

# Neoplatonic Pedagogy

James Ambury  
KING'S COLLEGE (PA)

*"For Socrates correctly says in the First Alcibiades that the soul will see all things and even god by entering into itself. For by inclining itself toward its own unity, which is to say to enter into all likeness and by getting rid of multiplicity and the variety of multifarious faculties, the soul will attain to the watchtower of all beings."* (Proclus, Platonic Theology I.15.23-16.1)

## INTRODUCTION

**M**y purpose in this paper is to develop an analysis of the position of the *Alcibiades I* (hereafter *Alcibiades*) in late Neoplatonic pedagogy. I am concerned with the Athenian tradition that begins with Iamblichus of Chalcis and develops with Plutarch of Athens, Syrianus, Hermeias, Proclus, and culminates with Damascius, as well as with the Alexandrian tradition, particularly Olympiodorus and the Anonymous author of the *Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*.<sup>1</sup> Plotinus and Porphyry influence both traditions, though I am interested in their influence on the later commentators and not in their work as it stands alone. What is relevant for my purposes is the hierarchy of virtue through which the soul must pass on the way to knowledge. The paper is by no means an exhaustive study of the systematic metaphysics of these thinkers, and is certainly not an overall interpretation of the reception of the *Alcibiades* throughout all of antiquity.<sup>2</sup>

The late commentators believed that a reading order of Plato's dialogues was fundamental to the curriculum for students of philosophy, and that this reading order began with the *Alcibiades*.<sup>3</sup>

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1. On the attribution of the *Prolegomena* to an Alexandrian commentator in the second half of the sixth century (perhaps Elias), see Westerink 1962, xli-1.

2. For this see Renaud, François and Tarrant, Harold. *The Platonic Alcibiades I: The Dialogue and Its Ancient Reception*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015

3. The classic account of the reading order is Festugière, "L'ordre de Lecture." See Anonymous, *Prolegomena* 26.1-45, and cf. Westerink's introduction, xxxvii-xxxviii. Cf. Pépin, *Théologie cosmique et théologie chrétienne*, 380-385. The tradition of establishing a reading order goes back at least as far as Thrasylus, if not further. See Dunn "Iamblichus, Thrasylus, and the Reading Order of Plato's

Beginning with Iamblichus, the dialogue retained its introductory function through Julian's closing the school at Athens in 529 AD, and in the commentaries of the Alexandrian lecturers.<sup>4</sup> Iamblichus and those following him held that students should read the *Alcibiades* first on the grounds that self-knowledge is the foundation for knowledge of intelligible reality.<sup>5</sup> What is not clear is why the *Alcibiades* should occupy the place in the reading order that, while purportedly foundational, is not identified with any particular type of psychic virtue. While every other dialogue in Iamblichus' reading order corresponds to one of the levels of virtue, the *Alcibiades* seemingly does not.<sup>6</sup>

I will argue that the *Alcibiades* occupies the introductory place

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Dialogues," esp. 59-62, for an overview. For book length treatment see Tarrant, *Thrasyllan Platonism*. In addition to the late Neoplatonic commentators, the *Alcibiades* was first in Albinus' reading order designed for an ideal young philosopher (*Prologus* 5) as well as in a Middle Platonic reading order that we find in the later work of the Arab philosopher al-Farabi. For a survey of the place of the dialogue in the Middle Platonists and Neoplatonists, see Segonds, *Proclus sur le premier Alcibiade*, vii-xx. The dialogue was not always first, as it is absent altogether from the arrangement of Aristophanes of Byzantium, and is the first dialogue in Thrasyllus' fourth tetralogy, and would not have been used by Antiochus of Ascalon. See Tarrant *Plato's First Interpreters*, 118-123.

4. Contemporary scholars have mostly devoted their attention to the late commentators, though recent work has called our attention to the nature of pedagogy in Middle Platonism as well as in what we know of the Old Academy. Mansfeld, *Prolegomena*, is an indispensable resource for the tradition of using isagogical schemata to introduce students to the works of Plato and Aristotle that includes but also predates the late commentators. See Tarrant, *Platonic Interpretation and Eclectic Theory*—who argues that as far back as the early academy, the consistent pedagogical element was not the transmission of doctrine as much as it was practice—and Dillon, "Pedantry and Pedestrianism?" who shows that aside from the Neoplatonic allegorization of prefatory portions of the dialogues and characters, and a more rigid conception of the σκοπός or aim of the dialogue, much of the substance of their commentaries was lifted from their Middle Platonic counterparts.

5. Thrasyllus' original subtitle for the dialogue was περί ἀνθρώπου φύσεως—on the nature of human being. Proclus, in *Alc.*, 11.1-17 claims that Iamblichus put the *Alcibiades* first because it contained in it the entirety of Plato's philosophy, as though it were a seed. See Segonds, *Proclus sur le premier Alcibiade*, xxi-xxxiv. For Iamblichus' fragments see Dillon, *Iamblichi Chalcidensis*. Olympiodorus, in *Alc.*, 11.3 considered the dialogue the gateway (προσπυλαίσις) to all of philosophy.

6. For brief discussions of the correspondence between the dialogues in the reading order and the hierarchy of virtues, see Festugière, "L'ordre de Lecture," and Hadot, "Les divisions des parties de la philosophie dans l'antiquité," 220-221.

in the reading order because it accounts for a student's transition from the natural and ethical virtues to the constitutional virtues. The *Alcibiades* is not merely introductory but exhibitionary, because the character Alcibiades himself embodies the first two kinds of virtue that are seemingly omitted from the reading order. The *Alcibiades* leads the student to the second dialogue in the sequence, the *Gorgias*, which corresponds to the third level of the hierarchy of virtue. The means for the transition is achievement of self-knowledge, understood in the *Alcibiades* as identification of the self with soul.<sup>7</sup> It is for this reason that the *Alcibiades* provided the transitional pedagogical moment for a student between his inculcation to virtue and his reversion upon the source of his virtue.

I divide the paper in three main parts. In the first, I recount the relationship between the Neoplatonic hierarchy of virtues and Iamblichus' reading order. Subsequently, I show that the natural and ethical virtues are present in the *Alcibiades* and are foundational for the soul's ascent. In the second, I show that the definition of soul in the *Alcibiades* is presupposed in the *Gorgias* and *Phaedo*, the two dialogues that follow it in the sequence. One cannot truly achieve the virtues shown in these two dialogues without first knowing oneself. Finally, I show that the lecturer in a Neoplatonic school could assume that by the time his students began reading the *Alcibiades*, they were prepared for its lessons because they had already been trained in the ethical virtues. I thus illustrate the ways in which Neoplatonic pedagogy cultivated character through habitual training. I conclude with a brief thought on the relationship between knowing and living in the Neoplatonic tradition.

### VIRTUE, NATURAL AND ETHICAL

I begin with the Neoplatonic doctrine of the degrees of virtue.

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7. Cf. Anonymous, *Prolegomena*, 26.18-20: "the first of the dialogues to be explained then, is the *Alcibiades*, because it teaches us to know ourselves, and the right course is to know oneself before knowing external things, for we can scarcely understand those other things so long as we are ignorant of ourselves." Even before Iamblichus' curriculum, Plotinus emphasized *Alcibiades* 129-130, in which Socrates identifies the human being with soul. See Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, 19. The entire ascent through the virtues is rooted in the emphasis on self-knowledge. This is contra Hathaway, "The Neoplatonist Interpretation of Plato," who argues that the 'Socratic' element, including the ethical and political virtues, was neglected by the Neoplatonist commentators.

Whereas in Plato the virtues are dispositions of the individual soul, the late commentators identify the virtues at different levels of reality. In Plotinus, the levels are constitutional (πολιτικάί), purificatory (καθαρχτικάί), and contemplative (θεωρητικάί).<sup>8</sup> The virtues are nominally the same at each level but are substantively different based on the progress of the soul ascending through the hierarchy. Justice, for instance, understood as constitutional virtue, requires the soul to introduce a measure on its passions (μετριοπάθεια), to curb its irrational instincts, and to conform itself to the proper natural order in which reason dictates action.<sup>9</sup> At the level of purification, the soul frees itself altogether from identification with corporeal nature. The soul abstains from consideration of the body and from pursuing the passions that affect it. Justice here is the dominance of reason without internal dissent.<sup>10</sup> Whereas at the constitutional level justice is a self-limiting of the passions of the soul, at the level of purification the soul rids itself of its identification with these passions altogether. Once the soul has completely purified itself, it reaches the contemplative level. It no longer needs to attempt to free itself from the body, but thinks or exercises intellection without effort. Damascius indicates that soul at this level has abandoned even itself, for it desires to become intelligence.<sup>11</sup> Justice here is each part of the soul's effortlessly fulfilling its function. One need not think about the passions because one is wholly free from them, and free therefore to contemplate intelligible reality without interference from the body.<sup>12</sup>

To Plotinus' original three levels Porphyry added the paradigmatic (παραδειγματικάι), which are the virtues as intelligibles, in Intellect itself, as Forms.<sup>13</sup> Soul here does not contemplate virtues in Intellect but is united with it. For his part, Iamblichus added three more levels: the first two, both of which precede the constitutional level of virtue, are the natural (φυσικάί)

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8. *Enn* 1.2 (19). On some of the difficulties of interpreting Plotinus' account, see Dillon, "Plotinus, Philo and Origen."

9. Porphyry, *Sentences*, 32.6-14

10. Porphyry, *Sentences*, 32.15-32

11. *In Phd.*, I.142

12. Porphyry, *Sentences*, 32.51-62

13. Porphyry, *Sentences*, 32.63-70. This level is absent in Marinus (*Vit Proc* III) and equivalent to the hieretic in Olympiodorus, *in Phd.*, 8.2. Damascius, *in Phd.*, I.143 seemingly follows Proclus and draws a clear line between paradigmatic and hieretic.

and the ethical (ἠθικαί). The natural virtues belong mainly to the living body and are shared between humans and animals alike. The ethical virtues, possessed by well-brought up children and tamed animals, are acquired through habituation. The third level, located above the paradigmatic, is called the hieretic (θεουργικαί). These virtues come into being in the godlike element of the soul.<sup>14</sup> The hieretic virtues are beyond being and concern the One. For Iamblichus, one could only reach this level by rites that allowed the individual to attain union with the divine. What is interesting for our purposes here is not the detailed distinction between all seven levels but the relationship between the levels and Iamblichus' reading order.

Iamblichus' reduction of the Platonic dialogues to two reading cycles largely overlaps with his sevenfold gradation of virtue. The first cycle began with the *Alcibiades*, followed by the *Gorgias* (πολιτικάί) and *Phaedo* (καθαρχικάί). The natural and ethical virtues are conspicuously absent. The purificatory virtues of the *Phaedo* were followed by the contemplative (θεωρητικάί) dialogues: *Cratylus* (περὶ ὀνομάτων) and *Theaetetus* (περὶ νοημάτων)—and then four dialogues labeled περὶ πραγμάτων: *Sophist* and *Statesman* (φυσικῶν), *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* (θεολογικῶν), and finally, *Philebus*, in which the student came to know the Good. The second cycle, which contained two 'perfect' dialogues, consisted of the *Timaeus*—concerned with physics—and the *Parmenides*—concerned with theology.<sup>15</sup> Iamblichus constructed the curriculum to engender a progression of the student's soul towards the Good. As such, one cannot move from one level to the next without progressing through each, one step at a time.

As the first dialogue in the sequence the *Alcibiades* seemingly does not correspond to any particular kind of virtue. One might suspect that the omission follows from the fact that the

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14. Damascius in *Phd.*, I.138-9 and I.143-4. See Dillon, "Iamblichus of Calchis," 903 for a chart and summary of all seven grades of virtue.

15. Anonymous, *Prolegomena*, 24.1-26.45; see also Westerink's introduction xxxvii-xl for commentary, including justification of the inclusion of *Sophist* and *Statesman* as physical dialogues. Damascius, in *Phd.*, I.142, indicates that Plato treats the theoretical virtues in *Theaetetus* 173c-177c, a passage modern commentators often refer to as 'the digression'. Dillon, "Iamblichus of Calchis," suspects that, because of its account of the heavenly, the *Phaedrus* would cover Iamblichus' paradigmatic virtues, and I suspect we could add the *Symposium* on account of Diotima's speech. The *Philebus*, in which one comes to know the Good, which is beyond being, would account for the hieretic virtues.

natural virtues are innate and the ethical virtues are the result of habituation. That is, because they do not require the soul to work upon itself in the same way the other virtues do—indeed, they do not assume familiarization with one’s psychic nature at all—one can possess them without knowing oneself. By contrast, both the measured limit of one’s passions (constitutional virtue) and the purification of oneself from them (purificatory virtue) assume familiarity with one’s true nature and what it is to act well in accordance with it. Accordingly, the late Neoplatonic view might seem to be solely that, while it is not taxonomically associated with any particular type of virtue, the *Alcibiades* is considered an introduction to the curriculum because every virtue that the reading order covers presupposes self-knowledge. The dialogue might thus be said to ‘look forward’ to the ascent of the soul. I do not deny this; indeed, I will argue that it is true. However, the *Alcibiades* also ‘looks backward’ because the character for which it is named embodies the first two kinds of virtue—the natural and the ethical—seemingly absent from the reading order.

Socrates begins the dialogue by praising Alcibiades’ natural virtues. He claims to have been observing Alcibiades for some time, waiting for the proper moment to approach and educate him.<sup>16</sup> He attributes Alcibiades’ sense of superiority primarily to his natural virtues. Physically, Alcibiades is the tallest and best-looking young man in Athens.<sup>17</sup> On just the basis of physical appearance, Socrates discerns a potential predisposition toward virtue. Iamblichus praises Pythagoras for just this practice—called physiognomy—when considering those who wanted to study with him:

He observed, moreover, their physique, manner of walking, and their whole bodily movement. Studying the features by which their nature is made known, he took the visible things as signs of the invisible character traits in their souls (τῶν ἀφανῶν ἠθῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ).<sup>18</sup>

Socrates observes an outward appearance of virtue in Alcibiades that is present only as image: it indicates or suggests the possible presence of virtuous character. Alcibiades’ virtue is as yet undetermined and lacks sustainability. On this basis, Socrates proclaims himself to be Alcibiades’ only true lover, for he loves his soul, which will retain its virtue if properly cultivated, whereas his other lovers love only his body, the virtue of which will

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16. *Alcibiades*, 103a-b

17. *Alcibiades*, 104a

18. *Vit. Pyth.*, 17.71

degenerate.<sup>19</sup>

Alcibiades is born into a noble family with many aristocratic friends. His guardian is Pericles, and he is extremely wealthy.<sup>20</sup> Proclus insists that someone who prides himself on these sorts of advantages possesses a soul that ‘resembles the body’ insofar as he conceives of his good in things other than himself. Such a soul is not truly self-sufficient because it depends on external things.<sup>21</sup> To become truly virtuous, Alcibiades must move beyond both his physical body and ‘bodily’ natural advantages. They are, as Socrates indicates, merely possessions of a possessor, and true virtue is to be fostered by cultivating the possessor, not the possessed.<sup>22</sup>

By the end of the first third of the dialogue, it is clear that Alcibiades not only prides himself on these natural virtues, but also identifies himself with them. In the face of his inability to answer Socrates’ questions, he insists that he needs no further education or training before entering into politics because he is naturally superior to all his contemporaries.<sup>23</sup> Olympiodorus characterizes the discussion up until this point in the dialogue (119a) as *elenctic*.<sup>24</sup> When Alcibiades insists that natural virtue is enough for his success, Olympiodorus argues that the dialogue becomes *protreptic*. Socrates is no longer merely concerned with refutation but insists on turning Alcibiades toward true wisdom, away from his natural virtues. Specifically, Olympiodorus claims, “τὸ δὲ προτρεπτικὸν ἐστὶν ἐν ᾧ προτρέπει αὐτὸν σοφία τοὺς ἀντιπάλους νικῆσαι: πάτριον γὰρ Ἀθηναίοις σοφία νικᾶν.”<sup>25</sup> Socrates turns Alcibiades toward wisdom to defeat his adversaries in Persia and Sparta, who far exceed him in natural advantages. Olympiodorus’ use of *πάτριον*, of one’s father or derived from one’s father, indicates that wisdom, not the peculiarities of the Alcmeonid dynasty into which he was born, is Alcibiades’ true inheritance as an Athenian.

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19. *Alcibiades*, 131e-132a

20. *Alcibiades*, 104b-c

21. *In Alc*, 106-107

22. *Alcibiades*, 129a-130a; cf. 131a-b

23. *Alcibiades*, 119a-b

24. *In Alc.*, 11.7-8. The point in these passages is not to bring perfectly coherent arguments against Alcibiades, but to make him aware of his ignorance and confusion. See Ambury, ‘The Place of Displacement.’ For a close reading of Olympiodorus specifically, see Renaud, ‘The Elenctic Strategies of Socrates.’

25. *In Alc*, 12.4-7



Despite his focus on his natural virtues, Alcibiades also exhibits the second level of virtue, the ethical. Proclus points out that, while observing Alcibiades, Socrates is impressed by his refusal to submit to the advances of any of his lovers, which he takes as evidence of a kinship with the beautiful and predisposition toward virtue.<sup>26</sup> Equally worthy of praise is Alcibiades' indifference to wealth as a criterion for determining self worth, and his general distaste regarding trivial, everyday affairs.<sup>27</sup> Alcibiades is therefore distinguished psychically insofar as his general patterns of behavior suggest the emergence of a character that may be elevated and perfected if it receives proper training.

Socrates praises Alcibiades because he seeks to achieve glory and honor beyond his natural virtues.<sup>28</sup> Socrates thinks Alcibiades' sense of superiority and desire for glory provides great promise for him. Nonetheless, it also presents the possibility of great peril. Olympiodorus points out that it is not on the basis of true greatness that Alcibiades has spurned his lovers but through haughtiness of soul (διὰ χασυρότητα ψυχῆς).<sup>29</sup> His restraint from gratifying them is a kind of false moderation. Moreover, his arrogance also manifests itself as a desire for power and authority: he wants to achieve glory by spreading his name throughout not just Greece, but all of Europe and Asia as well.<sup>30</sup> His desire for self-sufficiency is an ethical virtue that Socrates praises; it is his unawareness of what is truly honorable, what true justice and authority are, that Socrates must remedy. To do so, Socrates will turn him toward himself.<sup>31</sup>

Socrates thus focuses on Alcibiades' desire for authority at the beginning of the dialogue not to inflame it but to transfigure it. He exhorts Alcibiades toward a new conception of authority

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26. *In Alc.*, 99. We can glean a similar view in Syrianus, whose few comments on the *Alcibiades* survive in his commentary on the *Phaedrus*. Commenting on the art of love, in *Phdr.*, 207.17-23, Syrianus argues that a lover does not love just anyone, but one who is high minded or has noble thoughts (μεγαλόφρων). Cf. *Alcibiades* 103b. Segonds, *Proclus sur le Premier Alcibiade*, xxxvii, indicates that there seems to be considerable overlap between Syrianus' and Proclus' reading of the dialogue.

27. *In Alc.*, 95 on everyday affairs and Olympiodorus, in *Alc* 36.18-37.2, on wealth. Cf. *In Alc.*, 110-111

28. *Alcibiades*, 104e

29. *In Alc.*, 34.22

30. *Alcibiades*, 105a-c

31. Olympiodorus, in *Alc*, 37.8-13



that renders his initial ambition worthless and futile; worthless, because the authority in question is illusory, and futile, because his ambition is insatiable. When Olympiodorus comments on Alcibiades' love of honor, he points out that next to Cyrus and Xerxes the young man will wish to be greater still (ἔτι μειζόνων ἐπιθυμήσει). Such desire is ἀπειρα, or without limit.<sup>32</sup> Proclus also argues that Alcibiades' 'emotion of ambition' is like any other emotion—not being controlled by reason, it has no measure or boundary, belies a lack of moderation, and proceeds to infinity.<sup>33</sup> What Alcibiades needs for salvation is knowledge, without which he will bring about his own ruin.<sup>34</sup> The knowledge in question, moreover, is self-knowledge, for it is only with an awareness of his nature that he will impose measure upon his ambition. Read in light of the Neoplatonic gradation of virtue, Alcibiades needs self-knowledge to pass from the ethical virtues to the constitutional virtues.

### VIRTUE, CONSTITUTIONAL AND PURIFICATORY

Toward the end of the *Alcibiades* Socrates argues that soul and body are distinct on the grounds that the user of something (ὁ χρῶμενος) is different than the thing he is using (ᾧ χρῆται). Just as a shoemaker cuts not only with his tools but also his hands, so whatever a human being is is different than the body insofar as it uses the body.<sup>35</sup> Socrates adds that a human being should be identified with the soul because soul is what uses body. However, no sooner has he made this argument than he changes his language. 130a1 suggests that soul uses body, and after Alcibiades agrees, 130a3 suggests that soul rules body. χρῆται has become ἄρχουσα. Socrates then claims that a human being cannot be identified with body—on the grounds that a human being is what rules and the body is ruled—and is not a combination of the two—because if one of them does not rule, the combination cannot. He concludes that a human being is to be identified as soul.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, the command to know oneself must be understood as the imperative

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32. *In Alc.*, 50.21

33. *In Alc.*, 147-148

34. Proclus, *in Alc.*, 149

35. *Alcibiades*, 129d-e

36. *Alcibiades*, 130a-c

to know one's soul.<sup>37</sup>

Socrates is well aware that his proof is not without problems. It nevertheless suffices for his purpose of orienting Alcibiades toward the imposition of limit upon his desire for honor. Socrates insists that, whatever the problems with their proof, they must agree that nothing about us is more authoritative (κυριώτερον) than the soul.<sup>38</sup> To know oneself as soul is to identify oneself with the most authoritative dimension of our nature and cultivate ourselves accordingly. It is this sort of authority that Alcibiades needs: he must rule himself by caring for his soul, not his body or any natural advantages that are 'bodily' in their fleeting, dependent nature. Such things may be useful to us, but they are not subject to measure.<sup>39</sup> The more Alcibiades comes to regard his body as one of his belongings (αὐτοῦ, what is 'of him') and his other natural advantages as things of his body (τὰ τοῦ σώματος), the stronger his authority over himself will become. His soul will be organized and his way of life will acquire a more definitive configuration. In short, he will be better constituted.

The *Alcibiades* concludes with Alcibiades' commitment to transforming himself in accordance with his nature. The Neoplatonist commentators saw in this conclusion Alcibiades' preparation to pass over from the ethical virtues to the constitutional virtues. This is confirmed by consideration of the *Gorgias*, the dialogue that follows the *Alcibiades*.<sup>40</sup> Socrates' most important arguments in the *Gorgias* all rely in one way or another on the view that a human being is soul, and that the soul is what is authoritative about human beings. These arguments are (1) that rhetoric is to justice as pastry baking is to medicine (462b-465e); (2)

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37. *Alcibiades*, 130e

38. *Alcibiades*, 130d

39. Cf. Olympiodorus, in *Alc.*, 213.18-24

40. Olympiodorus, in *Alc.*, 4.15-5 reports that Damascius thought the *Alcibiades* was related solely to constitutional self-knowledge (περὶ τοῦ πολιτικῶς γινῶναι ἑαυτόν). Whereas Proclus believes the skopos of the dialogue is simply self-knowledge, for Damascius, it is constitutional self-knowledge, or knowledge of self as citizen. Segonds, *Proclus sur le Premier Alcibiade*, lvi, cites Hadot's translation of the Olympiodorus' reference to Damascius: "Dans ce dialogue, l'homme est défini comme une âme rationnelle se servant du corps comme d'un instrument: or, seul l'homme qui vit une vie de citoyen se sert du corps comme d'un instrument." Damascius thus sees the transition between the ethical and political virtues more explicitly at the end of the *Alcibiades*. Olympiodorus himself seems to argue as I do here, that the *Alcibiades* introduces the virtues present in both the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedo*.

that it is better to suffer an injustice than to commit one (475a-d); (3) that it is better to seek punishment for an injustice committed than to avoid it (476d-477a, 478b-e); and (4) that it is better to limit oneself than allow one's appetites to grow without restraint (491d-494dff).

Argument (1) grows out of Socrates' conversation with Gorgias about the type of skill (τέχνη) rhetoric is. Socrates asserts that rhetoric is not a skill at all but a knack (ἐμπειρία) for flattering the soul, just as pastry baking is a knack for flattering the body. His grounds for the claim are that the soul governs the body and makes judgments about what is best, not most pleasing. Without the authority of soul over body there would be no distinction between the good and the pleasurable.<sup>41</sup> Arguments (2) and (3) follow from Socrates' critique of Polus' desire for power, understood as the unrestrained exercise of force. Such is the object of Alcibiades' desire, and Polus vociferously defends its worth against Socrates' insistence on limit. Argument (4) makes Socrates' point about the necessity of measure even more clearly, for the sort of pleasure Callicles desires is a limitless, frenzied refilling of the soul that renders it insatiable. Neither Polus nor Callicles possess the constitutional virtues because they lack self-knowledge. Without identification of self with soul, there is no reason to accept Socrates' arguments, and they frequently seem not just implausible but absurd.<sup>42</sup>

Polus and Callicles serve as examples of the dangers of a human being's lack of constitutional virtue, still enslaved to the body, without imposition of limit, and holding mistaken notions of authority. Olympiodorus insists that Polus only holds that committing injustice is better than suffering injustice because he does not consistently embrace the 'common notions,' infallible guides to universal truth that every human being has *qua* their nature as human. Callicles is arguably worse since he doubts that such things exist.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, because Olympiodorus thinks that

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41. *Gorgias*, 465d-e. Cf. Olympiodorus, *in Gor.*, 14.10

42. Polus claims that Socrates' view that the unjust man is miserable and is more so if he is not punished is absurd (ἄτοπα) (476a1). Callicles exclaims that those who rule themselves and are moderate are stupid (τοὺς ἡλιθίους) (491e2), that political contracts for the sake of justice and moderation are foolish (φλυαρία) (496c8), and that Socrates is a strange person (ἄτοπος) (494d1).

43. *In Gor.*, 20.2, 21.1-2. See Renaud, "Rhétorique philosophique et fondement de la dialectique," 145-151, for Olympiodorus' view of the common notions in the *Gorgias*.

punishment is the restraining of passions, he interprets Polus' view that it is better to escape punishment for an injustice committed as his refusal to regulate his passions.<sup>44</sup> Without identifying himself with soul, Polus believes he has no reason to pursue the just life for which Socrates argues.

The emphasis on the absence of constitutional virtue is even clearer in Socrates' encounter with Callicles, in which Alcibiades appears in name. Socrates accuses Callicles of changing what he says from one moment to the next, to please his beloved demos.<sup>45</sup> Callicles is presented as a flatterer who seeks to gratify his beloved by telling it what it wants to hear, echoing a worry that Socrates has voiced about Alcibiades himself in the *Alcibiades*.<sup>46</sup> Moments later, Socrates asserts that his own beloved, the son of Clinias, also says different things from one moment to the next.<sup>47</sup> This lack of moderation in pursuit of honor is not restricted solely to Callicles or Alcibiades but is characteristic of the human condition. According to the Anonymous Commentator, every human being must discipline and train his ambition for the sake of something better (δεῖ ἰουθμίξειν καὶ κοσμεῖν ἐπὶ τὸ βέλτιον).<sup>48</sup> The language reflects an emphasis on constitutional virtue: human beings must 'bring rhythm' to, or impose constancy upon, love of honor.

Olympiodorus likens Callicles to Sisyphus insofar as he lifts his head above the passions only to be dragged down by them again.<sup>49</sup> Though he credits Callicles with being affected by

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44. *In Gor.*, 22.1. Cf. 22.4 and 23.1 on the worst sort of evil as evil residing in the soul. We have no fragments of an Iamblichan commentary on the *Gorgias*, though there is suspicion that he believed the dialogue's main skopos was a demiurgic power. See Jackson, Lycos, and Tarrant, *Olympiodorus: Commentary on Plato's Gorgias*, 23-28. Though such a conclusion seems likely, it also seems probable that because of his emphasis on salvation, Iamblichus and his followers at Athens would also have stressed the importance of the individual's constitution.

45. *Gorgias*, 481e

46. *Alcibiades*, 132a

47. *Gorgias*, 482a-b. Cf. Olympiodorus, *in Gor.*, 25.3

48. Anonymous, *Prolegomena*, 23.19-24. Shaw, in *Theurgy and Soul*, 1-17, argues that for Iamblichus too it is the responsibility of every soul to establish order in itself by mimicking the cosmos: "the task for every soul was to partake in divine mimesis by creating a cosmos out of the initial chaos of embodiment" (15). Cf. Marinus, *Life of Proclus*, XVIII: the constitutional virtues are to a certain extent purifying, because on a lower level they make those who possess them better by keeping emotions and desires within a fixed limit.

49. *In Gor.*, 45.1; cf. 42.1, 50.1

Socrates' arguments, he nonetheless indicates that Callicles lacks constitutional virtue insofar as he fears death. Without the view that the self is soul and the body a mere instrument, Callicles does not comprehend Socrates' insistence that death is not the greatest evil.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, he cannot comprehend it. In his explication of the lemma at 495e1, Olympiodorus indicates that Callicles is incapable of constitutional virtue. Socrates says that, while Callicles claims otherwise, he does not really believe that the good and pleasant are equivalent, and he would recognize this if he came to see himself correctly.<sup>51</sup> Without a proper understanding of himself, he cannot truly understand what is best for him. Put succinctly: Callicles lacks self-knowledge.

The *Alcibiades* also prepares the student not just to limit the passions of the body, but to transcend the body altogether. It thus prepares the student for the fourth level of virtue, the purificatory, associated in the decalogue with the *Phaedo*. Iamblichus broadly classifies the seven dialogues that follow the *Phaedo* as contemplative. The *Phaedo* therefore serves as an important bridge in the gradation of virtue, and its completion indicates that the student is ready to begin philosophical contemplation properly speaking. Only when the student purifies himself completely does he become capable of grasping intelligible reality.

The transition between the constitutional virtues and purificatory virtues is affected by the Pythagorean-inspired myth at the end of the *Gorgias*, in which Socrates speaks of the soul's judgment in the afterlife.<sup>52</sup> Stripped of the body at death, the soul's merits are judged without any physical appearance or material association of any kind. Once stripped, the soul retains everything natural to it and bears the traces of what happened to it throughout its embodied life. If the soul is judged to have followed the temperament of the body, it is punished for not having harmonized spirit and appetite; in other words, it is punished for lacking constitutional virtue.<sup>53</sup> Olympiodorus makes the transition between dialogues readily apparent by insisting that punishment, whether here or in the afterworld, renders the soul more temperate and more suitable to purification.<sup>54</sup> Punishment and purification,

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50. *In Gor.*, 38.1

51. *In Gor.*, 31.6

52. *Gorgias*, 523a-527d

53. *In Gor.*, 49.6

54. *In Gor.*, 50.4

like the constitutional and purificatory virtues, are not equivalent. The latter presupposes the former. In purification alone does the soul return to its origins.

Socrates' famous proclamation in the opening pages of the *Phaedo*—that philosophy is a preparation for death and dying (64a)—follows from this myth. True philosophers are already nearly dead (64b), because death is nothing other than the separation of the soul from the body (64c). The philosopher, while living, turns away from the body and towards the soul (64e), because only when the soul takes leave of the body, as much as possible, can it truly search for reality (65c). The philosopher purifies himself of his body (66d) and refrains as much as possible from association with it (67a4). This lived purification or separation consists in accustoming the soul to gather or collect itself out of the body (67c). It is only when we purify ourselves that we will know through ourselves (ἐσόμεθα καὶ γνωσόμεθα δι' ἡμῶν) all that is pure (67a-67b). The emphasis on the distinction between soul and body in the *Alcibiades* is now developed with more nuanced arguments in the *Phaedo*.

While later commentators differ from Iamblichus on the soundness of the arguments in the *Phaedo* for the immortality of the soul, the focus on purification remains consistent.<sup>55</sup> Damascius and Olympiodorus follow Proclus' division of the dialogue into three parts or sections—separation of soul from body (death), the immortality of the soul, and the condition of the disembodied soul. All three refer back to the skopos, the actual formulation of which is not known. Westerink ventures 'the life of purification' (περὶ καθαρτικοῦ βίου).<sup>56</sup> After imposing measure on the passions and the irrational elements of the soul, the student learns not to identify himself with these elements at all. When the student has properly 'died' to his body and material nature generally, he is ready to advance to the contemplative level of virtue.

In his commentary on the *Alcibiades*, Proclus argues that the decalogue contains within it three different kinds of purification

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55. On differences with Iamblichus see Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries: Olympiodorus*, 15-16. Though there is very little evidence of a Middle Platonic commentary on the dialogue, Westerink, *ibid*, 12-13 argues that the extant fragments from Harpocration (ca. 200 AD) on *Phaedo* 69a6-c3 indicate the possibility that even before Plotinus there may have been a distinction in gradations of virtue amongst the Attic commentators and other Middle Platonists. Against this cf. Dillon, *Harpocration's Commentary*, 131-134.

56. Westerink, *The Greek Commentaries: Olympiodorus*, 28

for students. The first kind he characterizes as dialectical, in which an interlocutor's opinions are refuted. This sort of purification induces contradiction, exposes the disagreement of opinions, and delivers us from twofold ignorance.<sup>57</sup> The twofold ignorance from which Alcibiades suffers obstructs the possibility of philosophical cognition, and he therefore must cleanse his soul of his pretense to knowledge.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, Proclus adds that there is purification through 'philosophy' in the *Phaedo* and through the art of initiation in the *Phaedrus* (244d-e, 250b-c).

The *Phaedo* passage is 69b-c.<sup>59</sup> This passage follows the important qualification Socrates makes at *Phaedo* 68c, where he argues that the philosopher is a person who not only treats his passions in an orderly fashion (κοσμίως), but who altogether scorns the body (τοῦ σώματος ὀλιγοροῦσίν). The purpose of the whole of 68c-69d is to isolate and purify the virtues from their slavish or spurious versions (ψευδωνύμων), their 'illusory' (ἔσκιαγοραφημένων) versions at the natural and ethical level, and also from the constitutional versions.<sup>60</sup> While contemporary commentators have found these and related passages in the *Phaedo* unduly harsh on the body, the Neoplatonic student, having read the *Alcibiades*, would have found little strange in them.

At the beginning of the passage, Socrates argues that virtue is not attained by exchanging pleasures for pleasures or pains for pains. Such virtue is not even truly virtue strictly speaking, since it admits of vice. One cannot become moderate, for instance, by limiting one's ambition and replacing it with a passion for wealth. Purificatory virtue requires us not to exchange the passions but

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57. Proclus, in *Alc.*, 174-176; cf. Anonymous, *Prolegomena*, 10.38-43

58. Cf. Siorvantes, *Proclus*, 116: for Proclus, "purification was the necessary prerequisite to leading an inviolate philosophical life, that is, reaching contemplative virtue."

59. Marinus *Life of Proclus* XXII, quotes this passage in the context of the claim that Proclus' soul nearly separated itself from his body and rose above the world of becoming. The previous chapters (XIX-XXI) illustrate the importance of purification of the body through ritual. See Baltzly, "Pathways to Purification," esp. 175-183, for the view that in Proclus we have not only purification through ritual but also through the pseudo-medical purgation of false opinion. Proclus in *Alc* 8.14-9.1 argues that it is not possible to know oneself without exhortation towards what is good, elicitation for the advancement of unperverted notions, and purification from twofold ignorance. On Proclus and twofold ignorance see Layne, "Refutation and Double Ignorance in Proclus." Cf. Anonymous, *Prolegomena*, 16.19-27.

60. Damascius in *Phd.*, 147, Olympiodorus in *Phd.*, 8.6.1-17, 8.11



to be wholly free from the passions (ὅλως παθῶν ἐξαίρεσιν).<sup>61</sup> Socrates calls these exchangeable virtues slavish (ἀνδραποδώδεις). Damascius does not include them in the series of virtues and he characterizes them as false; Olympiodorus seems to follow suit.<sup>62</sup> From 69a9-b5, the focus is on constitutional virtues—wisdom regulates passion. From b8-c3, the focus is on purificatory virtue—wisdom cleanses us from passion altogether.<sup>63</sup>

In his explanation of 69a-d, Olympiodorus argues that while constitutional virtues are really (τῷ ὄντι; 69b2) virtues and also true (ἀληθής; 69b3) virtues, only purificatory virtue, accompanied by wisdom, can be really true virtue (ἀληθὲς τῷ ὄντι; 69b8). He explains the distinction by direct reference to *Alcibiades* 129a8-b1, in which Socrates distinguishes between self (αὐτό), soul, and self itself (αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό), rational soul.<sup>64</sup> One can see how the definitions of the self in the *Alcibiades* foreshadow the kinds of virtue in this passage.<sup>65</sup> Constitutional virtue follows from

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61. Damascius, in *Phd.*, 162

62. Damascius, in *Phd.*, 145. According to Westerink's note to Damascius, in *Phd.*, 145-148, while Proclus and Damascius adopted the view that the slavish or spurious virtues were not equivalent to the natural virtues, Olympiodorus and his school identified slavish virtue with natural virtue. This seems evident from Olympiodorus in *Phd.*, 8.4.5-7. However, as Westerink himself notes in his commentary on the Olympiodorus passage, no sooner has Olympiodorus said this than he proceeds to claim (8.4.5-6) that the exchangeable virtues (slavish virtues) are not the equivalent of either the natural or ethical virtues. He subsequently cites Proclus' interpretation of the passage, which is Damascius' as well. Whatever the case, all are in agreement that the main focus of the passage is to purify virtue from its lower levels, whatever those lower levels may be.

63. Damascius, in *Phd.*, 164. Olympiodorus, in *Phd.*, 8.6.5-17 adds the contemplative virtues as well.

64. Debate over the proper reading of this passage continues today. Proclus thinks αὐτό refers to the tripartite soul, and αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό to the rational soul. Damascius argues against this, insisting that αὐτό refers to the rational soul using the body as instrument, whereas αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό refers to the soul of the soul, or intellect. See Segonds, *Proclus Sur le Premier Alcibiade*, lvii-lviii. This disagreement does not threaten the account of the progression of the soul, for psychic tripartition and soul's using body may both be understood as elements of constitutional virtue. The difference is one of degree, not kind. It thus might affect the commentator's designation of the skopos without changing his overall interpretation of the soul's progression in terms of virtue. Cf. n40.

65. See Olympiodorus, in *Alc.*, 224, 3-10; cf. 172, 1-14. In a recent discussion, Renaud, "La connaissance de soi," argues that Olympiodorus situates the dialogical encounter between Socrates and Alcibiades on both the political and moral planes simultaneously. One can therefore know oneself in different ways: "πολιτικῶς, c'est-à-dire selon les parties constitutives de l'âme usant du corps

knowing oneself as soul; purificatory virtue—and subsequently contemplative virtue—follows from knowing oneself as rational soul.

Towards the end of the *Alcibiades* Socrates develops this latter account of self-knowledge. To truly know oneself, one must see oneself reflected by the best part of the soul, wisdom (σοφία), and anything else similar to it. This is the most divine region of the soul, the site of both knowing and insight (τὸ εἰδέναι τε καὶ φρονεῖν).<sup>66</sup> Olympiodorus equates the life of purification with insight, and claims that insight is an emanation of intelligence reverting upon itself (νοῦ δὲ ἀπόρροια καὶ ἡ φρόνησις τοῦ πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐπιστρέμεντος).<sup>67</sup> Olympiodorus' lectures on the latter part of the *Phaedo* are unfortunately not extant. Nonetheless, in the dialogue we find that Socrates identifies himself solely with intellect and characterizes his body as little more than bones, sinews, skin, joints, and sockets. His argument there is that intellect (νοῦς) is the true cause (αἰτία) of everything that he does.<sup>68</sup> His body is only confined in jail because of his intellect, and his drinking the hemlock is the dramatic illustration of soul acting without regard for the body. Socrates' soul is thus entirely purified. As Porphyry writes, at the level of purification, wisdom consists in the soul's no longer sharing the opinions of the body but acting on its own. This, he claims, is perfected by pure exercise of the intellect.<sup>69</sup>

Self-knowledge as Socrates presents it in the *Alcibiades* is thus the foundation for the soul's ascent through the hierarchy of virtue, the initial phases of which were taught in the reading order by the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedo*. Because Alcibiades lacks self-knowledge, he admits to needing Socrates' guidance. Instead of haughtiness of soul and the power to do whatever he wants, Alcibiades needs

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(πολιτικῶς donc, dans le sens de la constitution, πολιτεία, de l'âme tripartite et de la modération des passions); καθαρτικῶς, dans le processus de se libérer des passions liées au corps, lorsque l'âme est tournée vers soi (ἐπιστρέφουσα πρὸς ἑαυτήν); et θεωρητικῶς, lorsque l'âme, une fois libérée du corps, est rationnelle et entièrement tournée vers les choses supérieures, en dernière instance le bien, vers ce qui est supérieur."

66. *Alcibiades*, 133b-c. On this passage in Proclus and Olympiodorus and the questionable lines 133c8-17, see Tarrant, "Olympiodorus and Proclus."

67. *In Phd.*, 8.1.5-7

68. *Phaedo*, 98b-99d. Damascius, *in Phd.*, I.413-414 and II.71, has little to say about this passage. For analysis of Socrates as the embodiment of erotic intellect in Proclus *In Alc.*, see Ambury, "Socratic Character."

69. Porphyry, *Sentences*, 32.15-32. On the identification of the true self with intellect throughout antiquity, see Pépin, *Idées grecque sur l'homme et sur Dieu*.

true moderation and justice.<sup>70</sup> Socrates will assist Alcibiades in transforming his ethical virtue by raising it the constitutional level. The *Alcibiades* concludes with Socrates' ominous hesitation about Alcibiades' future progress, not on account of his nature, but because of the force of the city, which worships the sort of false authority Alcibiades originally hoped to achieve. To confront this sort of danger, the Neoplatonic lecturer, occupying a Socratic role, sought to cultivate ethical character in his students before they read any of Plato's works.

### ANAGOGICAL PATERNALISM

In Neoplatonic pedagogy it was not sufficient for the student to just intellectually accept a philosophical theory or doctrine; rather, that student needed to assent to the lesson by assimilating his soul in accordance with it.<sup>71</sup> The lecturer facilitated this assimilation by cultivation of character. The student arriving at the reading of the decalogue could be assumed to already possess the ethical virtues. The lecturer developed these virtues by means of an anagogic paternalism—anagogic in the sense that its purpose was to lead the student toward true knowledge of intelligible reality, and paternal in the sense that it was epimeletic. The lecturer cared for the development of his student's soul like a parent raising a child.

We find direct testimony from Iamblichus on this anagogic paternalism in his letter to Sopater, 'On Bringing Up Children' (περὶ παιδῶν ἀγωγῆς). One can see straightaway that Iamblichus' conception of child-rearing is anagogic: one is to lead children in a specific direction from the time they are very young. The operative passage on ethical virtue is lines 10-13:

Then, by means of training (τοῖς ἔθουσιν ἄγει), it [correct education (ἡ ὀρθὴ παιδεία)] leads them on nobly and instills good habits (τὰ σπουδαία ἤθη), while they are not yet able to take in a reasoned account, by familiarization (συνηθείας) with what is noble turning their souls toward the better (πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον).

Iamblichus characterizes anagogic pedagogy as ἔθουσιν, habituation. Before the student comes to a reasoned account, he

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70. *Alcibiades*, 134c

71. As Sara Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism*, 17 has argued, Neoplatonic pedagogy was a kind of contemplative *askesis* that demanded not just familiarity with the texts of the tradition but an effort to assimilate the texts.

is already to be acquainted with virtue at the ethical level.<sup>72</sup> The *συν* in *συνηθείας* indicates that familiarization is here a kind of merging with the ethical, becoming one with it. This identification, or orientation toward what is better (*τὸ βέλτιον*), is presupposed before the student actually begins to reflect on its nature. Alcibiades himself is oriented in this way at the beginning of the *Alcibiades*. After the opening speeches, Socrates begins his refutation with an attempt to help Alcibiades discern *τὸ βέλτιον*.<sup>73</sup> Though he has trouble articulating the precise nature of what is better, Alcibiades nevertheless initially believes he knows about justice better than others. A student in a Neoplatonic school, arriving at the reading of the *Alcibiades*, would have been similarly oriented.

Students at a Neoplatonic school received training in ethical virtue both inside and outside the formal classroom setting. Inside the classroom, the Platonic dialogues were far from the first thing a student read; they were instead the culmination of his studies. Before Plato students read Aristotle. Before Aristotle, students read authors of the trivium (grammar, logic, rhetoric) and quadrivium (music, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy), three hortatory discourses by Isocrates, the Pythagorean *Carmen aureum*, Epictetus' *Enchiridion*, and Porphyry's *Isagoge*.<sup>74</sup> The lecturer selected these treatises for the sake of crafting a character that could eventually ascend through the levels of virtue represented in the decalogue.<sup>75</sup> Students would be familiar not only with philosophical concepts and distinctions; they would also receive lessons on character and be expected to assimilate those lessons.

The lecturer sought to inculcate in his students first and

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72. Marinus stresses the importance of Proclus' being raised in a moral background and becoming accustomed to doing what one should do before reasoning about causes (*Vit. Proc.*, VI, XV). In his version of Marinus, Rosán, *The Philosophy of Proclus*, 21 n12 notes that Proclus even refused to teach a certain student because he was already devoted to a life of pleasure and debauchery.

73. *Alcibiades*, 106c-109c

74. On the trivium and quadrivium see Hadot, *Arts libéraux et philosophie*. See Hoffmann, "What Was Commentary in Late Antiquity," (605-614) for a detailed analysis of the texts. The Neoplatonists viewed Plato and Aristotle as largely in agreement. See Lloyd "The Later Neoplatonists," (275-276). Though this paper has been about the late Neoplatonic commentators, there is evidence that the structure of their pedagogical activities was not essentially different from those of the Middle Platonists. See Dillon, "The Academy."

75. Cf. *Alcibiades* 106e, where Socrates calls attention to Alcibiades' basic education at the beginning of their discussion. Olympiodorus, in *Alc* 2.44-5, points out that Plato had a similar childhood upbringing.

foremost an ethic of self-discipline. One way in which lecturers inculcated this trait was the διατριβή, or question and answer that followed the lecturer's commentary on a text.<sup>76</sup> Porphyry relates one instance in which Plotinus permitted him to continue asking questions about the relation between the soul and the body for three consecutive days. When another student expressed frustration with the interrogation and a desire to hear Plotinus continue his exposition as if it were a treatise, Plotinus replied, 'But if we cannot first solve the difficulties Porphyry raises, what could go into the treatise?'<sup>77</sup> The anecdote illustrates more than just the importance that the separation of the soul and the body had for Plotinus. The διατριβή afforded the student the opportunity to struggle with and reason through the nuances of philosophical arguments and positions by questioning and challenging them.<sup>78</sup> The διατριβή thus engendered the intellectual persistence the student would need when confronting the more difficult problems posed in Plato's contemplative dialogues.

To prepare students for self-knowledge, the lecturers also sought to cultivate in them an orientation toward and reverence for authority. They accomplished this by divinizing their predecessors. Plotinus refers to Plato as the master, and Porphyry did the same for Plotinus himself.<sup>79</sup> Proclus speaks of the philosophy of Plato as a divine gift to human beings.<sup>80</sup> Marinus, in turn, praises Proclus as beloved of the gods and points out the superior natural and ethical virtues he possessed prior to meeting Syrianus.<sup>81</sup> Olympiodorus speaks of Plato as if he were worshipped from the time he was

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76. The word means simply 'passing time', though it acquired a much more technical usage in the Hellenistic era. See Glucker, *Antiochus and the Late Academy*, 162-66. In Plato, it describes the typical Socratic conversation at *Apology* 33e4, 37d1, 41b1, *Charmides* 153a3, *Euthyphro* 2a2, *Gorgias* 484e2, *Hippias Minor* 363a5, *Laches* 180c2, *Lysis* 204a1, and *Theaetetus* 172d1. The διατριβή would often continue outside the classroom. See Mansfeld, *Prolegomena*, 2-3.

77. *Vit. Plot.*, 13

78. Cf. the end of the *Alcibiades*, in which, after Socrates has suggested the Alcibiades care for himself by answering questions (127e), Alcibiades claims that he and Socrates will switch places and that he, Alcibiades, will care for Socrates in return (135d)

79. See Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, 17, who shows that when Plotinus reports Plato's philosophy and rebukes the Gnostics for abandoning Platonic teaching, he claims 'he, the master, says'. Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* II.9.6.24-8, III.7.1.13-16, V.1.8, 10-14, VI.2.1.4-5, VI.4.16.4-7. For Porphyry, see *Vit. Plot.*, 18.

80. *PT* I.I.p.5.6ff

81. *Vit. Proc.*, I-XII

born, and reports that Ammonius even apologized out loud when he felt the need to criticize him.<sup>82</sup> For students, reverence for the original masters and also for their lecturers was an integral dimension of the interpretation of texts.<sup>83</sup> This reverence for authority was habituated on a daily basis, and thus presupposed in students beginning Iamblichus' Platonic curriculum. Students would therefore be more likely to find plausible an epistemological emphasis on authority—either of soul over body or intelligible cause over effect.

One might object to this analysis on the grounds that it conflates metaphysical and hermeneutic notions of authority. That is, the authority of soul over body and cause over effect is not the same sort of authority that Plato had over the commentators or that the lecturer had over the student. After all, lecturers often challenged their predecessors and students frequently challenged their lecturers.<sup>84</sup> Hermeneutic authority is not absolute, whereas metaphysical authority is. That the two sorts of authority are different, however, is no objection to the point; rather, it confirms it. Just as Alcibiades' ethical virtue is image-like, so the authority of one's philosophical predecessors is itself merely an imitation of the real authority of the intelligible realm. Alcibiades' orientation toward authority—albeit a mistaken conception of authority—distinguished him in character and rendered him a promising candidate for ascension through the hierarchy of virtue. Similarly, a Neoplatonic student's predisposition toward authority rendered him more pliable to the view that truth is found in principles of intelligibility.

Ethical training also extended outside the classroom in the form of strict routines intended to discipline and improve character. Iamblichus inherited this emphasis from the Pythagoreans, who, according to his account, prepared a student for pure knowledge by inculcating a way of life that trained the body and purified the soul.<sup>85</sup> He recounts how the Pythagoreans soothed their disciples

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82. *In Alc*, 2.14-31; *In Gor* 41.9

83. Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism*, 16

84. The aforementioned encounter between Plotinus and Porphyry is but one example. For another (between Iamblichus and his students), focused on action rather than interpretation, see Eunapius, *Lives*, 367-369.

85. Afonasin, "The Pythagorean Way of Life in Clement of Alexandria and Iamblichus," demonstrates the mutual concern for the educational value of the Pythagoreans in Iamblichus and Clement. There is evidence in the Athenian school that the admiration for the propaedeutic dimension of Pythagorean edu-

by having them take morning walks in private places of calmness and stillness. They believed quietness amenable to setting the individual soul in order and composing the intellect (ἢ τὴν ἰδίαν ψυχὴν καταστήσουσι καὶ συναρμόσουνται τὴν διάνοιαν).<sup>86</sup> Students also cared for their bodies, eating only specified foods and taking all meals in common.<sup>87</sup> After dinner, they were accustomed to hearing a number of proclamations, multiple prohibitions—including those against harming living things—and an exhortation to assist the law and to battle against lawlessness (νόμῳ τε βοηθεῖν καὶ ἀνομία πολεμεῖν). This emphasis on discipline and limitation engendered a moderate character, and a student's living this way was considered integral for the elevation of the soul (τὴν τοῦ βίου ἀναγωγὴν).<sup>88</sup>

The routines of daily life were not confined to students alone: the lecturer provided an ethical example for his students to mimic. Proclus spent each day in the same way, following a cycle of ritual prayer, pedagogical explication, personal composition, philosophical conversation, and oral presentation.<sup>89</sup> Between these activities, he paid homage to the Sun no less than three times per day.<sup>90</sup> The student remained in close physical proximity to the teacher so that he might learn to mimic him.<sup>91</sup>

Proclus' homage to the Sun provides us one final insight into the ethical virtues presupposed for the student prior to his reading Plato. As the commentators deified the masters who came before them, so they also revered the true authority of the intelligible realm. Proclus' worship of the Sun is a case in point. Because he considered the Sun an offspring or analogue of the Good, his piety was an expression of reverence for the first, most authoritative

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tion, even inside the classroom, predates Iamblichus. Mansfeld, *Prolegomena*, 27 observes that Hiercoles, pupil of Plutarch of Athens, writes, "And this is the aim (σκοπός) of the [Pythagorean] verses and the position (τάξις), viz. to produce a philosophical character in the pupils before the other readings."

86. *Vit. Pyth.*, 96

87. *Vit. Pyth.*, 97-98

88. *Vit. Pyth.*, 100

89. See Saffrey, "Proclus, diadoque de Platon." Cf. *Vit Proc XXII*

90. See Saffrey, *La devotion de Proclus au Soleil.*"

91. See Tarrant, "Socratic Synousia," 141-145 for the view that the Academy was already emphasizing close, physical proximity to the lecturer as an indispensable part of education as far back as the time of Polemo and Crates. The former led the Academy 314-270/69, the latter for two to six years thereafter. Dillon, "The Academy," 77 argues that this remains the case into Middle Platonism.



principle of all.<sup>92</sup> Long before his students read the *Philebus*, in which they came to know the Good, Proclus' students acquired from him a lived orientation toward it.

Marinus tells us that, without a family of his own, Proclus looked after the welfare of friends and acquaintances, along with their wives and children, as if he were the 'father and cause of existence' of them all.<sup>93</sup> Proclus himself calls our attention to the use of the paternal appellation in the opening speech of the *Alcibiades* as a means to rendering Alcibiades' ambitious character more accommodating to Socrates.<sup>94</sup> He claims the reference to the father is a symbolic reference back to the father of all souls, such that Socrates considers the use of the paternal appellation a symbol of the turning around of the soul to its invisible cause.<sup>95</sup> We are reminded here of Olympiodorus' insistence on Alcibiades' true paternal inheritance. By acting as a caring father figure, Proclus inculcated discipline, a reverence for authority, and an orientation toward the Good to be copied by those in his school. His daily routines and rituals of worship were themselves protreptic, turning students toward truth before their souls ascended to it.

### CONCLUSION

I have argued that, far from being a mere introduction to Iamblichus' reading order of Plato's dialogues, the *Alcibiades* was placed first because the character for which it is named embodies the natural and ethical virtues that mark the beginning of the soul's ascent to union with the Good. By examining the two dialogues that follow the *Alcibiades* in the curriculum, one can see that its emphasis on self-knowledge as reversion to the most authoritative dimension of human being enables the transition from the first two sorts of virtue to the constitutional and purificatory virtues. The late Neoplatonists took the soul's ascent through the hierarchy of

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92. For the Sun as analogue of the Good see *PT* II.45.15-24; on the authority of the Sun and Good in Plato see *Republic* VI.508a4: the sun, analogized to the Good, is 'author' (κύριον) of the power to see; VII.517c2-4: the Good is the source (κύριον) of light in the visible realm and the source of truth and understanding in the intelligible realm; VI.509d2: the Good is sovereign (βασιλεύειν) over the intelligible realm.

93. *Vit. Proc.*, 17. See Blumenthal, "Marinus' Life of Proclus" for a summary and comparison with other Neoplatonist hagiographic biographies.

94. *In Alc.*, 24-25

95. Cf. *PT* I.122.3-123.15

virtue seriously enough to search for the natural and ethical virtues amongst their prospective students and then cultivate them both inside and outside the classroom.

One might doubt that we can analogize Alcibiades to just any student of philosophy. After all, he is distinct in many ways, with a number of natural and ethical virtues that the average student in a Neoplatonic school might not have had, and certainly which many of Plato's contemporary audience do not possess. However, as Proclus insists, every human being is more or less subject to the same misfortunes as Alcibiades, amongst which are our following irrational forms of life, our double ignorance, our absence of self-knowledge, and our need of assistance to free ourselves from excessive conceit and find the care appropriate to us.<sup>96</sup> Students are therefore not different from Alcibiades in kind, only in degree, and we would do well, pedagogically, to appreciate the Neoplatonic dictum that it is not grasping truth that enables us to live properly, but living properly that enables us to grasp truth.

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96. *In Alc.*, 6-7

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