VIRTUE, THE CITY AND THE SOUL IN ALCIBIADES MAJOR AND THE APOLOGY

How is self-knowledge related to the soul and the *polis*?

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Introduction

The *First Alcibiades* of Plato has been considered a problematic dialogue since the 19th century. From that time on, the place that this dialogue should have in the platonic *corpus* has been continuously discussed and its authenticity as Platonic work has been disputed by many.[1]

However, in antiquity, this dialogue was held to be completely unproblematic and its authenticity was never doubted. What is more, it was considered to form an excellent introduction to Plato's philosophy even among the Neoplatonists.[2] Some modern scholars have agreed with the ancients on the importance of this dialogue as an integral part of the Platonic philosophy and have made contributions to solving the problems presented in it and defending its authenticity.[3]

The *Alcibiades*[4] was seen as the first dialogue to be read as *ἀρχή* or basis of philosophy in general, because it deals with the question of what human nature consists in; knowledge of who we are is essentially prior to knowledge of things external to us, and therefore the *Alcibiades* was considered as the first dialogue to be read, before all other dialogues, since it is the most apt to teach the reader the knowledge of the true human nature, that is our rational soul.[5] According to Albinus, there is yet another reason why *Alcibiades* is considered the best introduction to philosophy, namely that the reader, when introduced to philosophy, should possess the same dispositions as Alcibiades in this dialogue – that is, natural abilities, age, motivation, disposition and leisure.[6]

I personally support the importance of this dialogue independently of its authenticity. Therefore, while not making any direct claims about its authenticity in this thesis, I totally agree with Julia Annas that a treatment of this dialogue as Platonic

[1] The authenticity of the *First Alcibiades* was first put into question in 1809 by the German scholar Friedrich Schleiermacher in his German edition of *Schleiermacher's Introductions to the Dialogues of Plato* (English translation published in 1836, New York, pp. 328-336), and he was followed by many. For the history of defenses for and against authenticity see Heidel 1896, p. 62 and Thesleff 1982, pp. 215-217.
[2] For the privileged status of the *Alcibiades* in antiquity see Renaud and Tarrant, p. 6.
[3] For arguments *pro* authenticity see Annas 1985, p.118 and Denyer 2001, pp. 5-11.
[4] From now on I will be referring to the dialogue *First Alcibiades* merely as *Alcibiades*, since I won't be making any references to the *Second Alcibiades*. The edition used for the Greek text of *Alcibiades* is that of Denyer, 2001. Translations are my own.
[5] See Renaud and Tarrant, 2015, p.6.
[6] Idem, n13.

in any case benefits our understanding and interpretation of Plato's philosophy in general.[7]

The aim of the present thesis is to argue that Socrates presents the care of the soul as altering one's priorities to fit two main purposes: the first extends to a personal level and amounts to a life according to human nature, and therefore according to wisdom, which is peculiar to humans alone. However, the ideal of caring for one's soul as transforming one's priorities is not only related to the personal level of an individual living as an entity. The second purpose extends to the level of the *polis*: caring for the soul amounts to altering one's priorities in order to fit citizenry as a whole. In order to fulfill this aim I shall relate this twofold purpose of self-care to two Socratic works: The *Alcibiades* and the *Apology*. By comparing the two works and the ideal of transforming one's priorities as presented in both, I aim to investigate to what extent this ideal works the same in both texts. In other words, does it make any difference whether it concerns the priorities of Alcibiades himself or those of the *polis* as a whole?

In the first chapter I shall examine the text of *Alcibiades*, which is a dialogue primarily concerned with the nature of man and the notion of self-care. Socrates is urging Alcibiades to care for his own self, as a prerequisite in order to realize his ambition to be a politician. The purpose of the first chapter of this thesis is to show that self-care requires altering one's priorities on the personal level, which – as I shall argue – amounts to ordering one's soul with the power of wisdom. At the same time I shall show how this notion of self-care is to be understood in the context of Alcibiades' political ambitions. To this end, I shall argue that self-care is presented by Socrates as a transformative ideal that serves individual and political purposes. Through getting to know his own self and caring for it properly, Alcibiades can transform in the direction of justice and become a virtuous man, i.e. a man able to rule. Therefore, Socrates intends to re-order the priorities of Alcibiades - i.e. trying to have virtue be his ultimate goal - in order to assist him in the realization of his ambition. For, if he is to properly order the world around him as a statesman, he must first be able to order his own self. Socrates, thus, starts by explaining to Alcibiades that caring for his self and turning towards justice is expedient and even necessary for a successful political career. Therefore, in order to care for himself and transform to a

[7] Cf. Annas 1985, p.111.

man who is able and worthy of ruling, Alcibiades must get to know what his true self is. For, indeed, caring for himself and turning towards virtue with the transformative power of wisdom can help Alcibiades know what the good is not only for himself, but for the city as a whole. Finally, I hope to make clear that this dialogue is not only concerned with what the self truly is, but also with the relation of self-knowledge and self-care to others and to the *polis*. My aim is to show that what Socrates means by self-care doesn't lead to an intellectual ideal of concentration on one's self alone, but rather to the altruistic and political ideal of knowing your nature as something you share with other human beings. Self-knowledge is described in the dialogue as a prerequisite in order to be able to live with others. Therefore, self-care is actually a process of shaping virtuous *citizens*. Presented as an altruistic ideal and as the basis for politics, self-care is therefore to be understood as in pairs with Alcibiades' political ambitions.

To this end, I shall further deal in the first chapter with the identification of the human self with the soul. As such, I shall argue that Socrates stretches the questions of "what am I individually as a character?" and "what is the human being?" in order to arrive at what one *ought to* be, in order to be human – and happy as a human in a *polis*. I aim to show that Socrates offers a twofold understanding of the human self – in both a particular and a universal aspect – and what is more, he offers a philosophical explanation of why self-knowledge matters. I agree with Leo Strauss at this point, that the intention of Socrates in his approach of Alcibiades is primarily to shape his politics in the direction of civic virtue through character formation and understanding.[8] Self-knowledge here is inextricably linked with cognizance of other natural human types.[9] Finally, in the end of this chapter I shall show that the purpose of Alcibiades in the dialogue is at foremost ethical, as the moral improvement that can only follow after knowledge and understanding of one's nature, essence and place in the world, *but* it is stressed here as the required basis of any political goal, that should include understanding of one's place in the society – consequently, the political dimensions of such a goal are underlined.

In the second chapter of the present thesis, I shall examine the *Apology* of Socrates, which I shall argue is concerned primarily with the ideal of self-care to the extent of the *polis*: altering one's priorities in order to fit citizenry as a whole. In this

[8] Strauss, 1964, pp.2-3.
[9] Parra, 2010, p.44.

second chapter, I shall offer a parallel reading of the *Alcibiades* and the *Apology*, since the former's discussion of self-knowledge and the identification of one's real self with the soul make it undisputedly part of the context of the latter. Indeed, in the *Apology*, we find the theme of self-care again, as well as the striving of the soul to become *ὡς βελτίστη*, i.e. the best it can be.[10] Socrates is trying to convince not Alcibiades, but the Athenians this time, to care for virtue (*ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἀρετῆς*)[11]. Instead of caring for money or fame, Socrates urges the Athenians to rather care for wisdom and truth and the perfection of their own soul.[12] Therefore, the aim of Socrates in this dialogue, just like in the *Alcibiades*, is to make people take care of their self by caring for virtue only, rather than for other things.[13] In other words, Socrates is trying to alter the priorities of the Athenians and help them stop caring for the wrong things (*οὐκ ἐπιμελοῦνται ὧν δεῖ*).[14] As such, my aim in this second chapter is to show that self-care as caring for one's soul is presented in the *Apology* too as establishing priorities in life, as an ethical goal of understanding the priority of some values among other ones and as an ideal of transforming one's self with the power of wisdom. Finally, I shall argue, the ideal presented by Socrates is that of transforming one's priorities to fit citizenry as a whole. That is to say, the Athenians ought to properly order their priorities from part to whole, i.e. not only altering their priorities as individuals, but also focusing on the priorities held by citizenry as a whole. As a result, in this dialogue again, like in the *Alcibiades*, politics seems to start with self-care.

The examination of the two Socratic works will lead towards answering the main question which serves as the title of the present thesis: How is self-care related to the soul and the *polis*? In other words, how does altering one's priorities reflect the ordering of the soul and how does it relate to the wider field of the city? Is there a difference in striving to alter a person's priorities by leading the soul to justice and in striving to make the *polis* better by leading it to just and fair priorities? Is the prioritization and ordering of goods presented differently when directed to Alcibiades and when directed to the Athenians? The examination and comparison of the

[10] Plato, Apology, 29e1, cf. 36c7. I use the OXFORD edition for Plato's Apology (Burnet, 2002). Translations are my own, unless differently mentioned.
[11] Plato, Apology, 31b5.
[12] Plato, Apology, 29d7-e2.
[13] Plato, Apology, 41e4-5.
[14] Plato, Apology, 41e5-6.

arguments given by Socrates in both situations aims to determine how the ideal plays out in the different context of the two works.

The examination of the *Alcibiades* will shed light upon the notion of the self and its relation to the soul, while making a contribution to the relation between soul and *polis*. In the first chapter it will already become evident why Alcibiades should go on such a quest for his own true self and how this is relevant to his ambition to successfully embark on politics. Alcibiades is a man who trusts too much on himself, and is therefore inclined to believe that he is ready to rule, because of the superiority of his natural abilities compared to the ones of his political competitors. Socrates is attempting to show Alcibiades all the way that the great qualities which he possesses are bodily and external goods - such as good looks, wealth, and a noble ancestry - rather than the good state of his soul, which results from the cultivation of wisdom. Socrates' attempt is actually a criticism of Alcibiades' priorities, and reflects a lot of his criticism of the priorities of the Athenians in the *Apology*, where the prioritization and ordering of goods is granted broader discussion. Therefore, on this matter, I absolutely agree with Andre Archie that the *Alcibiades* and the *Apology* are natural complements to each other, as argued in his great book on this dialogue.[15] Indeed, both dialogues lay foundations for the right ordering of values. The themes of virtue and the ordering of priorities in life, as giving to each thing its appropriate value deserved, constitute principal parts of the discussion in the *Alcibiades* as well as in the *Apology*. I shall argue that the goal Socrates wants to achieve by criticizing the priorities Alcibiades sets in his life in this dialogue is actually the same goal he has when criticizing the priorities of the Athenians and their valuing of the wrong things as found in the *Apology*. In both cases, Socrates is trying to give the interlocutor(s) the right *direction* in life, that is to say, he is trying to lead people to direct their lives to virtue as the ultimate end. The difference between the two works is a difference of audience: In the Alcibiades Socrates addresses the proper ordering of priorities plays out in a specific interlocutor with a specific ambition.[16] That is to say, while the *Alcibiades* is primarily concerned with Alcibiades' priorities as an individual, in the *Apology*, the priorities of the Athenians reflect the priorities of the *polis* as well. There is, thereby, a difference in scope among the two texts and a distinction between the

[15] Archie, 2015, p. 87.
[16] Archie, 2015, p. 92.

ordering of individual values and the ordering of the values of the city and citizenry as a whole.

To conclude, the *Alcibiades* may have been a controversial dialogue in modern times on ground of its authenticity. However, authenticity matters laid apart, this dialogue is definitely of undisputed value for the study of Platonic philosophy. As argued in Renaud and Tarrant's great book on the *Alcibiades*, "it is a dialogue concerned with the development of the human being from his first conversations as a toddler… to the good or ill that he can ultimately do his city".[17] Independently of belonging or not to the Platonic corpus, this dialogue is of utmost importance for setting forth the issue of the care for the self as the process of getting to know what constitutes the real human nature. What is more, this dialogue makes a great contribution to the difference between self and individuality, it connects self-knowledge to virtue and therefore to moral improvement, and last but not least, it links all those issues to the *polis*, thereby making contributions not only to what virtue of man means, but also to the virtue of the citizen.

[17] Renaud and Tarrant, 2015, p.272.

Chapter 1: Self-knowledge and the *Alcibiades*

- The importance of self-knowledge

The dialogue *Alcibiades Major* begins with Socrates' approach of the young Alcibiades, who has just reached his 20th year of age. Socrates begins by ensuring that the young man understands the reasons for this approach and goes on to enumerate them (103a1-104c). According to the laws of the Athenian state, all free men from the age of 20 and upwards had the right to enter public life and present themselves before the Athenian assembly.[18] From Socrates' very first words it becomes evident that Socrates regards Alcibiades as an arrogant man who looked down upon his fellow citizens and as a result had been abandoned by all his friends.[19] The cause of his arrogance was probably, as Socrates explains from the very beginning (104a1-104c), that Alcibiades trusted way too much on his natural charismas, such as his origin and affinity to Pericles, his beauty, his wealth, his intelligence and his social status. Socrates, however, claims to have always silently watched him and has finally decided to approach him to help him fulfil his ambitions regarding a political career (105a1-106a1).[20]

Indeed, Socrates manages to bring down Alcibiades' arrogance and to expose him to his ignorance concerning political matters by means of a long dialogue.[21] Alcibiades' ambition is to rule not only in Athens, but even to predominate in the rest of the then known world.. Through a series of questions Socrates makes Alcibiades admit that he's never been taught nor has he undertaken any effort to find out (*ἐθέλων αὐτὸς ζητεῖν*, 106d9) about matters concerning public rule and administration, and yet he has never doubted his knowledge and competency on such matters prior to his conversation with Socrates. Therefore, Socrates points out, he should be very competent in public matters, especially justice (109b6-d1), and certainly more

[18] Liakakos & Lagios 1977, 14. Cf. *Alc*. 105a-105b, 106c3-5.
[19] 103b4-7: "ὡς πρὸς τοὺς ἐραστὰς ἔσχες· πολλῶν γὰρ γενομένων καὶ μεγαλοφρόνων οὐδεὶς ὃς οὐχ ὑπερβληθεὶς τῷ φρονήματι ὑπὸ σοῦ πέφευγεν" (=your behavior to your loved ones: for although they have been numerous and high-spirited, none of them is left who has not been surmounted by your spirit and has run away).
[20] Socrates claims to be the only one who could help Alcibiades reach his goals, with the help of God (*μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ*), 105e1-5.
[21] The dialogue covers the entire Socratic work *Alcibiades Major*, 103a1-135e8.

competent than his fellow citizens and his enemies, if he is to be of any profit to Athens. But Socrates proves to him that he has no clue on the content of justice and injustice and therefore he would be unable to give good advice to his fellow citizens upon what is the most just and also the most profitable thing to do (109e2 – 113d1). After Alcibiades has come to great confusion through his own contradicting answers, Socrates assures him that he suffers from double ignorance, i.e. not only does he not know the most important things, but he is not even aware of his own ignorance, since so far he has considered himself a master of such matters (116e2 – 119b1). Alcibiades finally comes to admit once more that Socrates is right and realizes there is only one way for him to fulfil his ambitions: to try to improve his ignorant state through taking care (*ἐπιμέλεια*) of himself (124b1-10).

The purpose of the *ἐπιμέλεια* is defined as making people as good as possible (*ὡς ἄριστος*, 124d11) not in regard to particular matters, relating for example to horse-riding or weaving, but rather in regard to the general political interest of state government.[22] Therefore, Alcibiades needs to acquire excellence in good counsel (*εὐβουλία*, 125e10) relating to managing one's own and other's affairs, which requires knowing the art that constitutes the foundation of good state government (*τέχνη κυβερνητική*, 125d12)[23]. Socrates then asks Alcibiades what the thing is one has to take care of when caring for himself and what constitutes, consequently, the real self:

> *φέρε δή, τί ἐστιν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι—μὴ πολλάκις λάθωμεν οὐχ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιμελούμενοι, οἰόμενοι δέ —καὶ πότ' ἄρα αὐτὸ ποιεῖ ἄνθρωπος; ἆρ' ὅταν τῶν αὑτοῦ ἐπιμελῆται, τότε καὶ αὐτοῦ; (127e-128a)*
>
> *Tell me then, what does it mean to take care of oneself? For, doesn't it, many times, escape our notice that while not taking care of ourselves, we just think we do so? And when then is a man actually doing this (taking care of*

[22] This is the famous Socratic technai-analogy, which argues that just like the craft of the shoemaker is to make shoes, and of the doctor to heal, on the same way also the art of ruling belongs to the ruler. Therefore, the art of managing the affairs of the city should only be taken up by the ones who are experts to it.

[23] The analogy argues that just like the ship must be managed by the captain and not by someone who is ignorant of controlling ships, this way also the city must be managed by the one who has the knowledge and skills to rule cities.

himself)? I wonder, whenever he's taking care of his belongings, is he then also taking care of himself?[24]

It then becomes clear that it is actually a different thing to care for the things belonging or relating to oneself (*τῶν αὐτοῦ*) than to care for one's real self (*αὐτοῦ*) and that these objects of care, being distinct from one another, also require two different kinds of art (*τέχνη*) to initiate the care (128d3-7). Therefore, the art Alcibiades needs is the art that improves the real self. But, Socrates argues, it is impossible to know which art improves one's self if one does not know what the self is (128e10-11). And this way the discussion is led to the problem of how exactly the human self ought to be conceived of.

- The distinction between two selves

Socrates manages to motivate Alcibiades to inquire into justice, by convincing him that doing so is in his own interest, since he ought to be competent in such matters if he is to lead a successful political career. He also manages to convince Alcibiades that the first step in order to achieve this kind of knowledge is to recognize his own ignorance of that matter. Then, after recognizing his ignorance, Alcibiades can move on to try improving his ignorant state by acquiring knowledge. Socrates, however, convinces him that the first step in order to acquire knowledge is to get to know his own self. For it is impossible to improve his own self without first knowing it. This brings Socrates to the discussion of the importance of self-knowledge to the discussion of what the self is.

Socrates introduces the discussion of what the self is by making an important distinction:

φέρε δή, τίν' ἂν τρόπον εὑρεθείη αὐτὸ ταὐτό; οὕτω μὲν γὰρ ἂν τάχ' εὕροιμεν τί ποτ' ἐσμὲν αὐτοί, τούτου δ' ἔτι ὄντες ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ ἀδύνατοί που. (129b1-3)

[24] All translations of the Alcibiades are my own unless differently mentioned. The text edition used is that of Denyer, 2001.

Tell me then, in which way would it be possible to find the 'self itself'? For this way we could possibly find out what we ourselves are; while still ignorant of it, we are unable to do so.

This is the first trace of Socrates making a distinction between two kinds of self, namely the *αὐτὸ ταὐτό* which literally means the 'self itself' and what each self is *(τί ποτ' ἐσμὲν αὐτοί)* which he refers to as the the *αὐτὸ* or *αὐτὸ ἕκαστον*. He immediately goes on to link this distinction to another one, namely the distinction between the user of a thing (*χρώμενος*) and the thing being used (*ᾧ χρῆται*) (129c5). And, consequently, it occurs that the shoemaker and the guitarist are distinct from their hands, of which they make use to produce their art (129e13-14). Therefore, the man also has to be conceived of as distinct from his body, of which he makes use. Since the body is the thing being used, the man himself must be the user (*χρώμενος*, 129e7) of it. And since the body is the thing being used, Socrates concludes that the user must be the human soul. The real self, then, has to be the soul (*ψυχή*), which rules (*ἄρχουσα*) over the body (130a1-12).

ἐπειδὴ δ' οὔτε σῶμα οὔτε τὸ συναμφότερόν ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος, λείπεται οἶμαι ἢ μηδὲν αὖτ' εἶναι, ἢ εἴπερ τί ἐστι, μηδὲν ἄλλο τὸν ἄνθρωπον συμβαίνειν ἢ ψυχήν. (130c1-3)

But because man is neither the body nor the total of body and soul, there remains, I believe, or that he be nothing at all, or if he is something, that he be nothing else than the soul.

Consequently, the soul, the user of the body, would necessarily have to be the most authoritative part of the human essence. And therefore, it occurs, whoever has knowledge and takes care of the things related to the body, as for example the doctor or the physical trainer, does not possess any knowledge of his real self, but only of the things belonging to it and being used by it (131a2-10).

By means of the distinction between the user of a thing and the thing being used, Socrates proves to Alcibiades that the man is his soul. However, although the dialogue seems to get closer to the definition of the self, Socrates, again, distinguishes between two different kinds of self - this time more clearly:

ἔτι οὖν τι σαφέστερον δεῖ ἀποδειχθῆναί σοι ὅτι ἡ ψυχή ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος; […] εἰ δέ γε μὴ ἀκριβῶς ἀλλὰ καὶ μετρίως, ἐξαρκεῖ ἡμῖν· ἀκριβῶς μὲν γὰρ τότε εἰσόμεθα, ὅταν εὕρωμεν ὃ νυνδὴ παρήλθομεν διὰ τὸ πολλῆς εἶναι σκέψεως. […] ὃ ἄρτι οὕτω πως ἐρρήθη, ὅτι πρῶτον σκεπτέον εἴη αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό· νῦν δὲ ἀντὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ αὐτοῦ αὐτὸν ἕκαστον ἐσκέμμεθα ὅτι ἐστί. καὶ ἴσως ἐξαρκέσει· οὐ γάρ που κυριώτερόν γε οὐδὲν ἂν ἡμῶν αὐτῶν φήσαιμεν ἢ τὴν ψυχήν. (130c5-d67)

Do you need anything else to have a clearer proof that the soul is the human being? […] And if it hasn't been proved precisely, but at least adequately, it suffices us. For we will get to know it precisely only when we find that which we just now omitted due to requiring much examination. […] The thing that was said before somehow like that: that first of all we should examine the self itself. But now instead of the self itself we have examined what each himself is, and maybe this shall be enough. For we wouldn't call anything more dominant on ourselves than the soul.

Here, again, the distinction is between *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό*[25] (the self itself) and *αὐτὸ ἕκαστον* (**each** self – the word *ἕκαστον* here helps to a make the distinction even stronger). It is important to note here, as Renaud and Tarrant remark, that "the expression *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* is unusual Greek and hard to translate. Literally it means 'the self itself' recalling Platonic idioms for the Ideas".[26] I prefer to adopt this translation as 'the self itself', for I believe this translation emphasizes its contrast to *each* self or *αὐτὸ ἕκαστον*.

The text is disputed at this point, since there have been many different interpretations from ancient and modern readers. Olympiodorus was one of the ancient readers who argued that Socrates seems to distinguish two aspects of the self:

(a) *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* – which seems to be one and common for all humans, for it comes to contrast with the aspect **each** self

[25] As found at the critical apparatus of Denyer, 2001, the term *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* has been problematic since the text here is uncertain: while Denyer adopts the reading *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό,* other editions have adopted the reading '*τὸ αὐτό'.* However, whichever the correct phrase is, it is obvious that the term must refer to the same thing as *αὐτὸ ταὐτό* in 129b1. Also just two words before the problematic phrase, i.e. at 130d5, we have the reading *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό.* Therefore, whichever reading we choose, the meaning won't change. Choosing the reading *τὸ αὐτό* here would still correspond to the aforementioned *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* in the previous sentence. Denyer, however, gives a different interpretation to of the term 'self itself', which I shall discuss later in this chapter.

[26] Renaud and Tarrant 2015, 234-5.

(b) *αὐτὸ* (*ἕκαστον*) – which seems to be different for each human.

In his commentary on the dialogue (*In Alc*. 210), Olympiodorus interprets the *αὐτὸ ταὐτό* as the logical soul (*λογικὴ ψυχή*) that does not make use of the body nor lives inside it and the *αὐτὸ* (*ἕκαστον*) as the 'political' soul that uses the body and the passions and he therefore prefers to call it *πολιτικὴν ψυχήν*, as being relevant to the self as a citizen.[27] This passage has been very much disputed, as different scholars have given different interpretation to these terms and some have even set aside the distinction between two aspects or dimensions of the self. I shall discuss these interpretations later in this chapter.

At this point of the dialogue it is not yet clear how the ideal of self-knowledge relates to Alcibiades' political ambitions. As the dialogue progresses Socrates seems to introduce the connection of self-knowledge and self-care to others through an obscure analogy. This is the passage of the eye-soul analogy (133b2-3):

> *ὀφθαλμὸς ἄρ' εἰ μέλλει ἰδεῖν αὑτόν, εἰς ὀφθαλμὸν αὐτῷ βλεπτέον, καὶ τοῦ ὄμματος εἰς ἐκεῖνον τὸν τόπον ἐν ᾧ τυγχάνει ἡ ὀφθαλμοῦ ἀρετὴ ἐγγιγνομένη· ἔστι δὲ τοῦτό που ὄψις;*
>
> *If then an eye intends to see itself, it has to look into an(other) eye, and precisely into that part of the eye in which the virtue of the eye happens to reside. Is that not sight?*

Socrates compares at this point the human self, which is the soul, to the pupil of the eye. And just as an eye has to look into another eye in order to see itself, and just as it has to seek for the pupil - which is the best part of the eye where sight takes place - in order to be able to mirror itself on it, in this way too ought a soul to look upon another soul in order to get to know itself (133b5-6):

> *ἆρ' οὖν, ὦ φίλε Ἀλκιβιάδη, καὶ ψυχὴ εἰ μέλλει γνώσεσθαι αὑτήν, εἰς ψυχὴν αὐτῇ βλεπτέον, καὶ μάλιστ' εἰς τοῦτον αὐτῆς τὸν τόπον ἐν ᾧ ἐγγίγνεται ἡ ψυχῆς ἀρετή, σοφία, καὶ εἰς ἄλλο ᾧ τοῦτο τυγχάνει ὅμοιον ὄν;*

[27] Olympiodorus 1956, 209-10.

> *Consequently, my dear Alcibiades, the soul too, if it intends to know itself should look into a(nother) soul, and particularly into that part of it where the virtue of the soul, that is wisdom, resides, and at any other part of a soul which resembles this.*

Then Socrates argues that the part of the soul that probably is the best part, as it is the most reasonable and most authoritative, is certainly the one where knowledge (*τὸ εἰδέναι*) and prudence (*τὸ φρονεῖν*) reside. And this part of the soul, Socrates claims, is also the one that resembles the divine. Looking into that part of the soul with complete knowledge of the divine and of prudence would lead one to know himself to the utmost (133c1-4). This reasoning seems to be offering a necessary link between oneself and the others, for knowledge of myself clearly depends on some interaction with others and cognizance of them as a soul similar to mine that can function as mirror. Socrates consequently suggests that the path to self-knowledge takes me beyond interest in my individual personality, since this knowledge concerns things common to all, rather than peculiar to each embodied individual.[28] Through "mirroring" to other human souls, Alcibiades has to realize the peculiarity of what makes one human, which resides in the soul and particularly in that part of the soul that has wisdom. The analogy seems to introduce the idea suggested by Rider, that in learning about himself, one also learns about human nature, through becoming 'acquainted with what humans share and coming to recognize the divinity of the human intellect'.[29]

This idea becomes clearer right in the part following right after the eye-soul analogy, where Socrates identifies self-knowledge to *σωφροσύνη* (133c18), which is the virtue of temperance and self-control.[30] Consequently, it appears that self-knowledge has indeed much to do with control over one's bodily desires, urges and emotions, by the reasonable authoritative soul. Self-knowledge presented as moderation therefore includes knowledge of rational order, that is to say, knowledge of how the parts of oneself, of his soul and body are properly ordered.

Immediately after this point, Socrates makes yet another connection between self-knowledge and others, thereby explicitly linking self-knowledge to Alcibiades'

[28] Annas 1985, 122.
[29] Rider 2011, 408.
[30] For an extended description of the notion of *σωφροσύνη* as self-knowledge and self-control in antiquity see Annas 1985, 119 and Rademaker 2005.

political goals: Alcibiades needs to know himself and what belongs to himself in order to know the affairs of others (*ὅστις δὲ τὰ αὑτοῦ ἀγνοεῖ, καὶ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων που ἂν ἀγνοοῖ*), because without knowing the affairs of others, he will neither know the affairs of the *polis* (*οὐκοῦν εἰ τὰ τῶν ἄλλων, καὶ τὰ τῶν πόλεων ἀγνοήσει*.- 133e3-5). Since a man who is ignorant of his own situation, will necessarily ignore the situation of others, and, therewith will thus also fail to know the matters of the city, then such a man– Socrates concludes – would not be able to become a politician (133e7). What is more, such a man would then err and cause problems (*ἐξαμαρτάνων κακῶς πράξει*) not only in his personal life, but also regarding public life (134a6), and this would cause deep misery not only to himself but also to others, on whom his actions have an impact (134a8-10). Socrates concludes here that it is therefore not possible for a man to be happy, if he is not moderate and virtuous (134a12, *οὐκ ἄρα οἷόν τε, ἐὰν μή τις σώφρων καὶ ἀγαθὸς ᾖ, εὐδαίμονα εἶναι*) and that bad people are necessarily miserable (134a14, *οἱ ἄρα κακοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἄθλιοι*). Socrates makes clear to Alcibiades that, if he is without self-knowledge and its corollary political knowledge, he will necessarily fail. At the immediately following passage, Socrates makes an important addition to what Alcibiades would need to achieve his ambition: If he intends to manage the *polis* rightly and appropriately, he not only needs to acquire virtue, but he must also impart (*μεταδοτέον*) his virtue to the citizens (*εἰ δὴ μέλλεις τὰ τῆς πόλεως πράξειν ὀρθῶς καὶ καλῶς, ἀρετῆς σοι μεταδοτέον τοῖς πολίταις* - 134c1-2). We notice that the terminology changes as we find virtue (*ἀρετή)* at the place where we would normally expect to find self-knowledge or *σωφροσύνη*. The terms seem to coincide at this point of the dialogue, since by acquiring virtue, Alcibiades will be able to produce justice and temperance for the city (134c5-7):

> *αὐτῷ ἄρα σοὶ πρῶτον κτητέον ἀρετήν, καὶ ἄλλῳ ὃς μέλλει μὴ ἰδίᾳ μόνον αὑτοῦ τε καὶ τῶν αὑτοῦ ἄρξειν καὶ ἐπιμελήσεσθαι, ἀλλὰ πόλεως καὶ τῶν τῆς πόλεως.[…]*
> *οὐκ ἄρα ἐξουσίαν σοι οὐδ' ἀρχὴν παρασκευαστέον σαυτῷ ποιεῖν ὅτι ἂν βούλῃ, οὐδὲ τῇ πόλει, ἀλλὰ δικαιοσύνην καὶ σωφροσύνην. (134c5-7)*

> *Then you - and everyone else who is about to be governor and curator of not only himself and his private affairs, but also of the city and the matters relating to the city - must first acquire virtue yourself. Hence it is not power or*

authority for doing what you please that you have to secure to yourself or the city, but justice and moderation.

By acting this way, both Alcibiades and the city will resemble the divine (134d4). By pursuing this resemblance to the divine, Socrates concludes, Alcibiades will come to know not only himself but also what is good for himself. Likewise also the city of Athens will come to know itself and what s good for itself (hence the plural *καὶ τὰ ὑμέτερα ἀγαθὰ*) (134d6).

Indeed, after this point at the dialogue, it seems easier to connect self-knowledge to Alcibiades' goals, since he needs to learn about justice and prudence in order to achieve his political ambitions, and therefore it is essential to him to be able to appreciate and assess his relations to others. Consequently, he needs a kind of self-knowledge that would give him insight into his place in society as well as his proper duties and his role as a part of that society. In this particular setting, we can confer Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (IV 11 16-29), where self-knowledge is presented as a prerequisite in order to know what is suitable (*ἐπιτήδειον*) for oneself and what one's own possibilities are.[31] This means that a just appreciation of what is appropriate for one to do depends on a correct self-conception as well as on a correct appraisal of where one stands in relation to others, what his duties and role are towards and among his fellow citizens.

The reasoning of Socrates regarding the identification of the human self is not easy to understand. The distinction between two selves, namely *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* and *αὐτὸ ἕκαστον*, proposed by Olympiodorus and his contemporaries has led some modern readers to either adopt it with a different interpretation or to not accept it at all. Keeping in mind the argumentation sequence of the dialogue, I shall now proceed in the next part to discussing some of the different interpretations of the self in this dialogue and suggesting an interpretation of the object of self-knowledge that is in terms with the main purpose of the thesis, showing thereby the close connection between self-knowledge and the city.

- The combination of the two selves as the object of self-knowledge

[31] See Annas 1985, 121.

The reasoning of Socrates regarding the human self is not easy to understand. It is, however, evident that the real self has to be identified with the soul. The real puzzle starts at 129b1-3 and continues at130d4-6, where Socrates seems to be making a distinction between two selves by using two different terms to define it, namely *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* and *αὐτὸ ἕκαστον*. This passage has brought about many different interpretations from ancient and modern readers.

As described above, Olympiodorus suggests the distinction of the self between a particular self, which is different for each human and connected to one's individuality and bodily existence and a universal self, understood as the rational soul divorced from the body and its passions, which is common to all humans. According to Renaud and Tarrant, "this seems to be a distinction between individual selves and some universal 'self'".[32] Since the real self is the soul then both terms must refer to the soul, but then in different dimensions: the term 'each self' (*αὐτὸ ἕκαστον)* must be the soul when connected to a particular body and dependent on one's bodily existence with its own individual characteristics – including one's passions, desires, strength and weaknesses. We might connect it to what we nowadays call personality, since it reflects the individual (each human as a distinct personality). The 'self itself' (*αὐτὸ ταὐτό*) must be the soul purely in itself, independent of the body and common to all. It is to be understood as the rational soul divorced from the other aspects of human life, such as emotions and desires, therefore divorced from any individuality. I agree with Renaud and Tarrant that the idea presented here is that "there is a single rationality that underlies all truly rational life, and that souls only take on any individual identity by being linked to the body and acquiring emotions along with the cognition of their own individual circumstances".[33] The *αὐτὸ ταὐτό,* then, is that part of our soul which amounts to the pure rational capacity of the human being, as the distinctive characteristic of human nature. It is the universally common, shared by all humans, rational ability, and is what makes a human human. It is, as such, not one's body or personality that makes one human, but rather his share in this pure rational nature. This very part of the soul, again, is the part that shares in the divine nature, since the divine nature is purely rational.

[32] Renaud and Tarrant 2015, 58.
[33] Renaud and Tarrant 2015, 58.

Some modern scholars, such as Julia Annas and Christopher Johnson, have also adopted the distinction made by Olympiodorus but went even further suggesting that the object of self-knowledge, the self Alcibiades must get to know, is the *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* only, which they understand as an impersonal and truly rational self, which is identical to the selves of others but also to god.[34] They don't take both terms as corresponding to the object of self-knowledge, but rather identify the *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* as the sole object of self-knowledge.[35] Annas and Johnson thus exclude any particular or individual characteristics from the real self, and therefore understand self-knowledge as knowledge of an impersonal rational self, which is not personal or individual at all.[36]

I disagree with Annas on the exclusion of the *αὐτὸ (ἕκαστον)* from the object of inquiry by virtue of the following argument. There are clearly two dimensions of self-knowledge in the dialogue, as appears from the linguistic distinction between *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* and the *αὐτὸ (ἕκαστον)* – Annas does not reject that. But both must belong to the object of inquiry. For, not only universal and impersonal matters relating to the general ground of all selfhood and being are important in achieving a general awareness and understanding of who you are. Knowledge of personal and particular matters, relating to one's bodily passions and desires, is truly essential for a proper understanding of one's self. This is evident from Socrates' continuous emphasis on the importance of knowing one's ignorance. If knowledge of one's particular condition was irrelevant in getting to know oneself, Socrates would not have integrated it in a dialogue concerning human nature. Indeed, realizing one's ignorance is actually a precondition for all knowledge, since it marks the starting point for learning. Therefore, the purpose of the dialogue is not merely the knowledge of the true self for it does not only involve the issue of the self in its purity, but also stresses the relation of the self to the body and to the community.[37] Moreover, the presumption that Socrates would merely urge Alcibiades to an intellectual seclusion is at odds with his choice to approach Alcibiades exactly at this point in his life and with

[34] See Annas 1985, 133 and Johnson 1999, 14-15.
[35] In Julia Anna's words, "the real self, the self I know when I have self-knowledge, should turn out not to be in any intuitive sense individual or peculiar to me" (Annas 1985, 130). Consequently, according to Annas, Socrates is excluding the body from what one *really* is, as being external to the *real* self. Annas goes on to argue that the real human self is therefore impersonal, since, in contrast to the body, it is not individual to anyone.
[36] Cf. Rider 2011, 397-398.
[37] Cf. Renaud and Tarrant 2015, 230.

the eye-soul analogy, by means of which Socrates connects achievement of true self-knowledge with cognizance of other human beings.

As far as the purpose of the dialogue is concerned, accepting an impersonal real self, independent from any particular characteristics, as the object of self-knowledge, as suggested by Annas, would make no sense in the context it appears. Annas excludes the *αὐτὸ ἕκαστον* from the object of self-knowledge, identifying the real self as a self that transcends human individuality. Seeing the real self as a precisely non personal self, Annas argues that knowing one's real self is knowing God.[38] Annas seems to neglect that the question of self-knowledge arises in the dialogue in the very context of Alcibiades' ambitions and his current state of ignorance as unfit in order to achieve them. Therefore, as Renaud and Tarrant argue, it seems unlikely that the knowledge Alcibiades needs is purely related to "any abstract 'Idea of the Self' or 'Selfhood', since it is *his* self that he must learn to care for".[39] Since Alcibiades has to know himself, starting from the recognition of his ignorance, then self-knowledge must include many characteristics peculiar to the individual. As a matter of fact, Socrates never says in the dialogue that the self is identical to God.[40] What he really says is that there is a *part* of the soul that *resembles* God.[41] The intellectual part is the best part of the soul, but this doesn't exclude that the other, non-intellectual parts of the soul are parts of the real self as well.[42]

There is another, very different interpretation of this disputed passage. Recent scholars have rejected that Socrates even makes a distinction in this dialogue between two kinds or dimensions of the self, as proposed by Olympiodorus and modern readers. Nicholas Denyer, in his commentary on the dialogue, suggests the translation

[38] Annas 1985, 132-33: 'knowing one's real self is knowing God, where God is of course not a person, but is just what is ultimately real, however that is to be otherwise characterized. [...] Rather it turns out to be knowledge of the self itself, the precisely non personal self, which is called divine and God because these are, for a Greek, attributes of what is most truly objective. But, difficulties apart, the general direction of this passage and the preceding one is clear enough. Self-knowledge is not of the paradigmatically subjective, the embodied individual; it is of the paradigmatically objective, so that the true self turns out to be God, the ultimate reality.'

[39] Renaud and Tarrant suggest that the *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* refers to something superior to each individual self but reject the view that is refers to some abstract idea of the self or selfhood. See: Renaud&Tarrant, 2015, 58-59.

[40] See Gill 2007, 107: "The emphasis is on the idea that we know ourselves most fully when we contemplate god, as in a mirror, which reflects the best part of us (our essence), namely our god-like capacity for knowing and thinking. This idea is, in fact, most fully articulated in a passage preserved in Eusebius (and with some variations by Stobaeus) and not in the manuscript readings of Alcibiades (133c8–17)". For more details on the Eusebian interpolation see Brunschwig 1996, 71–2, 74–5.

[41] *Alc*. 133c1-2.

[42] Cf. Rider 2011, 401.

of *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* as "the itself itself", therefore refusing that the term has any reference to *the self* at all.[43] Denyer compares the distinction between *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* and *αὐτὸ ἕκαστον* to the distinction between 'real science itself' (*αὐτὴ μὲν ὃ ἔστι ἐπιστήμη*) and 'each of the real sciences' (*ἑκάστη δὲ αὖ τῶν ἐπιστημῶν, ἣ ἔστιν*) as found in Plato's dialogue *Parmenides 134a*.[44] With this interpretation, the term *αὐτὸ ταὐτό* then, cannot correspond to another dimension of the self that is to be known, but rather means 'to understand something in its essence'.[45] Thus, for Denyer, the term refers to a more abstract inquiry 'that would investigate all uses of the term *αὐτό*.'[46] Christopher Gill refutes the case of an impersonal true self as suggested by Annas, supporting the interpretation made by Denyer.[47]

Although Annas' interpretation of the real self as impersonal seems incompatible with the nature of the dialogue as presented in the present thesis, I do not share the rejection of the twofold dimension of self-knowledge, as suggested by Denyer either. Following the reading of Olympiodorus, I believe that the dialogue does indeed present a two-fold dimension of self-knowledge, as presented by the distinction between two kinds of self: *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* and *αὐτὸ ἕκαστον.* This distinction is certainly supported by the dialogue itself and its purpose, which is to link self-knowledge to Alcibiades' ambitions for a leading career in politics. Indeed, through the obscurity of the eye-soul analogy (*Alc*. 133b2-3), Socrates makes the connection of self-knowledge and self-care to what amounts to knowledge of other people and of what is good for other people. The eye-soul analogy shows that there would have to be something linking all souls together. As a matter of fact, accepting Denyer's exclusion of the *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* from the definition of the real self thereby making *αὐτὸ ἕκαστον* the only object of self-knowledge would undermine the relevance of self-knowledge to Alcibiades' ambitions, since the knowledge he needs for political leadership should include knowledge of qualities that humans share (presented in the analogy as the best part of the soul, namely the intellect).[48] This aspect of self-knowledge which seems to include knowledge of things outside one's own particular self becomes more clear at 133c18, where Socrates identifies self-knowledge to moderation (*σωφροσύνη*): Alcibiades needs to know himself and what belongs to himself before he can know

[43] Denyer 2001, 129b1–3n.
[44] Idem, 130b5-6n.
[45] See Gill 2007, 106-107.
[46] Cf. Rider 2011, 400.
[47] Gill 2007, 102.
[48] Cf. Rider 2011, 408.

the ‘things’ of other people and before he can manage the affairs of the city (133e3-5). At this point, Socrates explicitly links self-knowledge to knowledge relating to others and to the *polis*, presenting this kind of knowledge as a *conditio sine qua non* for political leadership (133e7). This argument, along with the eye-soul analogy, seem to give enough reason to retain the distinction between two dimensions of self-knowledge, one pertaining to particular characteristics peculiar to the individual, such as the recognition of one’s ignorance or talents, and another pertaining to the essential nature he shares with other humans, therefore gaining insight into the affairs of others and the city. That is to say, an important part of self-knowledge is knowledge of what kind of being one is.

I agree at this point with Daniel Werner’s well-argued analysis, distinguishing individual from universal self-knowledge.[49] He claims the first to be relating to aspects unique to one’s individual soul, such as knowledge of one’s character, desires and fears and considers it integral to proper understanding of one’s self. The second involves objective facts about oneself and universal truths that transcend the individual self altogether. In Werner’s theory, then, the *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* constitutes the universal while the *αὐτὸ (ἕκαστον)* corresponds to individual self-knowledge. Werner, thus, also disagrees with Annas’ ‘universalist’ view, that sees self-knowledge in this dialogue as wholly impersonal, therefore yielding to the *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* aspect alone. He accuses Annas of going too far excluding any individual factor from the notion of self-knowledge.[50]

Daniel Werner argues that Socrates holds a middle position on that matter. Socrates must hold the self to be a combination of qualities unique and peculiar to one’s character and qualities of an objective nature that are universally shared, for he stresses both matters as integral parts of Alcibiades’ path to improvement. Indeed, all the bad qualities of Alcibiades’ personality are enumerated by Socrates at the very beginning of the dialogue. Alcibiades’ arrogance, his extreme confidence in his beauty, wealth and nobility, as well as how he treats his loved ones (103b2-c3) are all qualities of his personality, for they all relate to desires and values that are particular to his nature. As a matter of fact, Socrates seems to be regarding elements common to all souls necessary for achieving self-knowledge, for he evidently seems to deny the possibility of getting to know oneself truly without grasping the general principle of

[49] Werner 2013, 4-8.
[50] Werner 2013, 7.

the objective 'self itself'.[51] Renaud and Tarrant seem to support Werner's claim here as well, arguing together with Olympiodorus that "the central question of the *Alcibiades* pertains primarily to knowledge of the rational soul, which is common, but also *includes* the individual soul".[52] Consequently, Socrates wants to lead Alcibiades to know things unique to his own individual personality, but this seems to be impossible without knowing the universally shared aspect of humanity understood as the share in purely divine rationality. However, it would also be impossible for Alcibiades to ascend to this dimension of self-knowledge that transcends his individual qualities and attain understanding of rationality as the principle that makes him human, without first coming to terms with his present particular condition, which is required in order to realize his ignorance and as a result to come to the desire to know.[53] Consequently, the two dimensions of self-knowledge seem to be inseparable and indeed, also in terms of order, interdependent upon one another.

- Self-knowledge and politics (Or: The self and the other)

As we have seen, based on the eye-soul analogy, it is obvious that the object of self-knowledge as Socrates presents it cannot be merely each and everyone's individual personality, for if it was, it wouldn't require any insight into society or into the place and role of others.[54] What is more, as implied in this passage, to acquire self-knowledge is not dependent upon oneself alone, but upon others among whom we live as well. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that self-knowledge as presented by Socrates must include knowledge of oneself in relation to others. This implies that self-knowledge actually exceeds personal interest and is dependent upon more than one's individual characteristics. Indeed, in order for Alcibiades to know his place and role among others, it is a prerequisite for him to know the role and place of others in respect to him. Therefore, it is clear that Alcibiades cannot ever acquire that kind of

[51] Cf. passage 129b and 130c-d, cited above: "we will get to know it precisely only when we (…) first of all we should examine the self itself."
[52] Renaud and Tarrant 2015, 233.
[53] Werner 2013, 11.
[54] As we have seen, the presence of the other is indispensable, for the eye cannot possibly see itself unless by means of being mirrored on the eye of another. And just as the eye needs to look at the best part of the eye, which is the pupil, in order to mirror itself, so should a soul look at the best part of the soul of another in order to get to know itself. And the best part of the soul is the part that possesses wisdom.

self-knowledge without grasping the sense of justice.[55] I have argued above that Socrates is not urging Alcibiades to get to know the *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* alone, but rather suggesting him to try to understand this common aspect *together with* getting to know his particular self.

The reason Alcibiades needs Socrates in his life reflects the reason we as humans need others in our life. Since the self we are to know - if we aspire to know ourselves entirely – is not each one's particular personality, but rather something we share with others, it is obvious that we must involve others in our lives and engage with them in order to cultivate ourselves into humans, which seems to be the ultimate purpose to be achieved. This indeed reveals the practical destination, i.e. political and moral – of self-knowledge as prerequisite of self-heed and self-government. As Linda Napolitano argues, there is obviously a structural connection between the self and the other to be traced in this dialogue.[56] She, too, in her turn, supports the distinction between universal self-awareness as recognition of one's own soul and the individual self-conscience of one's own physical identity, centered on each and everyone's bodily composition.[57] However, she argues that the most important element of the *Alcibiades* is the reference to the relational contextualization, i.e. the necessity of dialogic relations with others. She argues that the eye-soul analogy makes clear that the dialogue with the other is an integral part of one's way to self-knowledge (and therefore to self-improvement as the improvement of one's ignorant state).

Paulina Remes goes even further to argue that there is a bond between the self and the society in the dialogue. The theme of this dialogue, she claims, is the object of self-knowledge understood in its interrelations with other people and things making up the *polis*.[58] What is hidden behind the discussion of self-knowledge is, as such, the influence of a person on his surroundings, the interrelation between man and *polis,* as well as one's dependence upon his fellow human beings.

The need for Alcibiades' moral improvement is emphasized by Socrates in the beginning of the dialogue (103a-106a). Indeed, Socrates introduces the whole theme of the importance of self-knowledge by criticizing the way Alcibiades treats others (103b), owing to his utmost trust in his physical characteristics (beauty, nobility of

[55] Cf. Annas 1985, 123: It is impossible to "separate knowledge of what is due to me from knowledge of what is due to others".
[56] Napolitano 2012, 156.
[57] Idem, 158-159.
[58] Remes 2013, 270.

birth, wealth), resulting in his sense of complete self-sufficiency (104a) and arrogance (105a-b). Alcibiades' ambitions, though, focus on a political career. As a result, Socrates emphasizes, Alcibiades should lay aside his particular interest in himself to rather focus on other concerns that involve his interrelation with others, concerns such as justice. The meaning of that 'becoming better' only becomes clear at the end of the dialogue. There Socrates emphasizes that, when one is ignorant of himself, will also be ignorant of other people, and as a result, he will also be ignorant of things relating to the city, and therefore he would never be able to achieve a political career (133e2-6). But this is not the only result of one's ignorance, Socrates argues. For the ignorant will not only make mistakes (*ἐξαμαρτάνων*, 134a6) on public level, but also on private. And this man, doing ill (*κακῶς πράττων*, 134a8) in both public and private life will necessarily be wretched (*ἄθλιος*, 134a8). Therefore, Socrates concludes:

οὐκ ἄρα οἷόν τε, ἐὰν μή τις σώφρων καὶ ἀγαθὸς ᾖ, εὐδαίμονα εἶναι. (134a12)

Then it is impossible to be happy, if one is not temperate and good.

At this point it is clear that Alcibiades must improve his ignorant state in the direction of virtue, understood as temperance and goodness. This is very important, not only considering his political goals, but also for his personal happiness, since every bad person will necessarily be wretched too (*οἱ ἄρα κακοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἄθλιοι*, 134b1). It is evident by this point that the improvement that Alcibiades will achieve through getting to know himself corresponds to virtue as justice and temperance.

As we have seen, Socrates continuously exposes Alcibiades' ignorance on matters that involve the care for the others and therefore his inability to thrive in a political context, such as in giving advice on war and peace (106c-107d). Socrates is trying to move Alcibiades in the direction of justice, showing him that it is in his own interests (the desire for a political career) to be competent in those matters. After showing Alcibiades that it is indeed advantageous for him to be just, he links the knowledge of his own self – his ambitions and desires – to the knowledge of other human beings.

Alcibiades' ambitions involve the care for the other, since they are directed to politics, thus he ought not only to know well what he himself is, but also what others are, not particularly, but universally, i.e. what general characteristics connect him with everyone else, characteristics common and shared by all. Therefore, Alcibiades

necessarily needs improvement in the direction of justice and virtue, since he is primarily interested in conducting effective moral and political action.

At this point I would like to make the suggestion that the distinction made in the dialogue between two dimensions of the self that is to be known corresponds to another distinction. As we have seen, Socrates initiates the discussion of the self by enumerating Alcibiades' unique character traits. While the particular characteristics of his personality, together with his ignorance, come to the surface, Socrates also makes the link between Alcibiades and the city. He roots this link in Alcibiades' political ambitions, presenting his ignorance concerning political matters as an obstacle in achieving a successful political career. Then he goes on to make a link between Alcibiades and other human beings, by means of the eye-soul analogy and the necessity of interaction with others. Therefore, Socrates has *individuality* as a starting point: he first makes Alcibiades inquire about himself what he is individually as a character. Consequently, he goes on to make him inquire what the human being is. Through the obscurity of the eye-soul analogy, he leads Alcibiades to seek himself within others, for one aspect of the self is one and the same for all. As a matter of fact, self-knowledge would be relevant to political leadership only if it included knowledge of qualities that humans share.[59] Indeed, as we have seen, the analogy suggests that in learning about himself, one also learns about human nature. As such, one aspect of self-knowledge is knowledge about what it is to be human.[60]

Consequently, the dialogue progresses from self-knowledge as knowledge of one's peculiar characteristics to self-knowledge as knowledge of human nature. Socrates makes a transition from the inquiry of what a person is individually as a personality or character to what one is as a human being to arrive at what one ultimately ought to be (cf. *οἵους χρὴ ὄντας*, 124a4). As a matter of fact, in another Socratic dialogue, namely the *Theaetetus*, Socrates presents it as the philosopher's task to inquire and exert himself to find out what a human being is and what is appropriate for such a nature to do or undergo that is different from other creatures (*τί δέ ποτ' ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος καὶ τί τῇ τοιαύτῃ φύσει προσήκει διάφορον τῶν ἄλλων ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν*, Theaetetus 174b). As such, the knowledge which relates to *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό* seems to correspond to knowledge of *οἵους χρὴ ὄντας*, which indeed would be a necessary condition in order for one to be a successful political leader. Furthermore, this distinction between

[59] Rider 2011, 406-407.
[60] Ibidem.

individuality and humanity and the transition from the one to the other to arrive at what one, being both an individual and a human being, ought to be ultimately as an ideal, may be said to mirror the transition from ethics to politics, and perhaps most importantly their interdependence.[61] Socrates, thus, urges Alcibiades to consider who he presently is, who he is not and who he wants to be, but always in regard to political life, in order to be the one he ought to be as a human in a *polis*. The examination of his own character, desires and values is a necessary starting point in getting to know himself. But, since it is obvious that he shares universal characteristics with all other human beings, which constitute each and everyone's essence, he should come to realize that he ought to cultivate those characteristics in order to be human, rather than only individual.

Therefore, Alcibiades must necessarily improve his ignorant state and achieve justice and temperance, for this is not only to his own advantage but also to that of the *polis*. And how could there ever be any improvement whatsoever without self-awareness, since it is impossible to improve one's state without first confronting and realizing it? Self-awareness forms, as such, a normative end to be sought and the first path leading to improvement. Consequently, confronting one's particular self and connecting it to the sameness of the principle that makes us all humans, which seems to be the pure rational capacity naturally inherent in all, makes one a better person. This rational capacity includes knowledge of what a human being is and what he ought to be, including as such knowledge of the good and the bad, not only for oneself, but also for the whole *polis*.[62]

Last but certainly not least, Socrates urges Alcibiades to change his object of interest from what it is now – i.e. wealth and glory – to knowledge of himself as a person, as a human being and therewith to knowledge of what one ought to be. Achieving this knowledge should be Alcibiades' ultimate purpose. As such, Socrates is trying to change Alcibiades' priorities to what really is important not only for himself, but also for the *polis*. The next chapter will be devoted to further exploring this idea of self-knowledge as changing one's priorities in life, in the context of another Socratic work, namely *The Apology*.

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[61] For ancient thinkers ethics and politics were more closely linked than they are considered to be since modernity. See "Ethics or Political Philosophy*?"*, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* at: http://www.iep.utm.edu/republic/

[62] Cf. *Alc*. 133c21-22: *ἆρ' οὖν μὴ γιγνώσκοντες ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς μηδὲ σώφρονες ὄντες δυναίμεθ' ἂν* ***εἰδέναι τὰ ἡμέτερα αὐτῶν κακά τε καὶ ἀγαθά***;

Chapter 2: The priority of Values in the *Apology*

After examination of the Socratic dialogue "Alcibiades Major", it is evident that the notion of self-knowledge presented there is connected to the moral destination of self-care as the direction to virtue. In other words, it is by now clear that self-knowledge is a necessary condition in order to improve in justice and virtue. We have seen in the first chapter how Socrates is trying to convince Alcibiades to care for virtue, understood as taking care of one's soul. We have also linked that notion of self-care to other people and the city as a whole, therefore placing it in the context of Alcibiades' political ambitions. Connecting Alcibiades' soul to the soul of others in the city has made clear how caring for one's soul can be an altruistic ideal and essential for Alcibiades, since it is a necessary condition for successfully pursuing his political ambitions.

Another Socratic work where the notion of self-care is central, is the *Apology*. In this work, again, I shall demonstrate that politics, according to Socrates, should start with individual self-care. In the *Apology*, I shall argue, it is even more evident that this turn towards virtue inherent in self-care requires ordering one's priorities from part to whole and transforming them in order to fit citizenry as a whole. I shall argue that the goal Socrates wants to achieve by criticizing the priorities Alcibiades sets in his life is actually the same goal he has when criticizing the priorities of the Athenians and their valuing of the wrong things as found in the *Apology*. In both cases, Socrates is trying to give the interlocutor(s) the right direction in life, that is to say, he is attempting to lead people to direct their lives to virtue as the ultimate end. Therefore - as mentioned it the introduction - the second chapter of the present thesis serves to

offer a parallel reading of the *Alcibiades* and the *Apology* regarding self-care, where it becomes evident that caring for one's soul requires properly ordering and transforming one's priorities in order to fit individual as well as political virtues, since the former are a prerequisite for the latter. Finally, I shall argue that caring for one's self will ultimately result in the improvement of the citizens and the city as a whole.

The *Apology* of Socrates constitutes his response to the charges imposed on him by the city of Athens. However, Socrates defends himself in terms of his values and, therefore, his argumentation reveals that the values of his accusers differ fundamentally from his own. In this respect, the *Apology* is a work about what kind of person Socrates is and what kind of life he led. The central concern of Socrates' life and therefore also the central theme of the *Apology* is the care for the soul, and, as Richard Penner puts it in the *Cambridge Companion to Plato*, "for Socrates this concern was both for his own soul and for the souls of others".[63] Consequently, in the *Apology*, just like in the *Alcibiades*, we find Socrates addressing the issue of the neglected state of the soul of his addressees, namely the men of Athens.

As argued in the first chapter, Socrates approaches Alcibiades specifically with the intent to reorder Alcibiades' priorities to help him realize his ambition. In the Alcibiades, the issue of priorities is only implicit. However, the broad discussion of priorities in the *Apology* will perfectly complement this implication, since in the *Apology* we find Socrates addressing the issue of priorities directly. The first occurrence is at 29d2-30b3:

> *ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ἀσπάζομαι μὲν καὶ φιλῶ, πείσομαι δὲ μᾶλλον τῷ θεῷ ἢ ὑμῖν, καὶ ἕωσπερ ἂν ἐμπνέω καὶ οἷός τε ὦ, οὐ μὴ παύσωμαι φιλοσοφῶν καὶ ὑμῖν παρακελευόμενός τε καὶ ἐνδεικνύμενος ὅτῳ ἂν ἀεὶ ἐντυγχάνω ὑμῶν, λέγων οἷάπερ εἴωθα, ὅτι 'ὦ ἄριστε ἀνδρῶν, Ἀθηναῖος ὤν, πόλεως τῆς μεγίστης καὶ εὐδοκιμωτάτης εἰς σοφίαν καὶ ἰσχύν, χρημάτων μὲν οὐκ αἰσχύνῃ ἐπιμελούμενος ὅπως σοι ἔσται ὡς πλεῖστα, καὶ δόξης καὶ τιμῆς, φρονήσεως δὲ καὶ ἀληθείας καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς βελτίστη ἔσται οὐκ ἐπιμελῇ οὐδὲ φροντίζεις;' καὶ ἐάν τις ὑμῶν ἀμφισβητήσῃ καὶ φῇ ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, οὐκ εὐθὺς ἀφήσω αὐτὸν οὐδ'ἄπειμι, ἀλλ' ἐρήσομαι αὐτὸν καὶ ἐξετάσω καὶ ἐλέγξω, καὶ ἐάν μοι μὴ δοκῇ κεκτῆσθαι*

[63] Penner 1992, 134.

ἀρετήν, φάναι δέ, ὀνειδιῶ ὅτι τὰ πλείστου ἄξια περὶ ἐλαχίστου ποιεῖται,τὰ δὲ φαυλότερα περὶ πλείονος.[...] οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄλλο πράττων ἐγὼ περιέρχομαι ἢ πείθων ὑμῶν καὶ νεωτέρους καὶ πρεσβυτέρους μήτε σωμάτων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι μήτε χρημάτων πρότερον μηδὲ οὕτω σφόδρα ὡς τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς ἀρίστη ἔσται, λέγων ὅτι 'οὐκ ἐκ χρημάτων ἀρετὴ γίγνεται, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀρετῆς χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαντα καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ.[64]

Gentlemen of Athens, I welcome you and I am your friend, but I will obey the god rather than you, and as long as I am alive and able, I will not cease to practice philosophy nor exhorting anyone of you whom I happen to meet, speaking to you in my accustomed way: 'Good sir, being an Athenian, citizen of the greatest city and the most famous for its wisdom and power, are you not ashamed to take care of possessing as much wealth, reputation and honors as possible, while being careless and indifferent to wisdom and truth and to the perfection of your soul? And if anyone controverts and argues that he does care, I shall not let him go directly nor will I go, but I shall rather inquire and examine him again and again, and if he does not seem to possess virtue, while he says he does, I shall reproach him that he neglects the things that are of the greatest importance while caring for the things that are of less worth. [...] For I go about doing nothing else than trying to persuade you, young and old, not to care about your bodies or about riches rather than for the best state of your soul, telling you: 'virtue does not come from money, but rather it is virtue that makes money and everything else good for men, in both private and public'.[65]

[64] All translations of the *Apology* are my own. For my translation I have consulted the notes of Burnet 1924.

[65] The last part of this passage (30b3) has been very controversial amongs commentators. The standard translation of this phrase as presented by Slings (Plato's Apology of Socrates, 1994) is: "Aretê does not come from money, but from aretê money and the other good things all of them come to mankind in both private and public life". Burnet John opposes this standard translation in his edition of the *Apology*: 'We must certainly not render 'from virtue comes money'! . . . as Socrates was now ἐν πενίᾳ μυρίᾳ, he could hardly recommend ἀρετή as a good investment.' Burnet argues that *χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἅπαντα* is the subject of the sentence and that *ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις* is predicate. Burnet therefore proposes the translation: 'It is goodness that makes money and everything else good for men'. I have chosen to use Burnet's translation here, however I do not share the belief that the two translations are

At this point, Socrates reassures the Athenians, that even if they'd decide to let him live instead of convicting him to death, but only on the condition that he would stop practicing philosophy, he would answer this way, because he has cleared up within himself the order of priorities: practicing philosophy is of greater value than his life and freedom. Socrates makes this parallelism to emphasize his argument that the Athenians are blinded by bodily goods and possessions. Thus, the correct ordering of their priorities becomes the concern of Socrates' exhortation of his fellow citizens.[66] Socrates warns the Athenians to always be vigilant when ordering everything they care about and to keep the right priorities in mind. The Athenians have neglected the appropriate ordering of priorities by attaching greater value to lesser goods such as wealth and personal possessions rather than what matters most, i.e. wisdom, truth and the soul. The appropriate ordering of priorities that Socrates suggests, presupposes the prioritization of three types of goods. As Archie argues, these three types consist in goods of the soul, which pertain to knowledge and virtue, goods of the body, which include qualities such as good health and physical strength, and external goods such as riches and honors.[67] Since the soul, according to Socrates, is of greater value than the body and what belongs to the body, then the goods of the soul are to be sought before all other goods. Thus, the ordering of priorities suggested by Socrates constitutes a prioritization of values, where the highest value is the state of one's soul. Lesser goods such as private property matters, household affairs and political offices should only follow.

While this passage offers a ranking of the three types of goods according to their value, the next occurrence of the issue of priorities in the Apology reflects on the usefulness and benefit of the appropriate ordering of priorities. After Socrates has been found guilty, the question is what the penalty should be. The prosecutors have

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incompatible with each other. Slings' standard translation emphasizes that a person may acquire money and other goods as a result of their virtue (ἐξ ἀρετῆς), and that the money so acquired will benefit him. Cf. Natoli (2016), 79 at this point: 'We can now see that the standard and alternative translations of the aphorism are in philosophical agreement. Both affirm the priority of virtue and its power to effect change for the better in the lives of human beings, as generations of readers of Plato's *Apology* have understood. Where they differ is that the standard translation (unlike that of Burnet) frankly acknowledges the place of money as a good (albeit a contingent good) in the thought of Socrates.' At the end of this chapter (see p. ... of this thesis), the passages cited from *Meno* and *Euthydemus* make clear that Socrates does not hold money and other conventional goods to be good in themselves, but only when used appropriately, i.e. when their use comes under the guidance of prudence or wisdom. Following this reasoning, I believe Burnet's translation is more in line with this argument for it shows that money is not a good in itself, but rather is *made* a good by the guidance of the virtuous soul.

[66] Archie 2015, 89.

[67] Ibidem.

proposed death. Socrates can make a counterproposal, after which the jury will vote again. Socrates' response is full of irony, as he proposes that the penalty should be free meals at public expense. He justifies this counterproposal by giving examples of his activity so far. Socrates argues that he has tried to live a life that is useful not only to himself but also to others:

> *τί ἄξιός εἰμι παθεῖν ἢ ἀποτεῖσαι, ὅτι μαθὼν ἐν τῷ βίῳ οὐχ ἡσυχίαν ἦγον, ἀλλ' ἀμελήσας ὧνπερ οἱ πολλοί, χρηματισμοῦ τε καὶ οἰκονομίας καὶ στρατηγιῶν καὶ δημηγοριῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀρχῶν καὶ συνωμοσιῶν καὶ στάσεων τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει γιγνομένων, ἡγησάμενος ἐμαυτὸν τῷ ὄντι ἐπιεικέστερον εἶναι ἢ ὥστε εἰς ταῦτ' ἰόντα σώζεσθαι, ἐνταῦθα μὲν οὐκ ἦα οἷ ἐλθὼν μήτε ὑμῖν μήτε ἐμαυτῷ ἔμελλον μηδὲν ὄφελος εἶναι, ἐπὶ δὲ τὸ ἰδίᾳ ἕκαστον ἰὼν εὐεργετεῖν τὴν μεγίστην εὐεργεσίαν, ὡς ἐγώ φημι, ἐνταῦθα ἦα, ἐπιχειρῶν ἕκαστον ὑμῶν πείθειν μὴ πρότερον μήτε τῶν ἑαυτοῦ μηδενὸς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι πρὶν ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμεληθείη ὅπως ὡς βέλτιστος καὶ φρονιμώτατος ἔσοιτο, μήτε τῶν τῆς πόλεως, πρὶν αὐτῆς τῆς πόλεως, τῶν τε ἄλλων οὕτω κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον ἐπιμελεῖσθαι. (36b5-d2)*
>
> *What do I deserve to have done to me or to pay, because throughout my life I could not keep quiet, but neglecting the things the majority cares for, such as property, household affairs, military offices and public speaking and, in general, the offices and clubs and parties that come up in the state, because I considered myself really too good to take up those activities and stay alive, I did not adopt a course by taking up which there was no prospect of my being of any use neither to you nor to myself, but I devoted myself to conferring to each of you privately the greatest benefit, as I affirm, by attempting to convince each one of you not to care for any of his belongings before taking care of his own self, to become the best and most prudent possible, nor for the interests of the city before he cares for the city itself, and to care for all other things in the same way.*

Socrates argues here that he would not change his way of life which is the most beneficial to the city and its citizens, not even to save himself, but has rather lived his life according to the greatest benefit of the city. And, indeed, there he stands, ready to be convicted in front of the Athenians, for the life he has chosen to lead, according to the proper ordering of priorities. This is just another way of expressing the requirement of *ἐπιμέλεια ψυχῆς*, with the addition that a life devoted to the state of one's soul is a life full of worthiness, since it benefits not only oneself, but also the city as a whole. Hence, this argument is an argument of utility: a life devoted to virtue is a life of *ὄφελος*, i.e. of benefit. Virtue is beneficial, for it provides the soul with the wisdom to direct all other external goods to proper use, which in turn would also become beneficial.[68]

Similarly to the discussion in the *Alcibiades*, Socrates distinguishes the soul from what the soul uses, i.e. the body and the things belonging to it, such as passions and desires. The broad discussion of priorities in the *Apology*, though, sheds light on the transformative power of virtue, since the perfection of one's soul in goodness and wisdom makes the soul able of prioritizing the things belonging to it. For only the soul that has perfected itself in goodness and wisdom can prioritize the soul's goods, i.e. the body and its passions.

Alcibiades embodies great qualities such as wealth and beauty, but he has disregarded the most important good, which is the state of his soul. Therefore, he has taken care of the things that occupy the majority of the Athenians, i.e. his body and its possessions, i.e. beauty, wealth and honors, without any care for the wisdom and goodness of the soul, which is the directing factor that puts the lesser goods into practical use. Consequently, in both works, we see Socrates' audience, i.e Alcibiades and the Athenians respectively, being concerned with all the wrong goods, being indifferent to the appropriate ordering of priorities according to value.

I agree with Archie that the difference between the two works, which makes them complementary, is that in the Alcibiades the proper ordering of priorities plays out in a specific interlocutor with a specific ambition.[69] However, both Alcibiades and the Athenians have to reorder their priorities, by distinguishing the true self, which is the soul directed by wisdom, from the things that the self uses. Therefore they should

[68] Cf. Archie 2015, 90. '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'.
[69] Archie 2015, 92.

appreciate that they are different from their looks, bodily desires and riches, but rather a soul, understood as the real self as opposed to the body. If one fails to excel at the highest good, one will certainly fail at all other lesser goods, since the perfection of the soul in goodness and wisdom is what properly directs the use of all other - conventional - goods. Both Alcibiades and the Athenians are blinded by disordered priorities, and consequently even fail to get any benefit from the goods in which they do excel. For even if one is naturally talented and gifted as far as conventional goods are concerned, he would surely fail without the knowledge to exploit what he excels at.

In this respect, the argument of usefulness is essential in order for the interlocutors to realize that, when caring for conventional goods, they're caring for their body alone, rather than for themselves. The proper ordering of priorities does not only concern the individual but also the whole city. If Athens only excels in conventional goods while disregarding the concern for wisdom, it will necessarily fail in maintaining the welfare of the city, since it won't know how to properly use the conventional goods it excels at. As Archie puts it, 'only the soul under the guidance of wisdom can rule effectively both the body and the city'.[70]

The relationship between the soul and lesser goods relating to the body seems comparable to that between a leader and a herd. That is to say, the soul is the guiding element that can direct bodily goods to harmful or beneficial use, depending on the presence of virtue and wisdom within it. The virtuous soul will always lead the conventional goods to what is just, and therefore also beneficient.

The beneficiality of the ordering of priorities and the worthiness of a life dedicated to the state of one's soul in the *Apology* is reminiscent of a part in the *Alcibiades*. In 113d-118b, Alcibiades claims that what is just is not always expedient: "*οὐ γὰρ ταὐτὰ οἶμαι ἐστὶν τά τε δίκαια καὶ τὰ συμφέροντα*". And then Socrates tries to persuade him of the opposite, resulting in Alcibiades' agreement that, indeed, justice is always advantageous: *ταὐτά ἐστι δίκαιά τε καὶ συμφέροντα*".

It is very interesting to note at this point, that in the *Meno* (87e2-88c4), we find the same argument of beneficiality with a different terminology.[71] Socrates argues in this passage that the goods of the soul, such as temperance, justice, courage and

[70] Archie 2015, 98.

[71] Archie uses another passage from the *Meno* (Pl. *Men*. 87e3-88c4) to amplify Socrates' assumptions in the *Apology* regarding the practical effect of privileging the soul in the ordering of priorities: Archie 2015, 90-91.

magnanimity, are beneficial when accompanied by intelligence (*σὺν νῷ*) but harmful when not accompanied by intelligence (*ἄνευ νοῦ*). The logic of the argument is that "prudence" (*φρόνησις*) and "understanding" (*νοῦς*) are what make these qualities beneficial and their absence makes them harmful.[72] Similarly, the goods of the body (the conventional goods) are made either beneficial or harmful, according to the guidance of the soul:

> *πάντα τὰ κατὰ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτὰ μὲν καθ' αὑτὰ οὔτε ὠφέλιμα οὔτε βλαβερά ἐστιν, προσγενομένης δὲ φρονήσεως ἢ ἀφροσύνης βλαβερά τε καὶ ὠφέλιμα γίγνεται. [...] καὶ μὲν δὴ καὶ τἆλλα ἃ νυνδὴ ἐλέγομεν, πλοῦτόν τε καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, τοτὲ μὲν ἀγαθὰ τοτὲ δὲ βλαβερὰ εἶναι, ἆρα οὐχ ὥσπερ τῇ ἄλλῃ ψυχῇ ἡ φρόνησις ἡγουμένη ὠφέλιμα τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς ἐποίει, ἡ δὲ ἀφροσύνη βλαβερά, οὕτως αὖ καὶ τούτοις ἡ ψυχὴ ὀρθῶς μὲν χρωμένη καὶ ἡγουμένη ὠφέλιμα αὐτὰ ποιεῖ, μὴ ὀρθῶς δὲ βλαβερά;* [88d1-88e2]
>
> *All the things in the soul are themselves neither profitable nor harmful, but they become profitable or harmful when accompanied by wisdom or folly. [...] Then also the other good things, such as wealth and things of that sort, of which we were just now saying that they are sometimes good and sometimes harmful, isn't it just like the other case of the soul generally, where the guidance of prudence makes things in the soul beneficial while folly makes them harmful? Just likewise, in the case of these (i.e. the other goods, such as wealth and the like), are not these also made profitable when the soul uses and guides them rightly or harmful when the soul uses them wrongly?*[73]

This passage of the *Meno* assists in the interpretation of Socrates' argument in the *Apology* stated above, namely that: *οὐκ ἐκ χρημάτων ἀρετὴ γίγνεται, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀρετῆς*

[72] *Φρόνησις* in the *Meno* and appears to be synonymous with *ἀρετὴ*, "the perfection of the soul" (*τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς βελτίστη ἔσται*) and "the soul directed by wisdom" found in Alcibiades and the Apology. Failing to use the goods appropriately - and therefore beneficially - occurs in the case of *ἀφροσύνη*, when the soul is not in the condition that must be (cf. the soul of Alcibiades). The point is that the soul must be cared for so that it is guided by wisdom and prudence.

[73] Text by Jowett (1999b), translation is my own.

χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαντα καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ (30b1-3). Following the reasoning in the *Meno*, the argument which is only implicitly stated by Socrates in the *Apology* is that the soul which is directed by wisdom is the leading element (*ἡγουμένη*) in respect to everything else, and, consequently, that the goodness of the conventional goods depends on the goodness of the soul. And this is what Socrates means by "*it is virtue that makes money and everything else good for men*". Thus, money and other conventional goods can be profitable, on the condition that their use is appropriate (*ὀρθὴ χρῆσις*[74]). A prerequisite for proper use is right guidance (*ὀρθῶς ἡγουμένη*), which only the soul which has been cared for (we would say in Greek *ἐπιμεληθεῖσα*) and has reached the best state of *φρόνησις* can do. If guided by an ignorant soul, all these goods become harmful an therefore no good things. That is to say, since the wise soul guides rightly, and the foolish erroneously, the goodness and beneficiality of all other goods depends on the state of the soul.

Also interesting to note here is that we find Socrates using a similar argument in the *Euthydemus* as well (281a7-b1 and 281d6-e2):

> *ἆρ' οὖν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, καὶ περὶ τὴν χρείαν ὧν ἐλέγομεν τὸ πρῶτον τῶν ἀγαθῶν, πλούτου τε καὶ ὑγιείας καὶ κάλλους, τὸ ὀρθῶς πᾶσι τοῖς τοιούτοις χρῆσθαι ἐπιστήμη ἦν ἡγουμένη καὶ κατορθοῦσα τὴν πρᾶξιν, ἢ ἄλλο τι; [...] ἐὰν μὲν αὐτῶν ἡγῆται ἀμαθία, μείζω κακὰ εἶναι τῶν ἐναντίων, ὅσῳ δυνατώτερα ὑπηρετεῖν τῷ ἡγουμένῳ κακῷ ὄντι, ἐὰν δὲ φρόνησίς τε καὶ σοφία, μείζω ἀγαθά, αὐτὰ δὲ καθ' αὐτὰ οὐδέτερα αὐτῶν οὐδενὸς ἄξια εἶναι.*
>
> *Then similarly, I went on, in the use of the goods we mentioned at first—wealth and health and beauty— in regard to the right use of all these was it knowledge that leads the way and rectifies their conduct, or was it something else? [...] if they are guided by ignorance, they are greater evils than their opposites, inasmuch as they are more able to minister to the evil principle which rules them; whereas if prudence and wisdom guide them, they are greater goods; but in themselves neither sort is of any worth.*[75]

[74] *Meno* 88a5.
[75] Text by Jowett (1999a), translation is my own.

At this passage of the *Euthydemus*, Socrates agrees that conventional goods such as wealth and a good state of one's body can indeed be good and advantageous, but only when used rightly (*ὀρθῶς χρῆσθαι*). And for them to be used rightly, they have to be guided by knowledge. Socrates even argues that to have these conventional goods but use them wrongly would actually be worse than not having them at all (*μείζω κακὰ εἶναι τῶν ἐναντίων*). Here it is *ἐπιστήμη* that is presented as the leading element (*ἡγουμένη*) rather than *ψυχή* we found at the *Meno* passage. However, it comes down to be the same thing, since, as we have seen, the soul at its best state is the soul guided by wisdom. The Meno passage does indeed differentiate between the soul which is guided by *φρόνησις*, which makes for the right ordering of all, and the soul which is guided by *ἀμαθία*, which will lead everything to harmful instead of beneficial use. Michel Christiansen formulates this coincidence of terms in his article 'Caring about the soul in Plato's Apology': "*arete* appears as synonymous with the good state of the 'soul', that is, of the inner level of dimension of a man's life, identical with his true self, and closely related to his intelligence."[76]

To draw the line with *Alcibiades* and the *Apology*, the key issue is that Alcibiades as well as the Athenians care more about the conventional goods they *have*, such as property and other bodily goods, than about what they *are*. What is more, these conventional goods they consider to be valuable and advantageous, are of no value and of no benefit at all, if not accompanied by a soul which is guided by wisdom. Only the virtuous soul can make these goods beneficial, by ensuring that they be used well.

The whole requirement of reordering the priorities of Alcibiades and the Athenians found in respectively the *Alcibiades* and the *Apology* is therefore based on the assumption that the goodness of every other (bodily) good depends on the goodness of the soul, which is the primary good and therefore the one to be cared for first. Virtue, or goodness of the soul, is the utmost thing men should strive to, since, as Burnyeat puts it, it is 'something capable of dominating and organizing the whole pattern of a man's life'.[77]

[76] Christiansen 2000, 33.
[77] Burnyeat 1971, 210.

Conclusion

The main focus of this thesis has been to make the connection between the Socratic notion of self-care (*ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ*) to the *soul* and the *polis*. The first chapter deals with the notion of self-care as it appears in the Socratic dialogue *Alcibiades*. As we have seen, at the outset of this dialogue Socrates approaches Alcibiades with the specific purpose of helping him realise his potential and successfully fulfil his ambition of practicing leadership in Athens. After persuading Alcibiades that his current state is unfit for a political career, he then underlines the importance of self-care, understood as care for what one really is and which makes people as good as possible (*ὡς ἄριστος* – 124d11). To start caring for himself, Alcibiades must first know what he himself is. This brings the dialogue to its main topic, which is the quest to what one's real self is. Socrates then proceeds to the distinction between oneself and what belongs to oneself to arrive at the distinction between soul and body. Alcibiades then agrees with Socrates that the real self must be the soul (*ἡ ψυχή ἐστιν ἄνθρωπος* – 130c5-6), since the soul is the user of the body and therefore what rules over it (*ἄρχουσα* – 130a3). We have argued above that Socrates suggests a distinction between two dimensions of the self, namely the *αὐτὸ ἕκαστον* and the *αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό*, the first of which corresponds to the particular characteristics of the individual, while the second amounts to the peculiar characteristic of rationality

which all humans share and which allows them to gain knowledge of what is good and bad.

As I have argued above, it is evident from the dialogue itself and its context that the self-knowledge Alcibiades has to strive to includes both dimensions. Self-knowledge must clearly include knowledge of characteristics peculiar to Alcibiades as a particular individual. However, Socrates connects self-knowledge to knowledge relating to others and the city (*Alc*. 133e4–8), which implies that self-knowledge clearly extends to more than knowledge of one's individual characteristics. By means of the eye-mirror passage, Socrates argues that, by gaining self-knowledge Alcibiades will become acquainted with the divinity of human nature. That is, he will recognize that he and other humans share an essential attribute of rationality which resembles the divine.[78] Therefore, this analogy suggests that, when a person gains self-knowledge, he becomes acquainted with what kind of being he is and with the essential nature he shares with other humans. As such, self-knowledge extends from knowledge of one's particular characteristics to knowledge of human nature, and thus to knowledge of what is good for humans and – eventually – of what is good for the city. Indeed, considering Alcibiades' ambitions and the interference of Socrates to 'help him' achieve them, self-knowledge would only be relevant to political leadership if it included knowledge of qualities that humans share, and thereby also knowledge of things relating to the *polis*.[79] As such, this chapter has served as an answer to the main question of the present thesis: How is self-care related to the soul and the *polis*?

In chapter 2 I have attempted to provide an answer to the second question raised: how does altering one's priorities reflect the ordering of the soul and how does it relate to the wider field of the city? To answer this question, I have used another Socratic work where the notion of self-care is central, namely the *Apology*. This work is actually Plato's account of Socrates' defense before the Athenian jury, when he was put to trial by leaders in the restored Athenian democracy on the charges of corrupting the young and of impiety. This work then amounts to Socrates' justification of his way of life. That is to say, Socrates defends before the jury the utility of philosophy for political life. As we have seen, Socrates defends his way of life in terms of his values and thereby reveals how much his values differ from the ones of his audience,

[78] Following Rider 2011, 406.
[79] Ibidem.

namely the men of Athens. As such, the discussion reaches the topic of the care of the soul, when Socrates reveals to his addresses how much they have neglected their state of the soul by caring for the wrong things. While the topic of self-care as care for one's soul is in the same line with the argument in the *Alcibiades*, we have seen that the *Apology* makes clear that self-care requires a reordering of one's priorities. As such, we have seen that practicing philosophy is of greater value for Socrates than his life and freedom, for by practicing philosophy one cares for the goods of the soul, namely justice and wisdom, which are the goods with the greatest value of all other goods.

As we have seen, in the *Apology*, Socrates explicitly states that the care for the soul is, besides the most valuable, also the most beneficial. I have argued that by caring for the soul, one not only benefits himself, but also the whole city. What is more, it is clear here that excelling at other, lesser goods would be useless without the appropriate state of the soul. For the perfection of the soul in goodness and wisdom is what properly directs the use of all other lesser goods. By means of other Socratic works, namely the *Meno* and the *Euthydemus*, we have seen that even the goods of the soul can be not only not beneficial, but even harmful, if the soul does not possess the necessary prudence and wisdom in order to use them rightly.[80] Thus, it is prudence (*φρόνησις*) and understanding (*νοῦς*) that make these qualities beneficial, while their absence makes them harmful. We have concluded that, for Socrates, also the conventional goods such as wealth and the beauty of one's body can be profitable, when guided by wisdom. Therefore, as we have seen, the ordering of priorities is necessary for the Athenians in order to gain benefit out of any of their goods. But also the city of Athens, which excels in other goods, such as wealth and fame, must be managed by men who excel in prudence and understanding. If not, the goods of the city are no goods at all, but actually harmful. Thus, the city of Athens must alter its priorities too and concentrate on being virtuous rather than gaining national wealth and national glory. For the state which makes honor and wealth its object is not the true state. As Burnet argues, it is clear in the *Apology* that, for Socrates, the *ἐπιμέλεια*

[80] See the Meno passage back on p.32: Socrates argues in this passage that the goods of the soul, such as temperance, justice, courage and magnanimity, are beneficial when accompanied by intelligence (*σὺν νῷ*) but harmful when not accompanied by intelligence (*ἄνευ νοῦ*).

τῆς πόλεως should be in principle the same as the *ἐπιμέλεια ἑαυτοῦ*, which constitutes in a nutshell the political theory of Socrates.[81]

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[81] Burnet 1924, 234, note on 36c7.

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