

## Olympiodorus and Proclus on the Climax of the *Alcibiades*

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### Abstract

This paper examines the late Neoplatonic evidence for the text at the crucial point of the *Alcibiades* I, 133c, finding that Olympiodorus' important evidence is not in the *lexis*, which strangely has nothing to say. Perhaps it was dangerous in Christian Alexandria to record one's views here too precisely. Rather, they are found primarily in the prologue and secondarily in the relevant *theoria*. Olympiodorus believes that he is quoting from the work or paraphrasing closely, but offers nothing that can be paralleled in either the manuscripts or the Eusebian (or Stobaeon) versions. Since both the manuscript text and the Eusebian text fail to satisfy, the evidence deserves consideration. Even if he were not in possession of a text that was wholly correct, Olympiodorus does at least offer an overall interpretation of the passage which neatly unites the daemonic and erotic aspects of Socrates' activities, and offers a real reason for Alcibiades to return Socrates' love. He is encouraged to reflect upon the nature of the divine being (not just a *daemon* but a *theos* in this work) controlling Socrates, so that he may behold the likeness of his own, woe-fully obscured, inner self, and so acquire the self-knowledge necessary for true political success.

The anonymous *Prolegomena* (unsurprisingly) are compatible with Olympiodorus, while Proclus' prologue again largely agrees with Olympiodorus' interpretation. For Proclus, Alcibiades must become an observer of Socrates' knowledge and indeed of Socrates' whole life. 'For to desire to know the reason for Socrates' actions is to become the lover of the knowledge which is pre-established within him.' So the path towards a total understanding of his own inner intellectual self lies via the contemplation of that being that is rooted within Socrates.

I also examine earlier Platonist evidence for the text and find little that is not in harmony with late Neoplatonism.

## Keywords

Olympiodorus, Alexandrian School, Proclus, Neoplatonism, *On the Alcibiades*, *Alcibiades I*, Commentaries

## The Problem

One of the most persistent of the issues in the Platonic *First Alcibiades*,<sup>1</sup> hereafter known simply as the *Alcibiades*, is that which concerns the text at 133c, where some editors choose to insert (as 133c8-17) one question and one inference from ‘Socrates’ and two brief responses from ‘Alcibiades’. Though these are not in any surviving manuscript of Plato, they appear in some of the indirect tradition, best represented in this case by Eusebius, and supported with a worrying variant by Stobaeus.<sup>2</sup> The manuscript text has the disadvantage of building up to what promises to be a dramatic climax, providing an explanation of the Delphic inscription ‘Know yourself’, which Alcibiades is being invited to follow.<sup>3</sup> The direct contemplation of the self, however, seems highly problematic, rather like asking the eye to see into itself, which is only possible through mirrors and reflections. Can the soul, already identified with the ‘self’, somehow see into itself? Just as the pupil, the part of the eye most intimately bound up with vision and hence the part on which optical excellence depends, provides a representation of the beholder through which she can observe herself, so the mind, that part of the soul most intimately bound up with knowledge and its most divine (and hence potentially most excellent) part is expected to provide a similar focus for any mind bent on self-contemplation. But Alcibiades is not told in our manuscripts how he must turn his intellectual gaze upon a mind, nor what kind of mind he must look into. Presumably it is not his own mind, since the implication is that he can no more gaze into that than his eye can look into itself.

<sup>1</sup> This is not the place to discuss issues of authorship; for the view that it is Platonic but late, see Denyer (2001), intro., and for a commendably systematic statement of the view that it is spurious see Smith (2004).

<sup>2</sup> *PEXI* 27.5 and Stob. *Ecl.* III 21.24 (placing 133c18-20 before, as well as after the Eusebian supplement).

<sup>3</sup> 129a, 132c; the need for self-care on Alcibiades’ part makes the understanding of the ‘self’ imperative, thus making it necessary to establish what this really is.

Whereas the manuscript reading has the discussion bypass the climax that we require, i.e. the key piece of advice about looking into a mind,<sup>4</sup> the Eusebian offering expands on the notion that divinity can be found at the thinking centre of the mind, and advises Alcibiades that he must contemplate god, the brightest, purest, and fairest mirror (and presumably the brightest, purest, and wisest mind). The language is suspect,<sup>5</sup> but at least Alcibiades seems to be receiving somewhat more explicit advice about what he should be studying. Even so, is it the right advice, and is it really compatible with the remainder of the dialogue? Even 134d4-9, sometimes thought to confirm that 133c8-17 had been present (and hence itself considered doubtful by some),<sup>6</sup> does not refer explicitly to god, only to what is 'divine and bright' (τὸ θεῖον καὶ λαμπρόν); Socrates gives no practical advice to Alcibiades about how he could possibly come to know god, as if (in defiance of a famous passage)<sup>7</sup> it were an easy path to discern, and Alcibiades shows no special interest in how he might do this. A brief indication to 'Alcibiades' that he should try to know god may provide something of a climax, but it does not provide a climax *for this work*, representing as it does the path according to which a hitherto sceptical Alcibiades comes to return Socrates' love. If Socrates were promising some guidance on this path to the divine mind it might be different, but as things are there is nothing here that could possibly provide retrospective justification for Socrates' early claim (105d-e) that he had the sole power to advance Alcibiades towards his goal—with the god's help. We need to see Socrates do more than simply point out the need for Alcibiades to peer into the mind of god, and then step into the background. It is he who

<sup>4</sup> It is usually noted that it is unclear what εἰς τοῦτο refers to at 133c4, with both 'the divine' (if and only if τῷ θεῖῳ is to be preferred over τῷ θεῷ at the beginning of the line); see Johnson (1999), 11; my emphasis here is that Plato, or any decent imitator, is unlikely to have left such a matter to a demonstrative whose reference could easily be misunderstood.

<sup>5</sup> There is plenty of discussion on this, much of which revolves around the forms ὄθ' and ἔνοπτρον. See Denyer (2001), 236-7; Reis (2003), 85, 95-98; Carlini (1962) 175; but since we are dealing with a work of disputed authenticity one cannot assume the same Attic standards will be adhered to throughout.

<sup>6</sup> Carlini (1962), 169-74, and (1964) athetizes to e7, and is followed by Hutchinson (1997).

<sup>7</sup> *Tim.* 28c.

must become central to Alcibiades' career, and the god must be behind the scenes declining to oppose this.<sup>8</sup>

Hence neither reading at 133c is satisfactory, meaning that debate about this passage is also unsatisfactory, for most of the discussion has concentrated on which of two unsatisfactory texts one should read: the one that sanctions the addition of 133c8-17 or the one that omits it.

## Olympiodorus

Ancient commentators on Platonic texts are of considerable help in understanding variants, and should be required reading for anybody seeking to clarify the texts that they comment on. Of our two ancient commentators on the *Alcibiades* Proclus' stops not half way to 133c, while Olympiodorus, it is frequently noted, appears not to know the lines from Eusebius. Olympiodorus is quite capable of commenting on variant readings,<sup>9</sup> and he knows lost parts of (some version of) Proclus commentary,<sup>10</sup> so one can probably be confident that Proclus did not have 133c8-17 in his text either. The same goes for Damascius, with whom Olympiodorus is likewise familiar, perhaps more so. While Burnet even sees fit to observe (mistakenly) that Olympiodorus omits a phrase at 133c5,<sup>11</sup> what scholars seem not to see is what Olympiodorus *did have* at this most crucial point of the *Alcibi-*

<sup>8</sup>) Or so at least if we may presume that the god referred to at 105e-106a, who previously withheld permission for contact with Alcibiades, is the divinity behind the divine sign (or divine impediment, 103a).

<sup>9</sup>) For a study of his evidence for the text of the *Gorgias* see Tarrant (2001); examples of commenting on far less significant alternative texts occur at *in Grg.* 25.4, 25.7, 30.11, 45.7. However, it should be admitted that *In Alc.* does not normally show the same interest in variant readings.

<sup>10</sup>) There are references to Proclus in the discussion of the relevant lemma (130d-133c) at *in Alc.* 218 and 222.

<sup>11</sup>) Θεόν τε καὶ φρόνησιν. This phrase could be explained as a gloss, but I am at a loss to explain how one might deduce that this was not present in Olympiodorus. At no point in his commentary does the phrase seem to be required, though as we shall see 'god' seems to be missing from Olympiodorus' interpretation here. And we do find νοῦν γὰρ καὶ θεόν. At any rate Proclus clearly has these words in his text, preceded by words similar to ours, which he interprets as a reference to all of intelligible reality, including the Demiurge and the Animal-itself (*in Tim.* III 103.2-7).

ades, perhaps because the most telling evidence is in his prologue rather than in his discussion of the lemma.

We read in his prefatory material, where the target (*skopos*) of the dialogue is being discussed:

“... (A) so you too Alcibiades, (B) since you have been blinded in the self-moved faculty within you after giving yourself up to irrational activity, (C) because you are unable to turn around upon your own self, (D) look into me, i.e. into Socrates’ soul, and not into any random part of it but into the highest, and you will see in me intellect and (a) god. (E) So *through his saying* ‘look into me’ he showed that the target [of the dialogue] is about knowing oneself constitutionally;<sup>12</sup> *through his saying* ‘not into any random part’ that it is also [about knowing oneself] cathartically, since purifying oneself belongs to the highest part of the soul; *through the [words]* ‘you will see intellect in me’, that it is also [about knowing oneself] theoretically, since engagement with things at an intellectual level belongs to the theoretic faculty; and *through the [words]* ‘and (a) god’ that it is also [about knowing oneself] inspirationally, for it is in accordance with the divine within us—something simple like the divine itself—that we are inspired (ἐνθουσιῶμεν).” (Olymp. *In Alc.* 8.2-12; my translation)<sup>13</sup>

Olympiodorus is at first paraphrasing what he takes to be the thrust of Socrates’ message, for the words of part B ‘since you have been blinded in the self-moved faculty within you after giving yourself up to irrational activity’ are clearly a Neoplatonist explanation of part C, Alcibiades’ inability to contemplate his own self directly.<sup>14</sup> Part C, however, might itself have

<sup>12</sup> The adverbs ‘constitutionally’, ‘cathartically’, ‘theoretically’, and ‘inspirationally’ relate to four of the levels of virtue (*aretē*) that had become an essential tool of Neoplatonist hermeneutics. On this concept see in particular Brisson (2006).

<sup>13</sup> οὕτω καὶ σύ, ὦ “Ἀλκιβιάδη, ἐπειδὴ τὸ ἐν σοὶ αὐτοκίνητον ἀπετύφλωσας ταῖς ἀλόγοις ἐνεργείαις ἐκδούς σεαυτόν, ἀπόβλεπον εἰς ἐμέ, τούτέστι τὴν Σωκρατικὴν ψυχὴν, καὶ αὐτῆς μὴ εἰς τὸ τυχόν μέρος, ἀλλ’ εἰς τὸ ἀκρότατον, καὶ ὅψει ἐν ἐμοὶ νοῦν καὶ θεόν. διὰ μὲν οὖν τοῦ εἰπεῖν ἀπόβλεπον εἰς ἐμὲ δεδήλωκεν ὅτι περὶ τοῦ γνῶναι πολιτικῶς ἐαυτόν ἐστὶν ὁ σκοπός· διὰ δὲ τοῦ εἰπεῖν μὴ εἰς τὸ τυχόν, ὅτι καὶ καθαρτικῶς, τοῦ γὰρ ἀκροτάτου τῆς ψυχῆς τὸ καθαίρειν ἐαυτόν· διὰ δὲ τοῦ ὅψει ἐν ἐμοὶ νοῦν, ὅτι καὶ θεωρητικῶς, πρέπει γὰρ τῷ θεωρητικῷ τὸ κατὰ τὸν νοῦν τοῖς πράγμασιν ὁμιλεῖν· διὰ δὲ τοῦ καὶ θεόν, ὅτι καὶ ἐνθουσιαστικῶς, κατὰ γὰρ τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν θεῖον ἐνθουσιῶμεν, ἀπλοῦν ὃν ὡσπερ καὶ τὸ θεῖον αὐτό.

<sup>14</sup> In the *Alcibiades* the implication is that this inability needs no more explanation than

been close to something that Olympiodorus believed to be in the text, much as part A could. That Olympiodorus thinks he is explaining the actual Platonic text is clearer in part D, for from ‘look into me’ he is repeating actual details of what Socrates is supposedly saying, details that he goes on to offer an interpretation of in part E where distinctly Neoplatonist material is again in evidence. I cannot see whose words could be being interpreted here unless they are attributed to Socrates in the text that Olympiodorus used. How else, indeed, could the words of part D be cited as *key evidence* in the crucial debate about the target of the dialogue?<sup>15</sup> Admittedly they do not have to be a precise citation, but they would have to be a very *close* paraphrase—and there is nothing in our texts that they could be a paraphrase of. I think that it is clear, therefore, that Olympiodorus had something else in his text in place of our c8-17, for which the indirect tradition, represented by authors like Eusebius and Stobaeus,<sup>16</sup> is the sole witness.

Immediately that one attempts to genuinely understand what Olympiodorus is doing, important questions need to be faced. Had the same proactive (and seemingly pro-Christian)<sup>17</sup> hermeneutic that had resulted in the *inclusion* of c8-17 also resulted in the *exclusion* of other material that really did belong in this vicinity? Or had the need to counter the Christian exe-

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the inability of his eye to see itself, though one assumes that Plato would have had some notion of how self-knowledge might be possible.

<sup>15</sup> The ‘target’ (*skopos*) of a dialogue becomes a crucial question for all Neoplatonists after Iamblichus, for all its elements are required to relate to this central object of its teaching.

<sup>16</sup> References in note 2 above.

<sup>17</sup> Reis (2003) argues against the traditional view, best represented now by Fortuna (1992), which links the god whom c8-17 demands we look into with the world-soul of the *Timaeus* (which humans should imitate at and assimilate themselves to at 90a-d); this makes it plausible for him that the origins of the lines should go back to the Middle Platonists. While the traditional view cannot be conclusively proven, there are considerable holes also in Reis’ argument, which appears to require the premise that whatever we must, as our ultimate goal, assimilate ourselves to, must also be the first thing that we look to at the beginning of education-program. This is clearly doubtful, even in cases where it is not difficult to fasten the untrained mind upon the ultimate object of imitation. But to have Socrates telling Alcibiades that he has to fix his mind on an intellect whose revolutions are displayed in the heavens, giving as a reason that it is clearer, brighter, and easier to look into than the core of his own soul, defies belief. The path to assimilation to the world-soul given at 90d3–4 lies in understanding the harmonies and revolutions of this mind, over whose harmonies (as discussed at *Tim.* 35b-37c) ancient Platonists quarrelled incessantly.

getes induced the Neoplatonists into their own attempt to support their reading by 'discovering' textual confirmation? Both possibilities must be considered, though a firm answer will be beyond the scope of this paper.

The first question to be faced is what has happened in the commentary proper to the material found in Olympiodorus' prologue. The exegesis proceeds according to the usual two stages of this author's Platonic commentaries, a *theôria* which gives the overall interpretation of a passage, in this case about two Stephanus pages long, and a *lexis* that treats individual issues that may arise from the details of the text, but which does not generally raise substantive philosophic issues. The *lexis* actually fails to include comment on any details after 132e3 until the beginning of the new lemma at 133c19.<sup>18</sup> However, in the *theôria* on 131d-133c, the words that Olympiodorus believes are to be found in Plato's text are paraphrased slightly differently,<sup>19</sup> and with a new twist:

(A) So you, (B) since you have been blinded in the self-moving faculty within you and you are activated by external activity,<sup>20</sup> (C) because you are unable to turn around upon your own self, (D1a) look into my soul, (D2) and through it you will recognize your own as well. By looking into my soul you will find that there are 'images of gods' [*Symp* 215b3] within it, (D1b) for intellect is there and (a) god. (*Olymp. In Alc.* 271.12-16; my translation)

There is no direct suggestion here that any of this is other than paraphrase, but parts are so close to what we discovered in the prologue that their wording cannot just be free Olympiodoran paraphrase. *Something* is exercising some control over the words that he puts into Socrates' mouth. And, since he and his students will at this point of his lecture have their texts open at the relevant section of the dialogue, there can be no question of him merely having misremembered what he read. In this latter passage some material in section D specifying which part of Socrates' soul was

<sup>18</sup>) This is not exceptional, but given the importance of this passage on Olympiodorus' opinion and our own, one does wonder whether Olympiodorus is reluctant to comment on matters that had become controversial in Christian eyes.

<sup>19</sup>) As may be seen from the commentary on the *Gorgias*, it is a typical function of Olympiodorus' *theôria* to provide an explanatory paraphrase.

<sup>20</sup>) The Neoplatonic tradition makes much of the distinction between self-moved soul and other-moved soul, and the relevant terminology is found 39 times in Olympiodorus; in Proclus' truncated commentary there are over twenty cases, particularly at 225-6 and 279-81.

relevant has been omitted; in its place we get an allusion to the 'images of gods' (ἀγάλματα θεῶν) from Alcibiades' description of Socrates in the *Symposium* (215b3). It is possible that, just as part B is a pre-emptive explanation of part C, the 'images of the gods' in part D2 are offered as a pre-emptive explanation of part D1b.

In this passage Olympiodorus' theory becomes a little clearer; he works with a concept of *epistrophê*, whereby everything eventually turns inward towards the principle from which it had originated.<sup>21</sup> According to this theory Alcibiades ought strictly to be seeking to find a higher intelligence within himself.<sup>22</sup> However, he needs assistance, and the friendship of Socrates is seen as offering an excellent alternative to purely reflexive activity in the case of one who is so buffeted by external influences that it is impossible otherwise for his mind to find the direct inward path to whatever spark of divinity lies there, hidden within him. Reflexive activity is replaced by *reflective* activity.

Now Olympiodorus, working with a text that differs significantly from our own and perhaps backed by generations of commentators,<sup>23</sup> has been able to see here in the *Alcibiades* the framing theme of Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium*, introduced at 215b and restated at 222a: Socrates is like one of the Silenus-figures, whose ugly exterior can be opened up to reveal little statues of the gods. The absurd exterior of his arguments reveals to the one who is able to look within not just the lowly craftsmen and animals

<sup>21</sup> It seems that, according to Proclus, the inability of nature (*physis*) to revert to itself (*In Tim.* 1.12.13-21) is virtually equivalent of its inability to see into itself (1.12.26-28).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Proclus, *in Alc.* 19.15-21.7.

<sup>23</sup> As can be seen from the Aristotelian commentaries on the *Categories* in particular, the commentary is a conservative genre in which later authors frequently build upon earlier work, while updating and correcting it. While I cannot match Olympiodorus' interpretation in Proclus' truncated commentary, it is worthwhile here mentioning the fragment of papyrus that preserves a commentary on *Alcibiades*, now most conveniently published in *Corpus dei papiri filosofici greci e latine*, parte III. A possible reading of fragment B 1-2 would have it saying that one must draw near to (*plêsiasai*) and follow (*hepesthai*) somebody else, perhaps a lover, who is *sôphrôn* (*sô*]phr[oni erastêi plêsi]asai kai hepe[sthai] since that is how one could know oneself best. I should interpret *plêsiasai* here, which is a good but uncertain reading, as having an educational sense (as *La.* 187e7, 188a6, 187e2; *Thy.* 143d8, 144a2; cf. *Cri.* 53c5, *Rep.* 496a5), but with erotic overtones (as *Phdr.* 255a6; cf. *Rep.* 490b5 of the philosopher's love). Whether this relates to 133c5-6, or to the disputed lines c15-17, is unclear, as c21-23 are the next to be taken up.

about whom he talks, but an exceptional degree of intelligence and godliness, together with little images of virtue. In fact there seems to be everything there that somebody intent on becoming virtuous should be contemplating (222a).

Olympiodorus, in fact, does not find it difficult to believe that within the soul of Socrates there is a 'god by [being now in that] condition' (κατὰ σχέσιν θεός), by which is meant not that Socrates has anything within him that is by its very nature a god, but that something he does possess has come by perfection to possess that status.<sup>24</sup> Hence Olympiodorus when treating the god of 133c4-5, needs postulate no divinity for Alcibiades to gaze into other than the god who controls Socrates' movements and relationships (105d-e, 124c, 127e, 135d). This god either controls his 'daemonic obstacle' (103a) or is virtually identical with it,<sup>25</sup> and may without difficulty be placed *within Socrates* by an interpreter. When a little later he must postulate a god that Alcibiades *and the Athenians* may contemplate, apparently *without* any Socratic 'mirror' (134d), the commentator uses a little more ingenuity (229.23-30). Here he thinks that Plato is speaking 'about the human divine and the human intellective' (περὶ τοῦ θείου τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου καὶ τοῦ νοεροῦ τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου), but asks in what way the 'political man' looks upon the divine within himself, when not even the man at the next level of virtue up<sup>26</sup> can contemplate the divine within himself. The divine can be present in soul qua cause, qua belonging, and qua [temporary] share, and whereas the 'entheastic' person knows the divine within qua belonging, the 'political man' knows it only qua share. Socrates would know it qua belonging (it is *his* god), while Alcibiades and his political friends can only know it qua share. For our own purposes, however, this passage is important in showing only that Olympiodorus sees no god operating here other than the god within.

<sup>24</sup> Compare Porphyry's notion of a *daemôn kata schesin* at *in Tim.* fr. X (Sodano) = Proc. *in Tim.* 1.77.10-12, which is an individual soul that has received a daemonic lot.

<sup>25</sup> The closest parallel is with the *Theages*, where Bailly, (2004) 281, is correct to require that the *theos* of 130e6 must either be identical with the *daimonion* or serve to 'render the sign divine'.

<sup>26</sup> After the political, or 'civic' or 'constitutional' virtues, there come first the cathartic virtues, and beyond these those known here as 'entheastic'; only the entheastic man is fully aware of the divine within him.

It is clear then that Olympiodorus would reject any reading at 133c that would have Alcibiades gaze into any god *outside* the human soul.<sup>27</sup> This would of course include 133c10-11 from the disputed lines: 'so the god too happens to be purer and brighter than what is best within our soul.' The passage alerts us to the key point in the ancient struggle over the meaning of the dialogue's climax: the tradition of which Olympiodorus is part has Alcibiades directed towards a god *within* the human soul or 'self', while the tradition to which Eusebius subscribes has him directed towards a single *external* god that is apparently the brightest mirror in which a human might see his inner self. Reis argues from Albinus<sup>28</sup> that there could have been Platonists who have identified this external god with the heavenly intellect of the Platonic World-Soul, and 'Alcibiades' could have been invited to behold his own soul in the mirror of the World-Soul. However, most Platonists, even in Albinus' time,<sup>29</sup> had other gods superior to the World-Soul, and that part of the Christian tradition that was friendly towards Plato and believed man to be made in god's image had more motive for sponsoring the seemingly monotheistic lines than most did.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Reis (2003), 90.

<sup>28</sup> Reis (2003), 107-110; Albinus, *Prologus* 5 on the preferred curriculum of *Alcibiades*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Timaeus*. That the *Timaeus* was relevant to Albinus' understanding of our dialogue I cannot doubt; but even the *Timaeus* is speaking about the contemplation of, and assimilation to, a divinity within soul, and Platonists might have thought that it offered a parallel to, rather than the explanation of, the god-in-soul of the *Alcibiades*. Note that no lines from the *Alcibiades* ever become a classic text for the moral goal of 'assimilation to god', whereas Alcinoüs *Didascalicus* 28, 181.21-42, mentions (i) *Theaetetus* 176b, (ii) *Republic* 613a, (iii) *Phaedo* 82a-b, and even (iv) *Laws* 715e and (v) *Phaedrus* 248a. Furthermore *Timaeus* 90a-d was a classic text, even if it not specified there.

<sup>29</sup> Alcinoüs, *Didascalicus* 10 and Numenius (frr. 11-22) would be obvious cases, but even literalist interpreters like Plutarch and Atticus were most unlikely to accept that a reference to 'the god' meant no more than the World-Soul or its intellect.

<sup>30</sup> Reference is made to 'the god' as the superlative mirror in both a10 and a13; at c4, however, though it says 'So this part of it resembles the god', allows one to take 'of it' (ὀυ̅τῆς) with 'the god' as well, and to translate: 'So this part of it resembles *its* god.' That c8-c17 should belong with a christianizing interpretation is the thesis of Fortuna (1992).

## Possible Reconstructions

At this point I believe that we should offer a rough reconstruction of the lines that Olympiodorus appears to be reading without any support from the manuscripts. Our first aim here is simply to discuss how one ancient version of the text may have read, and we should defer consideration of whether any such text could possibly have been that originally written, whether by Plato or an imitator. It seems logical to adopt as one's first component something quite close to the words that Olympiodorus offers an interpretation of in his prologue, but not the interpretive sections (B, E), and we should attach considerable importance to those words that find their counterpart later in the *theôria*. These are italicised below:

(Part A) *so you too Alcibiades, ... (C) because you are unable to turn around upon your own self, (D) look into me, i.e. into Socrates' soul, and not into any random part of it but into the highest, and you will see in me intellect and (a) god.*

οὕτω καὶ σύ, ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδης, βλέψον εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ψυχὴν, καὶ μὴ εἰς τὸ τυχόν μέρος ἀλλὰ εἰς τὸ ἀκρότατον, καὶ ἐν ἐμοὶ ὄψει νοῦν καὶ θεόν.

While it is possible that a little more could be reconstructed from the *theôria* at 217.17-22, it is safer to draw inferences from the constraints that any text would have operated under, principally the need to be consistent with what went before and what followed, and to enable all that comes after to be seen to follow on naturally. For instance the lines 134d4-5, which Olympiodorus specifically addresses at 229.21-30, include a back-reference ('As we were saying in what went before...'), which is currently somewhat better explained by Eusebius' supplementary lines than by anything in the manuscripts. It makes the observation that the reformed Alcibiades and his political allies will operate with an eye on what is divine and bright (*λαμπρόν*), whereas the adjective *λαμπρός* fails to occur in 132d5-133c7, only in 133c9 and 11. It therefore seems a reasonable possibility that any text purporting to be an alternative to 133c8-17 also used this term. Something does in fact cause Olympiodorus to associate intelligence at 133c with brightness (217.18, cf. 229.22). While there must be alternatives here, could it perhaps be that his text read not *ἀκρότατον* but *λαμπρότατον*? Presumably Alcibiades must agree to search Socrates' soul, and this must be followed by the observation that people will best know themselves by looking into each other's souls in this way. That will prepare

the way for the virtue of sensibleness (σωφροσύνη) to be introduced at 133c18. Is all this credible? I certainly do not see why it should be less plausible to *non-christian philosophers at that time* than the lines c8-17.

However, there is an alternative strategy for restoring Olympiodorus' text, which is what might be called my 'minimalist' position. We should perhaps not insist that what Olympiodorus read involved substantially different lines in place of c8-17. It seems possible, when one compares 217.15-16 with 133c4-5, that (i) his 'intellect and god' (νοῦν καὶ θεόν) was rendering the original 'god and wisdom' θεόν τε καὶ φρόνησιν, and (ii) that his 'looking into my soul you will find in there divine images' (ἀποβλέπων δὲ εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν εὐρήσεις ἐνόητα θεῖα ἀγάλματα) was rendering 'and somebody could, by looking into *this* and discovering all that is divine [here]' (καὶ τις εἰς τοῦτο βλέπων καὶ πᾶν τὸ θεῖον γνούς). Here I should need just a small addition to our manuscript texts at c4, after the words 'So this is like its god', drawing attention to the fact that something both divine and wise<sup>31</sup> had been already seen to be operating within his own soul. After that it would be easy to read the reference to 'all the divine' that will be found there as a reference to the divine figures that Alcibiades had discovered within the 'opened up' Socrates in the *Symposium*. The kind of addition that I have in mind would see the passage run roughly like this:

SOC: So this is like its god—for in my soul too the brightest wisdom is something divine. (καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἢ λαμπροτάτη φρόνησις θεῖόν τι παρέστι.)

ALC: Of course.

SOC: And in this way, by looking into *this* and discovering all that is divine [here], its 'god' and wisdom, somebody could best discover his own self too.

ALC: Evidently.

SOC: But we agree that knowing oneself is *sôphrosynê*?

ALC: Certainly.

I emphasise that I am not claiming that this is precisely what Neoplatonists read. I am demonstrating rather the kind of minor addition that might explain why they arrived at their interpretations. Such a text as this would

<sup>31</sup> 'Wise', since it had been discovered to have very good reasons for its actions at 105e-6a.

have given Olympiodorus *just enough* reason to express the meaning as he has done both in his prefatory material and in the relevant *theōria*. But whatever Olympiodorus read, we are probably not dealing with a highly unusual text affecting just one Neoplatonist, since there are no signs of conflict with Proclus and Damascius over either the text or the basic interpretation of this passage. However, there is in fact some evidence, both from the Alexandrian School of Olympiodorus and from Proclus, about what these authors had read at this point.

### The Anonymous Prolegomena

We should here glance briefly at another work that appears to stem from the Alexandrian school in or around the time of Olympiodorus. The anonymous *Prolegomena to Plato's Philosophy* makes occasional reference to the *Alcibiades*, sometimes criticizing earlier interpreters for their views on the division of the dialogue or its *skopos* (*Proleg.* 19.12-19, 23.20-31) in ways that recall Proclus' discussion of earlier views (*in Alc.* 7.24-26, 12.17-13.19). It agrees with Platonism since Iamblichus on its place in the curriculum (*Proleg.* 26.23-26), and finally thinks it worth mentioning three times in relation to Plato's methods (27.73-80). It is the last of these methods, called the *prosthetic* method, which seems fleetingly to confirm that texts used by the Alexandrian Neoplatonists had more than we do at 133c:

For (A) he both proposes to investigate what a human being is, whether body, or soul, or the combination, and shows that it is neither the body nor the combination, but the soul by itself. Then (B), taking a step forward, he adds that it is not the entire soul—for (B1) it is certainly not the vegetative or irrational soul, but (B2) the rational. And again (C) that the human being is a mean between the divine and the generated. Observe how he adds to the investigation while taking steps forward.

Here there is no problem at all in recognizing what is meant by steps A and B, for A corresponds to 129b-130e, while B corresponds to 132c up until the beginning of 133c. But then this author finds a third stage (without which one could hardly speak of a prosthetic method at all!), in which one proceeds beyond the rational soul to find something that is even more central to our being—presumably the divine element that establishes our

nature as intermediate between that of the gods and purely mortal creatures.<sup>32</sup> One's first reaction to this might very well be that this author appears to be reading the extra lines (c8-17) offered by Eusebius, for they seem to leap ahead to god after discussing intellect. This cannot, however, be the case, for the investigation remains a search for what is central to us. Not only is the method *prosthetic*, so that it leaves the findings of the previous step in place as it moves on to a new one, but it had already been declared an investigation into our own nature (26). The god of c11-12, however, is external to ourselves. Our author is seeing the move to the divine-in-us as being a further one beyond the move from soul to mind. In addition from moving from soul to mind, this author's text proceeded from mind to the divine-in-us. It did so in such a way that this could be perceived as an extra step in the argument.

While this text strongly suggests that Olympiodorus would have had something in his text that is not available to us, it does not closely correspond to anything found in Olympiodorus' commentary. However, Olympiodorus does use terminology relating to various kinds of knowing oneself: the constitutional or civic level (available already to Alcibiades, *in Alc.* 229.26-30), plus the cathartic, theoretical, and the entheastic levels (none yet available to him). We have seen that these levels of self-knowledge were present in the prologue's interpretation of 133c:

So through his saying 'look into me' he showed that the target [of the dialogue] is about *knowing oneself constitutionally*; through his saying 'not into any random part' that it is also [about knowing oneself] *cathartically*, since purifying oneself belongs to the highest part of the soul; through the [words] 'you will see intellect in me', that it is also [about knowing oneself] *theoretically*, since engagement with things at an intellectual level belongs to the theoretic faculty; and through the [words] 'and (a) god' that it is also [about knowing oneself] *inspirationally*.

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<sup>32)</sup> As is noticed by the Budé editors (43 n.234), the doctrine that the human nature is intermediate between that of divine and mortal things is a doctrine repeated at *Proleg.* 22.15-18; it is this doctrine that slightly obscures the fact that what is relevant at 27.79 is the divine element alone. The person in whom this intermediate nature most readily comes to the fore would presumably be the inspired lover, or ἔνθεος ἐραστής, of whom Proclus interestingly says that he is a mean between the divine beauty and things lacking providential care, *in Alc.* 26.16-18.

We may seem now to have one too many steps, but ‘not into any random part’ seems to be designating the kind of soul that needs to be purged away if one is to go further, and so corresponds to B1 above, while the discovery of intellect through *theoretic* self-knowledge (when one is already purged) corresponds to B2. This leaves C to correspond to *inspirational* or *entheastic* self-knowledge, when one is aware not only of mind but also of the divine-within-one. After (A) discovering that we are soul we move (B1) away from the faculties associated with the body so as to isolate (B2) the rational faculty, and then (C) to the divine-in-us. Regarding the theoretic stage as the culmination of the cathartic process agrees with Olympiodorus’ comment on 134d later. There the discussion of who can achieve particular levels of self-knowledge contents itself with three stages: constitutional, cathartic and inspirational.

So we can say with a reasonable degree of confidence that the school of Olympiodorus had a text that enabled them to read the discovery of the god-within as a step beyond the discovery of one’s intellect. But texts that permit a given interpretation do not always demand it.

## Proclus

It is noteworthy that Proclus did not treat the *Alcibiades* as one of the many sources for his speculations in the *Platonic Theology* (1.5), and he certainly he saw 133c rather as a source for the divine within us, which may be viewed along with all reality as the soul turns inwards to gaze into its own self.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, if we have been struck by the erotic overtones of what Olympiodorus read into the dialogue’s climax, we should find them mild in comparison with Proclus. The inspired lover, or ἔνθεος ἐραστής, must apparently join the life of the beloved to his own, leading him alongside himself to intelligible beauty.<sup>34</sup> In this way a remarkable union is achieved.<sup>35</sup> The *Alcibiades* becomes an unequivocally erotic dialogue, and there is a strong emphasis on the way Socrates here is an erotic practitioner, rather than a dialectician or intellectual midwife.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> in *Tim.* III 104.3–7; *Theol.* 1.3.15.21–23.

<sup>34</sup> in *Alc.* 26.19–21, cf. 33.4–9.

<sup>35</sup> in *Alc.* 39–14.

<sup>36</sup> in *Alc.* 27.16–30.4; note especially 29.15–20; dialectic and midwifery make a contribution to Alcibiades’ seduction, but his perfection will be achieved (if at all) rather through love.

Yet while Proclus agrees in some ways with the Olympiodoran School, in others he clearly does not. For instance, he seems not to recognize the awareness of the divine within us as in any substantial way different from awareness of our intellect. We find him affirming that the *daemon* and the intellect are the same, allowing only that one speaks of the former in relation to *human* soul, and the latter in relation to soul pure and simple. He therefore explains the absence of overt reference to intellect (νοῦς) in this dialogue in terms of the dialogue being concerned with human soul (*in Alc.* 46.8-13). One might have wondered where he found a *daemon* creeping in other than the reference to the 'daemonic impediment' at 103a, except that Proclus himself notes in this very passage that the *daemon* has sometimes been called a god (θεός). The recognition that Socrates is prepared to refer to the origin of the δαιμόνιον as a θεός, most obviously at 105d-106a, means that a number of references to an unnamed god may be taken as references to Socrates' traditional divine sign, including not only such simple passages as 127e5 and 135d6, but also 133c4-5 at the controversial climax. Seen at the core of the soul, in the context of this dialogue, is whatever it is that is Socrates' *daemon*, and this is found in the region where wisdom and knowledge belong for the simple reason that this *daemon* is to be identified with intellect. This seems to set Proclus apart from both Olympiodorus and the *Prolegomena* as we have interpreted them.

Our most important material in Proclus, which confirms that for him too Alcibiades was to some degree required to focus on what he saw *in Socrates*, occurs in relation not to his prefatory discussion but to the very first lemma. At *in Alc.* 19.9-12 he leads us to expect in the dialogue's proem an accurate foreshadowing of the target of the dialogue as a whole. As in Olympiodorus the concept of reversion or *epistrophê* is crucial, and Proclus is attaching considerable importance to reversion *to oneself*. So Alcibiades is scarcely encouraged to be turning in upon Socrates' soul *in preference to his own*. We should not expect this, however, for Proclus (unlike Olympiodorus)<sup>37</sup> was willing to see the mirror-like image of one's eye or soul in the eye or soul of another as a mere reflection of oneself. When Alcibiades

<sup>37</sup> See Olymp. *in Alc.* 217.23-218.9 for the insistence, with Damascius and against Proclus, that there is some actual representation there that is intrinsic to the eye or soul towards which the gaze is directed. Proclus' reflections (*anaklaseis*) are dismissed as a peripatetic concept.

looks into Socrates' soul, therefore, the important thing is that he should there be able to see *himself* in some sense. This will already be reversion, rather than just a step on the road to reversion. However, Proclus clearly regards Alcibiades' looking into the core of Socrates' being as of some importance. Consider *in Alc.* 19.17 to 20.1:

The proem itself causes the young man to revert into himself and makes him an examiner of the thoughts pre-existing within him, and it leads him up (along with his reversion to himself) to a position for the contemplation of Socratic knowledge as well. That he should have investigated (103a, 104d) the reason why Socrates was the only one of his lovers not to desist from his love, but began before the rest and did not lose interest when the others stopped, reveals him as an observer of the whole of the Socratic life.

The use of the adjective 'Socratic' rather than the genitive 'of Socrates' gives this a somewhat metaphysical tone that weakens the eroticism that Proclus finds here, but we are being introduced to the notion that the inward gaze associated with reversion is not in fact incompatible with the keen, and even erotic observation of something that we can only see *outside us*. Perhaps anticipating that this will seem counter-intuitive, Proclus then proceeds to distinguish three types of reversion: to inferior, to self, and to superior. The latter two are illustrated with reference to *Parmenides* 145b–e, which allegedly shows how a god may revert in one way to itself and in another to what precedes it; in the former case it will be in itself, while in the latter it will be 'embraced within another and unified with the nature superior to it'. Proclus is deliberately expressing himself in a manner suggestive of a quasi-erotic union, and the reason for his doing so immediately becomes evident, when this two-fold reversion is related to Alcibiades' experience with Socrates (*in Alc.* 20.16–21.9):

Hence Socrates too at the end of the dialogue says that (1a) the one who reverts to himself and comes to contemplate himself (2a) will see, as a result, 'all the divine' (133c5), and through (1b) the reversion to himself—like a kind of rung to take one upwards—will relocate (2b.i) to the position for contemplation<sup>38</sup> of the divine, and will lead himself back (2b.ii) to a reversion

<sup>38</sup> The term *περιωπή* is never chosen lightly, and in a context such as this cannot simply be translated 'contemplation' as LSJ suggest since, (i) the Neoplatonists had no shortage of

upon what is superior (to himself).<sup>39</sup> The dialogue, giving an hint of this<sup>40</sup> right from its start, leads Alcibiades from the life which is directed outwards (1c) around to focus upon himself, and from an intellectual grasp of himself it summons him (2c) to a love for Socratic knowledge. For to desire to know the reason for Socrates' actions is to become the lover of the knowledge which is pre-established within him.

The reversion at 1a/1b leads to this 'reversion upon what is superior (to himself)', which intimately involves his response to the knowledge and life of his lover Socrates. The glimpse of 'all the divine' is not something that follows from the turn towards Socrates' intellect, but seems to be the consequence of the repositioning implied by reversion upon himself. It is through such repositioning that the contemplation of the internal workings of Socrates' mind becomes possible. A newly acquired ability to view the divine is relevant here, because Socrates' actions are themselves to be explained with reference to the divinity that controls him (105d-106a)—the divine-within is seen as the factor that explains these perfect intuitions and actions of Socrates. It is Alcibiades' new view of this core of Socrates' being that enables his lover to be transformed into an object of his own love. For Alcibiades, on reverting to himself, has restored only his vision of the divine; he has not restored either the divinity or the knowledge that could ultimately take him over too. His restored vision makes him conscious of what he lacks, and this consciousness calls upon him to love the knowledge that he sees already present in Socrates (cf. 21.6-7).

In case this interpretation should be questioned, it is at any rate totally clear here that, in the proem's foreshadowing of the climax of the dialogue, Alcibiades' turning inward will be followed by the desire for some kind of knowledge located within Socrates, a knowledge in accordance with which Socrates operates. Looking into Socrates' intellect is in Proclus' view the culmination of a *foreshadowing* of the climax of the dialogue. Surely, there-

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terms for this, and (ii) it must allude to the watch-tower to which the inward-reverting helmsman of the *Statesman* (272e5) withdraws; hence it always has some suggestion of place. Segonds in the Budé gives 'hauteurs'.

<sup>39</sup>) The thrust of this must be correct, though edd. prefer ἐαυτὸν to ἐαυτοῦ, which seems if anything to have greater manuscript support.

<sup>40</sup>) Note that the verb ἐνδείκνυσθαι is one of Proclus' standard terms for the hinting communication of symbols.

fore, Proclus associated this focus upon Socrates' mind with the culmination of the climax itself. While this in no way replaces the need for Alcibiades to discover the same mysteries ultimately within himself, it should be very clear that Proclus does not entertain the possibility that 133c may be inviting the contemplation of any god beyond what can dwell in the human soul.

What then does Proclus tell us about the text of 133c? I think that we may need something of an itemized account:

133c4: Hence this (part of it) is like (its) god, ...

There is little doubt that Proclus read these words and takes them to be referring to something within the human soul, and very possibly to the *daemon* within Socrates' soul, reinforcing his identification of god and *daemon* in this work (46.12-13).

133c4-5: ... and if somebody looked into this and got to know all that is divine, ...

While the idea of looking into Socrates is not prominent within the extant part of Proclus' commentary as it is in Olympiodorus, there is just enough to suppose that these words were present in the idea of a vantage-point for the viewing of Socrates' knowledge (19.21-22) from which one can become a viewer of all of Socrates' life (19.25-20.1). Then, once again, there seems no doubt that the reference to 'all that is divine' (πᾶν τὸ θεῖον) was present, since in the key passage referring forward to the climax a slight variant is found: τὸ θεῖον ἅπαν (20.18, cf. 29.10).<sup>41</sup>

133c5: ..., both god and wisdom, ...

Shortly after the reference to 'all that is divine' at 20.18, Proclus continues with the words: 'will relocate (2b.i) to the position for contemplation of the divine, and will lead himself back (2b.ii) to a reversion upon what is superior (to himself)' (21.1-3). It seems to be chiefly the reversion to Socrates' knowledge that is being seen as to what is superior to one (as opposed to self-reversion) at 21.5-7, so that it is possible that in 2b.i and 2b.ii we are seeing this phrase fleshed out. The phrase may also be behind the near-identification of the *daemon* with intellect at 46.8-13. That Proclus read the phrase here is certain from *in Timaeum* 3.103.4.

<sup>41</sup> See also *in Tim.* 3.103.3-4, where all intelligible reality (πάντα... τὰ ὄντα) is glossed 'god and wisdom'; that Proclus associates the phrase with intelligible reality is confirmed by *in Parm.* 909.1-2: παραδειγματικὸν... πᾶν τὸ θεῖον εἶδος, and the phrase πᾶν τὸ θεῖον is not uncommon elsewhere in Proclus.

134e4: ... to the godless and dark, ...

It is worth noticing that Proclus alludes to this phrase at 34.2-3 and 48.4-5, so that the reference back to an earlier brightness and darkness theme at 134d4 was almost certainly present in Proclus' text too. So it seems that 134d-e is sound, and *if* there is not enough in our manuscript texts of 133c to explain these lines, then something needs to be added.

Proclus is a challenging and at times fascinating interpreter, as well as a valuable witness to the text. His interpretation of 133c differs in significant ways from that of Olympiodorus, and yet two things seem certain: that he did not have the Eusebian supplement, and that something else was causing him to place a heavy emphasis on 133c4-6, and one that is more erotic and more Socrates-specific than any normal modern interpretation could easily be. In particular his interpretation of c4-6 would have been on more secure ground (as would Olympiodorus') if Socrates had just been drawing attention to the wisdom of his own *daemon*. At this point I should like to move on to consider one more ancient commentator on the *Alcibiades*.

### *The Papyrus Alcibiades-Commentator*

We are fortunate enough to possess two fragments of a commentary on the *Alcibiades* by an unknown author that tackle 133a-d. We have far too little to know with any precision quite what the author felt was the progress of the argument at 133c, but enough to make it seem extremely doubtful whether he could have had c8-17 in his text. It may, however, be worth offering a tentative reconstruction of fragment B.<sup>42</sup>

ΤΩΙ ΦΡΟ[NIMΩΙ ΔΕΙ ΠΛΗΣΙ-  
 ΑΣΑΙ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΕ[ΣΘΑΙ· ΟΥΤΩΣ  
 ΑΡΑ ΕΑΥΤΟΝ ΓΝ[ΟΙΗ ΑΝ ΜΑ-  
 ΛΙΣΤΑ. ΑΡ' ΟΥΝ ΜΗ [ΓΙΓΝΩΣΚΟΝ-      21  
 ΤΙ<sup>43</sup> ΜΕΧΡΙ ΑΓΑΘΟ[Ν.<sup>44</sup> ΛΑΘΟΝΤΕΣ

<sup>42</sup> I based myself initially on the edition of various collaborating editors in Adorno et al. (1995), 52-62; for a variety of alternative supplements consult this edition.

<sup>43</sup> It seems that the lemmata have been added in haste, or recorded with the use of abbreviations at the endings of words. See also the first and third notes to follow.

<sup>44</sup> Once the uncertain character had been thought compatible with O, Ω and Α, but the *CFP* editors do not think this last possible, and the error seems to fit in with others made in recording the lemmata (see last and next but one notes).

ΑΥΤΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΜΗ ΣΩΦ[ΡΟΝΟΥΝ-  
 ΤΕΣ ΟΥΚ ΑΝ ΕΙΔΕΙΗΜ[ΕΝ ΤΑ Ε-  
 ΑΥΤΩΝ ΚΑΚΑ ΚΑΙ ΑΓΑΘΑ · ΕΙ  
 ΓΑΡ ΙΣΜΕΝ<sup>45</sup> Ο ΤΙ ΕΙΠ' ΑΓΑΘΩΙ  
 ΤΙΝΟΣ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΠΡΟΙΣ[ΜΕΝ · Ο  
 ΤΟΙΝΥΝ ΥΠΕΡ ΤΟΙΑΥΤ' ΕΚΒΕ-  
 ΒΗΚΕΝ.<sup>46</sup> ΑΔΥΝΑΤΟΝ ΜΕΧΡΙ ΑΛ-  
 ΚΙΒΙΑΔΗΣ<sup>47</sup> ΕΣΤΙΝ. ΜΗ[ΓΝΟΥΣ  
 ΑΛΚ[Ι]ΒΙΑΔΗΝ ΟΥΔ[Ε ΤΑ ΤΟΥ  
 ΑΛΚΙ]ΒΙΑΔΟΥ ΠΩ[ΕΙΣΕΤΑΙ].

“... one should approach and follow the wise person; so in this way one would most of all know oneself.

**Then without knowing** up until **good**: If we escaped our own attention and did not become sensible, we should not know our own ‘evils’ and ‘goods’; for if we know what is for somebody’s good we have prior knowledge of him; so that [knowledge] transcends such things.

**Impossible** up until **are Alcibiades**: Without knowing Alcibiades one will not even yet know what belongs to Alcibiades...

My belief here is that we have rudimentary, and inaccurately recorded lemmata (133c21-23, 133d1-3) in lines 4-5 and 12-13 (in bold), in each case followed by interpretation that is scarcely more than simple paraphrase. However, there seems to be rather more than this at 1-4, where I am making some limited use of Lasserre’s suggestions.<sup>48</sup> The most important lines for our purposes are 1-2, where it looks as if Alcibiades is being told what it is necessary for him to do. This is where Olympiodorus would have him being told to look into Socrates’ soul (as an alternative to his own soul), while Eusebius would have him being told that he needs to look upon god.

If the infinitives printed in the CPF edition, *πλησιάζσαι καὶ ἔπεσθαι*, are correct, then it seems clear to me that a human being must be involved, since ‘drawing close’ to god seems problematic, even if following god is to

<sup>45</sup> The papyrus in fact appears to read HMEN.

<sup>46</sup> I thought of ἐκβαίνω with ὑπὲρ + accus. for ‘transcend’ when I saw that Porph. *Sent.* 34 was cited by LSJ for such a meaning; on checking the text at 34.2-3 I doubt that they can technically be correct, but feel that the passage offers me some support.

<sup>47</sup> More carelessness over the insertion of an abbreviated lemma.

<sup>48</sup> Lasserre (1991).

be allowed following the well-known maxim 'follow god'.<sup>49</sup> Drawing close to one's own inner self and one's intellect seems just as improbable; it would be intelligible, but the selection of the verb would be hard to explain. I should interpret *πλησιάσαι* here as having an educational sense,<sup>50</sup> but with erotic overtones (as *Phdr.* 255a6 and b7; cf. *Rep.* 490b5 of the philosopher's love). That mix would be entirely in accord with the overall nature of the *Alcibiades*. The remains of *φρο* suggest that we are talking either of the *σώφρων* or the *φρόνιμος* at this point, but it looks at first sight as if lines 2-4 relate directly to 133c6, which follows *φρονεῖν* in c2 and *φρόνησιν* in c5. Therefore some term beginning with *φρον-* should be preferred. It is also obvious that we need an object (in the dative) for the two infinitives. That, briefly, is the reason for my reconstruction, insecure though it is. Whether god also featured here as a separate entity is not clear, but since standard late Platonist interpretation does not hold any god external to the mind to be relevant, it seems entirely plausible that no external god did so.

It should be clear that my understanding of the process here implied, approaching the wise man (*φρόνιμος*) as educator or Platonic lover and following him, does at least agree substantially with the interpretation that Olympiodorus and Proclus adopt even if it can offer no direct insight into the reading that the former appears to be using. Some would argue that it tells against there having been any genuine lines in place of c8-17, but that is less than clear. At the end of the false extract the lines c15-16 claim that 'in this way we should best know and recognize ourselves'. Lines 2-4 could also have been offered as a reasonable paraphrase of this, even though they preserve the third person found at c6 rather than the first person plural. If they could be offered as a paraphrase of this, then perhaps they could plausibly be commenting on something like the following:

SOC: So you too Alcibiades, because you are as yet unable to look around at your own self, look into me, and not into any random part of me but into the highest; and if you find here some bright wisdom that calls upon you now, draw close to me so that you may follow it.

<sup>49</sup>) Sanctioned by Plato at *Laws* 715e, and associated regularly in Middle Platonism with the Platonist goal.

<sup>50</sup>) As in LSJ s.v. II, 2; this sense is found in Plato *La.* 187e7, 188a6, 187e2; *Thr.* 143d8, 144a2; cf. *Cri.* 53c5, *Rep.* 496a5; this sense is still current in early empire, and LSJ note its presence in Plutarch's *Eroticus*, 769a.

ALC: Indeed I do see such a thing, Socrates.

SOC: And this is rather like its 'god', and by looking into this and perceiving here all that is divine, its god and its wisdom, in this way you could best know yourself too.<sup>51</sup>

Some such lines would explain:

- (i) 'Olympiodorus' convictions about what the text signifies;
- (ii) What 134d4-e7 looks back to, with its discussion of brightness and darkness;
- (iii) Proclus' convictions about the erotic and climactic nature of this part of the dialogue, and his interpretation of 133c4-5 as applying to something that Alcibiades could have seen operating in Socrates.
- (iv) How the papyrus could speak of the Alcibiades-like individual becoming a close companion and follower of wisdom or of the wise individual.

Convenient explanations, however, warrant some suspicion. Any such text would be adding material *before* 133c4, not simply where c8-17 are placed by Eusebius. I do not wish to push such a reconstruction, and offer it only as one of many possibilities. The following, however, does seem relevant. The lines 1-3 appear to be finding some advice for Alcibiades (whether or not the 2nd person had been present) about who or what he should be approaching or following. That advice does not relate directly to anything that may be identified in the received text of 133c, though a relevant sense of the verb *πλησιάζειν* is found twice in a passage of the *Phaedrus* that was regularly linked to the *Alcibiades* by ancient Platonists,<sup>52</sup> as well as in

<sup>51</sup> The concluding words, after ΘΕΟΝΤΕΚΑΙΦΡΟΝΗΣΙΝ, might be rendered in Greek uncials as: ΚΑΙΟΥΤΩΣΕΑΥΤΟΝΑΝΓΝΟΙΗΣΜΑΛΙΣΤΑ. As such it differs only by one transposition and the inclusion of two sigmas from the received text: ΟΥΤΩΚΑΙΕΑΥΤΟΝΑΝΓΝΟΙΗΣΜΑΛΙΣΤΑ. Once ΟΥΤΩΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ has been misunderstood by taking the sigma as the optional character at the conclusion of the preceding adverb rather than as the first letter of the second person reflexive, and the initial two words are transposed (thus leaving the sigma redundant, it is natural enough to change the optative too from second to third person.

<sup>52</sup> Firstly, by Plutarch at *Erot.* 765a-6b, about which I hope to have more to say in relation to the *Alcibiades*; secondly by Proclus in his *Alcibiades* commentary.

Plutarch's *Eroticus*.<sup>53</sup> Either our commentator is here venturing further into exegetical matters than is his practice in the remains of the fragment, or he is addressing something in his text that drew an inference from our need to *observe* wisdom in action to our need to draw near to some actual source of wisdom. Such advice is something that is sadly lacking in our own text.

## Conclusion

We have seen evidence in all three partially extant commentaries on the *Alcibiades* that their interpretation either presumes, or at least would be more intelligible in the light of, material absent from our manuscripts. What would be missing is a suggestion that Alcibiades should study something to be found in the inner recesses of Socrates' soul. In these circumstances we need to consider very carefully whether Olympiodorus may not unwittingly have preserved for us key evidence of the *correct* text of *Alcibiades* 133c, a text that has now for some reason become curtailed.

Work might yet be done to determine whether Middle Platonism and Neoplatonism more widely could be alluding at times to what has gone missing. I have identified a short passage in Alcinous and two in Plutarch where I suspect that the texts employed later by Proclus and Olympiodorus were in the forefront of these authors' minds, but the arguments will be complicated, and I prefer to take only one step at a time.

Precisely why text would have been omitted from what is now the middle of 133c, whether in the interest of bowdlerization or through the mechanics of scribal error, must remain a mystery. But what it left behind, with two puzzling mentions of god and one of the divine in a line and a half, was too much of a temptation for those who would read a Christian message into the text.<sup>54</sup> I suspect that late antiquity saw Olympiodorus at

<sup>53</sup>) 765a: ἀυτῆ μὲν οὐ πλησιάζει ψυχῆ καθ' ἑαυτήν, where we find the notion that the beloved can see what is best within his own self reflected in the lover as if in a mirror (though this remains a visual image); compare also *De Genio Socratis* 594a where the soul of one (such as Socrates!) already drawing close to the end of its earthly cycle may respond to, and be aided by, a helpful *daemon* διὰ τὸ πλησιάζειν.

<sup>54</sup>) Even so, I suspect that their supplement did not fail to arouse suspicion. The ungrammatical ὁθ' that has puzzled readers of c8 is another case of erroneous word division. Instead of AP OYN OΘΩΣΙIEP we should try reading AP OY NOΘ., which might be explained by a marginal indication of spuriousness having intruded into the text of ἄρ' οὐχ ὥσπερ.

odds with Christian rivals over this work. Hence, in spite of its crucial importance for *any* serious reader of the work, he omits all consideration of 133a-c before c18 from the relevant *lexis*, preferring to hide his interpretation away in the introduction and in the *theôria*.

## Appendix: The Education-Program of Albinus

Since Reis has argued that we can see in Albinus a stage towards the christianizing lines 133c8-17, whereby the *Alcibiades* is interpreted as inviting us to view ourselves in the mirror of the world-soul,<sup>55</sup> we need to look briefly at the evidence here. In *Prologus* 5 the education-program for the ideal student commences with the *Alcibiades*, continues with the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, and culminates in the *Timaeus*. This last is indeed supposed to help us achieve assimilation to the divine, and there is no doubt that the author has the conclusion of the dialogue (90a-d) in mind, where humans are encouraged to observe the motions of the world-soul in the heavens.

However, we should be wary of giving a similar role to the introductory and concluding dialogues. The explicit purpose of the *Alcibiades* in *Prologus* 5 is to assist our ‘turning (τραπήνηναι), wheeling inwards (ἐπιστραφήνηναι) and recognizing (γνώνηναι) what we should be caring about’. Worryingly, this turning and wheeling would seem at first sight not to be so very different, though the latter is what will emerge as the standard Neoplatonic term for ‘reversion’, i.e. for turning *in upon ourselves*, while the former is ought rather to signify our being diverted from our present course towards another—much as Alcibiades was diverted from a premature political career. There really is no hint that Albinus has any movement towards an external god in mind as a likely outcome of reading the *Alcibiades*, and every reason to believe that the dialogue is already encouraging what it will encourage for the Neoplatonists—reversion to one’s own inner self. Clearly it is in this dialogue that one must discover the need to find this inner self for which we must care. The *Phaedo* can then go on naturally to promote

<sup>55</sup> Reis (2003), especially 107-9.

the philosophical life of a 'Socrates' who withdraws from what is worldly and allows his soul to turn inwards upon itself.<sup>56</sup>

For these reasons I still hold that Albinus is essentially in agreement with the reading of the work that we can associate with Proclus and Olympiodorus rather than that implied by the texts of Eusebius and Stobaeus.

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<sup>56</sup> Albinus is explicit about the *Phaedo* offering a paradigm of the philosopher and the philosophical life; for the soul's exclusion of what is outside it and for its inward turning see particularly 79d, 80e, and 83a-b.

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