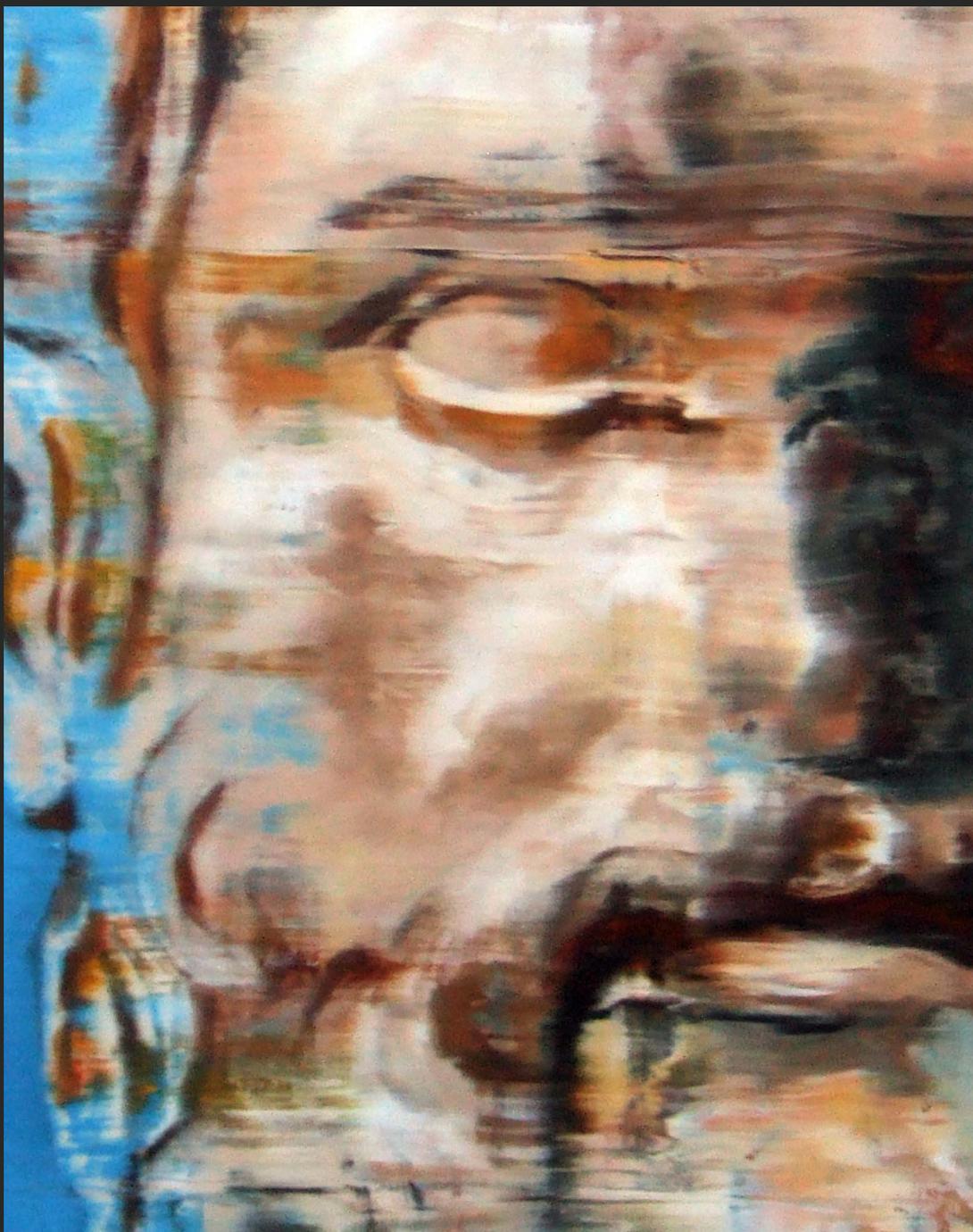


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jan/jun  
2014

issn 2179-4960  
e-issn 1984-249-X



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

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PENTASSUGLIO, F. (2014) Socrates on Virtue and Self-Knowledge in *Alcibiades I* and Aeschines' *Alcibiades*. *Archai*, n. 12, jan - jun, p. 69-79 DOI: [http://dx.doi.org/10.14195/1984-249X\\_12\\_7](http://dx.doi.org/10.14195/1984-249X_12_7)

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

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

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

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

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

Striking similarities between the two dialogues were first noted by Dittmar, who interpreted them in his 1912 commentary as evidence for *Alcibiades I*'s dependence on Aeschines' work<sup>1</sup>. According to Dittmar, the author of *Alcibiades I* – which, in his opinion, is a spurious dialogue written between 340 and 330 BC<sup>2</sup> – draws heavily on Aeschines' text; he does so, in particular, for all the themes that are not discussed in chapter 4, 2 of *Memorabilia*, the second chief source of his work. My primary aim in this paper is to show that the most striking parallels between the two dialogues are to be found with regard to the themes of virtue and knowledge, and in particular the close connection between the two. Leaving aside the controversial issue of the authenticity of *Alcibiades I*<sup>3</sup>, I will not focus on the problem whether the thesis Socrates expounds here conflicts or not with what is said in Plato's other dialogues<sup>4</sup>. Such a problem falls beyond the scope of this study, which is meant to outline the relation-