen take it for granted that the listener has no role to play while listening, whereas the speaker is presumed to have his subject-matter in order and so nothing further is needed on the part of the listener except to listen:

> Some people think that the speaker has a function, while the listener does nothing. They expect the speaker to come with everything carefully thought out and prepared, while they can charge in and sit down without a care and with no thought for proper behavior…. (45D7–E1)

This way of construing the situation could not be further from what actually takes place between the speaker and the listener. Plutarch argues that both the listener and the speaker have responsibilities that make for a productive conversation. Specifically, a concern for moral responsibility towards self-improvement should characterize the relationship between the one speaking and the one hearing. The responsible listener and the speaker must see themselves as composing a "harmonious rhythm" (45E–F). Plutarch has in mind the appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication

that transpires when two or more people interact, and how what transpires incites each person, the speaker and the listener, to speak and listen as if they were taking part effortlessly in a very delicate balancing act. One of the more practical examples of harmonious rhythm Plutarch discusses is for the listener to have good manners and not to praise the speaker immoderately (45F–46A).

Plutarch also tells us that the speaker must be prepared to present his information in an orderly, engaged manner (47B–C9). But more importantly, it is the rhythmic listener who complements the speaker's preparedness by further reflecting on what has been said. For example, the listener should not mimic, parrot style, what has been said as if one were a recorder intending to play back verbatim what the speaker said at some future time, but actively add to what has been said for the purpose of aiding "original thinking"[16] and for the benefit of one's own moral excellence. Listening must awaken the native abilities of the listener, otherwise, Plutarch explains, the listener runs the risk of becoming merely a "sophistic and curious" listener (45D5–10). The designation "original thinking" can be connected to the Socratic elenchus in general due to the type of questions and the problems entailed by these questions, within Plato's dialogues. Although there is a close resemblance between the Socratic elenchus and what I refer to as rhythmic listening, the latter process is not refutative in the Socratic sense. Rather rhythmic listening is a process for receiving and modeling proper moral inquiry.[17] In fact, there is a dramatic parallel between rhythmic listening and "recollection" in Plato's *Meno* (82b–86d). Meno is a poor interlocutor since he is not really active in the conversation. He does not much think but dodges. In contrast, the slave is active and takes to heart what Socrates says.

Two contemporary parallels to Plutarch's concept of rhythmic-listening are communication theory and the role of the reader in reader-response criticism.

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[16] David Hume aptly describes, many centuries later, what Plutarch seems to have in mind: "The great part of mankind may be divided into two classes; that of *shallow* thinkers, who fall short of the truth; and that of *abstruse* thinkers who go beyond it. The latter class is by far the rarest: and I may add by far the most useful and valuable. They suggest hints, at least, and start difficulties, which they want, perhaps, skill to pursue; but which may produce fine discoveries, when handled by men who have a more just way of thinking." The quotation is taken from Eugene F. Miller's collection of Hume's political and social writings, *David Hume's Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987, p. 253.

[17] The recent scholarship on the Socratic elenchus is in line with rhythmic listening and the elenctic modeling of proper moral inquiry. Gary Alan Scott's book (2002) *Does Socrates Have a Method?* is a collection of essays written by various scholars offering interpretations of Socrates' elenctic exchanges. One of the more compelling essays in the collection, written by Carpenter and Polansky (89–100), argue that the Socratic elenchus is not a particular method at all, but the Socratic dialectic generally. They show that there are a number of refutations, such as refutations of definitions, behaviors, proposed procedures, and substantive doctrines. Due to the variety of contexts in which refutations appears, Carpenter and Polansky conclude that any attempt to establish a general method or logic for refutations is futile. Robert Metcalf's (2004, 37–64; esp. 41–46) interpretation of the Socratic elenchus is persuasive and very much in line with Plutarch's discussion. Metcalf emphasizes the *ad hominem* aspect of Socrates' cross-examinations that is on display in the *Crito*.

In communication theory the defining feature of a dialectical exchange with another person or an audience is presumption and burden of proof. Pinto (2001), a prominent advocate of communication theory, argues that presumption underlies the set of propositions (premises) addressed to a point or issue, which the interlocutor accepts or refuses to accept.[18] A good argument, according to Pinto, creates a presumption in favor of its conclusion, "and shifts the burden of proof to the one who would dispute that conclusion" (3).[19] Consequently, the effectiveness of arguments, either through spoken or written communication, is relative to the concerns and expectations of a particular person or audience listening to an argument or speech.

The communication theory under discussion complements Plutarch's discussion of listening in so far as presumption and burden proof are necessary features of dialectical exchanges. Such features confer responsibilities on the speaker and listener for the sake of promoting self-mastery. More importantly, presumption and burden of proof encourages rhythmic listening.

According to reader-response criticism, readers help construct extant literary texts by bringing to bear on their form, grammar, and other types patterning, interpretative strategies. On this view, the text is constructed by a group of subjects, i.e., interpretive communities, with a set of beliefs and values (Newton 1997).[20] Stanley Fish, a prominent advocate of reader-response criticism, urges the reader to take responsibility for making a literary text productive pedagogically by minimizing its prefabricated textual meanings. Such meanings, according to Fish, "are said to be encoded, and the code is assumed to be in the world independently"[21] of the readers who are obligated to adhere to it. Fish's argument amounts to a denial of literary realism. He denies that the formal units believed to constitute a literary text such as intentions and meanings are reader-independent. Instead of meaning having to be extracted by the reader, in Fish's model meaning and intentions are called into being by the effort of the reader. The reader is allowed to construct extant literary texts by applying various interpretive strategies to it.

Fish's discussion of reader-response criticism complements Plutarch's discussion. On both accounts the reader and the listener play an active role in recasting an opportunity for learning into one that may contribute to his moral edification. They are not recasting merely for the sake of novelty. The reader's reading of the text is grounded in shared interpretative strategies dialectically arrived at; the listener's listening to the speech or lecture is, in the case of Plutarch, grounded in the classical ideal of moral self-sufficiency. Nicander must learn how to be free within the context of his own dispositions.

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[18] Robert Pinto, *Argument, Inference and Dialectic: Collected Papers on Informal Logic*, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001, pp. 1–9.

[19] Ibid., p. 3.

[20] Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the *Variorum*," in K.M. Newton (ed.), *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory*, New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1997, pp. 203–209.

[21] Ibid., p. 208.

Another aspect of rhythmic listening is to view criticism as a necessary step towards self-improvement. It is only through criticism, Plutarch believes, that youthful complacency can be minimized (46C6–7). We must pity the youthful listeners who "treat a rebuke by a philosopher with nonchalance or indifference, and laugh at reproof and praise their reprovers" (46C6–9) because it is indicative of bad education and breeding. The opposite tendency of resistance towards criticism is the tendency towards sensitivity when criticized (46E1–4). Sensitivity may suggest a receptive nature on the part of the youthful listener, but often times it is this very sensitivity that accounts for the "lack of discipline and manliness" (46E6) which turns the listener towards "flatterers" and "professional speakers." Often it is the case that the sensitive listener who is unable to handle criticism turns to friends and acquaintances to receive validation and easy agreement. The underlying idea behind the issue of indifference and sensitivity towards criticism is that listening, like philosophy, causes pain. And just as we would look forward to bandaging after having surgery, Plutarch reminds us, after youthful pretensions have been deflated by listening to the stings of reason, one should not run away before one has tried the treatment prescribed by reason (46F–47A3). Plutarch concludes his treatise *On Listening* by reminding us that proper listening is the means by which reason habituates the listener towards self-improvement and proper living.

7.2 Plato's *Alcibiades Major*

As I have discussed, particular dispositions can determine *what* and *how* we hear, and it is in the dialogue *Alcibiades Major* that this is well illustrated. The dialogue *Alcibiades Major* can be read in such a way as to show how envy, excessive admiration and non-rhythmic listening account for the failure of Alcibiades to listen to the Socratic conversation appropriately.

Like Nicander in Plutarch's treatise, Alcibiades is coming of age, and his enormous ambition and potential is seen by Socrates as calling for concern. Of course the dialogue is contrived because Plato has the advantage of appraising Alcibiades retrospectively. Nonetheless, what compels Socrates to engage Alcibiades in conversation is that Socrates recognizes the outstanding nature (*phusis*) that Alcibiades has is conducive to philosophy,[22] but that Alcibiades is profoundly ignorant about the means by which he can fulfill his desire to be a great political leader. Ambitious figures such as Alcibiades are in need of self-analysis, because their overwhelming talent and insatiable desires can either be utilized constructively or destructively. Socrates' task in the *Alcibiades Major* is essentially protreptic. It is through the Socratic conversation that Alcibiades' desire to rule will be re-directed towards desiring to rule himself first by cultivating that part of his soul where reason rules and is most divine.

[22] It is Diotima's praise of eros in the *Symposium* (209b–e4) that illustrates best Socrates' attraction to Alcibiades.

7.2.1 Envy and Alcibiades

In the opening pages of the dialogue, Socrates comes across in a strange manner (*see* 103a–105a). He explains to Alcibiades that he, in fact, is Alcibiades' first and true lover. Socrates explains that ever since Alcibiades was a little boy he has observed him but that he was unable to talk to Alcibiades because his daimonic voice prevented a discussion with him. Socrates has observed many things over the years regarding Alcibiades, including the education he has received. In addition to taking notice of Alcibiades' education, Socrates has correctly surmised that Alcibiades' ambition is motivated by envy. Given that *Alcibiades Major* is a retrospective account of Alcibiades, the effect on the reader of Plato describing the nature of Alcibiades' ambition may be to show Alcibiades' responsibility as a moral agent in shaping his own character.

Socrates' insight into Alcibiades' ambition is shown initially in a rather abrupt fashion when Socrates claims that Alcibiades feels entitled to be honored more than Pericles and anyone else, past or present. As the dialogue unfolds and Alcibiades is made aware of the work required of him, we see that it is ambition in the service of envy that characterizes Alcibiades' desire to be a great political ruler. To understand better Alcibiades' envy we need only think of an individual with such large desires for personal and public distinction that it becomes almost painful to witness other's accomplishments without that individual feeling a personal sense of loss. Alcibiades is such an individual. Alcibiades' beauty, wealth and family connections cannot satiate his large political desires, or the envy he suffers from, but is not yet fully aware of. In *Alcibiades Major* Socrates does recount the knucklebones episode (110a–c). The episode illustrates the point that even at a young age Alcibiades was confident that he understood what justice and injustice entailed. However, Alcibiades' self-confidence about his knowledge of justice and injustice will be shown to be unfounded. It has been pointed out that Alcibiades' conception of himself is very narrow and, as a result, limits the extent to which he understands the type of knowledge needed to be an effective ruler.[23]

As I mentioned in chapter five, Plutarch recounts several episodes that illustrate Alcibiades' budding ambition and envy, which Socrates may have in mind.[24] In another episode, commenting on Alcibiades conduct during the Peloponnesian War concerning the favorable attention the prisoners of Pylos gave to Nicias after the peace and restitution of the captives,[25] Plutarch says the following:

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[23] Julia Annas, "Self-Knowledge in Early Plato," *Platonic Investigations* (*Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy*, *Volume 1*), 1985, pp. 111–138.

[24] Plutarch, "Alcibiades," in Arthur H. Clough (ed.), *Plutarch's Lives*, Volume I, New York: The Modern Library, 1992, pp. 258–263.

[25] *See* Thucydides' *The History of the Peloponnesian War* 4.84–87.

> It was commonly said in Greece, that the war was begun by Pericles, and that Nicias made an end of it, and the peace was generally called the peace of Nicias. Alcibiades was extremely annoyed at this, and being full of envy, set himself to break the league.[26]

Socrates might have these episodes in mind when he piques Alcibiades' wonder at the scope of his envy by imputing to Alcibiades a profound state of discontent.

Alcibiades does not deny Socrates' imputation, his desires are now transparent, and so the dialogue proceeds as if Alcibiades freely confessed his discontent. How might we construe Alcibiades' envy? Aristotle's account of envy in the *Rhetoric* (1387b20–1388a30) explains that to be envious is to be discontent because one has been aroused by another's better fortune. Alcibiades is not yet fully conscious of another's better fortune; this will be thematized for him in the Spartan and Persian Speech, but he is aware of his uneasiness and enormous ambition. I want to argue that Alcibiades is partially conscious of another's better fortune because such an argument accounts for Socrates' claim, and Alcibiades' implied agreement, that Alcibiades thinks he deserves to be honored more than Pericles and anyone who ever was.

Alcibiades' concern with the reputation of Pericles, the influential politician and general of the years between the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, is not unfounded. Pericles assumed guardianship of Alcibiades and his brother Clinias after their father died in the battle of Coronea.[27] Alcibiades at this young age is so sure of himself, he believes he will obscure the other generals and statesmen once he concerns himself with public affairs; and will eventually outdo Pericles' reputation and authority. Pericles and his reputation will be the first obstacle to overcome in order for Alcibiades to achieve greatness.

Having disclosed Alcibiades' ambitions, Socrates asserts that they are impossible to achieve without his help (105d). The god would not permit Socrates to speak with Alcibiades until the young man's latent ambitions were piqued so that he would be willing to listen to Socrates since in no other way can he get the power he seeks. Socrates' aim is to get the type of power over Alcibiades that Alcibiades desires to get over the Athenians (105e). Thus the young man who supposed himself in need of no one is told that he desperately needs Socrates in order to achieve any of his ambitions. This shocks and intrigues Alcibiades. Unlike his other suitors that offered him small advantages, Socrates offers him the world. What Socrates has done is to set himself up as the object of Alcibiades' envy, but only to facilitate his more comprehensive aim, which is to harness Alcibiades' envy, and attach it to a life that is worthy or the best type of life. That is, by providing Alcibiades with an ultimate end, Alcibiades' life will be identified and ruled by that end. In an intellectual and pragmatic sense the divine must become the ultimate object of envy for Alcibiades. Only in this way will Alcibiades, in striving to be God-like, continuously find the motivation to cultivate himself, especially while out of earshot of Socrates.

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[26] *See* note 24, p. 263.

[27] Ibid., pp. 201–234.

7.2.2 Excessive Admiration, Alcibiades and the Spartan and Persian Speech

Alcibiades is brought to the point of acknowledging that he needs to care for himself, and that his thinking regarding local, Athenian politicians prevents him from doing so, because he thinks his natural abilities will be adequate. It is Socrates' task to provide Alcibiades with an end to strive towards; to provide direction and content to his overwhelming ambition. As the dialogue unfolds, we see that self-knowledge is what Socrates is prescribing to Alcibiades. What started off as an Alcibiades filled with envy and ambition gradually gives way to an uncritical admiration for the picture Socrates draws of the Spartan and Persian kings.

The tale of the Spartan and Persian kings illustrates the relationship between political success and self-perfection. Socrates begins the tale by explaining to Alcibiades that his political ambitions can no longer be satisfied by simply outdoing the local Athenian politicians. In fact, if he really wants to attain what he has set out to do, which is to rule all of Greece and Europe, he must first become aware of, and then suitably assess, his true competitors with whom he must struggle (120a6). Socrates informs Alcibiades that his main competitors are the Spartan and Persian kings. What makes these kings worthy of Alcibiades' attention is how they handle their women, their wealth, and their education. The Spartan kings, Socrates says, are held in such high esteem that their wives "are guarded at public expense by the ephors, so that every precaution is taken to ensure that their kings are descended from the family of Heraclide alone" (121c). The Persian king is so supreme his queen does not need to be protected; fear (121c3) prevents her from being unfaithful. When the Persian son and heir to the throne is born all of Asia celebrates; and the boy is brought up by royal tutors. Alcibiades' tutor was old and useless, Socrates reminds him, and hardly anyone noticed when he was born. Socrates concludes the tale by stressing the amount of wealth the Spartan and Persian kings have. Spartan wealth greatly exceeds Athens', he tells Alcibiades, and their land in Messene is larger than all the estates in Athens. Persian wealth, on the other hand, is even larger than Sparta's. According to Socrates, a reliable source informed him that the Persian court is so large that each tract of land is "named for a part of the queen's wardrobe" (123b–c).

Alcibiades' reaction to the tale is quite predictable; it is excessive. Alcibiades has been awed by Socrates' portrait of the kings. Alcibiades' excessive admiration of the tale is illustrated in the section following the Spartan and Persian Speech (124b1–126e1). The question at issue is what constitutes a healthy city. The intention of the Spartan and Persian Speech, we must not forget, is to get Alcibiades to see who his real competition is in order to deflate his pretensions of knowledge so he can care for himself. Instead, Alcibiades admires the grandiose vision of the Spartan and Persian kings so much that he answers Socrates' question by equating like-mindedness (homonoia) of the citizens of the city to "the friendship and agreement you find when a mother and father agree with a son they love, and when a brother agrees with his brother, and a women agrees with her husband" (126e1–4). Whereas Socrates

suggests that homonoia must be analogous to common knowledge found among practitioners of a particular craft or art, such as arithmetic.

Therefore, Socrates implies that the type of agreement Alcibiades prefers is subjective and unaccountable. Personal failings on the part of the brother, or a wife in relation to her husband, would not sever the agreement unless extreme circumstances prevailed. These types of relationships do not call for Alcibiades to master himself. The assumptions that Alcibiades seems to be making is that all will recognize his greatness without his having to lift a finger. Alcibiades is displaying a sense of entitlement, and Socrates recognizes this continuous subtle drift to which Alcibiades is prone. The type of agreement Socrates is looking for is the type of agreement that is intellectually based. The type of like-mindedness knowers of a particular art, such as mathematics, would have. Alcibiades' conception of agreement precludes self-cultivation; he is claiming that emotional, familial-like agreements can be had despite a lack of an objective criterion by which we can separate the knowers from the non-knowers. This lack of intellectual agreement cannot have the necessary protreptic effect that Alcibiades needs because there is no common criterion Alcibiades feels compelled to aspire to. The practical implication of Alcibiades' way of thinking is that he can neglect his soul; the part of his soul that is wise and God-like.[28]

7.2.3 *Non-Rhythmic Listening and Rhythmic Listening and Alcibiades*

Non-Rhythmic listening is the last disposition that plays a part in the failure of Alcibiades to listen appropriately to the Socratic conversation. The main aspect of rhythmic listening that concerns my reading of the *Alcibiades Major* is what Plutarch describes as both the listener and speaker sharing the responsibility of forming a "harmonious rhythm." Aside from the speaker or questioner being prepared to impart and promote knowledge through speech—moral knowledge in the case of Alcibiades' conversation with Socrates—the listener must respond to what is being said by showing what was said by the speaker has been understood intellectually and dispositionally. For a listener to understand intellectually and dispositionally the listener must be able to give an account of what is heard through effectively explaining it to others and by exhibiting it to others through his behavior. There needs to be a harmonizing of word (logos) and deed (ergon). It is only in this way that we know the listener has been affected, the dye has been cast.

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[28] This correlates well with the leading philosophical thought that all beings are to be understood in terms of the principle of being, i.e., that which has being fully and independently (see, e.g., Aristotle's *Metaphysics* iv 1–2 and *NE* 1168b31–33: "just as the city or any other systematic whole is most properly identified with the most authoritative element in it, so is man").

Does Alcibiades rhythmically listen? Although in the course of the dialogue Alcibiades submits to Socratic questioning, and allegedly turns from his overwhelming desire for political rule to the care of his soul (128d–e), Alcibiades' closing remarks illustrate that the Socratic conversation did not make a deep enough impression on him. Alcibiades did not rhythmically listen, and so the dialogue ends on a rather unharmonious note with Socrates suggesting that the power of the city may prove to be his and Alcibiades' downfall (135e). Why would Socrates make such a statement?

Socrates makes such a statement because Alcibiades fails to locate the proper starting point for the arduous task of self-cultivation. The following exchange reveals Alcibiades' persistent confusion, despite having come this far in the Socratic conversation, and Socrates' unwillingness to name that confusion for what it is, slavishness (δουλεύειν, 135c2):

> S: Then do you know how to escape (ἀποφεύξῃ) from your present state?
>
> Let's not call a handsome young man by that name.
>
> A: I do.
> S: How?
> A: It's up to you, Socrates.
> S: That's not well said, Alcibiades.
> A: Well, what should I say?
> S: That it's up to God (Ὅτι ἐὰνεθεὸς ἐθέλῃ)
> A: Then that's what I say. And furthermore I say this as well: we're probably going to change roles, Socrates. I'll be playing yours and you'll be playing mine, for from this day forward I will always attend on you, and you will have me as your constant companion.
> S: Then my love for you, my excellent friend, will be just like a stork: after hat- ching a winged love for you, it will be cared for by it in return.
> A: Yes, that's right. I'll start to cultivate (ἐπιμέλεσθαι) justice in myself right now. (135c13–e4)

Alcibiades answering in such a way reveals his lack of understanding of the discussion he and Socrates have had in the dialogue. This lack of understanding on the part of Alcibiades is revealed by Socrates comparing his love for the youth to a stork. Ancient ornithology held that once storks taught their young how to fly their roles reversed, and the offspring cared for their parents. Likewise, Socrates has not only expressed his love for Alcibiades; he has produced in Alcibiades a counterlove for Socrates. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates describes how the exchange of love between the lover and the beloved should unfold:

> Think how a breeze or an echo bounces back from a smooth solid object to its source; that is how the stream of beauty goes back to the beautiful boy and sets him aflutter. … So when the lover is near, the boy's pain is relieved just as the lover's is, and when they are apart he yearns as much as he is yearned for, because he has a mirror image of love in him —"backlove" [counterlove]—though he neither speaks nor thinks of it as love, but as friendship. (255c–e, trans. by Nehamas and Woodruff in Cooper.)

To Alcibiades' credit he knows his initial role as beloved has been reversed, but he fails to understand that the reversal supervened as a result of his conversation

with Socrates about justice (cf. the *Symposium*, 216a–c5). The earnestness with which Alcibiades concludes his conversation with Socrates by claiming he will start to cultivate justice in himself right away belies non-rhythmic listening because for Alcibiades to have located the proper starting point for the arduous task of cultivating justice within himself he would have recognized it began in the beginning of his conversation with Socrates.

7.3 Conclusion

Plutarch's short treatise *On Listening* is both practical and profound. Its practical suggestion is that a listener's dispositions can affect the receptivity toward what is heard. Among the young, Plutarch claims, the overriding dispositions that impede the moral benefit that is to be gained through conversation are envy, excessive admiration, and non-rhythmic listening—just the sorts of dispositions we have found Alcibiades to have in Plato's *Alcibiades Major*. *On Listening*'s more profound suggestion is that to care for ourselves there needs to be a perspective outside of ourselves to engage us in conversation—just the sort of approach Socrates takes towards Alcibiades. At least there must be this external challenge to our self so long as that self is not adequately developed. In fact, on a dramatic level, Socrates set out to redirect the provincial political ambition that Alcibiades harbors towards a concern for a genuine rule over his soul, but by the end of the dialogue Alcibiades' inability to listen rhythmically blinds him to the realization that throughout the Socratic conversation he had been cultivating justice in his soul all along.

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Chapter 8
Conclusion

Abstract Addresses the importance of informal arguments in *Alcibiades Major*, and why the dialogue is relevant to modern readers. My hope is that *Politics in Socrates' Alcibiades* will engage a wide range of readers, including scholars, students of ancient Greek philosophy, decision theorists, political theorists and others working on more contemporary analytical problems in the history of philosophy. Alcibiades' ambition, intellectual perspectives, counterfactual questioning, ancient inspiration, modern philosophical discussions.

Politics in Socrates' Alcibiades has addressed two important aspects of *Alcibiades Major*: its method of argumentation and its treatment of topical themes. The sheer methodological diversity of Socrates' informal style of argumentation in the dialogue should be humbling to anyone attempting to interpret *Alcibiades Major*. Why humbling? Because my intention was to develop the definitive interpretation of *Alcibiades Major* but I quickly realized that my aim was futile with such a complex dialogue. *Alcibiades Major* is a hard dialogue, and so I concluded that there cannot be a definitive interpretation. I instead read the dialogue as a provocation, designed to help the reader reflect on its method and to come up with solutions to the issues and problems discussed within it.

The argumentative style that predominates in *Alcibiades Major* is one that operates without an explicit premise conclusion structure. In fact, the elenctic exchanges between Socrates and Alcibiades are rich with premises and conclusions in support of the truth of their respective propositions, but these exchanges are usually not accompanied by inference indicators like "therefore" or "hence" that are found in more formal types of argumentation.

Socrates' approach to Alcibiades is, in part, motivated by the assumption that Alcibiades' doxastic attitudes toward his potential to be a powerful ruler are unfounded. Socrates wagers that if he can get Alcibiades to acknowledge that his ignorance is an impediment to the realization of his ambition, he may be able to convince Alcibiades that his ambition is misdirected. Accordingly, I have been careful not to make a distinction between persuasion and argument. Socrates' arguments against Alcibiades' ignorance are persuasive precisely because they

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employ *ad hominem* attacks and they appeal to emotion. Socrates subdues Alcibiades by exposing his vulnerabilities and attacking his self-conceit.

The book's topical themes have been interpreted in the context of different intellectual perspectives. While not losing sight of the fact that Plato's dialogues are products of their time, *Alcibiades Major* is relevant to ancient and modern philosophical discussions. To that end, I have emphasized throughout the book an aspect of my approach to reading the dialogue that is underemphasized by other commentators. Namely, from start to finish, Alcibiades is portrayed as genuinely torn between the sophistic allure of power and those who promise it and Socratic self-reflection. Alcibiades recognizes that Socrates is capable of equipping him with powerful intellectual tools that he can use for any purpose he chooses. Socrates, on the other hand, recognizes that he must convince Alcibiades to pay more attention to the good or end so as to make sure that the powerful intellectual tools are carefully utilized. Since the sophistic allure does not speak much about the end or the good, it tends to promote conventionalism by merely accepting conventional ends, i.e., money, power, honor. Ultimately, *Alcibiades Major* makes clear the distinction between an adequate end and the merely conventional end and the irresponsible and responsible approach to practical reflection and action.

My approach poses a challenge to the modern belief that the ancients are not as relevant as they once were. Chapters 3 through 7 of the book, in particular, show the continuing relevance of the dialogue and its timeless insights. In Chap. 5 I argued that a version of decision theory might be relevant to how Socrates approaches Alcibiades in the beginning of the dialogue. Socrates' hypothetical and counterfactual questioning makes Alcibiades' beliefs transparent while at the same time making him aware of his deficiencies. In *Alcibiades Major*, Plato seems to take it for granted that hypothetical and counterfactual questions, and the types of decisions they pose, are effective precisely because of their practical effects. These hypothetical questions are grounded on the principle that if the agent could only straighten out his views, he would conduct himself correctly, and achieve the good for which he aims. The types of hypothetical questions found in *Alcibiades Major* are also found in The ring of Gyges and City of Pigs passages (*Republic*); Socrates' self-reflective, counterfactual questioning during his trial (*Apology*); and in Alcibiades getting questioned by a personified god (*Alcibiades Minor*).

In Chap. 7 I discussed the act of listening as it relates to Alcibiades. What could be more rewarding than learning how to listen appropriately in an age which undermines listening? It might be instructive to look with admiration at the Graeco-Roman tradition of reflecting upon listening, and how to benefit morally from what one listens to. As I pointed out, Plutarch is only one of many writers who composed short treatises on listening. Others include Pliny, Seneca and Epictetus. In the Chap. 1 discussed the origins and consequences of listening inappropriately in *Alcibiades Major*. The relevance to modern readers who read the dialogue lies in accounting for Alcibiades' failure to benefit from the Socratic conversation. Although Alcibiades' dispositions prevented him from benefiting from Socrates, the fact that his psychological states affected what he heard, invites us to consider the causal factors of these states. The chapter offered an answer to such a consideration.

Socrates' conversation was not merely an intellectual exercise to convince Alcibiades he needed a genuine education; it was an informal attempt to modify Alcibiades's attitudes toward his potential to be a ruler.

If read carefully, *Alcibiades Major* can resonate in the lives of modern readers, especially when broadened to apply to a variety of different contexts. *Politics in Socrates' Alcibiades* has shown that the ancients can be a source of inspiration and guidance to those who seek it.

Erratum to: Instances of Decision Theory in Plato's *Alcibiades Major* and *Minor*, and in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*

Erratum to: Chapter 5 in: A. Archie, *Politics in Socrates' Alcibiades*, SpringerBriefs in Philosophy, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-15269-1_5

Footnote 11 in Chap. 5 ends with a colon, but the cited passage the colon introduces is included in the main body of text after the superscript 11 (p. 78) and continues on the next page (p. 79) in the main body of text.

Footnote 11 in Chap. 5 states:

The parallel between what Alcibiades is willing to forfeit (i.e., his life) in order to *gain* power and what Socrates in the *Apology* is willing to forfeit (i.e., his life) in order to *practice* philosophy is revealing. In the *Apology*, Socrates self-reflectively entertains the counterfactual offer of being acquitted by the Athenians on the condition he cease investigating and practicing philosophy or be put to death:

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Even if you acquitted me now and did not believe Anytus, who said to you that either I should not have been brought here in the first place, or that now I am here, you cannot avoid executing me, for if I should be acquitted, your sons would practice the teachings of Socrates and all be thoroughly corrupted; if you said to me in this regard: "Socrates, we do not believe Anytus now; we acquit you, but only on condition that you spend no more time on this investigation and do not practice philosophy, and if you are caught doing so you will die;" if, as I say, you were to acquit me on those terms, I would say to you: 'Gentleman of the jury, I am grateful and I am your friend, but I will obey the god rather than you, and as long as I draw breath and am able, I shall not cease to practice philosophy, to exhort you and in my usual way to point out to any one of you whom I happen to meet: Good Sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the greatest city with the greatest reputation for both wisdom and power; are you not ashamed of your eagerness to possess as much wealth, reputation and honors as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul?' (29c-e1).

Might Socrates' single minded ambition surpass that of Alcibiades?

Addenda

The following two addenda are intended to suggest areas of possible research on *Alcibiades Major*'s and *Minor*'s connection to other Socratic dialogues. Both addenda take as their starting points themes discussed in Chaps. 5 and 6. As I mentioned in the introduction, by analyzing *Alcibiades Minor* I am not taking a position on the authenticity of the dialogue.

Addendum 1

Other Leading Ideas Found in Alcibiades Major *and the* Apology

The fact that priorities are a leading idea in *Alcibiades Major* and the *Apology* reveals important information about Socrates' conduct during his trial and his approach to Alcibiades. Other leading ideas found in both dialogues that are entertained in a general fashion in the *Apology*, and then complemented in a specific manner in *Alcibiades Major*, may be worthy of attention.

(1) If the Delphic Oracle in the *Apology* (20e–b) approved of the type of conversation Socrates was having prior to Chairephon's question to the Oracle, we see more clearly in *Alcibiades Major* that it is not the case that Socrates, as he claims in the *Apology* (32a–b), is just an example, a representative man whom the gods chose to highlight the idea that human knowledge is worthless compared to divine knowledge. Socrates has the gods on his side quite often (see Plato's *Theages*), because the only thing that prevented him from conversing with Alcibiades sooner was the divine. It is only with the gods' help that Socrates says he can help Alcibiades achieve his goal of being a great Athenian leader. Socrates' appeal to the divine in *Alcibiades Major* might be a way of setting up a *eudaimonistic* goal for Alcibiades: the ultimate human good, i.e., happiness, can only be attained by striving to be god-like. The task left to Alcibiades is to follow the course (i.e., a Socratic education) that contributes to happiness.

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(2) In both dialogues philosophical endeavors need the sanction of something divine or its equivalent. This may suggest that philosophical activity happens for reasons beyond sheer human curiosity.
(3) Socrates approaches Alcibiades in a very flattering and seductive manner (103a–106b). The opening pages of the *Apology* is equally seductive, but stemming more from Socrates' self-effacement than fawning over the jurors (17a–21b). Socrates' continued attempt to seduce the jurors is revealed in his statements following the jury's vote of death. His intended audience is not the 501 jurors before him, *per se*, but the audience, both present and absent, of his philosophical sympathizers (38d1–4). The seduction is a specific seduction of the few. This is made clear when we recall that Socrates' opening remarks to the judges as "men of Athens" (17a) is an incorrect form of address. Whereas he calls those who voted for his acquittal "judges" (39e–40a), the correct form of address.
(4) I will conclude with one other leading idea found in both dialogues, the role time plays in confrontations between Socrates and his interlocutors. In the *Apology*, Socrates recounts the accusations brought against him by first making the following remark:

> Very well then. I must surely defend myself and attempt to uproot from your minds in so short a time the slander that has resided there so long …, but I think this is very difficult and I am fully aware of how difficult it is … . (19a–b)

In contrast to Socrates' admission in the *Apology*, in *Alcibiades Major*, ironically, time is the factor in Socrates holding back from speaking with Alcibiades. From all indications, when permission is finally given by the god, Socrates has all the time he needs in order to 'uproot' Alcibiades' presumptive knowledge of what rulers need to know to rule effectively (103a–b).

Addendum 2

Other Leading Ideas Found in Alcibiades Minor *(Socratic Traditionalism)*

The focus of my discussion in this addendum is Plato's *Alcibiades Minor*[1] and what I call traditionalism. It is the sort of traditionalism found in the characterization of knowledge as knowledge of utility. By characterizing knowledge in such a way, I argue that Socrates is endorsing a form of traditionalism that is referred to by the political philosopher Michael Oakeshott in his essay, 'Political Education,' (2001, 159–188) as traditions of behavior. In the essay, Oakeshott attempts to ground

[1] Except where indicated, Anthony Kenny's (1997, Cooper) translation is cited.

proper human doing not in 'timeless, ephemeral principles,' but in particular activities that are recognized as traditional modes of conduct. These traditions of behavior make up a craft and determine whether a crafts person puts his skills to good use, the subject of which Socrates is concerned with in *Alcibiades Minor*. In addition to discussing Oakeshott, I analyze three of Pindar's odes as illustrations of traditions of behavior that constitute an athlete's craft. Often the athlete's excellence is due to his command of a type of knowledge based in utility.

Knowledge of Utility

In *Alcibiades Minor*, Alcibiades is full of ambition and, until Socrates engages him in conversation, unaware of not knowing what he needs to know. The issue at hand is whether or not it is smart for Alcibiades and humans in general to pray for anything in particular, considering the fallibility of human knowledge. Why? Because without knowing it, explains Socrates, many pray for what they think are goods, when in fact, they are praying to receive things that will affect them badly once their prayers are granted by the gods. To illustrate his point, Socrates reminds Alcibiades of Oedipus' prayer. Oedipus inadvertently blurted out the prayer that his sons might take up arms to settle their inheritance. The gods granted his prayer, and Oedipus' sons killed one another (138b–c). The cautionary tale Socrates shares with Alcibiades introduces the topic of knowledge and its role within human affairs, the subject of which the remainder of the dialogue treats.

There are three significant passages where knowledge and its role are discussed. Each passage gets more specific about the role of knowledge, and in the third passage we finally see Socrates advocating a type of knowledge that is neither absolutely good, nor an ignorance that is absolutely evil. Instead, we see Socrates advocating the position that knowledge and its role is relative to the activity in which it is applied. For example, the knowledge required of a shoemaker is different from the knowledge required of a scientist. More importantly, in claiming the relativity of knowledge operative in human affairs, Socrates is expressing the idea that knowledge emerges from existing traditions of behavior, not the other way around. We do not customarily conceive a way of going about an activity in the abstract apart from the concrete activity of having engaged in the activity or having somehow been motivated by the activity. The man who is already a scientist and cognizant of the traditions of scientific inquiry knows *how* to formulate a hypothesis. However, expertise can be applied to different contexts and prove to be effective, but it would not be as effective as it would be in its native context. This latter point highlights the fact that craft knowledge does not arise *ex nihilo*, but from the activity of practicing the craft.

The first passage from *Alcibiades Minor* that I will look at (140e–141a) claims that the wise act and speak appropriately; the second passage (143d–e) speaks about wisdom in relation to ignorance. The claim made in the latter passage is that human error is due not to ignorance in general, but ignorance of the best. The third passage

(145b2–c) claims that those who act and speak appropriately and have knowledge of the best are wise, which is knowledge of utility.

After having explained to Alcibiades the difference between madness and stupidity, characterizing the latter as big-heartedness (μεγαλοψύχους 140c9) and the former as simply having large quantities of stupidity, Socrates resumes his discussion of the lessons learned from Oedipus and others who were not circumspect in what they prayed for. Socrates asks Alcibiades the following questions:

> Is it your view that the wise (φρονίμους) are those who know what should be done and said?—Yes.—And who are the stupid (Ἄφρονας)? Those who know neither of these things?—Just so.—And those who know neither of these things will say and do what they ought not, without knowing (λήσουσιν) that this is what they are saying and doing?—So it seems. (140e–141a)

Here we see Socrates reflecting on the role of wisdom in prayer, and more broadly, its role in human affairs. The way Socrates discusses wisdom suggests that the wise judge appropriately that their knowledge is right for an occasion and how it is to be applied to the occasion. For those like Oedipus neither knows that their knowledge is appropriate in circumstance X or once circumstance X arises, how to recognize and apply their knowledge to it. We also see that Socrates' description of wisdom lacks any sort of metaphysical baggage. Wisdom is practical reasoning that allows one to do the right thing in the right circumstances.

The next passage (143d–e) continues the discussion of knowledge and its role in human affairs, but it is widened to include a discussion of ignorance, and knowing what the best is as a criterion for right actions. We again return to the issue of prayer and how it can bring many evils. Alcibiades gives an account of those who think they are praying for good when, in fact, they are praying for evil by saying that all evil that befalls man is due to ignorance. In part, Alcibiades' account is correct, but he has cast his net too wide. Socrates says as much by insisting that Alcibiades 'specify what it is ignorance of' because ignorance is not an evil to certain people in certain states. To illustrate his need for specification, Socrates mentions the shocking story of Orestes and Alcmaeon who murdered their mothers to avenge the death of their fathers. Alcibiades' response to the story is quite emotional:

> Alcibiades: Spare me, for God's sake, Socrates!
>
> Socrates: It isn't the person who says that you should not ever want to behave like that whom you should ask to spare you, but rather any who contradicted (ἐναντία) him; for the act to you seems so horrendous that you do not like to hear it spoken of even by way of example. But do you think that Orestes, if he had been of sound mind and known what was best for him to do, would have dared to commit any such crime?
>
> Alcibiades: No, I don't.
>
> Socrates: Nor, I think, would anyone else.
>
> Alcibiades: Certainly not.

> Socrates: It seems then that it is ignorance (ἄγνοια) of the best (βελτίστου), failing to know what is the best, that is a bad thing. (143d–e)

Socrates limits Alcibiades' blanket indictment of ignorance as the cause of evil by adding that ignorance of the best is the cause of human evil. Considering the context of the passage under consideration, the best is not talked about as if it were only a regulative ideal. Orestes and Alcmaeon were ignorant of what would have been best to do under the circumstances they found themselves in. Both were consumed by rage, and in the case of Orestes, he also killed his mother's lover Aegisthus for plotting the murder of his father (*see* the *Odyssey* 1. 29ff., 298ff., 3. 303ff.). They would have exacted a punishment upon their mothers but one short of death, if they had been of sound mind and not ignorant of the best. The point to be gained is that the best is the criterion in all human affairs (145a–b).

Human affairs are varied, so to sharpen my focus I will speak about the best criterion within the context of an objective to be achieved, such as the orator giving advice on war or peace. The example is fitting because Socrates will connect the ignorance of the orator to the harmful effects experienced by his advisees. We should appreciate what is entailed by adopting the criterion of the best: by offering such a criterion, means-end reasoning is introduced, which helps us to appreciate the psychological aspect several choices among means to ends reveal about the person choosing. Socrates' claim is that there is *a* best means to a given end. What if we are ignorant of the best as the story of Orestes and Alcmaeon and Oedipus illustrate, but we have other skills (τέχνη) or abilities in our possession that make it possible to pursue what we mistakenly think is the best? If Oedipus had suddenly lost his voice before he blurted out his prayer his sons would not have been harmed; or if Alcmaeon had failed to recognize Clytemnestra he would not have killed his mother (*see* Socrates' (144b–c) shocking example of Alcibiades wanting to kill his mentor Pericles, but unable to do so because he cannot recognize him). Socrates intends for us to draw two lessons from these stories. The first lesson is that for certain people in certain states, ignorance, ironically, turns out to be the best course of action for those ignorant of the best; and secondly, not knowing the best, combined with skills, usually brings harm to their possessor.[2]

So far, the wise are those who know what should be done and said in the appropriate circumstances due to their practical reasoning, in contrast to the ignorant who fail to act appropriately because they are ignorant of the best. The passage I will now consider from *Alcibiades Minor* (145b2–c) is a more comprehensive look at the role of knowledge in human affairs. The passage gives a summation of how knowledge has been characterized up to this point in the dialogue, and it also illustrates the traditionalism that characterizes Socrates' conception of knowledge.

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[2] In Plato's *Crito* Socrates tells the young man: 'My dear Crito, your eagerness is worth much if it should have some right aim; if not, than the greater your keenness the more difficult it is to deal with you' (46b, Cooper).

To illustrate the idea that possessors of skills who lack knowledge of the best will be harmed, Socrates discusses with Alcibiades the role of orators. In focusing on the orator, Socrates not only emphasizes the harm that is done to the orator who lacks knowledge of the best, but also the harm done to those who act on the orator's advice:

> Well, do you call a man wise who knows how to give advice, but not what advice is better (βέλτιον) to give or when it is best to give it?—Certainly not.—Nor, I imagine, a man who knows how to make war, without knowing when or for how long war should best be made? Isn't that right?—Yes.—Nor again a man who knows how to kill or steal or banish people without knowing when it is better to do this, or to whom?—No.—So what we want is the person who knows one or the other of these things but also has the knowledge of what is best—which no doubt is the same as knowledge of utility (ὠφελίμου). (145b2–c)

In the passage under consideration, Socrates recounts what he has argued for in the other two passages about knowledge and its role in human affairs. Here he provides the added perspective that the type of knowledge he has characterized up to this point as a criterion, which is knowledge of the best, turns out to be the same as knowledge of utility. Socrates' use of the word ὠφελίμου to describe this type of knowledge is consistent with my argument that he is endorsing the idea that knowledge results from existing traditions of behavior that are relative to the activity of a particular craft.

In arguing that Socrates is making such an endorsement in *Alcibiades Minor*, I will survey Oakeshott's claims about traditions of behavior that inform what he refers to as the arrangements of society. For Oakeshott, tradition is useful to the degree it renders behavior efficient when engaged in various activities. The efficiency is due to the accumulation of knowledge gained through trial and error of the practice of a particular activity that is then distilled into traditions of behavior. These traditions of behavior are highly efficient and are informed by knowledge of the best or utility. I will also look at the types of athletic crafts Socrates cites in *Alcibiades Minor* (145d–146b) to justify his claim that knowledge of the best is the same as knowledge of utility. Due to Socrates' athletic illustrations cohering with Oakeshott's reflections on traditions of behavior, and the knowledge that informs those traditions, I refer to Socrates' endorsement of this kind of knowledge as Socratic traditionalism.

Oakeshott on Traditions of Behavior

Oakeshott's reflections on traditions of behavior in his essay 'Political Education' are motivated by what he sees as its opposite, the ideological style in politics. Although politics *per se* is not our concern in looking at *Alcibiades Minor*, it will be helpful to consider Oakeshott's description of the ideological style in politics as a foil for the concrete traditions of behavior that are exhibited in any activity or craft.

The ideological style of politics is an abridgement of ideas from the political traditions of a society. The ideologue fails to recognize that instead of his ideology

having been inspired by the concrete traditions of his political community or a political community, believes it to be the product of his intellectual premeditation. The significance of Oakeshott's description of the ideological style in politics is not unique to politics. His description is a rubric, *so to speak*, under which many crafts can be mistakenly approached. For example, Oakeshott compares the ideologues' disregard for the traditions of political behavior from which his ideology was abridged to the craft of cooking:

> It might be supposed that an ignorant man, some edible materials and a cookery book composes together the necessities of a self-moved (or concrete activity) called cooking. But nothing is further from the truth. The cookery book is not an independently generated beginning from which cooking can spring; it is nothing more than an abstract of somebody's knowledge of how to cook: it is the step-child, not the parent, of the activity. The book, in its turn, may help to set a man on to dressing dinner, but if it were his sole guide he could never, in fact, begin: the book speaks only to those who know already the kind of thing to expect from it and consequently how to interpret it (168).

The problem is not that the ignorant man or the ideologue has an abridged or summary knowledge; the problem arises in not acknowledging that the cook book and the ideology spring from traditions of behavior that efficiently determine and guide their respective ends. There needs to be constant reference to these traditions for the would-be practitioner or he runs the risk of demanding from the cook-book or ideology what it cannot possibly give.

The alternative to the ideological style in politics is captured in Oakeshott's remarks regarding the cook-book. The content of the book, its recipes, operates according to several presuppositions: it can only speak to those who know what to expect from it and how to interpret it. Is it not the case that when the cook opens a cook-book it is to mark a traditional affair? The cook-book is filled with recipes which, more often than not, have been handed down generationally. The ceremonial occasions the cook-book commemorate, may speak, for example, to the various seasons and what they bring. Those who consult the cook-book will have reasonable expectations of what its recipes promise if the recipes are followed correctly. Depending on the type of recipe, there will also be a familiarity with the appliances needed.

The cook tacitly understands that there will be an order to the ingredients that he must keep intact if he wants the desired end to be the best. Most importantly, by following the recipe, the cook is replicating activity that has already been determined and so he is guided by the knowledge gained through a specific tradition of behavior. The fundamental difference between these two approaches, the ideologue's disregard for the concrete origins of his ideology and the craftsman who replicates traditions of behavior, is that the former treats knowledge as if it can be decontextualized, neatly packaged and applied to radically different contexts without suffering the slightest attenuation in its effectiveness to render behavior

efficient, whereas the latter operates according to a fixed course within which traditions of behavior become highly efficient at achieving their proscribed end.

There is one more aspect of Oakeshott's reflections on traditions of behavior that needs discussion before I look at its relevance to the type of knowledge Socrates endorses in *Alcibiades Minor*. In speaking of the fixed course within which traditions of behavior operate, the image conjured up may have been one of behavior ceaselessly operating according to necessity. This image could not be further from how traditions of behavior operate, and Oakeshott explains as much by introducing the concept of intimations. Again, we must keep in mind that Oakeshott's discussion of traditions of behavior takes place within the context of politics and so intimations are spoken of within the context of the political. Nonetheless, we find his discussion of intimations applicable to traditions of behavior found in various crafts. The efficiency that results from a tradition of behavior is not due to the 'grind' of necessity that ever pushes on, but to its ability to use the resources found in its own traditions of behavior to modify and regulate itself (177–178). The ability to exploit these resources or intimations, Oakeshott explains, is native to traditions of behavior:

> This activity [traditions of behavior that make up a society's political activity], then, springs … from the existing traditions of behavior themselves. And the form it takes, because it can take no other, is the amendment of existing arrangements by exploring and pursuing what is intimated in them. The arrangements which constitute a society capable of political activity whether they are customs or institutions or laws or diplomatic decisions, are at once coherent and incoherent; they compose a pattern and at the same time they intimate a sympathy for what does not fully appear. Political activity is the exploration of that sympathy; and consequently, relevant political reasoning will be the convincing exposure of a sympathy, present but not yet followed up, and the convincing demonstration that now is the appropriate moment for recognizing it (173–174).

It is the intimations found in traditions of behavior that renders tradition useful. How we utilize the intimations will dictate to what degree tradition can be useful. This is why the idea of sympathy is important for Oakeshott, and goes some distance in accounting for the type of knowledge endorsed by Socrates: crafts, like politics, are recognizable precisely because they operate according to traditions of behavior. They are not seeking innovation at every turn, but the innovation that may be desired results in a piecemeal process in which intimations from within the craft are pursued to achieve a given end. Socrates has this sort of scenario in mind when, in the context of discussing the orator's craft and what advice the orator should be capable of giving, he speaks of knowledge of the best as being the same as knowledge of utility. The orator must know both the traditions of behavior that have defined his craft, considering he is a part of the tradition, and when to tweak the tradition, as the occasion demands, in order to make his oratory most effective.

Knowledge of Utility
Socratic Traditionalism and Pindar's Athletes

Following Socrates' admission (145b2–c) that knowledge of the best is the same as knowledge of utility, he queries Alcibiades about what more is needed to make one wise other than simply knowing about particular crafts. Here Socrates is rehearsing what he and Alcibiades have already established regarding the inadequacy of the possessor of skills (i.e., the orator) who lacks knowledge of the best. The rehearsal canvasses other possessors of skills that are operative in certain crafts but who have the same lack. About such crafts, Socrates poses several questions:

> Now suppose we have a person who knows how to ride or shoot, or box (πυκτεύειν), or wrestle (παλαίειν), or compete in any other sport or exhibit any other skill (τέχνη). What do you call the person who knows how best to exercise a particular skill? If it is the skill of riding, I expect you will call him a good rider.—I will.—And if it is boxing, you will call him a good boxer, and if it is flute-playing (αὐλητικὴν) you will call him a good flute-player, and so in other cases. Or do you disagree?—No, not at all.—Now do you think that knowing about these things suffices to make a person wise, or is more needed?—Much more, upon my life (145c9–145d3).

Knowing about these things does not make one wise because the possessor of the skills Socrates lists do not know when or on whom it is better for them to exercise their skills because they lack what is most important, the knowledge of utility. Socrates' appeal to the criterion of utility in grounding the type of knowledge the possessor of skills must have, as opposed to a metaphysical, ahistorical criterion, endorses tradition as the arbiter of what is best. Such an endorsement can be illustrated by exploring the crafts highlighted in the aforementioned passage.

As we have seen, the best courses of action for the craftsman are the few alternatives among the traditions of behavior that have been handed down to him. Additionally, the traditions of behavior the craftsman choose to replicate are quite efficient at what they produce. In the passage under consideration, Socrates' list of skills is indicative of the traditionalism I am ascribing to him. Among the crafts listed, the most notable are boxing, wrestling and flute-playing. When looking at each of these crafts individually, excellence at them requires that the practitioner know the craft's tradition sufficiently enough to be recognized as a practitioner of the craft, and to know when to tweak the tradition enough to accommodate novel circumstances or new opponents. However, before I look at each of the three crafts individually, a brief description of each craft, and its traditional significance to the ancient Greek world, is in order.

Boxing, wrestling and flute-playing are traditional, physical education crafts that date back to the eighth-century BCE. Homer speaks of boxing and wrestling in the *Iliad* (23. 262–897) and the *Odyssey* (8. 120–130) in accounting for the funeral games for Patroclus. Flute-playing dates back to the sixth-century BCE and was popularized mainly by the Pythian Games, which featured musical contests. The importance of boxing, wrestling and flute-playing, as well as other athletic competitions, was due to an aristocratic culture of sport which saw physical training

occupying 'the place of honour' (Marrou 1956, 40). An important factor in gaining competence in these athletic events was to take lessons from a trainer (παιδοτρίβης) who coached the young on the sports grounds (παλαίστρα) with the intention of fielding the best athletes during the pan-Hellenic games. The coach was also responsible for having his athletes maintain a strict dietary regimen. From the middle of the fifth-century BCE there were four major venues for athletic competitions, all of which featured boxing and wrestling: Olympian, Pythian, Nemean and the Isthmian Games (*OCD* 206). Flute-playing was featured only in the Pythian Games.

The event of boxing required that the boxer wear gloves consisting of hard bandages (ἱμαντες ὀξεῖς) with the fingers protruding against leather strips to keep them in place. Unlike modern day boxing, boxing in antiquity did not take place in a ring, there were no rounds, which enabled matches to last until an opponent gave up due to exhaustion,[3] and kicking was allowed (Marrou 122).

Wrestling was the most popular event at all four Games. Its popularity was signified by the use of the word παλαίστρα for the gymnasium and for physical education as a whole (Marrou 122). Each wrestler, after drawing lots, was paired off. The object of the wrestling match, of which there were three rounds, was to throw the opponent on to the ground without falling down with him. If both opponents fell, no points were won by the thrower. It did not matter how one's opponent fell, although leg-holds were forbidden and tripping was allowed.

Flute (αὐλός)[4]-playing was featured in the Pythian Games along with other musical contests such as cithara-playing and singing to the cithara. Although not much is known about how musical contests were conducted and decided, the tradition of flute-playing is captured in an Ode written by Pindar for a victor by the name of Midas of Akragas, about whom I will say more when discussing the praise offered to the victors of the Games.

When considering the practitioners of these traditional, physical education crafts, we see that it was not just the athleticism of the victors that is celebrated; it is the tradition of the individual craft, the significance of success and the glorification of natural talent complemented by laborious effort. Indeed, the victors are celebrated as embodying traditions of behavior that call for strict discipline and informed spontaneity. Moreover, the athlete's informed spontaneity is made possible by the resources or intimations of his craft's traditions. The most significant chronicler of the games and their traditions is the sixth-century poet Pindar. Pindar was a conservative Boiotian aristocrat whose interest in the Games was primarily

[3] Marrou tells the story of the Emperor Titus who tired his opponents out by keeping his guard up for two whole days without letting his opponent get a single blow in. Titus' tactic sounds a lot like the 'rope-a-dope,' the tactic the great American heavy weight champion Mohammed Ali employed to tire his opponents out. Ali simply danced around the ring while guarding himself, leaned against the ropes occasionally, until his opponent, intent on pursuing him, eventually exhausted himself.

[4] The αυλός was a reed instrument; the oboe is its nearest relative.

philosophical (Bowra 1969, ix–xviii).[5] Each of Pindar's odes was commissioned by patrons, often aristocratic families, who wanted to sing the praise of athletes originating from their respective Greek cities.

I will now look at relevant passages from three of Pindar's odes; each ode commemorates a victor at one of the four Games in boxing, wrestling and flute-playing. The odes are typically divided into three sections. Each ode contains an opening and closing section devoted to the victor's success, while the central section of the ode consists of a mythical narrative addressing the significance of tradition for the victor. The narrative may focus on the deeds of the heroes who are from the city the victor originates, which accounts for the tradition that produced the qualities displayed by the victor; it may serve as a negative contrast to the victor's situation; and it may reflect a generalized aspect of the victor's success. The central section of the odes will be my main focus because in it homage is being paid to the traditions of the craft and how well the victor has replicated and added to the craft through laborious effort.

Boxing

In *Olympian X* (c. 474 BCE), which praises the victor Hagesidamos of Western Locroi, winner in the boys' boxing, there are two significant passages. The first passage accounts for the divine context in which Hagesidamos' win is placed. The second passage places Hagesidamos within the context of winners of various sporting events from the past.

Pindar begins the ode by asking the muses and truth, daughter of Zeus, to read him the name of the Olympian victor Hagesidamos, son of Archestratos, in preparation for the praise that was promised him in the past and now must be paid (I, 5–10). Pindar then acknowledges the Lokrians of the West for their local tradition of poetry, mainly love songs, and upon Zeus' request he proceeds to situate Hagesidamos victory within the grand tradition of the Games:

> Without labor few find joy, a light upon life that makes up for all efforts. The ordinances of Zeus have roused me to sing of the grandest Games, which by the ancient tomb of Pelops, with contests six in number, Herakles founded when he slew Poseidon's son, fine Kteatos…, (II, 20–25).

By speaking of the origins of the Olympic Games, Pindar casts Hagesidamos' as an heir to noble traditions of behavior that seek to reward the athlete-hero for surmounting the hardships and enduring the labor that inevitably arises from the pursuit and mastery of a craft. One aspect of this noble tradition consists of Herakles surmounting the twelve labors to found the Olympic festival in honor of his father Zeus. Pindar connects Hagesidamos' win with Herakles' fifth labor in particular. The fifth labor requires Herakles to clean the stable of Augeas for a fee,

[5] Except where indicated, Bowra's translations of Pindar's odes are cited.

but after Herakles' task is complete Augeas refuses to pay the fee he promised. Herakles exacts revenge on Augeas by leading an army to sack Elis while successfully repelling an attack by Eurytos and Poseidon's son Kteatos, whom Herakles kills. With the spoils from his conquest of Elis, Herakles establishes the four-yearly Olympic Games in Pisa (Graves 1996, Vol. I., 490–491). Although Pindar recognizes that Hagesidamos' win is due to the athlete's disciplined labor, it's not the only thing that accounts for his success. Pindar reminds us that the Gods have a say in all things and that Hagesidamos needs to acknowledge the divine in the spirit of Herakles whom, after having fenced off the area in which athletic contests would be held—'The hill of Cronus,' he erected six alters to the Olympian Gods, one for each pair, alongside the sacrificial hearth he founded in honor of his great-grandfather Pelops (Graves 491).

Might Pindar, in speaking of the Gods, be offering commentary on the unknown element in Hagesidamos' victory? Pindar refers to the divine as an essential feature of what motivates the athlete's success. It would be nonsensical to account for the informed spontaneity, the split-second decisions, the good athlete excels at without appreciating the degree to which the good athlete knows the divine traditions of his craft, and so is able to exploit its use for psychological momentum. Oakeshott's intimations—the various resources that are contained within traditions of behavior that, if correctly exploited, render traditions useful—are at play in Hagesidamos' victory.

The second passage of Pindar's ode places Hagesidamos' win alongside winners of the first Olympian Games and the festive events that greeted them:

> All the holy place was loud with song in the glad feasting the music banquets. We follow the first beginnings and in the namesake song of glorious triumph we shall sing aloud of the thunderbolt and the fire-flung shaft of Zeus, the noise-awakener, the flaming lightening, fitting in every victory; the luxuriant music songs shall answer the pipe (IV, 75–85).

The athletes that performed in the first Olympic Games, all of whom are unknown, are: Oionos, winner in the foot-race; Echemos, winner in boys' wrestling; Doryklos, winner in boys' boxing; Phrastor, winner in the javelin throw; and Nikeus, winner in the stone-throw (70–75). Pindar's acknowledgement of the first Olympic victors places Hagesidamos' win within a long tradition of athletes excelling at their individual crafts, and Hagesidamos, as an Olympic victor, should also be celebrated.

Wrestling

In *Nemean VI* (c.461 BCE), which praises the victor Alkimidas of Aigina, winner in the boys' wrestling, the historical record is sparse in accounting for the details of praise bestowed upon his victory. Nonetheless, the ode reflects my central concern with illustrating traditions of behavior as knowledge based in utility, the type of

knowledge Socrates endorses in *Alcibiades Minor*. *Nemean VI* focuses on the fact that Alkimidas descends from a family that includes many fine athletes. Wrestling is only one of the many sporting events that Alkimidas' family has excelled at. Pindar acknowledges Alkimidas' familial descent as follows:

> Even now Alkimidas gives visible witness that his race is like the fruitful fields which change about and now give men abounding life from the soil, now rest again and pick up strength. He has come from Nemea's well-loved Games, a boy in the struggle, who follows this calling from Zeus; he has been revealed a hunter and had good sport in the wrestling (I, 5–15).

The 'visible witness' Pindar speaks of may, in part, nt that laid the groundwork for Alkimidas' victory, but when we consider that 'fruitful fields' need cultivation, and the yield one gains due to cultivation reflects toil ('now rest again and pick up strength'), it is more plausible to read Pindar as putting greater emphasis on the discipline that is demanded from well performed crafts. Alkimidas' athletic family is composed of craftsmen who have honed their craft generationally, which goes some distance in explaining their continued success. Other passages suggest that traditions of behavior practiced by his family, complemented by toil and the divine, is what accounts for Alkimidas' victory.

The last stanza of the ode, for example, is more direct about the connection between traditions of behavior learned in Alkimidas' family, the divine and toil. Pindar comments on all three:

> He plants his feet in the kindred tracks of his father's father, Praxidamas; for he, an Olympic victor, first brought twigs from Alpheos to the Aiakidai; He was crowned five times at the Isthmus, thrice at Nemea, and saved Sokleidas from oblivion, who was first of Hagesidamos' sons. To his delight three prize-winners reached the peak of prowess by tasting toil. With good fortune from God (I–II, 15–25).

The descent of the family is Hagesimachos, Sokleidas, Praxidamas, Theon, and Alkimidas (Bowra 209). The stanzas implicit claim is that Alkimidas' family embody traditions of behavior that have proven highly efficient at fielding successful athletes in the Games. The familial athletic tradition began with Hagesimachos, and I can only surmise that he, too, was a part of a local tradition that stressed athletic endeavors. Pindar's larger point is that from Hagesimachos to Alkimidas, traditions of behavior were gained through concrete activity which became the basis on which each successive generation relied and replicated, but it also became a basis on which to learn from the tradition's intimations: how best the tradition could be put to the best use. This is precisely Socrates' point in *Alcibiades Minor* when he criticizes craftsmen for having a skill but not knowing how best to use it, which is shown by their not knowing 'when or on whom it was better for them to exercise their skills…' (145e–146b).

Flute-Playing

The last ode we will consider from Pindar is *Pythian XII* (c.490 BCE). The ode praises Midas of Akragas, winner in the flute-playing. The mythical backdrop of the ode is the occasion that inspired Athena to invent the flute and the tune 'The Many-Headed,' which mimicked the voice's lament of the Gorgon Euryala for the killing of her sister Medusa by Perseus (Graves 223–230 and Bowra 30). *Pythian XII* does not directly address mortal practitioners of the craft of flute-playing that may have influenced Midas. What it does treat is the relationship between the human voice and the mimetic quality of the flute. In keeping with its origins as a voice-like instrument, Pindar suggests that the craft of the good flute-player consists in replicating the expressiveness of the voice. Thus, a degree of informed spontaneity goes into the craft of flute-playing due to its ability to relieve and reflect the passions.[6]

The passages I will reflect on are from the end of section three and the beginning of section four. They read as follows:

> And when she delivered from these labors the man she loved, the Maiden created the flute's wide-ranging music, to copy in it that strong and loud lamentation which reached her from Euryala's eager jaws … Blown through thin bronze, and blown through the reeds which grow near the fair-spaced city of the Graces in the garden of the Nymph of Kaphisos. Wherever dancing is, they are sure to be. Any bliss that man may win (And without labor, none!)… (III–IV, 15–32).

Although Athena invented the flute, she gave it to mortal man without traditions of behavior to follow in the strict sense that Oakeshott describes. If there are no traditions of behavior for Midas to have followed, and a degree of informed spontaneity is part and parcel of flute-playing, what accounts for his success and my reading of *Pythian XII* as an illustration of the type of knowledge of utility Socrates endorses in *Alcibiades Minor*?

The role of the Graces in the craft of flute-playing justifies my reading. The Graces were Aglaia (Glory), Euphrosyna (Mirth) and Thalia (Health), and they had a prominent place in local cult at Orchomenos. The Graces make it possible for the flute-player to reproduce, as life-like as possible, the many sounds of the human voice. The role of the graces does not render the good flute-player's abilities inexplicable simply because his playing is divinely inspired. The role of the Graces can be read in pedestrian way: Midas' success is due to his ability to be spontaneous by reproducing a range of emotions, originally conveyed by the human voice, in a very short period of time. Traditions of behavior and its use value (intimations) may be consulted insofar as the flute-player constantly tries to render life-like the sounds his flute replicates, and he does so in a piecemeal fashion each time he tries.

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[6] This is one of the reasons why Aristotle says that citizens can listen to flute but not learn to play it: 'The proper time for using it is when the performance aims not at instruction, but at the relief of the passions' (*Pol*. 1341a20–25; cf. *Republic* 399d).

Conclusion

In this addendum, I have analyzed what I refer to as Socratic traditionalism, a type of knowledge endorsed by Socrates in *Alcibiades Minor*. What constitutes this type of knowledge are traditions of behavior that can be mastered and replicated as well as serve as a basis of change for the craftsmen to adapt to new circumstances or competitors. Oakeshott's discussion of intimations complements Socrates.' If a craftsmen is successful in using his tradition, not only is he in possession of the skill that defines his craft, he is able to put the skill to good use by successfully exploiting his tradition's intimations (i.e., the resources contained within traditions of behavior that render traditions useful and efficient). My treatment of Pindar's athletes has illustrated how traditional, physical education crafts embody traditions of behavior in *Alcibiades Minor* and Oakeshott. The athlete's craft is the supreme theater in which tradition and utility based knowledge converge. With respect to his craft, often the best athlete is the consistently traditional athlete.

The significance of Socrates endorsing a view of knowledge that functions in this manner is that it cautions us against the ideologues failure to see knowledge as the abridgement of concrete traditions of behavior instead of the product of intellectual premeditation.

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