AUTHENTICITY OF THE *ALCIBIADES* I: SOME REFLECTIONS

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> "I think it an injudicious novelty, introduced by Schleiermacher, to set up a canonical type of Platonism, all deviations from which are to be rejected as forgeries."
> GEORGE GROTE, *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates*, II, London 1888, p. 19.

When the authorship of a book is disputed, how can one *prove* a concrete person X is the author when his name on the back is not enough? First, supposing that the person does not have any reason to lie or deny the authorship, one can try to ask him or her. If this is not possible, one has to gather as much evidence as possible and investigate its credibility. The closest epistemic testimonies would be the most relevant – someone whom we can trust says he saw *X* writing it, someone who knew *X* well says that it was written by *X*, or some contemporary or close fellow refers to the book as being written by *X*. Then comes perhaps a further level of epistemic probability – several people (perhaps experts in the given field or subject) agree on the authorship, and later generations refer to the book as *X*'s work.

None of this is available for the dialogue *Alcibiades* I, that has its place in the fourth tetralogy of Plato's books.[1] One cannot ask Plato, and similarly, as with the vast majority of the dialogues, there is no direct evidence from authors of Plato's generation or generation after him

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[1] Since I do not have anything substantial to say about the *Second Alcibiades*, from now on, I refer to the *First Alcibiades* just as the *Alcibiades*. When occasionally referring to the *Second Alcibiades*, I mark it as the *Alcibiades II*.

(i.e. no one writes "Plato says in the *Alcibiades*" or "Plato's *Alcibiades* says").[2]

If no one ever doubted the authenticity of the *Alcibiades*, there would be no need to argue for it. However, since the beginning of the nineteenth century this has not been the case. The reputation of the *Alcibiades* was questioned for the first time by Friedrich Schleiermacher in his preface to the German translation of the dialogue.[3] The subsequent debate resembles throwing a ball from one side to the other without much being added every time the ball makes its way. After the initial debate, which I will treat in more detail in the next section, Schleiermacher's view was the prevailing one until the late eighties of the twentieth century, when Julia Annas published her article on self-knowledge arguing vigorously against the doubt. Soon after her article followed the stylometrical study of Gerard Ledger that classified the *Alcibiades* among the authentic works.[4] Some ten years later the edition of the text by Nick Denyer and a new French commented translation by Jean-François Pradeau and Chantal Marboeuf appeared without putting the name of the author into brackets or inserting pseudo- in front of Plato.[5] Far from being the full stop after the debate,[6] it rather launched a new discussion, which so far has not seen firm outcomes.

[2] However, several authors try to track some references in Aristotle's writings, cf. JEAN-FRANÇOIS PRADEAU – CHANTAL MARBOEUF, *Platon: Alcibiade*, Paris 1999, p. 76; JULIA ANNAS, *Self-knowledge in Early Plato*, in: *Platonic Investigations*, (ed.) DOMINIC J. O'MEARA, Washington 1985, p. 117, ftn. 23. For critique of their efforts see NICHOLAS D. SMITH, *Did Plato write the Alcibiades I?*, in: Apeiron 37, 2004, pp. 97-99.

[3] FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER, *Schleiermacher's Introductions to the Dialogues of Plato*, Cambridge 1936, pp. 328ff. I use the English translation dated 1836, the German original was published at 1809, cf. JEAN-FRANÇOIS PRADEAU – CHANTAL MARBOEUF, *Platon: Alcibiade*, p. 24.

[4] JULIA ANNAS, *Self-knowledge in Early Plato,* pp. 111-138; GERARD R. LEDGER, *Recounting Plato, A Computer Analysis of Plato's Style*, Oxford 1989.

[5] NICHOLAS DENYER, *Plato: Alcibiades*, Cambridge 2001; JEAN-FRANÇOIS PRADEAU – CHANTAL MARBOEUF, *Platon: Alcibiade*.

[6] That such debates can have a "full stop" is demonstrated by Paul Woodruff's defense of the *Hippias Major*. Analogically to the *Alcibiades*, it was Schleiermacher who first rejected authenticity of the *Hippias Major* on the grounds of pure philological and philosophical taste. Further authors added further reasons: there are unique terms unparalleled in the rest of the *corpus*, some passages seem to copy motives from other dialogues, Hippias seems to be rather stupid, the style is too comic to be Plato's, there are flagrant errors in argumentation, etc. Cf. PAUL WOODRUFF, *Plato – Hippias Major*, Oxford 1982, pp. 94-103.

Authorities – Ancient and Modern

Ancient authorities generally regarded the *Alcibiades* as a genuine work of Plato.[7] It was well known in the Platonist tradition and possibly to the stoic school as well. Carlini cites almost fifty ancient authors quoting or referring to the text of the dialogue.[8] In different periods of Platonism Albinus and Iamblichus claimed that it was the first dialogue to be read by anyone entering Plato's philosophy. Plotinus alludes several times to the work (*Enneads* I,1,3,3; IV,4,43,20-1; VI,7,5,24) and we possess extensive commentaries by Olympiodorus and Proclus. Finally, Cicero adopts several themes in his *Tusculan Disputations* I,52 and V,70 as well.[9] However, ancient authors acknowledged Plato's authorship of nowadays dubious works such as the *Theages*, *Hipparchus* or *Minos* as well and thus cannot serve as a proof in the discussion.

As I said earlier, the modern debate was launched by the attack of Friedrich Schleiermacher.[10] Schleiermacher declares himself to be one of the rare experts with such knowledge of Plato that he can state his claim against the entire tradition so far.[11] Although the taste of a great philologist is no small matter, his arguments beg a number of questions. The dialogue appears to him: "very insignificant and poor, and that to such a degree, that we cannot ascribe it to Plato."[12] What reasons does he have for this claim? There is, according to him, a "singular want of

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[7] The attitude of ancients was not un-critical; several dialogues (e.g. *Eryxias* or *Axiochus*) were proclaimed inauthentic already in antiquity, cf. DIOGENES LAERTIUS, *Lives* III,62 and NICHOLAS DENYER, *Plato: Alcibiades*, p. 14.

[8] ANTONIO CARLINI, *Platone: Alcibiade, Alcibiades Secondo, Ipparco, Rivali*, Torino 1964, pp. 401-403; even with possible cross-references between the ancient authors themselves, the number is quite high.

[9] Cf. JEAN PÉPIN, *Que l'homme n'est rien d'autre que son âme: observations sur la tradition du Premier Alcibiade*, in: Revue des Études Grecques 82, 1969, pp. 56-70, and JULIA ANNAS, *Self-knowledge in Early Plato*, pp. 112-114.

[10] For the list of authors on each side of the barricade, cf. ROBERT R. WELLMAN, *Socrates and Alcibiades: The* Alcibiades Major, in: History of Education Quarterly, Winter 1966, pp. 18-19 and JEAN-FRANÇOIS PRADEAU – CHANTAL MARBOEUF, *Platon: Alcibiade*, pp. 219-220. The overviews show that neither of the opinions is prevailing.

[11] FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER, *Schleiermacher's Introductions*, p. 329.

[12] FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER, *Schleiermacher's Introductions*, p. 329. On the other hand, RICHARD S. BLUCK, *The origin of the Greater Alcibiades*, in: Classical Quarterly, New Series 3, 1953, p. 51, although being sceptical about authenticity, writes: "The

uniformity" throughout the dialogue, but a couple of lines later he states that "particular passages, very beautiful and genuinely Platonic, may be found sparingly dispersed, and floating in a mass of worthless matter, consisting partly of little broken dialogues busied about nothing, partly of long speeches."[13] Schleiermacher finds several crucial aspects missing: irony, philosophy, and Alcibiades' love for Socrates.[14]

Scholarly opinion was not unified even in the nineteenth century itself.[15] In his *Plato and other Companions of Sokrates* George Grote writes that *Alcibiades* I "exhibits a very characteristic specimen of the Sokratico-Platonic method".[16] Although Grote defends also the smaller dialogue *Alcibiades II*, which is nowadays generally agreed to be dubious, he lays down a thesis that is usually maintained by those who oppose Schleiermacher: "we must look for a large measure of diversity in the various dialogues ... to admit it as a work by Plato".[17]

A century later there still seems to be a similar pattern in the discussion.[18] Neither Julia Annas, Jean-François Pradeau, Chantal Marboeuf

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quality of the *Alcibiades* makes it most unlikely that it was written merely as an exercise; the writer was almost certainly a genuine philosopher himself, with a message to convey, and if so his work is first-hand evidence of an interesting transitional period in the history of philosophy."

[13] FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER, *Schleiermacher's Introductions*, p. 330.

[14] FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER, *Schleiermacher's Introductions*, pp. 330, 332, 334. As to the first two points, irony is missing from several other dialogues as well, and thus its absence is not an argument; there are other authors who see the *Alcibiades* as philosophically interesting: starting with GEORGE GROTE, *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates*, II, London 1888; PAUL FRIEDLANDER, *Der Grosse Alcibiades. Ein Weg zu Plato* and *Der Grosse Alcibiades. Kritische Erörterung*, Bonn 1921, 1923, and more contemporary JULIA ANNAS, *Self-knowledge in Early Plato*, pp. 111-138; OWEN GOLDIN, *Self, Sameness, and Soul in 'Alcibiades I' and 'Timaeus'* in: Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie 40, 1993, pp. 5-19, and DAVID M. JOHNSON, *God as the True Self: Plato's Alcibiades I*, in: Ancient Philosophy 19, 1999, pp. 1-19. The third point, missing Alcibiades' love for Socrates will be discussed later.

[15] The debate up until the eighties of the 19th century is summarized in GEORGE GROTE, *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates*, p. 18. On the side of the opponents of authenticity he cites Schleiermacher and Ast; among the proponents of Plato's authorship is Socher, Hermann, Stallbaum, Steinhart, and Susemihl. Lutoslawski in *The Origin and Growth of Plato's Logic* (1897), pp. 197-198, later argues against Plato's authorship.

[16] GEORGE GROTE, *Plato and the Other Companions of Sokrates*, p. 7.

[17] Ibidem, p. 19.

[18] Apart from FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER, *Schleiermacher's Introductions* and DAVID GRIBBLE, *Alcibiades and Athens*, Oxford 1989, the most coherent critiques are

nor Nick Denyer argue for the authenticity of the dialogue. They rather challenge the arguments against Plato's authorship; they all agree that the balance of proof is not against the dialogue, but they think the task of possible disproof must be on those arguing against authenticity. [19]

The reviews of the French translation by Pradeau and Marboeuf as well as the reactions to Denyer's edition are more often than not in favour of authenticity.[20] Joyal in his negative review of Denyer's work summarizes the most frequent counterargument in the following way: "we are dealing with a dialogue that was intended to be an introduction to Plato's writings; and this brings us back to the question whether Plato would have composed such a work."[21]

Now the question is whether and how other scholars – who do not deal directly with the *Alcibiades* but write on different topics from Plato's philosophy – use or do not use the dialogue in their works. As Denyer noted, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* refers to the dialogue only once and mentions that its authenticity is debated.[22] The situation in the

usually triggered by a suggestion to accept the *Alcibiades* into the family of Plato's genuine works; thus EMILE DE STRYCKER, *Platonica I: l'authenticité du Premier Alcibiade*, in: Les Études Classiques 11, 1942, pp. 116-151 is directed against CORNELIS VINK, *Plato's Eerste Alcibiades. Een onderzoek naar zijn authenticiteit*, Amsterdam – Paris 1939, and NICHOLAS D. SMITH, *Did Plato Write the Alcibiades I?*; against NICHOLAS DENYER, *Plato: Alcibiades.*

[19] Cf. JULIA ANNAS, *Self-knowledge in Early Plato*, pp. 111-115; JEAN-FRANÇOIS PRADEAU – CHANTAL MARBOEUF, *Platon: Alcibiade*, pp. 27-28, and NICHOLAS DENYER, *Plato: Alcibiades*, pp. 14-26.

[20] Supportive: BETEGH in Classical World 99, 2006, pp. 185-187; KONSTAN in Ancient Philosophy 24, 2004, pp. 461-464; FERRARI in Classical Review 53, 2003, pp. 296-298; TODD in Phoenix 57, 2003, pp. 340-341; negative: JOYAL in Bryn Mawr Classical Review 2003.01.28 and more or less ROWE in Phronesis 44, 2003, pp. 250-251, as well; purely descriptive: MULHERN in Journal for History of Philosophy 41, 2003, pp. 265-266. I did not have access to all the reviews, however, this, I believe, is a majority of them. An interesting case is MURPHY in Mouseion 46, 2/1, 2001, pp. 86-90, who rejects the authenticity because he is convinced by Denyer's late dating of the dialogue, while most of the reviews that agree with Plato's authorship are hesitant about Denyer's idea of late dating.

[21] MARK JOYAL, *Review of Nicholas Denyer, Plato: Alcibiades. Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics*, in: Bryn Mawr Classical Review 2003.01.28, http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2003/2003-01-28.html, visited 17th January 2009.

[22] *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, (ed.) RICHARD KRAUT, Cambridge 1992, pp. 35 and 543. Similarly, Gail Fine in the widely used *Plato*, vol. 2, refers to the dialogue once, commenting: "though this work may be spurious, its reasoning may be Platonic", *Oxford Readings in Philosophy: Plato*, II, (ed.) GAIL FINE, Oxford 1999, p. 31.

last two introductory volumes on Plato differs, but not radically: *A Companion to Plato* edited by Hugh H. Benson mentions the dialogue only twice, but without any doubt about its authenticity.[23] *The Oxford Handbook of Plato* edited by Gail Fine refers to the dialogue once and questions its authenticity with a [?] symbol.[24] If one looks into the recent books that students use nowadays, one similarly finds that although the *Alcibiades* is usually rehabilitated from its dubious reputation, it is nevertheless not often used.[25] For example, Christopher Rowe refers to it as "probably pseudo-Platonic", however, he uses it several times in his recent book;[26] Michelle Carpenter and Ronald M. Polansky use the dialogue in their essay on Socratic *elenchus* in *Does Socrates Have a Method?*, edited by Gary Alan Scott,[27] and Julia Annas confirms her earlier conviction in *The Virtuous Life in Greek Ethics* edited by Burkhard Reis.[28]

Judging solely the current state of the debate, general opinion is split as it has been ever since Schleiermacher. But fewer authors dismiss the dialogue without the need to justify their position or at least mention that the authenticity is a debated issue. Moreover, in contrast to the books from the eighties or nineties of the 20th century, more and more authors work with the *Alcibiades* without explicit doubts about its authorship.

I have tried to sketch the contemporary state of affairs concerning the authenticity of the *Alcibiades* in (mostly) Anglo-Saxon scholarship. In the following section I will focus on different groups of arguments, and then in the penultimate section I will ask whether there is any advantage in taking all these arguments together as a whole.

[23] *A Companion to Plato*, (ed.) HUGH H. BENSON, Malden & Oxford 2006, p. 452; see especially the use of the *Alcibiades* by DEBORAH K. W. MODRAK at page 133.

[24] *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, (ed.) GAIL FINE, Oxford 2008, p. 581.

[25] Again, the selection is purely subjective; I chose three fairly recent volumes in which the library form indicated frequent use.

[26] CHRISTOPHER ROWE, *Plato and the Art of Philosophical Writing*, Cambridge 2007, p. 282, see esp. p. 124.

[27] *Does Socrates Have a Method?*, (ed.) GARRY A. SCOTT, Pennsylvania 2002, pp. 95-97, authors treat the dialogue as genuinely Plato's.

[28] *The Virtuous Life in Greek Ethics*, (ed.) BURKHARD REIS, Cambridge 2006, pp. 41-43.

Particularities

a) Lexica

The first point I will consider is the language of the dialogue and several unique words which do not occur elsewhere in the Platonic corpus. The opponents of authenticity listed five problematic terms: κρήγυος (111e1), ἄχραντος (114a1), προδρομή (114a2), ἕλχος (115b9), and ἐπιφάνεια (124c10).[29] All of these terms are attested before and after Plato, therefore the question concerns only Plato's own vocabulary and favour for certain terms. DeStrycker is not correct in listing ἐπιφάνεια since it appears in several other places in the corpus and may be thus crossed from the list.[30] Further, I take προδρομή as a metaphorical use of a term that occurs in masculine form in the *Charmides* 154a4,[31] similarly the term ἕλχος appears in the *Laws* X 877a5, and so it does not seem to be so entirely unique in the corpus.

Thus we are left with κρήγυος and ἄχραντος; Denyer argues that these are poetic terms, and their usage would need explanation whoever the author is. He rejects the underlying assumption that everything in Plato's authentic work must have a parallel as unwarranted, and claims that Plato used these terms with a specific aim in mind. Denyer lists several occurrences of κρήγυος that support his interpretation but in the case of ἄχραντος one has to take his word for it, or check the TLG for oneself to confirm this.[32] The parallels for κρήγυος are convincing enough to believe that Plato was making an allusion to poetic works where this term occurs.

Of course, Denyer uses the general line of defence that a unique occurrence of a term is not a proof of a bogus work.[33] For example when I searched for ἐπιφάνεια I found that Sophocles uses ἐπίφαντος only once in his plays (*Antigone* 841): are we willing to argue that this casts

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[29] Cf. WILLIAM A. HEIDEL, *Pseudo-Platonica*, Baltimore 1896, p. 68; EMILE DE STRYCKER, *Platonica I: l'authenticité du Premier Alcibiade*, p. 137, and NICHOLAS DENYER, *Plato: Alcibiades*, pp. 15-16.

[30] PLATO, *Laches* 184b5, *Menexenos* 246e6 and ἐπιφανής occurs in *Laws* 629e6 and 829d1.

[31] Cf. LSJ ad προδρομ-εύω.

[32] NICHOLAS DENYER, *Plato: Alcibiades*, pp. 16, 126 and 135.

[33] Ibidem, p. 16.

any doubts on the authorship of the *Antigone*? And the occurrence of a rare word moreover calls for an explanation regardless of who exactly the author is – rare words are rare, and that is what makes them special in any circumstances. Further, if one looks into Brandwood's *Word Index to Plato*, one finds several terms that occur only once in the corpus, yet no one uses them to disprove the authorship of the dialogue in which they occur.[34] Therefore, I do not find this principle on its own methodologically sound enough to question the authorship of a work.

b) Style, Doctrine, and Stylometry

The problems with style can be divided into two subgroups: judging the date of composition of the dialogue on the one hand, and placing it into the stylistic groups settled by stylometric research on the other.[35] To judge upon similarities and / or dissimilarities in composition and doctrines with other dialogues does not seem to be a methodologically sound process either.[36] One methodological objection is summarized by Annas: "*Both* its similarities to, *and* its differences from, the rest of the Platonic corpus show that it is not authentic. With these rules, providing inauthenticity is naturally an easy game."[37] Denyer adds that since "absolutely every feature of the *Alcibiades* is either a similarity to, or a difference from, writings agreed to be by Plato"[38] everything in the text could serve to disprove Plato's authorship. Moreover, this method applied to *any* dialogue gives the same result: inauthenticity.

Some could object that I am being unfair, for it is not necessary to stick to both parts of this method: *either* similarity *or* dissimilarity in style and doctrine is sufficient proof. But the similarity argument does

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[34] LEONARD BRANDWOOD, *A Word Index of Plato*, New York 1976; e.g. ἀβίαστον at *Timaeus* 61a7 and ἀβρόν at *Symposium* 204c5 are the two examples from the first column on the first page of the index.

[35] On stylometry cf. LEONARD BRANDWOOD, *The Chronology of Plato's Dialogues*, Cambridge 1990, and GERARD R. LEDGER, *Re-counting Plato*. By "composition" I mean larger features of style in which the work is written, i.e. *aporetic* or *protreptic* character, number of interlocutors, using Socrates disavowal of knowledge, presence or absence of positive doctrines in the text etc.

[36] WILLIAM A. HEIDEL, *Pseudo-Platonica*, p. 62 claims that the dialogue is "too Platonic" to be by Plato, cf. NICHOLAS DENYER, *Plato: Alcibiades*, p. 16 for further quotations; the most recent similar approach is in DAVID GRIBBLE, *Alcibiades and Athens*, p. 261: "it is precisely this closeness that has led many to suspect it".

[37] JULIA ANNAS, *Self-knowledge in Early Plato*, p. 215.

[38] NICHOLAS DENYER, *Plato: Alcibiades*, p. 17.

not work; similarity of style and doctrine is what serves to group the dia-
logues together and thus can hardly serve as a proof of inauthenticity.[39]
I will come back to the stylistic and compositional differences later in
this section and to the doctrinal differences in the next section.

Joyal raises another problem concerning the style or rather the genre
of the dialogue: "*Alcibiades* I was popular in antiquity in large part pre-
cisely because it functioned as an excellent introduction to Plato's writ-
ings and the thought contained therein. Is it demonstrable that Plato
would have written a work that performed this function so well and
seems even to have been written for just this purpose?"[40] Great masters
write great works. But do they write *only great* works? Or do they write
great introductions as well? If the answer is yes, Joyal's objection falls.
Plato established a school and was involved in its educational process
(though this "school" was far from something like our university); for
example, the *Meno* serves as a great introduction to Plato's epistemo-
logy followed by the more complicated *Theaetetus* and the *Euthyphro*
does equally well for beginners in metaphysics. Are those two dialogues
bogus since they are in a way introductory, and Plato would never write
an introductory work?

One could possibly think that stylometry must put an end to the dis-
pute.[41] Well, it depends. There are two questions: can stylometry prove

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[39] I will deal later with more complicated cases when the dialogue combines the
style of one group with a doctrine usually assigned to another group of dialogues.

[40] MARK JOYAL, *Review of Nicholas Denyer*; this point largely covers his second
objection that the dialogue "aims for and ends in the (temporary) conversion of
Alcibiades. Unlike the usual pattern in Plato's Socratic dialogues, its focus is not an
ethical problem whose lack of resolution creates *aporia* and thereby serves as an *im-
plicit* protreptic for the reader."

[41] Stylometry is a statistical method measuring the stylistic features in the works; it
counts frequency of certain vocabulary or stylistic features, and the similarities and
divergences of results establish stylistic groups of texts. Stylometry became popular
by the end of the nineteenth century; it was a perfect child of its time, a genuine blend
of Hegelianism (belief in the development of spirit) and positivism (basing proper
philosophical understanding on scientific, statistical ground). The hope was to estab-
lish a stylistic development of Plato's works that could give us the order of their com-
position as well. Cf. LEONARD BRANDWOOD, *The Chronology of Plato's Dialogues*, his
results are summarized in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, (ed.) RICHARD KRAUT,
pp. 90-120, cf. review CHARLES M. YOUNG, *Plato and Computer Dating – A Discus-
sion of Gerard R. Ledger, Re-counting Plato: A Computer Analysis of Plato's Style
and Leonard Brandwood, The Chronology of Plato's Dialogues*, in: Oxford Studies
in Ancient Philosophy 12, 1994, pp. 227-250.

or disprove authorship? And, further, can it help in establishing a dialogue's time of composition? The *Alcibiades* was not regularly used in the older stylometric researches since the authors mostly shared the assumption that it is bogus.[42] If it occurs in the research, then no feature makes it exceptional, and it is usually put into the family of the so-called early dialogues. The last major stylometric research conducted by Ledger shares this opinion on the date of its origin and it presents explicit statistical arguments for the authenticity of the dialogue.[43]

Apparently there is a remarkable retreat of stylometry from contemporary scholarship.[44] While, for example, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* features an essay on stylometry by Leonard Brandwood,[45] later introductions such as Blackwell's *Companion to Plato* or *The Oxford Handbook of Plato* are much more reserved. In the former Christopher Rowe questions the rigidity of a strict developmentalism and T. H. Irwin in the latter shows several problems of a chronological ordering based on stylistic features.[46] It is generally problematic to make the step from the stylistic groups (which are more or less well established) to any prediction concerning chronology, i.e. concerning the time of the composi-

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[42] From twenty-one researches summarized in LEONARD BRANDWOOD, *The chronology of Plato's Dialogues*, it figures only in Campbell, Walbe, and Baron. The overall result of more than a hundred years of this research in not fascinating either: the grouping has been generally agreed upon for no more than fourteen works out of the entire corpus.

[43] GERARD R. LEDGER, *Re-counting Plato*, pp. 121, 144, 168. According to Ledger, the *Alcibiades* is closest in style to the *Gorgias* and *Meno*.

[44] Its advantages and limitations are summarized in CHARLES H. KAHN, *On Platonic Chronology*, in: *New Perspectives on Plato, Modern and Ancient*, (eds.) JULIA ANNAS – CHRISTOPHER ROWE, Cambridge (MA) 2002, pp. 93-127; criticism of certain aspects of stylometric methodology are in CHARLES M. YOUNG, *Plato and Computer Dating*, pp. 243-250; DEBRA NAILS, *Review of G. R. Ledger, Re-counting Plato: A Computer Analysis of Plato's Style and Holger Thesleff, Studies in Platonic Chronology*, in: Bryn Mawr Classical Review 03.04.17., http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/1992/03.04.17.html visited 17th January 2009; PAUL KEYSER, *Review of G. R. Ledger, Re-counting Plato: A Computer Analysis of Plato's Style*, in: Bryn Mawr Classical Review 02.07.03., http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/1991/02.07.03.html visited 17th January 2009; PAUL KEYSER – GERARD R. LEDGER, *Responses*, in: Bryn Mawr Classical Review 03.06.19., http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/1992/03.06.19.html visited 17th January 2009.

[45] In *The Cambridge Companion to Plato*, (ed.) RICHARD KRAUT, pp. 90-120.

[46] ROWE in *A Companion to Plato*, (ed.) HUGH H. BENSON, pp. 17-20; IRWIN in *The Oxford Handbook of Plato*, (ed.) GAIL FINE, pp. 81-84.

tion. Further, one has to presuppose that Plato never went back to re-write certain dialogues or their parts.[47] It has to be taken for granted that the author was incapable of controlling the stylistic features measured,[48] and that the examiner selected context independent clusters of text to examine (which on its own brings the problem of circularity).

Another attempt to dispute the authorship of the *Alcibiades* might be placing it into certain stylistic / chronological group of the dialogues and then to claim that it incorporates philosophical or compositional features of a different group. Therefore, the argument continues, it cannot be genuine.[49] Several other dialogues share the same "problem". There is, for example, the *Charmides* and the problem of self-reflexive relations, and *Euthyphro* or *Hippias Major* and the theory of forms. With respect to composition and style of the dialogue, the obvious example is the *Theaetetus*, a dialogue generally supposed to be a mature work of Plato, yet resembling many of the so-called Socratic dialogues.[50]

Despite the problems with the relation between style and chronology described above, I always find some unease in the idea that Plato devotes himself to writing the dialogues in one manner of composition for about fifteen years and then suddenly changes to another. If one believes in the excellence of Plato's style, as I do, it is then more natural to suppose that Plato uses different stylistic and compositional features to deal with different philosophical problems or different approaches to these problems regardless of the chronology of composition.

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[47] On the other hand, MALCOLM SCHOFIELD, *A Displacement in the Text of the Cratylus*, in: Classical Quarterly 22, 1972, pp. 187-196 convincingly shows that Plato re-wrote or re-edited parts of the *Cratylus*, and we know about two different prologues to the *Theaetetus* as well (cf. ANONYMUS, *In Platonis Theatetum* 3,28-37; GUIDO BASTIANINI – DAVID SEDLEY, *Commentarium in Platonis Theaetetum*, in: *Corpus dei Papiri Filosofici*, III: *Commentari*, [ed.] FRANCESCO ADORNO, Firenze 1995, *ad loc.*).

[48] The problem is that Plato was obviously extremely skilful in changing style: for example Lysias' speech from the *Phaedrus* is closer to Lysias' own work than to Platonic dialogues, similarly, the myth in the *Protagoras* and the speeches on Eros in the *Symposium*, cf. GERARD R. LEDGER, *Re-counting Plato*, pp. 103-104 and 124-125. I believe Ledger is immune to this objection since he measures hardly observable stylistic data, cf. NICHOLAS DENYER, *Plato: Alcibiades*, p. 18.

[49] For example, it belongs among the so-called early dialogues but operates with doctrines known from middle or later dialogues. DAVID GRIBBLE, *Alcibiades and Athens*, p. 260, objection (i), (ii), (iii).

[50] Cf. DAVID SEDLEY, *The Midwife of Platonism*, Cambridge 2004, ch. 1 and 5.6.

c) Alleged Doctrinal Differences

No one has ever suggested that there was anything un-Platonic in the *Alcibiades*;[51] cases have been made, that what is said in the dialogue does not correspond with what is said on the same subject elsewhere in the corpus. There seems to be a problem in using this argument since there are opposing views even in the well-attested dialogues. What are we going to do with two contrasting views on the immortality of the soul in the *Symposium* 206a-208b and *Phaedrus* 245c-e?[52] What about simplicity of the soul in the *Phaedo* and its three parts in the *Republic* or the role of self-knowledge as the only human wisdom in the *Apology* and the denial of its usefulness and possibility in the *Charmides*? How should we distinguish which doctrinal differences are to be accommodated into a single general interpretation, which are a sign of Plato's philosophical development, and which mark out a bogus work?[53]

For example, Smith points out that the identification of Socrates' *daimonion* with god in the *Alcibiades* 105d5 is never made explicit elsewhere.[54] But even Smith himself acknowledges that *daimonion* is called "divine" in many other places.[55] I believe, that "divine" (*theios*) means simply "having the characteristics of god(s)".[56] The step from calling some voice or sign "divine" to saying that it is the voice of "god" then does not seem so problematic.

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[51] Cf. JEAN-FRANÇOIS PRADEAU – CHANTAL MARBOEUF, *Platon: Alcibiade*, p. 25.

[52] Point made by NICHOLAS DENYER, *Plato: Alcibiades*, p. 25.

[53] This is exactly the case with Smith's objection (d) and (e), NICHOLAS D. SMITH, *Did Plato write the Alcibiades I?*, p. 103. The *Alcibiades* seems to be much more in favour of public political life and common morality than other dialogues (esp. *Apology* and *Gorgias*); but this, I take it, is not because Socrates changes his mind but because he talks to young Alcibiades who is keen on a political career and, moreover, it seems to be his first philosophical discussion proper. Smith's objection (f) is based on his misreading of lines 134a4-7 where Socrates says: "And if he doesn't know what he's doing, won't he make mistakes?" (Ὁ δὲ μὴ εἰδὼς οὐχ ἁμαρτήσεται;). He considers this in opposition to Socrates claim that due to knowledge of his own ignorance he avoids being in error. Smith missed that the person in question *does* something he does not know. However, this suggests that he is *not aware* of his ignorance for if he knew he did not know it, he would not start his action in the first place.

[54] NICHOLAS D. SMITH, *Did Plato write the Alcibiades I?*, p. 100, objection (b).

[55] PLATO, *Apology* 31c8-d1, 40a4-6, 40c3-4, 41d6; *Euthyphron* 3b5-6; *Euthydemus* 272e4; *Phaedrus* 242b8-9; *Republic* IV 496c4.

[56] Cf. I. G. KIDD, *Review: Le Sens du Mot THEIOS chez Platon by Jean van Camp, Paul Canart*, in: The Philosophical Quarterly 8, 1958, pp. 377-378, p. 378.

Smith further claims that Socrates' statement in the *Apology* that no one ever learned anything from him (*Apology* 33b6-8) contrasts with *Alcibiades* 105e2-5 where he says that he is the only one to provide what Alcibiades craves for. Besides understanding this passage as a way of keeping Alcibiades in the dialogue, one has to ask whether Alcibiades actually learnt anything from Socrates, and whether Socrates' method of providing someone with virtue (*aretē*) is actually a kind of dogmatic teaching. I suppose that answers to both questions are negative, and thus Smith's objection does not work.[57]

I agree with Smith that non-committal answers are rare in the dialogues and violate the Socratic "say-what-you-believe rule". Alcibiades gives this non-committal answer at 106c2-3, and Socrates accepts it without any further worries.[58] Is this a sign of bogus work? Alcibiades answers the question whether he indeed has the intentions Socrates ascribes to him; plain agreement would reveal Alcibiades' weakness: pride and certain political *hybris*. His answer "let's say I do, if you like, so I can find out what you're going to say" allows him to stay in the discussion without openly admitting his hubristic expectations. It is, I suppose, a convincing answer contemporary readers or listeners to the dialogue might accept as coming from Alcibiades, who wants to listen to Socrates, but does not want to reveal his weakness right at the beginning.

De Strycker further lists several objections concerning the relation of the doctrines and topics discussed in the *Alcibiades* and its most probable early origin. Socrates is, according to him, too subservient to god which is a feature of later dialogues; the four cardinal virtues at 121c-122a presuppose the *Republic*, and the soul-body distinction presupposes the *Phaedo*.[59] R. S. Bluck adds that mind is considered intelligible first in the *Timaeus* and a parallel between visual and mental perception (132c-133c) is not used before the *Republic*.[60] But these objections are absurd; overall, there is no more reason to suppose that the *Alcibiades* must presuppose other dialogues rather than that these dia-

[57] On Socrates' teaching cf. for example ALEXANDER NEHAMAS, *What Did Socrates Teach and To Whom Did He Teach It?*, in: Review of Metaphysics 46, 1992, pp. 279-306.

[58] NICHOLAS D. SMITH, *Did Plato write the Alcibiades I?*, p. 102, objection (c).

[59] EMILE DE STRYCKER, *Platonica I*, pp. 144-151.

[60] RICHARD S. BLUCK, *The origin of the Greater Alcibiades*, pp. 48-49.

logues must presuppose the *Alcibiades*.[61] It seems that these objections rest on an unwarranted assumption that whenever Plato introduces a certain idea, he gives a proper justification and explanation right with it. Well, if you like this assumption, you find yourself committed to dating the composition of all the dialogues that discuss justice, Forms, parts of the soul, or opinion and knowledge after the *Republic*.[62]

Smith's article ends with three rather peculiar objections.[63] First, Socrates calls several students of Zeno of Elea wise despite (i) the impossibility of teaching virtue proclaimed in many dialogues and (ii) the statement of the Delphic oracle that no one is wiser than Socrates, who actually knows nothing. If one accepts this argument, then one is obliged to cross out each and every dialogue where anyone except Socrates is called wise or a teacher. Second, Smith complains that the "self itself" at 129b1 is a puzzling form that instead to an individual self refers to something like Forms. I agree that it is puzzling indeed, but according to several interpreters perfectly sound in the argument and in Plato's line of thought as well.[64] Again, one has to wonder how many dialogues would stay in the corpus after cutting out those with puzzling passages. Finally, there is the objection that despite being a so-called early dialogue, the *Alcibiades* at 133b9-10 seems to presuppose a complex soul with different parts. First, it is not clear whether this passage must be read with a tripartite or bipartite soul in mind,[65] and second, there is a similar hint in the *Gorgias* as well.[66] Therefore, if I were

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[61] Concerning assumptions and presuppositions in the dialogues, cf. CHARLES H. KAHN, *Did Plato Write Socratic Dialogues?*, in: The Classical Quarterly, New Series 31, 1981, pp. 305-320; IDEM, *Plato's Charmides and the Proleptic Reading of Socratic Dialogues*, in: The Journal of Philosophy 85, 1988, pp. 541-549; IDEM, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue*, Cambridge 1996.

[62] This idea becomes especially amusing when applied to love and thus to the chronology of *Lysis*, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. Further on, it would be hard to establish *any* of the dialogues as possibly the first, although there has to be one, which Plato wrote at the very beginning of his career.

[63] NICHOLAS D. SMITH, *Did Plato write the Alcibiades I?*, p. 105, objections (g), (h), (i). The previous objections were met either in the text above or in footnote 53.

[64] Cf. JULIA ANNAS, *Self-knowledge in Early Plato*, pp. 111-138; OWEN GOLDIN, *Self, Sameness, and Soul in 'Alcibiades I' and 'Timaeus'*, pp. 5-19; DAVID M. JOHNSON, *God as the True Self: Plato's Alcibiades I*, pp. 1-19.

[65] The term used for "part" here is *topos*, place, which is quite vague and indeterminate.

[66] PLATO, *Gorgias* 493a3-4: τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς τοῦτο ἐν ᾧ ἐπιϑυμίαι εἰσὶ.

forced to accept the traditional chronology of composition based on style of the dialogues, I would be happy with setting the *Alcibiades* somewhere around the *Gorgias*.[67]

d) Dramatic Setting and Realities

The last particular group of problems I will discuss are some disagreements between dramatic settings of the *Alcibiades* and that of other dialogues. The supposition behind this possible objection is that Plato creates the dramatic settings of the dialogue so that they do not conflict with each other and do not involve obvious historical absurdities.[68] Already Schleiermacher mentions several problems of this kind: when we compare the *Alcibiades* with the *Protagoras*, an incongruity seems to emerge, for in the *Protagoras* Pericles is still alive and yet Socrates and Alcibiades appear as old acquaintances, who must already have conversed a lot with one another.[69] However, I do not see any disturbing inconsistency here. Alcibiades in the *Protagoras* is already somewhat older to be a proper object of desire for an adult man, but he is still a pretty young man.[70] Within the dialogue he seems to be equal to other (much older) participants and thus I suppose that he already passed into early adulthood.[71] We know that Alcibiades was born in 451 or 450 BC, in the *Alcibiades* he is not yet twenty (123d6-7),[72] and Pericles dies in 429 BC. The dramatic date of the *Alcibiades* might well be 432/1 BC, and thus Plato has at least two years into which to situate the dramatic date of the *Protagoras*.

Another sign of a problem might be that we do not find Alcibiades' love for Socrates manifested anywhere in the dialogue, whereas in the *Symposium* it is an essential part of their relationship.[73] True, Alcibiades' love, that is so profound in his speech in the *Symposium*, is missing, but isn't this due to the fact that it is the first meeting between

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[67] Cf. JEAN-FRANÇOIS PRADEAU – CHANTAL MARBOEUF, *Platon: Alcibiade*, pp. 9-14 and 28-29.

[68] Therefore we find that Socrates conversing with Parmenides is quite young, and there is no dialogue where Socrates would talk, for example, to Homer.

[69] FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER, *Schleiermacher's Introductions*, p. 334.

[70] PLATO, *Protagoras* 309a-b.

[71] Cf. ibidem, 336b and 347b.

[72] Twenty was perhaps the usual age to appear in front of the assembly and speak; cf. XENOPHON, *Memorabilia* 3,6,1.

[73] FRIEDRICH SCHLEIERMACHER, *Schleiermacher's Introductions*, p. 334.

them? Moreover, Alcibiades concludes the first philosophical "date" in a promising way: "we're probably going to change roles, Socrates. I'll be playing yours and you'll be playing mine, for from this day forward I will never fail to attend on you, and you will always have me as your attendant".[74] And if love is an essential part of Socrates' role in the *Alcibiades*, this "changing of the roles" suggests that Alcibiades will be the lover from now on.[75]

The remaining problem is in the discrepancy between Socrates falling in love with Alcibiades some years before first talking to him (*Alcibiades* 103a-b) and Alcibiades' jealous behaviour, which stops him from looking and talking to any other beautiful person from the very moment Socrates falls in love with him (*Symposium* 213c6-d1). This, I believe, is the only annoyance. However, I am not convinced of its strength and I doubt anyone would like to base his or her claim concerning the authenticity of the *Alcibiades* on it.[76]

Gribble claims that the *Alcibiades* depicts Alcibiades himself as too submissive and unintelligent. According to Gribble this does not correspond to the overall picture of Alcibiades and, moreover, to his depiction in the *Protagoras*.[77] It is true that Alcibiades at several places admits that he is lost or does not know what to do further,[78] but even Gribble himself acknowledges in the footnote that Alcibiades shows some spirit at 114e1 and 119b5-10. Actually, in the second passage Gribble lists Alcibiades boasts that he is better in his natural dispositions than *any* Athenian politician. Moreover, there are several passages where Alcibiades seems far from being submissive: he claims to anticipate Socrates' motives,[79] and he is even on the verge of being arrogant;[80] the suggestion of changing roles with Socrates by the end of the dialogue does not sound too submissive either.[81]

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[74] PLATO, *Alcibiades* I 135d8-11, transl. Hutschinson.

[75] Cf. ibidem, 103a1-3, 131e1-4 and 135e1-3.

[76] DAVID GRIBBLE, *Alcibiades and Athens*, p. 261, objection (v), he admits that this is merely a puzzle and not a reason to reject the *Alcibiades* as a work of Plato. However, NICHOLAS D. SMITH, *Did Plato write the Alcibiades I?*, pp. 100 lists it again as his objection (a).

[77] DAVID GRIBBLE, *Alcibiades and Athens*, p. 261, objection (iv), he refers to PLATO, *Protagoras* 336b-e, 348b-c.

[78] PLATO, *Alcibiades* I 109a8, 112d10, 113b12, 116e1-3, 118a1.

[79] Ibidem, 104d1-6.

[80] Ibidem, 113e4-5.

[81] Ibidem, 135d7-11.

Further, Gribble claims that certain anecdotes occur in the dialogue, but actually belong to later tradition.[82] However, he does not list any reasons why these pieces of anecdotal information must be from later tradition and, moreover, the points he lists (cf. footnote 82) are quite common so that it is unclear why they should not be considered known *already during* Alcibiades' life. And even if these points *were* parts of rumours that constituted part of the tradition, Alcibiades died in 404 BC and thus even if we believe that Plato wrote the dialogue early in his career, there has been some time for rumours to spread and some legends to become established (especially taking into consideration how famous Alcibiades was).

Summing Up and the Genealogy of Doubt

What particular reasons survive for disproving the authenticity of the dialogue? If I have counted correctly, it is the unique term ἄχραντος at 114a1 and the discrepancy between the *Alcibiades* and the *Symposium* concerning Alcibiades' jealousy long before Socrates actually talked to him for the first time. And one could add any objections from Smith's article or Gribble's book that one considers were not properly answered in the text above.

It does not seem to be sufficient to rule out the dialogue as a bogus after all. But if each reason is insufficient on its own, what about taking them all together? Each particular reason might be wobbly on its own but when considered together the force of the whole bundle might be great enough to deal with the dialogue once and for all. This, I believe, is a justified process for making one's case stronger. The discussion then moves from judging particular reasons onto a higher level of judging the reason(s) for these reasons.

However, it is exactly the genealogy of these doubts that does not convince me about their validity when taken together. The problems listed above did not originate from unbiased examinations. As I showed in the description of the debate, they are all related to the unfortunate judgement of Schleiermacher from the beginning of the nineteenth cen-

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[82] DAVID GRIBBLE, *Alcibiades and Athens*, p. 261, objection (vi); he lists Alcibiades' refusal to learn to play flute, Pericles being its guardian, location of his estates, name of his tutor, and mythical genealogy.

tury. Different reasons (weak on their own) coming from independent epistemic backgrounds might have a greater force when taken together. But when the weak reasons stem from a single motivation to defend an unwarranted belief, I do not think their power grows when considered all together.[83] The case of the *Hippias Major* (cf. above) clearly shows that one authoritarian doubt, although arbitrary and unwarranted, initiates a sequence of attempts to support this doubt. Were these attempts correct and convincing, the arbitrariness of the original doubt might fade away. However, if these attempts and arguments are weak and unconvincing, then the sum of such reasons with an unwarranted starting point is no stronger that each of the weak reasons taken on its own.

Conclusion

In the previous chapters I tried to show that the debate concerning the authenticity of the *Alcibiades* is far from finished. There does not seem to be anything approaching unified scholarly opinion – perhaps apart from the obvious fact that the authenticity is a debated issue. However, I think that any further attempt to reject the authenticity of the dialogue has to be done independently of the previous attempts. Some people might be convinced by the objections I have tried to meet above, but then they have to argue away the methodological problems of the older arguments.

Another question is what will actually change if we accept or deny Plato's authorship in this case. I mean what will be changed in our understanding of Plato or Socrates? I do not see any dramatically new doctrines or thoughts proposed in this dialogue that would make us revise our understanding gained from other dialogues. On the other hand,

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[83] Let me explain my point: if a certain number of people have a belief for which I do not find a sufficient reason to accept, I might still be convinced by their multitude; or I might at least think that there must be something to this belief when such a large number of people have it. However, if I find that these people have this belief because one person told them so (and this source-person did not have any better reasons either), I am no longer impressed by their multitude. Now, even if these people develop additional (but still weak) reasons for having this belief, I am no longer convinced about its appropriateness. A sum of weak reasons with the same, questionable epistemological genealogy cannot increase the argumentative force of the weak claim that stands as their origin. In order to strengthen the original weak claim the supportive reasons have to be correct and convincing (at least one of them) and preferably they should originate from an independent motivation.

I find several passages concerning Plato's view of psychology, *sōphrosynē* and self-knowledge illuminating.[84] Accepting the dialogue into the family of genuine works would not bring any fresh thoughts different from what we know already. In my own view there are, of course, some philosophically interesting points: the metaphysics of self connected with the enigmatic expression "the self itself" (αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό) at 129b1 and 130d5; the connection between rationality and divinity in our soul suggested at the mirror passage (133b7-c7); or the assumption that any knowledge depends upon self-knowledge (I cannot properly know anything if I do not know myself) at 131a2-b6. But these and any others are merely more-or-less interesting footnotes to the well developed doctrines. If one imagines Plato's philosophy in the dialogues as a mosaic, these are then single stones – they might complete the picture but according to some they distort it and therefore have to be excluded.

As I have said above, the dispute is not so much about the dialogue's philosophical content but rather about the incompatibility between its style or doctrines and assumed date of composition. The proof repudiating the dialogue from the genuine works would strengthen the interpretative positions that rest heavily on the traditional chronology of composition. However, if the dialogue is not bogus, its status brings into question the chronological, stylistic and doctrinal unity of the common dialogue groups.[85] Accepting such a troubling dialogue might open questions as to how useful and how well grounded the usual division into early, middle and late dialogues is. This is, I understand, the main point in the debate of which the actual fate of the *Alcibiades* is only a smaller part.

If Smith somewhat paternalistically advises others to approach the *Alcibiades* with "extreme caution", I suggest that unbiased rationality is all that one needs, and careful readers of the dialogues usually have that anyway.[86]

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[84] Cf. again JULIA ANNAS, *Self-knowledge in Early Plato*, pp. 111-138 and EADEM in *The Virtuous Life in Greek Ethics*, (ed.) BURKHARD REIS, pp. 41-43; OWEN GOLDIN, *Self, Sameness, and Soul in 'Alcibiades I' and 'Timaeus'*, pp. 5-19, and DAVID M. JOHNSON, *God as the True Self: Plato's Alcibiades I*, pp. 1-19 for further positive uses of the *Alcibiades* in Platonic scholarship.

[85] Similarly as the *Charmides*, *Euthydemus* or in a way the *Timaeus* as well.

Summary

This text maps the history of debate on the authenticity of Plato's or pseudo-Plato's *Alcibiades I*. The first doubts were raised by Friedrich Schleiermacher at the beginning of nineteenth century and the debate became vigorous again after Denyer's and Pradeau-Marboeuf's attempts to argue for Plato's authorship couple of years ago. I discuss several particular points raised against the authenticity (lexical, literary, stylistic and philosophical problems) and I will show that none of them stands on its own. Further, when taken together these points do not prove the dialogue to be a bogus work. The debate, I conclude, is open; however the tendency in the last decade is in favour of Plato's authorship rather than against it.

Key words: Plato; *Alcibiades I*; stylometry; style; authorship

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