Alcibiades II Lexicon

A Philological and Philosophical Reading Companion

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Introduction

A prayer interrupted

Alcibiades is on his way to pray when Socrates asks him to consider what he is asking for. A granted request can be a disaster. Power, military command and children are objects of familiar hopes; possession of them does not establish that the recipient knows how to live with them. The dialogue consequently shifts from the propriety of particular petitions to the relation between practical judgment and every other kind of knowledge. Its closing recommendation is a delay: learn how to be disposed toward gods and people before carrying out the intended sacrifice.

This lexicon accompanies Diotimos Editions' *Alcibiades II*, second edition, supplied in Greek and English. Its textual scope is the complete dialogue, 138a–151c, together with the edition's introduction, Key Words, forty-one explanatory notes, outline, glossary and editorial discussion. The Greek is Burnet's text as reproduced there. The English headwords follow this edition where possible, so that a reader who encounters "unintelligence," "unpray," "the beneficially" or "greatness of soul" can find the particular problem those expressions preserve. The lexicon does not replace the facing Greek and English or silently modernize the translation.

The traditional attribution to Plato identifies a place in the transmitted corpus. It is not a conclusion about authorship. The edition presents the work as almost certainly

inauthentic, records an ancient doubt and leaves its date unsettled. Here “the dialogue,” “Socrates argues,” and “Alcibiades agrees” distinguish the work, its dramatic speakers and the historical author. A striking Socratic assertion is not automatically a doctrine held by Plato. Nor is the failure of one argument permission to disregard the dialogue’s larger inquiry.[1]

How to use the lexicon

The full articles are arranged alphabetically by English headword. Each begins with Greek and transliteration, then distinguishes ordinary meaning, local argumentative work, annotated passage references, and this edition’s translational or textual choices. A grouped headword can contain several related words; it does not claim that those words are interchangeable. Greek displayed as a source form can be inflected, while a dictionary lemma names the family. Conceptual headings such as “Excluded middle” are modern aids to analysis, not claims that the corresponding technical phrase appears in the Greek.

The defined register supplements the articles with smaller words, concrete objects, characterizations and ordinary idioms that matter to the reading. Its records contain explanations and exact attestations, rather than merely directing the reader elsewhere. Contextual glosses explain short stretches of language in their particular

1 Diotimos Editions, *Alcibiades II*, Introduction, “The dialogue,” “What is most exposed,” and “A note on the persons.” The ancient alternative attribution is reported from Athenaeus 11.506c; it is not independent proof of Xenophontic authorship. The incompatibility between the recent death of Archelaus (141d) and the living Pericles of the hypothetical encounter (144a) matters separately from any proposed philosophical school or date.

argumentative setting. Aliases are navigation aids only; their number is not represented as a count of independent definitions. The three indexes offer English and Greek routes into the vocabulary, an ordered passage route through the dialogue, and thematic routes through its arguments and images.

References use Stephanus page and section: 143c means section c of page 143, regardless of the page on which that passage falls in a modern book. A range such as 143c–144c follows one argument across several sections. An annotated reference need not mean that every Greek word in the article's heading occurs at every location: some locations establish a contrast, consequence or later return. This distinction matters especially for grouped families and for a concept first introduced under one expression and developed under another.

The movement of the argument

138a–c: Asking and receiving

Socrates' opening observation is small and physical: Alcibiades looks gloomy and has his eyes on the ground. His destination is prayer to an unnamed god. The "greatest pondering" is whether one can request what is harmful while supposing it good. Two events must coincide for the feared result: the mistaken request and divine willingness to grant it. Prayer therefore cannot be evaluated simply by whether it succeeds. Oedipus' curse supplies the disturbing example of a petition actually fulfilled.

138c–139c: A tempting identity

Alcibiades calls Oedipus mad. Socrates moves through soundness and sickness, intelligence and unintelligence, then the supposed impossibility that one thing should have two opposites. If madness and unintelligence are both opposite to intelligence, they appear identical. The argument relies on more than the observation that some people are intelligent and others not: it needs exhaustive alternatives and an account of opposition. Its outcome is tentatively worded, and the next exchange tests it rather than installing it as a definition.

139c–140d: Consequence, retreat and division

Most citizens are unintelligent, the speakers agree; if that means all are mad, life among them would be a continual assault. This consequence motivates retreat. Socrates proposes that madness belongs within a larger class, as fever and ophthalmia belong within disease and particular trades within craftsmanship. People have different shares of unintelligence. The escalating and euphemistic names are comic as well as classificatory. This new arrangement avoids the previous identity; the analogies do not by themselves prove its full adequacy.

140d–141d: Judgment and the offer of power

Intelligent people know what they should do and say. Socrates recalls Oedipus, now characterized by anger and a deliberate wish that harmful things should happen. Others unknowingly petition for what harms them. The imagined god offers Alcibiades progressively greater rule. Alcibiades welcomes it but will not exchange his soul or

life for it, and will not accept what he would use badly. The qualifications reveal that having the apparent good depends on conditions not supplied by its name.

141d–143b: Fulfilment, regret and a safer prayer

Archelaus' death, the troubles of generals and the grief brought by children give concrete forms to the earlier warning. Petitioners can reverse themselves, "sing a palinode" and "unpray." The Homeric Zeus rejects the idea that the gods are solely responsible for human suffering: the dialogue adds unintelligence to the quoted account of recklessness. An unnamed poet's prayer asks Zeus to give good things even without a request and to ward off bad ones even when requested. Alcibiades infers that ignorance causes many bad things for people, including the self-directed danger of prayer.

143b–144c: A necessary distinction within ignorance

Socrates refuses the inference that every ignorance is bad. If Orestes or a would-be killer of Pericles failed to recognize the intended victim, the harmful action could be prevented. The counterexample distinguishes knowing the best from possessing the information needed to carry out a mistaken intention. Ignorance of the best is bad; ignorance of a particular person can be beneficial to someone already disposed to act badly. This is neither a general praise of ignorance nor a claim that failing to recognize one's mother constitutes practical wisdom.

144d–145e: Expertise needs a governing judgment

The possession of other knowledge without the best seldom benefits and generally harms, Socrates now proposes. Political advisers know, or think they know, about war, peace, walls and harbours. The question is whether their competence extends to whether and when action is better and how long it should continue. Riding, boxing and flute-playing make the distinction easier to see: a recognizable skill does not alone make its possessor intelligent. “The knowledge of the best” is equated with knowledge of the beneficial, but its content is not worked out into a complete science or curriculum.

145e–146e: An expert city without direction

A commonwealth can contain accomplished archers, athletes, soldiers and orators and nevertheless lack the knowledge of the best and a person able to direct when each expertise should be used. Its problem is not too little specialized capability. Each contributor follows what he can do, trusting opinion without sense, and the aggregate is confusion and lawlessness. Socrates then returns to the individual: if knowing or supposing one knows produces more eager harmful action, the resulting ignorance may be safer. The condition attached to that disturbing conclusion must remain visible.

146e–147e: Guidance, fair winds and a poet’s bad knowledge

City and soul must hold fast to the governing knowledge as a sick person to a physician or a traveller by sea to a pilot.

Wealth and bodily strength can make the unguided voyage worse: a favourable wind increases the consequences of bad direction. The person of much learning and many crafts meets a storm. The *Margites* is then reread so that knowing many works "badly" becomes its being bad for the hero to know them. Socrates openly changes grammatical forms and reconstructs the sense outside metre. The interpretation illustrates his conclusion; it is not a neutral demonstration of what the poetic line must mean.

147e–148d: Instability and the Spartan alternative

Alcibiades' agreement does not settle him. This edition reads his short reply at 147e as another reversal, while noting that further assent is also possible. The god's offer returns, and Alcibiades now finds the question too hazardous to answer. Socrates presents the Spartan prayer, used privately and publicly, for fine things in addition to good things. Its restraint avoids dictating the particular possessions that have caused trouble. The Spartans' experience supports the example; the passage does not promise every petitioner automatic success.

148d–150b: What the gods value

The reported Athenian consultation of Ammon contrasts elaborate expenditure and apparent neglect. The oracle prefers Spartan auspicious speech to the other Greeks' rites. Socrates interprets that speech as their prayer. He then extends the point through the Trojans' rejected offerings and the analogy of a bad moneylender who can be misled by gifts. Gods look to the quality of the soul, to

holiness and justice. Intelligence returns as knowing the proper things to do and say toward gods and people. The argument corrects the valuation of worship; it does not announce that sacrifices have ceased to matter.

150b–151c: Waiting, seeing and an unsettled victory

Socrates recommends quiet until Alcibiades learns the right disposition. The future educator is “the man who cares about you,” left unnamed. Athena’s removal of mist from Diomedes’ eyes supplies an image for removing a condition that obstructs discrimination of bad and good. Alcibiades promises obedience, postpones sacrifice and crowns Socrates. The final tragic quotation makes the crown an omen of victory, while Socrates’ rivalry with Alcibiades’ lovers supplies the immediate dramatic stakes. Sacrifice is deferred, the teacher is not explicitly identified and the wished-for educational victory has not been shown to occur.

Distinctions to keep in view

Intelligence and cleverness. The dialogue does not deny that craftsmen know their work. It denies that possession of a skill establishes sound judgment about its exercise. Reading *phronēsis* as a general test score would erase the distinction for which the craft examples exist.

Bad things and wickedness. “Bad” commonly concerns damage, loss or misfortune here. The edition avoids “evil” for *kakos*, preserving the question whether apparently desirable possessions are beneficial. This does not

eliminate moral evaluation: murder, injustice and holiness remain part of the inquiry.

A harmful intention and a harmful petition. Oedipus can wish harm in anger; another petitioner can wish what seems good and be mistaken about it. The dialogue puts both under scrutiny without making their intentions identical.

Ignorance of value and ignorance of a person. The ambiguity of "be ignorant of" is productive. It lets Socrates show why more information need not benefit the person who has not corrected a bad practical judgment. Treating both ignorances as one undifferentiated deficiency would miss the counterexample.

The best and the beneficial. Their explicit identification does not explain every difficulty about who benefits, over what period and through what kind of judgment. The city and the individual both enter the argument. Nothing warrants replacing "best" with an entirely specified later philosophical doctrine.

Analogy and proof. Disease, craft, medicine and navigation illuminate structures in the argument. An analogy can reveal a distinction or make a danger intelligible without proving every property of the compared cases. The comic city of madmen and the rudderless commonwealth should be read for the particular inference each is testing.

The prayer and the worshipper. Verbal restraint, intention and character are connected, not collapsed. "Auspicious speech" is more than the mechanically correct pronunciation of an acceptable formula, while justice and

intelligence are more than expensive religious display. The conclusion still anticipates future observance.

Source reading and proposed correction. Burnet's printed words control this translation. The variants noted at 139a, 143a, 144d, 145b–e, 147a–d, 148b–d and 151b materially affect interpretation. A plausible emendation cannot be silently substituted for the words the reader actually has.

Text, sources and further reading

The four supplied formats contain the same edition but organize its pages and apparatus differently. This lexicon uses the Markdown as an addressable working text, checks it against the other supplied formats and compares the complete Greek with the Perseus transcription of Burnet. A separate public scan of *Platonis Opera*, volume II, provides selected checks of printed readings and apparatus. Its file pagination differs from the scan described in the edition: its *Alcibiades II* occupies PDF pages 364–384. It is a corroborating printed witness, not identified here as the user's physical copy.[2]

The edition's own notes are the first route for its translation choices. Its "Editorial Note" explains B and T, later hands, additions, deletions and the treatment of poetic quotation. Those explanations concern Burnet's

2 Burnet, *Platonis Opera*, II, as reproduced in the supplied edition, 138a–151c. The public Perseus file identifies its basis as Oxford, 1910. Comparison here distinguishes continuous wording from capitals, accentuation, spacing, editorial brackets and page lineation; agreement in normalized wording is not a claim that every typographical detail is identical. Selected print checks concern 138a–c, 141a–d, 146b–147c, 147c–148a, 150b–e and 151a–c.

apparatus; they do not imply that the present lexicon has collated the manuscripts. The bibliographic links below lead to the digital Greek, a catalog record and the separate printed volume.

- Perseus Greek text: Alcibiades II, edited by John Burnet
- Perseus canonical Greek XML
- Perseus catalog record for Burnet's Alcibiades II
- Public scan of Burnet, Platonis Opera II

This is a scholarly reading companion rather than a morphological concordance or a replacement critical edition. It supplies definitions, interprets their local work and exposes important uncertainties where they affect the reading. It does not claim manuscript collation or external human classical peer review. Digital export checks and screen inspection likewise do not stand for testing on every physical EPUB reader.

Lexicon

Action and speech

πράττειν (prattein); λέγειν (legein); διαπράττεσθαι (diaprattesthai); προχείρως (procheirōs)

The word. Prattein means to do or act, legein to say or speak; diaprattesthai can emphasise accomplishing or perpetrating an act. Procheirōs describes acting readily or with something ready to hand. The recurring pairing places speech within practical life: a prayer or civic recommendation can be an act whose consequences require judgment.

In Alcibiades II. The intelligent know what they must do and say at 140e, while those who know neither can do and say what they must not without noticing. This makes the spoken request a central example, not a harmless verbal supplement to real action. Alcibiades' later alarm at praying for the worst recognises that one can ask for the very outcome one should have avoided.

At 144d and 146b knowledge or believed knowledge is said to precede what we are readily about to do or say. The adverb restricts the emphasis to willingness and facility in action; the text is not an analysis of every involuntary motion. At 146d the problem is increased eagerness: the agent's confidence makes his capacities more available for execution, which is dangerous when the underlying judgment is wrong.

The relation also helps explain the final decision. To refrain from unsafe prayer and postpone sacrifice is a practical response to the acknowledged deficiency, even though it is not yet the knowledge sought. At 150b the

defining formula returns toward both gods and people, and at 151a Alcibiades acts on the advice by deferring the ritual. The conversation's immediate success is a change in what he does, rather than a demonstrated mastery of all correct answers.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **140e.** Knowing what to do and say supplies the criterion of intelligence.
- **143a–b.** Doing and praying for the worst are attributed to unrecognised ignorance.
- **144d–e; 146b.** Ready speech and action depend on real or believed knowledge.
- **146d.** Greater eagerness to act can multiply harm.
- **150b; 151a.** The formula returns and Alcibiades chooses to postpone the sacrifice.

In this edition. The edition retains the repeated verbal pairing rather than replacing it with a single abstraction such as "behaviour". At 144d it prints "rather readily", reflecting Burnet's comparative procheiroterōs; at 146b the form is procheirōs. The recurrence connects the initial thesis and its practical test.

See also. Knowing what to do and say · Knowing and thinking one knows · Benefit and harm · Advice and oratory · Timing and duration

Advice and oratory

συμβουλεύειν (symbouleuein); συμβουλή (symboulē); σύμβουλος (symboulos); ῥήτωρ (rhētōr); ῥητορικός (rhētorikos)

The word. The symboul- family concerns advising, advice and an adviser; rhētōr is a public speaker or orator, and rhētorikos describes rhetorical ability. Advice is both a civic practice and something a person can supply to himself. Being able to address an assembly does not, for the argument, settle the quality of the judgment guiding the address.

In Alcibiades II. At 144e–145a orators illustrate the states that precede ready action: they advise either knowing how or thinking they know. War and peace, walls and harbours give concrete objects of civic deliberation. Socrates sweepingly says that everything the city does toward another city or by itself comes from their advice. The passage presents that broad claim as part of the speakers' argument, not as a separately documented account of every Athenian institutional process.

The test at 145b–c distinguishes advising ability from knowing whether and when it is better. A person with the relevant skill becomes an intelligent and sufficient adviser only if knowledge of the best accompanies him. The dual destination, city and self, is important: public importance does not create a different standard from the guidance needed in one's own life.

The "political blast" at 145e gives rhetoric a comic and inflated sound among the unguided experts. Yet advice itself is not discarded. At 151a Alcibiades credits Socrates with advising well and crowns him. The advice has yielded

the bounded decision to wait rather than the grand public action envisaged earlier. This provides an enacted example of useful counsel without a demonstration that Socrates has exhaustively taught the knowledge of the best.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **144e–145a.** Civic orators advise on war, peace, walls and harbours from knowledge or its appearance.
- **145b–c.** A sufficient adviser must also know whether, when and what is beneficial.
- **145e.** Rhetorical men add an inflated political blast to the unguided commonwealth.
- **151a.** Alcibiades recognises Socrates' advice through the wreath.

In this edition. "Adviser", "advice" and "advise" retain one family. Burnet prints rhētorikōn at 145e where T has politikōn, "political"; the edition follows "men of rhetoric". At 151a "advised me well" preserves kalōs, rather than replacing it with the adjective "good".

See also. Knowing what to do and say · Knowledge of the best · Craft and expertise · Timing and duration · City and soul · Fine

Agreement and admission

ὁμολογεῖν (homologein); ὡμολόγηται (hōmologētai); ὡμολογήθη (hōmologēthē); ὡμολόγησα (hōmologēsa)

The word. Homologein means to agree or admit, literally to say the same. Its finite forms distinguish what has been agreed, what was agreed, and what a speaker says he agreed. In the dialogue an admission becomes available for recall and testing; its being shared does not make it immune from correction.

In Alcibiades II. At 138d the existence of intelligent, unintelligent and mad people is recorded as agreed before their relationships have been settled. Socrates recalls the admission that madness is opposite to intelligence at 139b, followed by the denial of a third condition. The resulting argument is then challenged by its implications for civic life. Agreement has made the premises explicit, but the partners must still examine what follows from them.

At 140a the repeated formula establishes the asymmetry between disease and ophthalmia. Socrates adds that they have agreed rightly. That additional evaluation would be unnecessary if “agreed” already meant “proved true”. At 140d a return to what was agreed at the beginning restarts the inquiry on who the intelligent and unintelligent actually are, after the failed identification of madness and unintelligence has been set aside.

Later assent is often conveyed by shorter replies rather than homologein. At 146e Socrates asks whether his thesis has really been shown right, while Alcibiades answers that it now seems right to him. At 147e the edition reads his next response as another reversal. These stages prevent the reader from confusing a sequence of affirmative

answers with the stable possession of the knowledge the conversation seeks.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138d.** The existence of the relevant types is admitted before their relation is determined.
- **139b.** Earlier admissions are recalled as premises.
- **140a.** Agreement on inclusion is separately judged right.
- **140d.** The original inquiry is resumed through an agreed starting point.
- **146e; 147e.** Assent and apparent conviction remain distinguishable from a settled result.

In this edition. The edition keeps the tenses of the agreement formulas rather than replacing every one with "yes". It also preserves the contrast between Socrates' claim to have been shown right at 146e and Alcibiades' weaker "now it seems so to me".

See also. Inquiry · Opposites · Excluded middle and the third condition · Trust · Opinion

Alcibiades

Ἀλκιβιάδης ὁ Κλεινίου (Alkibiadēs ho Kleiniou); ὦ Ἀλκιβιάδη (ō Alkibiadē)

The word. Alcibiades son of Cleinias is the young man on his way to pray. The dialogue directly supplies his patronymic, identifies Pericles as his guardian and friend, and ends with his presentation of a wreath. Much familiar biographical information belongs to the edition's introduction, not to the conversation itself.

In Alcibiades II. The opening visual portrait is suggestive rather than explanatory: Alcibiades looks gloomy and downward, like someone pondering. He answers the question about the errand but does not disclose a definite intended petition. Socrates instead constructs hypothetical requests that reveal his readiness to treat great political power as a supreme good.

Alcibiades is an active, sometimes unstable respondent. He objects that Oedipus was mad, admits perplexity over the disease analogy, accepts delight at the offer of tyranny, draws the lesson that ignorance causes terrible prayers and protests at the mention of matricide. His answers often create the next difficulty rather than merely ratifying a completed lesson.

The edition reads his response at 147e as another reversal: what seemed convincing now seems otherwise. Socrates describes him as shifting up and down. This moment matters because the argument's apparent completion does not produce stable judgement. When the god's offer is renewed, Alcibiades cannot give an immediate answer. He has become more aware of risk without yet acquiring the knowledge that resolves it.

At the end he accepts postponement, expresses readiness to obey the unknown educator and crowns Socrates for advising him well. These are actions within the scene and genuine changes of orientation. They do not show the later educational outcome. His insistence that he would submit to instruction whoever the man is preserves the uncertainty around the teacher's identity.

The historical career summarized in the edition makes tyranny, command, exile and violent death resonant warnings. That irony belongs to the informed reader's perspective. It should not erase the text's younger interlocutor, who is still deciding what to do with the sacrifice and wreath immediately before him.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138a.** The unnamed intended prayer and the gloomy downward gaze set the scene.
- **141a–141c.** His patronymic and eager response to the imaginary dominion give ambition a personal focus.
- **143a–143d.** He draws an epistemic lesson and reacts strongly to the matricide example.
- **147e–148b.** Unstable assent becomes an admission that a safe request is not obvious.
- **150d–151b.** He asks for education, accepts delay and crowns Socrates.

In this edition. Note 28 allows another interpretation of palin au moi dokei at 147e, further assent rather than reversal, while explaining the translation's choice. The Introduction dates Alcibiades' death before the death of Archelaus and records the resulting anachronism. The lexicon should not silently harmonize that contradiction.

See also. Socrates · Ambition and tyranny · Pericles · Generalship, exile and informers · Teacher, care and waiting · Wreath and crowning

Alcmaeon

Ἀλκμέωνα (Alkmeōna)

The word. Alcmaeon is named beside Orestes as a figure said to have committed the same act toward his mother. Unlike Orestes, he does not receive a separate counterfactual analysis. His brief appearance strengthens the initial category of shocking actions rather than contributing an independent argument.

In Alcibiades II. Socrates denies that Alcibiades would wish to have done what these men did. The plural example makes the denial broader than one unusually familiar tale. Alcibiades reacts by demanding auspicious speech, and Socrates answers that the denial is precisely the reassuring proposition, however disturbing the act mentioned may be.

The ensuing argument singles out Orestes to test knowledge of the best, and later failure of recognition. Alcmaeon should therefore not be credited with a narrated attempt, a hypothetical failure to recognize his mother or a judgement of his own in this dialogue. His contribution is the recognition of a class of dreadful deeds against which Alcibiades' response can be elicited.

The edition's note explains that Alcmaeon killed Eriphyle, who had sent Amphiaraus to his death in the Theban war in return for a necklace. This background makes the name intelligible and offers a possible resonance with the later discussion of gifts. The dialogue itself does not draw that connection, so it remains a reader's association rather than a stated argument about bribery.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **143c–143d.** The name appears in the denial that Alcibiades would be willing to commit matricide.

In this edition. Note 16 supplies the mother, father and necklace story. No independent Greek wording for those absent names is entered here as though quoted from the dialogue. The article's scope reflects the name's single occurrence.

See also. Orestes · Auspicious speech · Gifts and divine bribery

Ambition and tyranny

τύραννον (tyrannon); τυραννίδα (tyrannida); ἐπιθυμήσαντες (epithymēsantes); περιχαρῆ (perichārē)

The word. Tyrannos is a tyrant and tyrannis the rule or dominion sought. Epithymein names desire; ambition is an editorial grouping for the appetite for power and distinction displayed in the examples. Socrates does not report an actual conspiracy by Alcibiades.

In Alcibiades II. The imagined god progressively enlarges the offer: Athens, all the Greeks, all Europe. The same-day proclamation that Alcibiades son of Cleinias is tyrant adds recognition by others to possession of power. Alcibiades endorses the expectation of delight and assumes anyone else would feel the same. He therefore gives the example its force as an attractive apparent good, not a temptation he has already learned to resist.

Socrates changes the measure of the offer. Alcibiades would not exchange his soul or life for even the dominion of all Greeks and barbarians, since he could not use what he gained. Nor would he want it if he were going to use it badly and harmfully. These concessions insert the condition of the user and the result of use into an evaluation initially governed by scale.

Archelaus and his beloved then dramatize the instability of possessing the coveted office. Erotic desire for a person is matched by desire for tyranny; murder wins it, but three or four days later another plot ends its possessor’s life. The example shows how achievement can expose a person to the very ruin desire ignored. Generalship and parenthood broaden the lesson beyond exceptional autocratic power.

At 148a the divine offer returns after the argument about knowledge. Alcibiades no longer answers with immediate joy; he cannot say offhand how to hit the right mark. This is a change in confidence rather than a demonstrated permanent renunciation of ambition. The final joke about his greatness of soul keeps the unresolved attraction to grand requests in view.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **141a–141b.** The god's expanding offer exposes Alcibiades' delight in power and public recognition.
- **141c–141e.** Life, beneficial use and Archelaus' fate test the value of tyranny.
- **142c–142d.** The many remain eager to request such possessions despite the examples.
- **148a–148b.** The offer returns to a more hesitant Alcibiades.
- **150c.** Greatness of soul may still prevent him from accepting a modest prayer.

In this edition. Note 8 identifies the parallel with Alcibiades I 105a–105c and records Sauppe's and Dobree's supplements at 141b. Historical suspicions of Alcibiades' tyranny belong to the edition's contextual account, not an allegation made here by a narrator. The example of Archelaus is also chronologically incompatible with the living Pericles of 144a.

See also. Alcibiades · Archelaus and his beloved · Soul and life · Generalship, exile and informers · Forethought and caution

Ammon, oracle and prophet

Ἄμμων (Ammōn); προφήτην (prophētēn); ἐπερωτᾶν (eperōtan); τάδε λέγει Ἄμμων (tade legei Ammōn)

The word. Ammon is the god consulted by the Athenians in Socrates' reported story; the prophētēs is his answering representative. The edition identifies him as Zeus Ammon at Siwa. Oracle is the contextual designation of the consultation, not a separate technical lemma required by the quoted Greek.

In Alcibiades II. The Athenians consult because repeated defeats by Sparta seem incompatible with their lavish religious provision. Their question embeds a case for their own superiority: more and finer sacrifices, richly adorned sanctuaries, solemn processions and unmatched spending. The prophet's answer rejects the terms of that accounting instead of naming a missing costly rite.

The answer is carefully restricted. Ammon would prefer Spartan auspicious speech to all the Greeks' rites together, and nothing further is said. Socrates comments that the god evidently did not allow more. The brevity is part of the reported narrative; it does not furnish a list of oracular instructions for Athens to carry out.

Socrates then makes an interpretive move of his own. He thinks the god means the Spartans' prayer, whose limitation to fine and good things differentiates it from the other Greeks' indiscriminate asking. The movement from the oracle's phrase to a theory of prayer belongs to Socrates' reasoning, not a longer speech hidden inside Ammon's answer.

Alcibiades accepts the conclusion in part because he would not cast a contrary vote against the god. The divine

authority reinforces a conclusion already articulated through ethical and epistemic considerations. Yet the narrative itself remains hearsay, and the edition explicitly warns against treating it as independently attested history.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **148d–148e.** Socrates introduces a story heard from certain people and the Athenians' decision to consult.
- **148e–149a.** The embassy argues from ritual expenditure and asks how to escape its troubles.
- **149a–149b.** The prophet gives only Ammon's preference for Spartan auspicious speech.
- **149b–149c.** Socrates interprets the response in terms of the quality of prayer.
- **150a–150b.** The oracle's authority returns in the conclusion about gifts, justice and intelligence.

In this edition. Note 34 states that no other ancient author reports this consultation. It distinguishes other Ammon consultations recorded by Plutarch, Cimon 18.6–18.7 and Nicias 13.1. At 148d Burnet brackets the older men, so the translated source is simply certain people. The apparatus notes rival readings of prophet at 150a; the article follows Burnet's printed singular.[3]

See also. Sparta · Athens · Auspicious speech · Gifts and divine bribery · Gods and divine giving

3 Burnet brackets 'the older men' at 148d. B has 'from the older men or from certain people', while T has 'from certain older men'; the English gives the retained 'from certain people'. The supplied note 33 records this source of indeterminacy before note 34 explains the reported consultation of Ammon.

Anger

ὀργῇ κεχρημένους (orgēi kechrēmenous)

The word. Orgē is anger; the dative phrase at 141a describes people as affected by or acting in anger. Socrates uses it to distinguish Oedipus from contemporary worshippers who ask for harmful things without sharing his emotional condition.

In Alcibiades II. After the discussion of madness and unintelligence, Socrates returns to Oedipus with a more discriminating account. Oedipus did not suppose his request was for good. His anger helps explain the deliberate wish to add harm to an already disastrous situation. That makes him a vivid opening example of prayer's capacity to harm, but not a sufficient model of the error Alcibiades is likely to commit.

The crucial expansion is to those who are not angry and believe that their petitions seek good. Calmness supplies no guarantee of understanding. The divine offer of tyranny immediately tests this ordinary, apparently rational desire: Alcibiades would rejoice, yet concedes that the possession is unacceptable if it destroys his life or is used harmfully.

The dialogue accordingly does not reduce mistaken prayer to loss of emotional self-control. Anger may direct someone knowingly toward a destructive request; ignorance can direct someone there without recognition. The educational conclusion addresses the second condition as well as the first. The absence of rage leaves the need for knowledge of the best fully in place.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138c.** Oedipus calls down additional harm; Alcibiades initially labels him mad.
- **141a.** Socrates expressly distinguishes his anger from the calm but mistaken petitions of others.
- **141a–141c.** Alcibiades' delighted response to imagined power illustrates desire without the same anger.

In this edition. The entry is anchored in the explicit orgē phrase at 141a. It should not enlarge that single distinction into a theory of the soul's parts or a claim that the dialogue derives all bad action from passion. The edition's in the grip of anger is a contextual rendering.

See also. Oedipus and his sons · Curse · Praying in ignorance · Ambition and tyranny

Archelaus and his beloved

Ἀρχέλαον (Archelaon); τὸν Μακεδόνων τύραννον (ton Makedonōn tyrannon); τὰ παιδικά (ta paidika); τὸν ἐραστήν (ton erastēn)

The word. Archelaus is called tyrant of the Macedonians. Ta paidika denotes his beloved, while erastēs is the lover. Socrates' story makes the beloved's desire for tyranny match Archelaus' desire for him, then turns both attachments into the occasion of death.

In Alcibiades II. The lover is killed by the beloved who expects to become a tyrant and a happy man. The new ruler holds power only three or four days before being killed through another plot. The narrative compresses attainment and catastrophe so that possession of the sought object cannot be mistaken for secure fulfilment of the end, happiness.

The erotic symmetry is deliberately sharp. Archelaus loves a person; the beloved loves the position that the lover holds. What looks like success in one relation becomes exposure in another. This prepares an implicit contrast with the last scene, where erotic rivalry is attached to advice, care and prospective education rather than to the murderous capture of office.

The story is presented as recent news that Alcibiades cannot have missed, with a Homeric tag meaning yesterday and the day before. That immediacy is dramatically effective but historically impossible on the edition's chronology. It should be read as a feature of the work's problematic construction, not repaired by inventing another Archelaus or a different interlocutor.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **141d.** Desire for tyranny is illustrated through the beloved's murder of Archelaus.
- **141e.** The brief-lived usurper is in turn killed, completing the reversal of expected happiness.

In this edition. Note 10 records Archelaus' death in 399 BC, after Alcibiades' death in 404. It contrasts Diodorus 14.37.6, where Craterus strikes him accidentally in a hunt, with Aristotle, Politics 5.10, 1311b8–20, which gives a deliberate attack by Crataeus with Hellanocrates. The dialogue itself leaves the beloved unnamed; the variants should not be merged into one uncontested account.

See also. Ambition and tyranny · Erotic rivalry and victory · Alcibiades · Homer

Argument and revision

λόγος (logos), account or argument; σκοπεῖν (skopein), look into; μεταβάλλειν (metaballein), change

The word. A logos can be something said, a reason or a connected argument. Revision can concern a premise, an inference, a translation of a poetic line or a speaker's disposition toward a conclusion. The presence of a logos does not guarantee that it has proved its claim.

In Alcibiades II. The first extended argument turns on opposites and exhaustive alternatives. Its proposed identity of madness and unintelligence is immediately exposed to an awkward consequence: most of the city would be mad in the violent sense presupposed by Socrates' joke. The subsequent division revises that account. The dialogue is consequently not well represented by extracting the identity at 139c as its final teaching.

Later revisions are not all equivalent. Alcibiades' claim that ignorance causes bad things is narrowed through the case in which recognition would facilitate murder. The broad thesis about other knowledge is qualified by the knowledge of the best and then expanded into a commonwealth of experts. Socrates' reinterpretation of the Margites attempts a further confirmation, but it depends on grammatical substitutions explained in the speech itself.

At 147e the uncertainty is dramatised as the interlocutor's repeated change. This need not mean that every preceding step has been refuted. It shows that assent, argument and stable practical orientation are not automatically one achievement. The return of the god's imagined offer tests

Alcibiades' readiness to act rather than merely inviting another general "yes."

The end gives a practical recommendation and an educational promise without presenting a completed definition of the governing knowledge. An argument map should therefore preserve both progress and incompletion. The text moves beyond its opening supposition, but its final wreath is not a certificate that Alcibiades now possesses the knowledge he needs.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **139b–140d.** The initial identity is tested and replaced by a classificatory account.
- **143b–144c.** An undifferentiated condemnation of ignorance is revised by a counterexample.
- **144d–146e.** The central claim is developed and recapitulated with an explicit governing knowledge.
- **147b–148a.** Poetic interpretation leads to unstable assent and a renewed practical question.
- **150c–151c.** The immediate outcome is postponement and readiness to learn.

In this edition. "Look into" keeps the family of inquiry verbs visible, whereas "reason" at 142b renders logos rather than nous. These choices prevent the account of reasoning from being confused with a simple inventory of occurrences of "sense."[4]

See also. Agreement and admission · Inquiry · Opposites · Perplexity and reversal · Knowing badly

4 The edition's Glossary, "sense," expressly reserves nous for "sense" and distinguishes logos in the expression "there would be some reason in it" at 142b. Its Key Words, "Perplexity," also makes the later instability part of the dialogue's progression.

Athena and Diomedes

τῷ Διομήδει (tōi Diomēdei); τὴν Ἀθηνᾶν (tēn Athēnan); ὄφρ' εὖ γιγνώσκοι ἠμὲν θεὸν ἠδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα (ophr' eu gignōskoi ēmen theon ēde kai andra)

The word. Athena's removal of mist from Diomedes' eyes supplies the final image of educational preparation. The quoted purpose is that he should distinguish god and man. Socrates transfers the image from heroic eyesight to Alcibiades' soul and from those objects of recognition to bad and good.

In Alcibiades II. The allusion occurs precisely when Alcibiades asks who will educate him. Instead of naming the man, Socrates describes a preliminary task by comparison with Athena. The mist must first be removed; only then can further things be applied that enable good discrimination. The sequence marks a preparation for instruction rather than an assertion that merely hearing the image has already cured Alcibiades.

The comparison does not require the educator to be a god. Athena supplies an analogy for enabling clearer judgement, while the prospective teacher is called the man who cares about Alcibiades. Identifying that man with Socrates is plausible in the scene but remains inferential. An imported revelation by a later religious saviour would move beyond both the wording and the edition's explanation.

Diomedes is also present indirectly in the earlier invitation to inquiry at 140a. The edition hears the Iliadic tag about two going together, adapted so that the two are looking into a question. The pair of allusions supports cooperative perception: one passage needs a companion, the other the

removal of an impediment. Neither promises that isolated confidence is enough.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **140a.** The joint-inquiry phrase echoes Diomedes' call for a companion, according to note 6.
- **150d–150e.** Athena's action provides the comparison for removing mist from Alcibiades' soul.

In this edition. Note 40 identifies Iliad 5.127–128. The dialogue changes Athena's first-person announcement into third-person report and reuses the epic formula for knowing bad and good. Note 6 places the earlier companion tag at Iliad 10.224. These are distinct episodes, not one continuous scene retold here.

See also. Mist and seeing · Teacher, care and waiting · Homer · Socrates

Athens

Ἀθηναίων (Athēnaiōn); Ἀθηναίοις (Athēnaiois); τῇ πόλει ἡμῶν (tēi polei hēmōn)

The word. Athens is the speakers' city, the initial object of the imagined tyranny and the civic agent in the Ammon story. The dialogue moves between citizens, a city's practical welfare and public religious conduct. Its civic criticism cannot be reduced to advice about an isolated private prayer.

In Alcibiades II. At 141a Athens is the first stage in an expanding offer of rule. At 141e–142b its former generals supply nearby evidence that a desired office can lead to exile, death and harassment. The speakers' claim to know these cases firsthand makes the consequences of public ambition locally intelligible without identifying individual generals.

The Ammon narrative presents Athens as both distressed and argumentative. Defeat at sea and on land leaves it at a loss; the embassy seeks escape but explains the problem by an assumed imbalance between its own magnificent worship and Sparta's divine favour. The supposed evidence of deservingness is financial and ceremonial.

Socrates includes himself in the criticism, saying that we make a simple argument when we claim superiority on this basis. The word recalls one of the politely auspicious names for unintelligence. Thus the attack is not simply outsider denunciation of another city: it is a self-implicating diagnosis of his own city's bad inference.

The alternative applies equally to a city and a private person. Either can spend lavishly despite wrongdoing, and either needs to be assessed by the appropriate knowledge

and conduct. The dialogue supplies no programme of constitutional reform or historical explanation of a particular war's full course; it uses civic experience to test what counts as a benefit and what the gods honour.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **141a–141b.** Athenian tyranny is the first offered object of Alcibiades' ambition.
- **141e–142b.** The city's generals illustrate the costs of public office.
- **148d–149b.** Athens' reported embassy asks why Sparta wins despite supposedly inferior worship.
- **149e–150a.** Socrates includes his own community in the criticism of gifts and expenditure.

In this edition. The Ammon story is unattested elsewhere according to note 34, and its defeats should not be assigned to a securely dated campaign that the dialogue does not name. The introduction's chronological conflict involving Archelaus and Pericles further counsels against reconstructing one exact historical date from the civic examples.

See also. Sparta · Ammon, oracle and prophet · Generalship, exile and informers · Ambition and tyranny · Processions and rites

Attention and joint discovery

προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν (prosechein ton noun); σκεπτομένω (skeptomenō); εὑρίσκειν (heuriskein)

The word. To prosechein ton noun is to apply or turn one's mind to something, hence pay attention. Skeptomenō is the dual participle used of the two people looking together; heuriskein is to find or discover. The vocabulary gives examination an interpersonal form without making agreement alone the measure of truth.

In Alcibiades II. At 139e Alcibiades correctly refuses to identify all disease with ophthalmia but is at a loss about what he is saying. Socrates answers at 140a that if he attends, perhaps the two of them looking into it together will discover the matter. The pupil's inability to articulate the distinction is treated as a reason for continued shared inquiry, rather than as proof that he has no useful judgment at all.

The invitation immediately leads to a carefully repeated agreement: every ophthalmia is disease, but not every disease ophthalmia. Attention is directed toward the asymmetry of the claims, not toward memorising a new list. This is the local work through which the failed identification of madness and unintelligence can be replaced by a more differentiated account.

Socrates' "perhaps" and the invitation to work together modestly describe the prospect of discovery. They do not promise that every question in the dialogue will be solved. At 143a and 150b he again invites Alcibiades to say what he has in mind to set against the argument. Active attention thus includes the opportunity to object, although Alcibiades' repeated assents and later instability show that

participating in an exchange is not yet possessing a stable understanding.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **139e.** Alcibiades recognises a difference but cannot explain what he means.
- **140a.** Joint examination is offered on the condition that Alcibiades attends.
- **140a–b.** The shared inquiry distinguishes a disease from disease as such.
- **143a; 150b.** Alcibiades is invited to contribute a response rather than remain merely silent.

In this edition. The edition renders the nous idiom as “pay attention”. Its note identifies an echo of the Iliadic two-going-together tag, with looking substituted for going. The dual form and “perhaps” keep both collaboration and the provisional prospect of finding an answer visible.

See also. Inquiry · Agreement and admission · Sense · Division and parts · Trust

Auspicious speech

εὐφημότατα ὀνόματα (euphēmotata onomata); εὐφήμει (euphēmei); εὐφημία (euphēmia)

The word. Euphēmia is auspicious or good-omened speech, including the restraint or silence required to prevent ill-omened words in worship. The adjective, verb and noun recur in comic naming, an alarmed interruption and the oracle's judgement on prayer. Their shared family is essential to the dialogue's construction.

In Alcibiades II. The first occurrence concerns names that flatter unintelligence: great-souled, simple, innocent, inexperienced and tongue-tied. Calling these the most auspicious names does not make the conditions good. It exposes the difference between a favourable verbal surface and the character named. That initial joke prepares for the later claim that religiously proper wording must be measured by more than pleasant sound.

When Socrates mentions matricide, Alcibiades cries speak auspiciously. Socrates answers by attending to the proposition actually uttered: he has denied that Alcibiades would be willing to do such a thing, and the person requiring correction would be one who asserted the contrary. The response is playful but exacting. Verbal alarm can itself fail to discriminate between the mention of an act and its endorsement.

Ammon's preference for Spartan auspicious speech over the Greeks' combined rites moves the issue from wording to the content of the request. Socrates explicitly offers his interpretation: by the phrase the god means the Spartan prayer. Its restraint keeps it from naming arbitrary possessions as goods. The other Greeks can accompany an

ill-judged petition with magnificent offerings and still speak inauspiciously.

This trajectory also makes silence positive. At 150c the safest speech-act for Alcibiades is to keep quiet until he learns. Auspiciousness is not a magical substitute for knowledge; restraint can acknowledge its absence. The return to greatness of soul makes the flattering name from 140c part of the final diagnosis.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **140c–140d.** Polite descriptions of unintelligence are named most auspicious.
- **143d.** Alcibiades' injunction is turned back onto the actual meaning of Socrates' sentence.
- **149b.** Ammon prefers Spartan auspicious speech, which Socrates interprets as their prayer.
- **149c–150c.** Ill-judged petitions and the advice to keep quiet disclose what good religious speech requires.

In this edition. The edition keeps auspicious throughout instead of varying the family into kind names, reverent words and lucky prayer. Its Key Words compare sacrificial speech in Euripides, Iphigenia at Aulis 1563–1564 and Ion 1187–1193. Those parallels establish the ritual register; they do not turn every occurrence here into a technical ritual command.

See also. Ill-omened words · Sparta · Ammon, oracle and prophet · Forethought and caution · Anger

Authorship and attribution

Ἀλκιβιάδης δεύτερος (Alkibiadēs deuteros), Second Alcibiades; an editorial and historical heading

The word. Authorship asks who composed a work; attribution records the name under which it has circulated. The title Second Alcibiades distinguishes this short dialogue from the First Alcibiades. Neither numbering nor inclusion in a collected edition is itself proof that Plato wrote it.

In Alcibiades II. The supplied edition places the work within the transmitted Platonic corpus while regarding it as almost certainly not Plato's. It reports that Athenaeus already knew an attribution to Xenophon. That report establishes an ancient disagreement, not the correctness of the alternative. The dialogue's date likewise remains uncertain: similarities to other dialogues and alleged affinities to later schools require argument, not a chronological label inferred from one expression.

The most accessible difficulty is internal to the dramatic situation. Archelaus' murder is described as recent news at 141d, while Pericles is available as the living target of a hypothetical attack at 144a. The edition dates their deaths to 399 and 429 respectively, and Alcibiades' to about 404. These cannot be combined into one historically possible conversation. The problem is not cured by treating "yesterday and the day before" as literal calendar information: the phrase is a Homeric tag, but the reported death still places the imagined conversation too late.

Interpretation must distinguish these historical questions from the value of the inquiry. The prayer problem, the contrast of special knowledge and practical judgment, and

the vivid final exchange deserve close reading without an authenticity verdict doing their work for them. Conversely, the familiar names Socrates and Alcibiades do not authorize importing the entire argument of the First Alcibiades into this dialogue.

"Socrates argues" identifies the speaking character. "The dialogue proposes" identifies an arrangement of speeches and consequences. Neither expression commits the reader to attributing every position, joke or temporary concession to Plato. The lexicon uses the traditional corpus title while keeping those distinctions explicit.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **141d.** The recent report of Archelaus' killing creates a chronological difficulty.
- **144a.** Pericles is Alcibiades' guardian and friend in the hypothetical encounter.
- **151a–c.** The close belongs to a literary educational and erotic drama, not an independently authenticated historical report.

In this edition. The Introduction, "What is most exposed," gives the edition's reasons for doubt and its cautious treatment of dating. Its "A note on the persons" distinguishes the little supplied by this dialogue from external biography. The title's traditional "Plato" is therefore qualified by the edition itself.[5]

See also. Alcibiades · Socrates · Archelaus · Pericles · Dramatic irony

5 See the supplied Introduction and note 10, at 141d. A traditional title, an ancient rival attribution, a chronological contradiction and a modern argument about philosophical affinities are different kinds of evidence; none should be substituted for the others.

Benefit and harm

ὠφελεῖν (ōphelein); ὠφέλεια (ōpheleia); ὠφέλιμος (ōphelimos); ὠφελίμως (ōphelimōs); βλάπτειν (blaptein); βλαβερῶς (blaberōs)

The word. The ōphel- family names helping, benefit, what is beneficial and acting beneficially. Blaptein is to harm or damage, with blaberōs meaning harmfully. These terms assess what capacities and possessions do for their users and communities. They do not simply rename having something desirable or performing a technique successfully.

In Alcibiades II. Alcibiades' apparent willingness to accept unlimited rule is restricted at 141c: he would not want it if unable to use it or if he would use it badly and harmfully. Generalships and children then show how coveted outcomes can bring suffering. At 142b Socrates allows that danger and labour would have some reason if they led to benefit; at 142d the issue is specifically things whose presence harms more than it benefits. The argument permits comparison rather than classifying every such object as invariably harmful.

The assessment is extended to knowledge at 144d and 146e. Its possession without the best seldom benefits and mostly harms. At 145c the knowledge of the best is equated with knowledge of the beneficial, but no further account of benefit is established. In particular, the parallel concern for city and self does not itself demonstrate that their interests can never conflict. The dialogue asserts the same requirement of guidance for both.

At 146b Socrates strikingly requires that "the beneficially" accompany what one does from knowledge or apparent

knowledge. An adverb is treated as an additional requirement: successful execution is not enough; the action must be beneficial in its actual conduct and application. This prepares the inference that increasing readiness to act may increase harm. The practical orientation is clear even where the reasoning passes quickly over what would substantiate its broad claims.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **141c–d.** The value of rule depends on its use and possible damage.
- **142b; 142d.** Benefit can justify burdens, while coveted possessions may harm more than they help.
- **144d; 146e.** Other knowledge is said usually to harm without the best.
- **145c.** Knowledge of the best is identified with knowledge of the beneficial.
- **146b–d.** Beneficial action, rather than knowledge alone, is the condition of profit.

In this edition. The translation keeps “benefit” distinct from “profit” and consistently renders blaptein by “harm”. Its conspicuous “the beneficially” preserves to ōphelimōs rather than smoothing the adverb into a different noun or silently identifying it with the possession of knowledge.

See also. Profit · Knowledge of the best · Good and bad · Use and misuse · Generality and qualification

Better and best

βέλτιον (beltion); βέλτιστος (beltistos); ἄμεινον (ameinon); κράτιστος (kratistos); ἄριστα (arista)

The word. The comparative and superlative vocabulary identifies what is better or best, but not always by the same Greek formation. Beltion and beltistos dominate the practical argument; ameinon appears in the challenge about ignorance at 143c. Kratistos and arista occur in other evaluations. The standard and the person for whom something is best must be recovered from each context.

In Alcibiades II. The first important qualification concerns appearance: the poet's friends do and pray for what is not better although it seems so to them at 142e. Alcibiades assumes everyone can ask for the best for himself at 143b, but Socrates' examples expose how a person can mistake the worst for the best. The repeated comparisons are claims under examination, not expressions whose use guarantees correct discrimination.

The crucial contrast is between what turns out better "according to that craft" at 145d and what is best for the city and oneself at 146a. A horseman or boxer can know the former and lack the latter. Nothing in the term "best" alone bridges the difference of scope. Indeed the ambitious expert who gives his own craft the largest civic share exemplifies that illicit transition.

The best also governs timing and personal improvement. The soldier must know how long war is better; Socrates considers quiet best for Alcibiades at 150c; Alcibiades wishes to become better at 150e and judges postponement best at 151a. These uses make practical improvement and restraint intelligible without resolving every question

about the comprehensive knowledge of the best. The comparative requires an appropriate respect and occasion, rather than an automatic preference for doing more.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **142e–143b.** What seems better and what is best for oneself are not securely known.
- **143c; 144a.** Ignorance can be better in a specified case; the worst can be thought best.
- **145b–d.** Better specifies time, duration, object and a craft-relative achievement.
- **146a.** Craft-relative best is distinguished from the best for city and self.
- **150c; 150e; 151a.** Quiet, becoming better and postponement bring the comparison into Alcibiades' present conduct.

In this edition. The edition's "best" also renders kratiston at 148e and 151a, and "fare best" renders arista at 142a. By contrast, kratistos is "strongest" in the adapted verse at 146a. These renderings should not be treated as evidence that every occurrence translates beltistos.

See also. Knowledge of the best · Good and bad · Craft and expertise · Timing and duration · Use and misuse

Children and parenthood

τέκνων (teknōn); μοχθηρῶν (mochthērōn); χρηστῶν (chrēstōn); ἀγένητα (agenēta); λύπας (lypas)

The word. Tekna are children; the opposed descriptions mochthēra and chrēsta are rendered worthless and worthy. The example concerns parents who asked for children and later experienced grief. Agenēta, unborn or not having come to be, names the retrospective reversal of that desire.

In Alcibiades II. Parenthood broadens the evidence beyond tyranny and public command. A wish can be familiar and affectionate, not politically excessive, and still lack adequate foresight. Socrates gives two distinct routes to grief: children remain worthless throughout, or they become worthy but suffer misfortunes that deprive the parents of them. The second possibility prevents the inference that sufficiently virtuous children would remove every risk from the prayer.

The argument attends to the parents' experience of the requested outcome. Some spend their entire lives grieving; the bereaved are said to be no less unfortunate. The severity of the comparison supports the claim that even a deeply desired possession cannot be judged solely at the moment of wishing. It does not amount to a universal claim that childlessness is better or that all parental love is mistaken.

The imagined wish that children had never been born resembles the generals' wish never to have held office. Both try to negate an accomplished history. These examples prepare the account of unpraying while exposing its insufficiency as a practical cure. The

philosophical demand is for a more discriminating relation between desire and the good, not an instruction to bereaved people to renounce their attachment.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **142b.** Parents pray for children and encounter misfortune and grief.
- **142b–142c.** Worthlessness and bereavement are distinct paths to disappointment.
- **142c–142d.** Retrospective wishes feed the general account of revising prayers.

In this edition. The edition keeps worthy and worthless for chrēstos and mochthēros rather than using good and bad indiscriminately. Its Glossary distinguishes misfortune, symphora, from ill fortune, dystychia. The children in this example are not identified with Oedipus' sons, although the opening family tragedy may give the later passage added resonance.

See also. Prayer and wishing · Unpraying and palinode · Oedipus and his sons · Forethought and caution

City and soul

πόλις (polis); ψυχή (psychē); πολιτεία (politeia)

The word. Polis is a city as a political community; psychē is soul and can also signify life; politeia is a constitution or the commonwealth with its organisation and way of life. The explicit pairing of city and soul at 146e makes a shared requirement of guidance. It does not by itself establish that city and soul have an identical internal structure.

In Alcibiades II. The commonwealth of experts at 145e–146b lacks an adequate standard for deploying its many strengths. Its members privilege their own crafts, fail to hit what is best for the city and themselves, and produce confusion and lawlessness. This is a model of competing partial capabilities rather than a detailed description of any named constitution. Nothing requires reading every specialist as an allegorical part of an individual soul.

At 145c and 146b–c the beneficial adviser and actor already serve both city and self. The statement at 146e then explicitly requires city and soul to hold fast to the knowledge of the best. Doctor and pilot supply models of dependence on competent direction. The common requirement is living rightly, but the text does not derive a systematic account of how individual and civic benefit are reconciled in difficult cases.

The later religious comparison develops the parallel through assessment. At 149e the gods look to the soul, and at 150a both a private person and a city can afford expensive rites despite having made many mistakes toward gods and people. External expenditure does not show the quality of either agent. At 150e the mist belongs to Alcibiades' soul, making the educational application

personal without claiming that his eventual improvement alone will cure a whole city.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **145c.** Adequate advice is for both city and self.
- **145e–146b.** The unguided commonwealth combines specialist ability with disorder.
- **146b–e.** Beneficial action and governing knowledge are required on both scales.
- **149e–150a.** Soul and conduct outweigh ritual expenditure by either person or city.
- **150e.** Alcibiades' soul requires the removal of its mist.

In this edition. The edition preserves "soul" for psychē even at 141c, where Alcibiades' answer appears to take the word as life itself. At 145e–146b politeia is "commonwealth", not simply another occurrence of polis. These distinctions keep the civic experiment and the personal educational conclusion legible.[6]

See also. Knowledge of the best · Confusion and lawlessness · Craft and expertise · Benefit and harm · Possession and guidance

6 At 146a Euripides' Antiope is adapted so that 'of the commonwealth' replaces 'of the day' and 'strongest' replaces 'best'. The edition's note 23 compares Gorgias 484e and explains Burnet's indicative tynchanei against the subjunctive in the manuscripts here. The dialogue is making a poetic line serve a new civic comparison, not quoting it without change.

Confusion and lawlessness

ταραχή (tarachē); ἀνομία (anomia)

The word. Tarachē is disturbance or confusion; anomia is lawlessness or lack of lawful order. At 146b the imagined commonwealth is full of both. The words name the collective result of misdirected expertise, not an independent analysis of a particular statute, criminal offence or constitutional form.

In Alcibiades II. The diagnosis follows the experts' attempts to give the largest civic share to the craft in which each excels. Their capacities are real, and the imagined city includes accomplished archers, musicians, athletes, military men and speakers. The disorder therefore cannot be explained by an absence of technical skill. It results from the absence of the knowledge, and the knowledgeable guide, needed to decide the proper use of those skills.

Socrates asks whether it would be right to describe such a commonwealth as full of confusion and lawlessness, and Alcibiades agrees. The description has been prepared by a sketch of rivalry and failure to secure the best, not by a separate proof that every failure of practical knowledge necessarily breaks a law. Anomia adds a normative political judgment to the confusion already pictured.

The positive remedy is stated at a more general level: beneficial action is profitable to the city and self, and both city and soul must hold to the knowledge of the best. The dialogue does not prescribe a legal code, an institution for choosing its guide, or a programme for enforcing the resulting order. Its diagnosis should not be expanded into a constitutional proposal it never develops.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **145e–146a.** The commonwealth lacks both governing knowledge and a person able to use its experts.
- **146a.** Each specialist's ambition privileges his partial field.
- **146b.** The explicit diagnosis is great confusion and lawlessness.
- **146b–e.** Beneficial action and adherence to knowledge state the contrasting requirement.

In this edition. The edition renders tarachē as "confusion" and anomia as "lawlessness". "Full of great confusion and lawlessness" describes the whole imagined commonwealth. It should not be mistaken for another application of the earlier word mania or a claim that all its citizens are clinically mad.

See also. City and soul · Craft and expertise · Knowledge of the best · Madness · Division and parts

Craft and expertise

τέχνη (technē); ἐπιστήμων (epistēmōn); τὸ κατὰ ταύτην τὴν τέχνην βέλτιον (to kata tautēn tēn technēn beltion)

The word. Technē is an organised skill or craft, and epistēmōn describes someone knowledgeable in a field. The relevant excellence is expressly what turns out better according to a given craft. The term can cover productive occupations, athletic capacities and musical accomplishment; it does not by itself certify sound judgment about their place in a life or commonwealth.

In Alcibiades II. At 140b–d the differentiated crafts make an uncomplicated point of classification: shoemaking and carpentry are crafts without being one another. Later the same field supplies a more demanding test. The horseman, boxer and flute-player receive their proper specialist descriptions from knowledge of the better result within their activities. Socrates does not expose their expertise as pretence. He asks whether that expertise entails intelligence, and Alcibiades emphatically denies the entailment at 145d–e.

The commonwealth of experts then shows why the distinction matters. Each pursues the activity in which he is strongest and seeks the largest share of collective life for it. What is best according to his own craft may leave him far from what is best for himself or the city. A technical standard is genuine but partial; making it sovereign over the whole is the error.

The account therefore differs from a blanket rejection of craft. The required knowledge concerns when and toward whom to use the experts, and at 147a it would guide the man who possesses many crafts. At 151b Teiresias’

successful craft helps explain the garlands in the closing comparison. That positive example does not retroactively identify every craft with comprehensive wisdom; it shows that the word remains available for an effective, bounded competence.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **140b–d.** Different crafts establish inclusion without identity.
- **145c–e.** Specialist excellence does not by itself make its possessor intelligent.
- **145e–146a.** A city needs a standard for using and ordering its technical capacities.
- **147a.** Many crafts require guidance rather than mere accumulation.
- **151b.** Teiresias receives first-fruits because of his craft.

In this edition. The edition consistently uses “craft” for technē. Its “according to that craft” and “according to the craft itself” preserve the scope restriction at 145d and 146a. Rendering these simply as knowing “the best” would destroy the contrast the argument is making.[7]

See also. Craftsmen · Many crafts · Knowledge of the best · Better and best · Use and misuse · Possession and guidance

7 At 145c Burnet prints J. G. Schneider’s toiouton, ‘such’, where B and T have poiounta, ‘doing’. The source’s note 21 records the change. The description of the man who possesses the relevant knowledge must be read with this adopted predication in view.

Craftsmen

δημιουργός (dēmiourgos); δημιουργία (dēmiourgia); τεχνίτης (technitēs); σκυτοτόμος (skytotomos); τέκτων (tektōn); ἀνδριαντοποιός (andriantopoios)

The word. Dēmiourgos and technitēs designate a practitioner of a craft; dēmiourgia is craftsmanship. Skytotomos, tektōn and andriantopoios name the shoemaker, carpenter and sculptor in the early example. The English category “craftsman” gathers different occupations without implying that every practitioner has the same knowledge or produces the same work.

In Alcibiades II. At 140b–c Socrates moves from diseases to craftsmen because the plurality of their occupations makes the logical point easy to see. Shoemakers, carpenters and sculptors are all craftsmen; the whole class is not thereby the class of carpenters, shoemakers or sculptors. The list is openly incomplete, since there are a great many others whom Socrates need not enumerate. Its purpose is not a hierarchy of manual trades.

The later account moves from collective names to appropriate specialist predicates. A person who knows what turns out better in horsemanship is called a horseman; analogous names belong to boxing and flute-playing at 145c–d. Naming recognises the object of the person’s competence. It does not warrant calling the same person intelligent without further examination of what he knows about use and benefit.

At 145e technitai joins archers, flute-players and athletes in the imagined commonwealth. These practitioners are capable, yet their combination remains “sorry” without governing knowledge and its possessor. The social

problem is intensified when each seeks civic predominance for his own activity. The fault is not simply that practitioners are numerous or divided into occupations, but that their partial competences lack adequate direction.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **140b–c.** Shoemakers, carpenters and sculptors exemplify distinct members of a common class.
- **145c–d.** Specialist names track the knowledge relevant to each activity.
- **145d–e.** Knowledge of a field does not warrant the further description “intelligent”.
- **145e–146a.** Practitioners in a commonwealth compete to privilege their own strengths.

In this edition. The edition renders both dēmiourgos and technitēs as “craftsman”, while retaining “craftsmanship” for dēmiourgia. They occur in different parts of the argument: the first supplies the classification, the second the political thought experiment. The English identity of rendering should not hide that change of term and role.[8]

See also. Division and parts · Craft and expertise · Many crafts · City and soul · Advice and oratory

8 At 145e the reference to ‘those we spoke of just now’ follows Dobree’s hous, ‘whom’, and points back to people skilled at warfare and killing. With hois, supported by B, T and Stobaeus, the reference would instead concern the craftsmen in the current sentence. Supplied note 22 also distinguishes Stobaeus’ ‘these’ from the principal manuscripts’ ‘such’.

Creon and Teiresias

Κρέων (Kreōn); Τειρεσίαν (Teiresian); ἀπαρχάς (aparchas); οἰωνόν (oiōnon); κλύδωνι (klydōni)

The word. Creon and Teiresias enter through Euripides' Phoenician Women. Teiresias wears garlands received as first-fruits for success achieved through his craft, and Creon takes them as an omen amid his own rough sea. Socrates makes that encounter the comparison for receiving Alcibiades' wreath.

In Alcibiades II. The roles are not interchangeable. Teiresias has the garlands and the achievement that earned them; Creon sees and interprets their possible significance for his own endangered situation. Socrates compares his act of taking an omen to Creon's. He does not simply proclaim himself Teiresias or declare the philosophical education already victorious.

Alcibiades' gift acknowledges the usefulness of advice, and Socrates hopes that the judgement it expresses signals victory over the young man's other lovers. The rough-sea phrase preserves uncertainty. A garland can be hopeful evidence of a relationship's direction while the contest remains unresolved.

The comparison also revisits the question of craft. Teiresias' craft has earned a concrete success, whereas the larger dialogue has denied that possession of expertise alone entails intelligent use. The ending borrows his achieved honour for a new personal hope without withdrawing that earlier caution. The learner's continuing orientation, not the physical wreath by itself, is what Socrates prizes.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **151b.** Socrates recounts Creon's response to the seer's victorious garlands.
- **151b–151c.** He applies omen and rough sea to his own hoped-for success with Alcibiades.

In this edition. Note 41 explains from Phoenician Women 852–859 that Teiresias has returned from Athens after helping the Athenians defeat Eumolpus and wears first-fruits of the spoils. Those details clarify the abbreviated allusion but are not all narrated here. The printed doxa at 151b is opinion, whereas Ast and Buttmann conjecture words for gift.

See also. Euripides · Wreath and crowning · Erotic rivalry and victory · Physician, pilot and storm

Curse

κατηρᾶτο (katērato); κατάρᾳ (katarai); καταρᾶσθαι (katarasthai)

The word. Katara is a curse, and katarasthai means to curse or call down harm. Its relation to ara, which can name prayer as well as curse, helps explain why the dialogue refuses to treat the mere act of praying as a guarantee of benevolent content.

In Alcibiades II. Oedipus' request that his sons divide their inheritance by the sword introduces prayer whose harmful direction is intended. Instead of asking for relief from his existing troubles, he calls down additional ones, which are fulfilled and generate further dreadful consequences. The example makes divine fulfilment frightening before the more ordinary instances have appeared.

Alcibiades initially tries to isolate this conduct as madness. Socrates later distinguishes it from the conduct most relevant to the young man: Oedipus did not think he was asking for good, whereas other people do think so and may nevertheless ask for harm. A curse intentionally seeks what an ignorant prayer can unintentionally accomplish. The analogy is functional, not an assertion that the speakers' intentions are identical.

At 143b Alcibiades says that asking for the worst things for oneself would resemble a curse rather than a prayer. His formulation measures prayer by what it seeks to obtain, while his admission of ignorance undermines the easy confidence that each person can identify the best request. The boundary between prayer and curse must therefore

be guarded by judgement, not simply by choosing a pious-sounding verb.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138c.** Oedipus calls down further harms instead of praying for release from those already present.
- **141a.** His conscious harmful intention is contrasted with unsuspecting requests for apparent benefits.
- **143a–143b.** Alcibiades discovers that a request for supposed good may function like a curse.

In this edition. The edition's notes distinguish the dialogue's bronze weapon from the iron in Aeschylus, Seven against Thebes 785–790, and Euripides, Phoenician Women 66–68. Note 2 observes that Jocasta calls Oedipus' curses prayers only three lines after calling them curses. These parallels explain the lexical overlap without supplying a missing speech of Oedipus in this dialogue.

See also. Oedipus and his sons · Anger · Prayer and wishing · Praying in ignorance

Disposition and character

διακεῖσθαι (diakeisthai), be disposed; ἕξις (hexis), state or condition; ψυχή (psychē), soul

The word. To be disposed is to stand in a particular condition or orientation toward an action or person. A hexis can name a state without carrying every feature of a later technical account of settled virtue. The dialogue asks what actions become possible or appropriate for a person in a given condition.

In Alcibiades II. The opening danger includes the gods' being in a state in which they grant the request. Human error is not the only factor named in the feared outcome. Later, the person disposed to kill benefits from being unable to recognize the intended victim. The benefit belongs to that particular conjunction of purpose and ignorance; remove the murderous disposition and the evaluation can change.

The Athenians describe the Spartans as neglectfully disposed toward worship, evaluating their conduct by the visible economy of religious expenditure. The oracle and Socrates' interpretation challenge that way of reading the disposition. Costly action does not by itself establish holiness, while modest ritual provision does not by itself establish disregard for the divine.

At 150d the educational goal is learning how one should be disposed toward gods and people. The concern is broader than memorizing one safe request. It includes the character of the petitioner and the practical intelligence needed to speak and act properly. The soul inspected at 149e–150a is relevant in this ethical sense; it is not merely

the possession surrendered in the earlier imaginary exchange of power for life.

Disposition is therefore one of the ordinary relational words that holds the argument together. Different states make the same information, capacity or petition function differently. The text does not supply a complete theory of character formation, but it repeatedly refuses to evaluate outward success apart from the state of the agent.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138b.** The gods' state of granting requests is part of the danger.
- **144c.** Ignorance of a particular object is better for people disposed in the specified harmful way.
- **149a.** The Athenians characterize Spartan worship as neglectful.
- **149e–150a.** The gods attend to whether a soul is holy and just.
- **150d.** Learning the right disposition toward gods and people is the final educational condition.

In this edition. The English retains "be disposed" across the different applications. Reading it as one rigid technical definition would be no more faithful than replacing it everywhere with unrelated paraphrases. The opening hexis and the later diakeisthai are related explanatory vocabulary, not the same Greek word.[9]

See also. Soul and life · Gods and divine giving · Protective ignorance · Holiness and piety · Teacher, care and waiting

9 Compare the supplied English at 138b, 144c, 149a and 150d. Hexis names the divine state in the opening construction; forms of diakeisthai describe the later dispositions. These are explanatory relatives, not identical lexical occurrences.

Division and parts

μέρος (meros); μέρη (merē); διειληφότες (dieilēphotes); πᾶσα (pasa); σύμπαντες (sympantes)

The word. Meros is a part or share; merē its plural. Dieilēphotes, the form used of craftsmen and unintelligent people, says that they have divided or apportioned something among themselves. The discussion also relies on "all" and "all together". "Genus" and "species" describe its inclusive structure for the reader; those technical nouns are not the wording of this passage.

In Alcibiades II. The model is established through illness: all ophthalmia is disease, but not all disease is ophthalmia. This is a directional relation. Reversing it would mistake a particular kind for the encompassing class. The repeated assent at 140a draws attention to the difference between inclusion and equivalence, a distinction the first argument about madness had failed to respect.

Craftsmanship supplies a parallel. Shoemakers, carpenters and sculptors have divided its parts among them, and all are craftsmen; the collective description does not make them all carpenters or all shoemakers. Socrates then transfers the structure to unintelligence. At 140c the transfer changes register: madness is possession of its largest part, other names designate smaller shares, and the conclusion at 140d again speaks of differences comparable to craft from craft and disease from disease. Quantitative shares and qualitative kinds are thus juxtaposed rather than rigorously distinguished.

The language of apportionment becomes politically charged at 146a. Each expert tries to allot the largest part of the commonwealth to the activity in which he is

strongest. A legitimate part now tries to dominate the whole. This is not another formal division, but it exposes why the earlier fact that an expert belongs to a class does not license treating his special competence as sufficient government of a city.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **139e–140a.** All ophthalmia is disease, but the converse is denied.
- **140b–c.** Craftsmen divide the parts of craftsmanship without becoming identical specialists.
- **140c–d.** Unintelligence is divided through a mixture of degrees and kinds.
- **146a.** Experts seek the largest civic share for their particular craft.

In this edition. The edition retains “parts” for craftsmanship and “part” for the commonwealth. Its quotation marks at 146a include “part”, which belongs to the adapted Euripidean wording. The phrase “all together” at 140c is important: the collective designation does not erase the several occupations.

See also. Health and sickness · Madness · Craftsmen · Craft and expertise · City and soul · Generality and qualification

Dramatic irony

An analytical heading; τυραννίς (tyrannis), tyranny; στρατηγία (stratēgia), generalship; φυγή (phygē), exile

The word. Dramatic irony arises when the reader can understand an implication unavailable or unspoken within the conversation. Here the apparent goods Alcibiades considers can recall a life whose public ambitions and dangers the audience already knows.

In Alcibiades II. The imagined grant of tyranny and the treatment of generalship address Alcibiades' own desires. The dialogue does not make him list a future biography. Instead, an informed reader can hear the warning that visible honour and authority may carry grief, exile or violent death. The force comes from the relation between the examples and their addressee, not from an explicit prediction.

The anonymous generals are especially important. Socrates names none of them. The edition's note suggests historical associations, including Alcibiades himself, but these remain associations supplied by the reader. They must not be promoted into names actually spoken in the text. Likewise the source's contemporary-sounding report of Archelaus is a chronological fault, not automatically a sophisticated fictional device.

The closing crown adds another asymmetry. Alcibiades treats Socrates as a successful adviser and promises future obedience. Socrates accepts the gesture as an omen of victory over other lovers, while describing his situation through the storm of a tragic quotation. The dialogue shows hope and uncertainty together. Knowing the

historical Alcibiades' later course can intensify that uncertainty, but the last scene itself does not narrate it.

This form of irony supports close attention to ordinary words such as "accept," "give," "wish," "best" and "victor." Their practical stakes change as the object shifts from political possessions to an educational relationship. A lexicon that isolates vocabulary from the dramatic sequence would conceal part of its significance.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **141a–c.** The offered power tests Alcibiades' own ambitions.
- **141d–142b.** The fate of rulers and generals undermines simple identification of office with benefit.
- **150e–151c.** A promise of obedience and a crown are accompanied by an uncertain image of victory.

In this edition. The Introduction explicitly invites attention to the reader's knowledge of Alcibiades' later life. Note 11 distinguishes named historical parallels from the unnamed generals of the speech; note 41 explains the tragic crown without claiming that its outcome has already been secured.[10]

See also. Alcibiades · Ambition and tyranny · Generalship, exile and informers · Wreath and crowning · Erotic rivalry and victory

10 Supplied notes 10–11 distinguish Archelaus, who is named at 141d, from the generals, who are not named at 141e–142b. The dates of Thucydides' exile, Alcibiades' condemnation and Arginusae belong to the note's explanatory parallels, not to Socrates' wording.

Erotic rivalry and victory

ἐραστῶν (erastōn); καλλίνικος (kallinikos); καλλίνικα (kallinika); κλύδωνι (klydōni)

The word. Erastai are lovers; kallinikos means fair-victorious or winning a fine victory, echoed from Euripides' victorious garlands. Socrates' final wish to prevail over Alcibiades' lovers names a personal competition that the conversation's educational success might help him win.

In Alcibiades II. The last sentence reveals Socrates' position among the young man's lovers rather than making love a separately defined topic. The preceding description of the caring educator and Alcibiades' willingness to obey give this competition its immediate substance. Socrates seeks a relation secured through beneficial advice and care, although the prospective educator has not explicitly been named.

The victory is desired, not reported as achieved. Socrates takes Alcibiades' favourable opinion as an omen and describes his own predicament as a rough sea no less than Creon's. The crown can therefore register present progress without guaranteeing that he will defeat rival influences or that Alcibiades will complete the education.

The earlier Archelaus story supplies a contrasting erotic configuration. A beloved desires tyranny while the tyrant desires him; the effort to seize the desired object destroys both men. The dialogue does not expressly formulate a comparison between these two scenes, but their distribution permits a reading in which possessive competition for power and care directed toward improvement have sharply different prospects.

The final playful tone should not conceal the philosophical uncertainty. The argument has exposed the insufficiency of desire and confidence, and the ending leaves Socrates himself hoping for an outcome. His hopeful interpretation of the wreath is still interpretation, not a divine certificate or a completed proof of success.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **141d–141e.** The lover and beloved in the Archelaus story link erotic desire with destructive political acquisition.
- **150d–151a.** Care and reciprocal eagerness provide the educational context of the final rivalry.
- **151b–151c.** Socrates takes an omen and wishes to be fair victor over Alcibiades' lovers.

In this edition. The edition's Introduction notes that the last words establish Socrates as a rival of the other lovers. It gives parallels from Alcibiades I and Symposium separately; those fuller narratives should not be imported as events explicitly recounted here. At 151b opinion is printed, with gift reserved for the apparatus.

See also. Socrates · Alcibiades · Archelaus and his beloved · Wreath and crowning · Creon and Teiresias

Error and missing the mark

διαμαρτάνειν (diamartanein); ἁμάρτημα (hamartēma); ἁμαρτάνειν (hamartanein); τοῦ καιροῦ τυχεῖν (tou kairou tychein)

The word. Diamartanein means to miss or fail to reach; hamartēma is a mistake, and hamartanein to make a mistake or go wrong. At 148a "hitting the right mark" translates obtaining the appropriate point or occasion, tou kairou tychein. The target language supplies a practical image; it does not imply that every occurrence is a literal reference to archery.

In Alcibiades II. At 146a the expert can hit the technical standard of his craft while missing what is best for city and self. The contrast distinguishes success within an operation from success in the life the operation serves. At 146c the many similarly miss the best because they rely on opinion without sense. This failure is specified by its object, not merely by an unsuccessful physical execution.

The mistakes at 147a grow with the force of favourable fortune when guiding knowledge is absent. Resources and strength can enlarge the scale of what goes wrong. The claim is conditional and comparative: apparent advantages increase exposure under the absence of direction. It does not establish that every fortunate person necessarily makes more mistakes than every unfortunate one.

At 148a Socrates asks how Alcibiades could hit the right mark in accepting a divine offer or framing a prayer. The same practical deficiency now affects the immediate errand. At 150a mistakes are explicitly directed against gods and human beings, showing that the vocabulary can

include ethically serious wrongs; “mistake” need not mean an innocent trivial slip. Costly sacrifice remains compatible with such wrongdoing and does not cancel it.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **146a.** A technically accomplished person can miss the best for city and self.
- **146c.** The many’s reliance on senseless opinion misses the best.
- **147a.** Lack of guidance lets favourable resources enlarge mistakes.
- **148a.** Alcibiades cannot securely hit the appropriate mark in asking or accepting.
- **150a.** Mistakes against gods and people can coexist with lavish ritual expenditure.

In this edition. The edition keeps “miss” for diamartanein and “mistake” for hamartēma and hamartanein. Its “right mark” at 148a belongs to kairos with tychein. The different expressions support a thematic connection without being made into a single invented Greek formula.

See also. Better and best · Knowledge of the best · Timing and duration · Opinion · Benefit and harm

Euripides

Εὐριπίδῃ (Euripidēi); τούτῳ μέρος (toutōi meros); καλλίνικα (kallinika); στέφη (stephē)

The word. Euripides is named at the close as the poet who presents Creon and Teiresias. An earlier quotation from the lost Antiope is identified by the edition's note, although the speaker does not name its author there. The two uses connect selective expertise with political and personal claims to victory.

In Alcibiades II. At 146a the quoted words are absorbed into Socrates' account of a city made up of experts. Each gives the largest share to the activity in which he is strongest. The adaptation turns a statement about allocation of a day into one about allocation of a commonwealth, making the tendency of expertise to promote itself politically visible.

At 151b the quotation is overtly dramatic. Creon sees Teiresias' victorious garlands and takes them as an omen while describing his own condition as a rough sea. Socrates takes Alcibiades' opinion and its visible wreath as an analogous favourable sign. The tragic line is not used to predict a secure victory; it lets hope and danger coexist in the ending.

The edition also uses Euripides to explain the opening Oedipus story and the vocabulary of auspicious speech. These are editorial parallels, not additional quotations spoken by Socrates in this dialogue. Distinguishing the levels prevents the apparatus of explanation from inflating the apparent number of direct Euripidean interventions.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **146a.** An Antiope quotation is adapted to the commonwealth of rival experts.
- **151b–151c.** The named Phoenician Women comparison supplies wreaths, omen and rough sea.

In this edition. Note 23 locates the Antiope lines through Gorgias 484e: commonwealth replaces day, and strongest replaces best. Burnet prints the indicative tynchanei on the evidence noted there. Note 41 identifies Phoenician Women 858–859 and records that Burnet supplies your from Euripides. The earlier Oedipus and religious-language parallels belong to notes 1–2 and the Key Words.

See also. Creon and Teiresias · Wreath and crowning · Erotic rivalry and victory · Oedipus and his sons

Excluded middle and the third condition

ἢ νοσεῖν ἢ μὴ νοσεῖν (ē nosein ē mē nosein); τρίτον πάθος (triton pathos); μήτε φρόνιμον μήτε ἄφρονα (mēte phronimon mēte aphrona)

The word. “Excluded middle” is an analytical heading for the alternatives discussed, not the dialogue’s own name for a logical law. Its actual expressions are “either be ill or not be ill”, “a third condition”, and “neither intelligent nor unintelligent”. Pathos here is a condition one is in, not specifically an emotion or a later technical category.

In Alcibiades II. Socrates first gets Alcibiades to deny the existence of people who are neither healthy nor sick. He then gives the sharper wording “either be ill or not be ill” at 139a. That formulation expressly contains a predicate and its negation. The previous healthy/sick pair is made to behave as an exhaustive alternative, but the exchange does not pause to establish the equivalence of its positive terms with illness and non-illness.

The same structure is transferred to intelligence and unintelligence: is there a third condition between them? Alcibiades denies it, and Socrates concludes at 139b that one of the two conditions is necessary. The later identification of unintelligence with madness requires an additional premise about only one opposite to a thing. Exhaustiveness alone would not identify every condition described as contrary to intelligence with the whole of unintelligence.

The awkward wording at the start must remain part of the evidence. Burnet prints “possible” at 139a, although the question’s course and the following “must” suggest why editors proposed stronger wording. The translation treats

Alcibiades' "Certainly not" as an answer to whether a third condition exists. It does not turn the first question into the unqualified assertion that the argument would ideally require.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138d–139a.** Healthy and sick are treated as excluding a third condition.
- **139a.** The explicit alternative is illness or non-illness; Burnet nevertheless retains "possible" in the next question.
- **139b.** No third condition is recalled and the necessity of one alternative asserted.
- **139b–d.** A separate uniqueness premise drives the identity with madness and its subsequent rejection.

In this edition. The note on 139a records Ast's "necessary" and Stallbaum's "only", but the translation keeps Burnet's "possible". This lexical difference affects the argument and must not be quietly corrected in paraphrase. The heading is modern exposition, not an unattested Greek lemma.[11]

See also. Opposites · Health and sickness · Division and parts · Agreement and admission

11 At 139a the edition translates Burnet's 'possible'. Its note 4 records Ast's proposed 'necessary' and Stallbaum's 'only'; it also explains that Alcibiades' negative answer addresses the second question. The logical force of the subsequent exhaustive division must not be obtained by silently translating the first question as a different text.

Fine

καλός (kalos); καλά (kala); κάλλιστος (kallistos); καλῶς (kalōs)

The word. Kalos can commend what is beautiful, admirable or fine; kallistos is its superlative, and kalōs the adverb “well”. The family can praise a prayer, ritual splendour, a name or a piece of advice. It is not everywhere equivalent to agathos, and its force can be sincere, reported or ironic.

In Alcibiades II. The Spartans ask for “the fine things on top of the good” at 148c. The wording keeps two commendations in relation rather than treating them as a single undifferentiated request. In the local argument, the prayer’s restraint matters: it does not try to prescribe particular triumphs or possessions independently of their goodness. The phrase need not be expanded into a comprehensive doctrine equating moral beauty and benefit.

The Athenians’ claim to offer the “finest” sacrifices at 148e is immediately tested by Ammon’s preference for Spartan auspicious speech. Costliness and magnificence are insufficient evidence of acceptable worship. An even more pointed use comes at 150c, where “greatness of soul” is called the “finest” name within unintelligence. The superlative commends the flattering label ironically, not the underlying deficiency.

The adverb performs more straightforward assessments: the safe poet speaks well at 143a, and Alcibiades says Socrates has advised him well at 151a. These evaluations apply to particular speech and advice. They support the theme that a worthwhile utterance is judged by what it

helps its hearer do, but they do not make every kalōs a technical reference to the knowledge of the best.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **143a.** The poet's prayer is judged well and safely spoken.
- **148c.** The Spartan prayer distinguishes the fine from the good while joining them.
- **148e.** Athenian ritual excellence appears within their challenged self-description.
- **150c.** "Finest" ironically praises a flattering name for unintelligence.
- **151a.** Alcibiades judges Socrates' advice well given.

In this edition. The translation keeps "fine" distinct from "good" and renders kalōs as "well" where English requires an adverb. At 151a it accordingly says "advised me well", not "given me good advice". The compound kallinikos at the ending belongs to the language of fair victory, rather than being another simple occurrence of kalos.

See also. Good and bad · Better and best · Advice and oratory · Intelligence and unintelligence

Forethought and caution

προμήθεια (promētheia); φυλακή (phylakē); σκέψις (skepsis); ἀσφαλές (asphales)

The word. Promētheia is forethought; phylakē is caution or guarding; skepsis is examination. The vocabulary describes the care needed before requesting or accepting apparent goods. Asphales and its comparative mark safety, not certainty that one has already acquired the whole knowledge required.

In Alcibiades II. Socrates asks for great forethought at 138b because a request can outrun its speaker's understanding. The temporal position matters: care must precede the prayer and its possible fulfilment. The later palinode is too late to establish that the original act was safe. A capacity to foresee or withhold judgement is therefore more valuable here than the mere ability to obtain what one wants.

Alcibiades eventually voices the requirement for much caution at 148b. Socrates extends it at 149c to inquiry about what should and should not be said. The question joins religious speech to the earlier definition of intelligence as knowing what one must do and say. It also suggests that caution is active examination, not simply fearful silence.

The immediate recommendation nevertheless is to keep quiet and postpone. Alcibiades is not equipped to select a definite object of prayer, and Socrates doubts that he will tolerate the Spartan formula. Waiting is safer than a risk undertaken through pride. The promise of a teacher prevents this restraint from becoming a principle that

nothing should ever be attempted: it is a temporary discipline directed toward learning.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138b.** Forethought must guard against harmful requests that the gods might fulfil.
- **141c–141d.** Accepting offered possessions at random is judged unsafe.
- **148a–148b.** Alcibiades acknowledges the need for caution himself.
- **149c.** Caution includes examining what must and must not be said.
- **150c–151a.** Silence and postponement are the safer present course.

In this edition. The source distinguishes forethought from caution rather than treating them as occurrences of one Greek noun. Its revised English at 148b preserves the lest-construction. At 151a safer is comparative: the dialogue recommends a better course under acknowledged ignorance, not a complete guarantee against every possible harm.

See also. Praying in ignorance · Unpraying and palinode · Prayer and wishing · Teacher, care and waiting

Generality and qualification

ἔστιν ὧν (estin hōn); ἔστιν οἷς (estin hois); ἔχουσί πως (echousi pōs); εἴπερ (eiper); ὀλιγάκις (oligakis); τὰ πλείω (ta pleiō)

The word. This heading gathers the ordinary expressions that restrict the dialogue's claims: of some things, for some people, in a certain condition, if indeed, seldom and for the most part. They are not a specialised Greek terminology for quantification. Their importance is that the argument's most startling conclusions change substantially when their restrictions are omitted.

In Alcibiades II. The central correction comes at 143c. Alcibiades has blamed ignorance broadly; Socrates demands an object, a person and a condition. The conclusion at 144c repeats the restrictions after the Pericles and Orestes cases. A local good effect does not establish that ignorance is good universally, just as the universal condemnation did not survive a counterexample.

The next claim is qualified differently. Possession of other knowledge without the best "looks as though" it seldom benefits and mostly harms at 144d. The assertion concerns the usual consequences under a specified absence, not the impossibility of any beneficial result. At 146d the paradox about not knowing additionally depends on the conditional that knowledge or supposed knowledge makes people readier to act to their harm. The practical mechanism is part of the claim, not dispensable decoration.

The argument nevertheless sometimes generalises beyond what its examples independently show. At 143e ignorance

of the best is called bad for everyone after the Orestes exchange. The numerical and frequency claims about the many are not established by measured evidence. A close reader can acknowledge the intended generality while distinguishing it from what has been demonstrated. Preserving qualifications does not require pretending that every inference has thereby become conclusive.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **143c.** The blanket verdict on ignorance is qualified by object, agent and state.
- **143e.** Ignorance of the best receives a contrasting universal condemnation.
- **144c.** The restricted positive conclusion is repeated.
- **144d; 146e.** The central thesis includes an absence condition and frequency qualifiers.
- **146d.** The practical conclusion depends on a stated condition about eagerness and harm.

In this edition. The translation deliberately retains the repeated phrases and hesitant formulations. They should not be abbreviated into slogans such as “knowledge is harmful” or “ignorance is good”. Conversely, its full force at 143e should not be softened into a merely occasional disadvantage.

See also. Ignorance · Protective ignorance · Knowledge of the best · Many and few · Benefit and harm

Generalship, exile and informers

στρατηγίας (stratēgias); φυγάδες (phygades); συκοφαντῶν (sykophantōn); ἀστρατηγήτους (astratēgētous); πολιορκούμενοι (poliorkoumenoi)

The word. Stratēgia is generalship; phygades are exiles; sykophantai are informers or malicious prosecutors. The rare astratēgētoi describes people who have never been generals. A military office apparently conferring honour becomes something its former holders wish they had never obtained.

In Alcibiades II. Socrates turns from a Macedonian tyrant known through report to fellow citizens whose fortunes he says the two speakers know from being present. The claim gives the warning immediacy and civic proximity. Some desired and gained generalships and are now exiles; others have died. Even those reputed to have done best pass through fear and danger in command and continue to suffer on returning home.

The siege metaphor makes the domestic aftermath resemble the war itself. Informers surround former commanders no less relentlessly than enemies did. The supposed reward of successful public service therefore cannot be assessed from military competence or achievement alone. The trial is whether the dangers and labours lead to benefit, which Socrates says is here the opposite of the appearance.

The prayer to have been never generals is comic in wording and severe in implication. It seeks not merely relief from current troubles but the undoing of a career already lived. It anticipates the palinode in which people withdraw prayers after their requested objects prove

harmful. The text offers no mechanism by which the past can be unmade.

For readers familiar with Alcibiades' later life, the unnamed examples can carry dramatic irony. That resonance must not be promoted into an explicit identification: Socrates names none of the generals. The institutional warning has its own force before particular historical careers are supplied.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **141e–142a.** Socrates claims firsthand knowledge of the fortunes of Athenian generals.
- **142a–142b.** Exile, death and domestic prosecution reverse the expected benefit of office.
- **142c–142d.** Generalship remains among the objects the many rashly request.

In this edition. Note 11 offers Thucydides, Alcibiades and the Arginusae generals as possible reader associations. It states exactly that eight were condemned after Arginusae and six who returned were executed; these details are not in Socrates' speech. The translation says come to the end of their lives rather than ended their lives, which could wrongly imply suicide. Never generals is rare, not demonstrably coined here.

See also. Ambition and tyranny · Unpraying and palinode · Athens · Alcibiades · Forethought and caution

Gifts and divine bribery

δῶρα (dōra); δωροδόκοι (dōrodokoi); ὑπὸ δώρων παράγεσθαι (hypo dōrōn paragesthai); κακὸν τοκιστήν (kakon tokistēn)

The word. Dōra are gifts; dōrodokoi, literally takers of gifts, is the familiar vocabulary of bribe-taking. The comparison with a bad moneylender makes the commercial and corrupting implications explicit. Socrates rejects an account of divine response in which an expensive presentation can divert judgement.

In Alcibiades II. The Trojan sacrifice supplies the transition from ritual expenditure to gifts paid in vain. Socrates denies that the way of the gods is to be led astray by gifts as a bad moneylender might be. This is more than a claim that the Athenians have offered too little. It discredits the model on which a larger payment would solve their problem.

The correct object of divine attention is the soul, considered as holy and just. A private person or city can afford repeated ceremonies while making many mistakes against gods and humans. If the gods accepted those ceremonies as decisive compensation, the wealthy wrongdoer could convert resources into favour without acquiring the judgement under discussion. Their refusal therefore links religion with the earlier critique of wealth and power without knowledge of the best.

The ending carefully prevents all giving from becoming suspect. Alcibiades gives Socrates a wreath in acknowledgement of good advice and still intends future customary gifts to the gods. Socrates accepts the wreath. The difference lies in the significance of the exchange and

the state it expresses, not in a blanket moral rule against gifts. Nor does the closing acceptance establish that Socrates claims the divine status the critique presupposes.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **148e–149a.** The Athenians implicitly measure favour against the scale of their expenditure.
- **149d–149e.** Trojan gifts fail, and the bad-moneylender comparison rejects inducement.
- **149e–150b.** The soul's justice and intelligence displace gifts as the decisive consideration.
- **151a–151b.** A wreath acknowledges advice while customary offerings remain a future intention.

In this edition. The edition keeps gifts and takers of gifts so the verbal link remains audible. Its Key Words compare Republic 390d–390e and Laws 885b, without claiming that this dialogue establishes the same full argument. At 151b the printed word is doxa, opinion; gift is an editorial conjecture, not the word translated in the text.

See also. Holiness and piety · Justice · Wealth, bodily strength and fortune · Wreath and crowning · Gods and divine giving

Gods and divine giving

θεός (theos); θεοί (theoi); διδόναι (didonai); τἀναντία (tanantia); ἀποδέχονται (apodechontai)

The word. The dialogue alternates between the god Alcibiades is approaching and gods in the plural. Didonai is to give; divine acceptance of human offerings is expressed by apodechesthai. The reciprocal language of giving is central, but the text denies that the two directions compose an enforceable commercial exchange.

In Alcibiades II. The initial observation is deliberately uneven: gods give some requests and not others, and to some people rather than others. It does not establish an automatic law of answered prayer. The risk is that they may give exactly what a person mistakenly desires. Successful petition and genuine benefit therefore come apart before any question about expensive ceremonies is raised.

The imagined divine offer of unlimited political power tests the same danger without an actual prayer. A benefit must be assessed by whether the recipient will use it safely and well. The god in this hypothetical is not appearing in the dramatic scene; Socrates is constructing a question that reveals Alcibiades' valuation of power.

The poet's prayer allows Zeus to give good things beyond the worshippers' asking and ward off harmful things despite their asking. The Spartan example likewise leaves outcomes with the gods, who may give what is requested or its opposite. These statements make room for human uncertainty; they do not authorize the reader to infer a systematic doctrine of providence or to explain every historical reversal as divine reward or punishment.

At the close the gods are said not to take bribes and to honour justice and intelligence. Alcibiades' education must change his relation to them as well as to people. The promise to resume customary offerings if they are willing leaves divine agency acknowledged while human responsibility for the quality of requests remains intact.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138b.** Unequal and partial fulfilment makes prayer a matter requiring forethought.
- **141a–141c.** A hypothetical god offers political dominion, which must still be judged by its use.
- **143a.** Zeus is asked to separate genuine good from the worshipper's requests.
- **148c–148d.** The Spartan example preserves the gods' power to give a request or its opposite.
- **149c–150b.** Acceptance of offerings depends on more than expenditure.
- **151b.** Future worship is anticipated under the qualification if they are willing.

In this edition. The singular god at 138a is not named; it should not be confidently identified as Zeus, Ammon or another deity. The source repairs an earlier translation at 138b so that both harmful petition and divine fulfilment are governed by the danger-clause. Its gods remain plural where the Greek is plural.

See also. Prayer and wishing · Zeus · Ammon, oracle and prophet · Gifts and divine bribery · Holiness and piety

Good and bad

ἀγαθός (agathos); κακός (kakos); τἀγαθά (tagatha); τὰ κακά (ta kaka); ἐσθλός (esthlos)

The word. Agathos and kakos are the ordinary words for good and bad, applied to people, things and outcomes. Tagatha contracts ta agatha, “the good things”. Esthlos supplies a poetic word for good at 143a and 150e. The words do not themselves decide whether the relevant standard is moral worth, technical excellence, usefulness or a favourable result; the argument must establish the context.

In Alcibiades II. The opening danger is precisely the gap between things being bad and being thought good. Alcibiades’ delighted acceptance of the imagined tyranny at 141a–b makes that gap personal. The offer seems among the greatest good things, but he withdraws his acceptance if its possession entails loss of life or harmful use. Desire and the name of a coveted possession therefore cannot independently establish its goodness.

Ignorance brings the problem into sharper focus. At 143c some ignorance can be good for particular people in particular states, although ignorance of the best is bad at 143e. “Good” here evaluates an absence by what it prevents. Likewise genuine technical knowledge can be bad for its possessor when it facilitates destructive conduct. The dialogue does not have to deny that such knowledge is real in order to question its value.

The opening distinction is repeated near the close at 148b and 150c. By 150e Alcibiades’ educational need is to become able to know both bad and good. The language echoes the poetic formulation of knowing god and man,

but the discrimination has not yet been taught. The safe prayer asks for good things without claiming that the suppliant can already name every thing that will meet that description.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138b.** Bad requests can be mistaken for good ones.
- **141a–d.** The apparent goodness of tyranny is tested against use, harm and life.
- **143c–144c.** Ignorance has different values according to its object and agent.
- **147d.** Socrates' interpretation makes knowing many works bad for Margites.
- **148b; 150c; 150e.** The original error is recalled and the promised education concerns bad and good.

In this edition. The edition renders kakos as "bad", never "evil". It preserves "worthy" and "worthless" for chrēstos and mochthēros of children at 142b, rather than collapsing them into the central good/bad vocabulary. Esthla in the prayer and esthlon at 150e are both rendered "good".

See also. Better and best · Benefit and harm · Fine · Ignorance · Knowing badly

Health and sickness

ὑγιαίνειν (hygiainein); ἀσθενεῖν (asthenein); νοσεῖν (nosein); νόσος (nosos); ὀφθαλμία (ophthalmia)

The word. Hygiainein is to be healthy and can also mean to be of sound mind; asthenein is to be weak or sick; nosein is to be ill, and nosos a disease. Ophthalmia, inflammation of the eyes, is the recurring example of a particular disease. The range from soundness of mind to bodily illness supplies the dialogue with an analogy, not an identity of medicine and judgment.

In Alcibiades II. The analogy begins in Alcibiades' word "healthy" at 138c. Socrates takes it up through healthy and sick people, and then states the exhaustive alternative of being ill or not ill. This helps establish the proposed lack of an intermediate state between intelligence and unintelligence. It does not by itself prove that "not ill" and "healthy" have precisely the same content, or that every apparent opposition elsewhere must have the same logical form.

After the equation of madness with unintelligence becomes untenable, disease provides a different lesson. All ophthalmia is disease, but not all disease is ophthalmia. Fever and gout enlarge the examples; further illnesses are expressly allowed. At 140b the doctors are invoked for differences in what diseases bring about, how they act and their respective powers. The point is inclusion without identity, supported by differentiated effects rather than by a catalogue claimed to be complete.

At 146e medicine returns in another role: city and soul must hold fast to the knowledge of the best as an ill person holds fast to a doctor. The earlier patient supplied an

example for classification; this patient supplies an example of dependence on guidance. Nothing in that comparison establishes that any actual doctor already possesses the comprehensive knowledge of the beneficial that the city and soul require.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138c–139a.** “Healthy” moves from soundness of mind into the bodily contrast used in the first argument.
- **139e–140a.** Ophthalmia illustrates a one-way inclusion within disease.
- **140b.** Different diseases have different effects and powers, according to doctors.
- **146e.** The sick person’s dependence on a doctor becomes an analogy for city and soul.

In this edition. The note at 138c explicitly preserves the double sense of hygiainōn. The English distinguishes “sick”, “ill” and “disease”, while consistently calling the particular eye disease “ophthalmia”. It is the diseases, not the doctors, that differ in their operation at 140b.

See also. Excluded middle and the third condition · Division and parts · Madness · City and soul · Knowledge of the best

Holiness and piety

ὅσιος (hosios); πρὸς θεοὺς καὶ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους (pros theous kai pros anthrōpous)

The word. Hosios is holy or religiously right, said at 149e of the person whose soul the gods consider. Piety is an explanatory English heading, not a separate technical noun supplied by this passage. The conjunction with just makes appropriate conduct toward gods inseparable here from judgement about human relations.

In Alcibiades II. The decisive comparison is not between someone who performs rituals and someone who performs none. It is between the material gifts visible in a ceremony and the soul of the giver. Sacrifice can be lavish even when that agent has made many mistakes toward both gods and people. Holiness consequently cannot be inferred from religious expenditure alone.

The conclusion names justice and intelligence as honoured by gods and by human beings who have sense. It then identifies the intelligent and just with those who know what they must do and say toward gods and humans. Holiness is drawn into an account of informed conduct, rather than isolated as an instinct of reverence or a capacity to pay for correct ceremonies.

Alcibiades' final practical obligation is to wait until he learns how to be disposed toward both groups. This extends the issue from isolated words to the condition from which speech and action proceed. Yet the dialogue does not offer a complete definition of holiness or a code of duties. It identifies a need for education and the insufficiency of externals while leaving the positive instruction largely prospective.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **149e.** The gods ought to attend to the soul, whether the person is holy and just.
- **150a–150b.** Justice and intelligence determine the assessment of speech and action toward gods and people.
- **150d.** Alcibiades must learn an appropriate disposition before resuming the religious errand.

In this edition. The English holy renders hosios at 149e; the poetic holy Ilium at 149d uses a different form, hirē, and is not evidence that the Trojans satisfy the ethical condition. The polytheistic vocabulary and ceremonial setting should be retained rather than translated into a later doctrine of inward faith.

See also. Justice · Gods and divine giving · Gifts and divine bribery · Teacher, care and waiting · Troy, Trojans and Priam

Homer

Ὅμηρον (Homēron); θειότατον τε καὶ σοφώτατον ποιητήν (theiotaton te kai sophōtaton poiētēn); παρ’ Ὁμήρῳ (par’ Homērōi)

The word. Homer is an explicit poetic authority and the source of several quotations and echoes. Socrates calls him the most divine and wisest of poets in the Margites interpretation. The dialogue’s Homer includes the comic poem commonly attributed to him in antiquity; modern attribution should not be silently substituted for that dramatic claim.

In Alcibiades II. Poetic language appears at several levels. The joint-search invitation at 140a echoes an Iliadic tag, and yesterday and the day before at 141d borrows another. These small adaptations furnish ordinary argumentative speech rather than stopping it for a separate recital. At 142d–142e the Odyssey’s account of human responsibility becomes an explicit explanatory authority, with unintelligence inserted as Socrates’ alternative to recklessness.

The Margites quotation is more contentious. Alcibiades sees no relevance in the fool’s badly knowing many works, and Socrates insists that the poet is riddling. His appeal to Homer’s supreme wisdom supplies a reason to search for a meaning compatible with the argument. That rhetorical move is itself part of the scene; it does not establish that the reconstruction is the poem’s historically certain sense.

The Trojan sacrifice and Athena’s treatment of Diomedes serve different final functions. The first undermines the claim that costly ritual compels divine favour; the second pictures the preliminary work of education. The inherited

material is repeatedly selected and adapted to the immediate philosophical question, rather than reproduced as an unaltered catalogue of Homeric doctrines.

The variety of uses advises discrimination about evidence. A tag, an attributed comic poem, a textually unusual quotation and an altered line of epic speech are not equivalent witnesses. The lexicon should show both what Socrates makes them do and the source edition's limits on their textual or historical status.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **140a.** An Iliadic companionship tag is adapted to joint inquiry.
- **141d.** The recent-news formula is borrowed from Iliad 2.303.
- **142d–142e.** Odyssey 1.32–34 supplies the rebuke to misplaced blame of gods.
- **147b–147d.** The Margites is attributed to Homer and reconstructed as a riddle.
- **149d–149e.** The Trojans' rejected sacrifice provides religious evidence.
- **150d–150e.** Athena and Diomedes supply the educational analogy.

In this edition. Notes 6, 10, 13, 27, 36 and 40 identify the relevant Homeric sources. Most importantly, only one of the five lines quoted as Iliad 8.548–552 stands at that location in the Homeric manuscripts; the final line recurs elsewhere. Burnet's spacing marks exact retained words where poetry is absorbed into prose.

See also. Margites · Zeus · Troy, Trojans and Priam · Athena and Diomedes · The unnamed poet's prayer · Archelaus and his beloved

Ignorance

ἄγνοια (agnoia); ἀγνοεῖν (agnoein)

The word. Agnoia is ignorance or failure to know; agnoein is to be ignorant of something, but can also mean failing to recognise a person. The object and circumstances therefore matter. The dialogue moves between ignorance of what is best and ignorance of a particular identity while retaining a single Greek family.

In Alcibiades II. Alcibiades introduces the noun in his response to the poet's safe prayer at 143a. Ignorance seems responsible for doing and even praying for the worst things without noticing. Socrates does not deny the danger; he objects to blaming ignorance at random. At 143c he requires specification of what is unknown, by whom, and in what condition. A term that appeared to name an unqualified evil becomes a question requiring an object and a situation.

The qualification is proved by an intentionally narrow case. Someone convinced that killing a particular person would be best may be prevented from acting by failure to recognise that person. The missing identity knowledge does not correct the destructive purpose, but prevents its successful execution. Ignorance of the best remains bad at 143e; ignorance that blocks an act chosen under that deficiency can be good at 144c. These are different evaluations of different absences, not a withdrawal of the need for judgment.

The later argument extends the pattern to skills that equip people to act more readily. Its purpose is not to commend ignorance as the completed human ideal. The conversation ends with the need to learn and to become able to

distinguish bad from good. The verb at 147c, where Homer supposedly could not be ignorant that “knowing badly” is impossible, belongs instead to the defence of a poetic interpretation.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **143a–c.** Alcibiades condemns ignorance and Socrates requires qualification.
- **143e.** Ignorance of the best is specifically declared bad.
- **144a–c.** Failure to recognise an intended victim can prevent harmful action.
- **146d–e.** The argument extends to action-producing knowledge without guidance.
- **147c.** The verb is used in the claim about what Homer could not have failed to know.

In this edition. The English deliberately retains “be ignorant of” even at 144b–c, where ordinary English would more naturally say “fail to recognise”. At 143a the printed hosōn kakōn yields “of how many bad things”; the manuscripts’ alternative would give “how great a bad thing”.[12]

See also. Ignorance of the best · Recognition and misrecognition · Protective ignorance · Knowing and thinking one knows · Learning and much learning

12 At 143a Burnet follows the Coislinian correction hosōn kakōn, reflected in the English ‘how many bad things’. The principal manuscripts have hoson kakon, ‘how great a bad thing’. The supplied note 15 makes the change of construction explicit; it does not alter the ensuing need to distinguish kinds of ignorance.

Ignorance of the best

ἡ τοῦ βελτίστου ἄγνοια (hē tou beltistou agnoia); τὸ ἀγνοεῖν τὸ βέλτιστον (to agnoein to beltiston)

The word. The phrase specifies ignorance by its object: what is best. The noun and the substantivised infinitive are deliberately paired at 143e, “ignorance of the best, and being ignorant of the best”. This is the fundamental deficiency against which ignorance of a particular identity or technique must be assessed.

In Alcibiades II. Orestes furnishes the initial test. Socrates asks whether he would have dared his terrible action if he had been intelligent and known what was best for him to do. Alcibiades says no; Socrates extends the denial to anyone else and then declares ignorance of the best bad for all. The conclusion is presented as general, but it is reached through a shared judgment about the example, not through an independent definition of the best or a complete proof of its universal effects.

The hypothesis concerning Pericles shows how this deficiency works. A person ignorant of the best can come to think even the worst action best at some time. The text does not claim that every such person must become murderous; it says that nothing in his condition prevents such an opinion from arising. Socrates expressly disavows attributing the willingness to Alcibiades himself before exploring what would follow from the hypothetical mistake.

The protective failure to recognise Pericles does not remove ignorance of the best. It blocks the execution of one purpose formed under it. Thus the dialogue can call one ignorance bad and another ignorance comparatively

beneficial without inconsistency at the level of their specified objects. The eventual requirement for education aims beyond mere obstruction: Alcibiades must become capable of knowing bad and good, not simply remain unable to carry out his wishes.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **143d–e.** Knowledge of the best is set against Orestes' deed; its absence is called bad for everyone.
- **144a.** Ignorance of the best leaves room for thinking the worst best.
- **144b–c.** Non-recognition prevents an act without correcting its governing opinion.
- **150d–e.** Future education is to make discrimination of bad and good possible.

In this edition. The doubled formulation at 143e should not be abbreviated away: it joins the named condition and the activity of being ignorant. The edition's "best" consistently retains the superlative; "good" alone would weaken the contrast with "worst" at 144a.

See also. Ignorance · Protective ignorance · Knowledge of the best · Better and best · Opinion

Ill-omened words

βλασφημούντων (blasphēmountōn); βλασφημοῦντος (blasphēmountos); βλασφημεῖν (blasphēmein)

The word. Blasphēmein here is to utter ill-omened words in a religious setting. It is opposed to euphēmia, auspicious speech. The translation deliberately avoids blaspheme, whose familiar English sense of insulting God would impose a different criterion on these passages.

In Alcibiades II. The other Greeks at 149c ask for whatever comes to mind, whether good or bad. Their fault is not stated as disbelief or deliberate abuse of the gods: it is indiscriminate petition. To call it ill-omened speech makes a request that seems reverent to its speaker potentially defective by its very content. Gold-horned cattle and other offerings cannot correct that defect.

Socrates brings the general indictment home at 150c. If Alcibiades prays in his present condition, the god may hear ill-omened words, accept none of the sacrifice and perhaps let him acquire something further. The last phrase leaves the threatened consequence suggestive rather than naming a specific punishment. Its force is enough to justify caution without supplying a detailed theology of divine retribution.

The word therefore joins the epistemic and ritual arguments. The danger of misidentifying good and bad is not confined to a private mental error; when expressed as a petition it affects how one approaches the gods. The proposed remedy combines silence, learning and a better disposition toward people as well as gods. Correct ceremonial presentation by itself is insufficient.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **149c.** The gods reject costly rites accompanied by indiscriminate requests.
- **150c.** Alcibiades' own sacrifice is placed under the same warning.

In this edition. The Key Words explicitly distinguish this use from the later English religious associations of blaspheme. Note 35 pairs it with euphēmia as vocabulary of worship. The translation's something else besides at 150c should not be replaced by an invented definite penalty.

See also. Auspicious speech · Sacrifice · Praying in ignorance · Gods and divine giving · Teacher, care and waiting

Inquiry

σκέπτεσθαι (skeptesthai); σκοπεῖν (skopein); ἐπισκοπεῖν (episkopein); ἐπισκέπτεσθαι (episkeptesthai); σκέψις (skepsis); ἀθρεῖν (athrein)

The word. The verbs mean to examine, consider or look into; skepsis is the corresponding examination. Athrein suggests looking closely. They name the activity performed by the speakers, without themselves specifying a single technical method. Inquiry here includes testing a classification, reconsidering a consequence, examining a hypothetical case and judging what to say in worship.

In Alcibiades II. The initial invitation at 138d is to examine who the intelligent and unintelligent people are. The first approach fails, so at 139d Socrates says that they must look at matters another way. Disease and craftsmanship are then examined, and at 140d the original question is deliberately resumed. This sequence presents inquiry as revisable: a plausible beginning does not acquire authority merely because the conversation has already passed through it.

The same movement appears when Alcibiades condemns ignorance generally. Socrates asks them to look further at 143e and constructs the case of a would-be attacker who fails to recognise his victim. At 144d a further invitation introduces the startling thesis about other knowledge without the best. The inquiry progresses through increasingly precise conditions on judgments such as “ignorance is bad” and “knowledge is beneficial”.

The practical end is neither endless questioning nor a completed curriculum. The Spartans may have arrived at their restrained prayer by examining matters for

themselves at 148c. At 149c Socrates explicitly joins caution with examination of what should and should not be spoken. Alcibiades' postponement therefore grows out of inquiry into the safety of action, while the promised education remains future.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138d.** The inquiry asks who the intelligent and unintelligent are.
- **139d; 140a; 140d.** A failed approach is replaced, pursued jointly and returned to the starting question.
- **143e; 144d.** Further examination qualifies the valuation of ignorance and knowledge.
- **148c.** The Spartans may have reached their prayer through their own examination.
- **149c.** Examination is directly required for deciding what to say.

In this edition. The edition generally uses "look into" for this family and "look at" for athrein at 139d. Ordinary "see" and "look" exhortations need not be translated instances of skepsis. No separate doctrine of scepticism should be inferred from the noun.

See also. Agreement and admission · Attention and joint discovery · Generality and qualification · Protective ignorance · Knowing what to do and say

Intelligence and unintelligence

φρόνιμος (phronimos); ἄφρων (aphrōn); φρόνησις (phronēsis); ἀφροσύνη (aphrosynē); φρονεῖν (phronein)

The word. Phronimos names someone who thinks sensibly or has sound judgment; aphrōn denies that quality. Phronēsis and aphrosynē are the corresponding conditions. The family concerns the direction of conduct, rather than a measurable intellectual capacity. Neither possession of information nor success in a specialised activity is enough to establish the intelligence at issue here.

In Alcibiades II. At 138c Alcibiades tries to quarantine the problem of destructive prayer by calling Oedipus mad. Socrates initially explores the relation between being mad and being intelligent, but the resulting identification of all unintelligence with madness is abandoned at 139d. The revised account at 140c–d places madness within a wider field of unintelligence. That correction matters: ordinary people can lack judgment without displaying the behaviour used to make the first conclusion look absurd.

The positive test arrives at 140e: the intelligent know what they must do and say. It is a practical and normative qualification, not simply an ability to execute whatever they choose. The orator, soldier, horseman and boxer can possess genuine knowledge yet fail the test, because knowing how does not settle whether, when, for how long or toward whom the activity should be undertaken. At 145c intelligence requires the accompanying knowledge of the best, identified there with knowledge of the beneficial.

The final return at 150a–b associates intelligence with justice and applies the original formula to relations with both gods and human beings. The dialogue therefore

brings its apparent excursion through classification back to prayer. Alcibiades' problem is not insufficient cleverness in constructing a request: it is his inability to judge the good of what he requests. Socrates' teasing reference to his greatness of soul at 150c shows that an impressive self-image can coexist with this deficiency.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138c–139c.** An initial opposition produces the provisional identification of unintelligence with madness.
- **140c–e.** The wider classification is followed by the test of knowing what to do and say.
- **145b–e.** Technical accomplishment is distinguished from practical intelligence.
- **150a–c.** Intelligence and justice govern conduct toward gods and people; Alcibiades' grand ambition remains suspect.

In this edition. The edition consistently uses "intelligent", "intelligence", "unintelligent" and "unintelligence" to keep the family visible. "Wisdom" belongs to sophia, and "sense" to nous. Reading "intelligent" as mere cleverness would erase precisely the distinction argued at 145b–e.

See also. Madness · Knowing what to do and say · Knowledge of the best · Craft and expertise · Sense · Wisdom

Justice

δικαιοσύνη (dikaiosynē); δίκαιος (dikaios); δίκαιοι (dikaioi)

The word. Dikaiosynē is justice and dikaios the just person. The noun enters emphatically near the close, paired with intelligence; the adjective first helps specify the soul the gods ought to consider. Its limited verbal distribution should not obscure the concluding importance of the concept.

In Alcibiades II. Justice enters the argument as the alternative to ritual purchasing power. If the gods look at the soul and whether a person is holy and just, then wealth cannot ensure divine favour while leaving conduct unexamined. The point applies to cities as well as private people, matching the earlier account of benefit for the city and oneself.

At 150a–150b justice and intelligence are said to be especially honoured by gods and by humans with sense. Socrates then brings the just and intelligent within the description of those who know what they must do and say toward gods and people. This recalls the account of intelligence at 140e and adds the explicit twofold field of application. It gives the religious conclusion a practical and cognitive structure.

The dialogue does not, however, supply an independent derivation proving that every conceivable sense of justice is identical with intelligence, or enumerate all just actions. Its final formulation is compact and responsive to the immediate problem of prayer and sacrifice. Reading it as a fully worked out theory would suppress the fact that Alcibiades still needs education in what the right disposition and discrimination require.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **140e.** The earlier account of intelligence supplies the pattern later extended to justice.
- **149e.** The just soul becomes the proper object of divine attention.
- **150a–150b.** Justice and intelligence are jointly honoured and connected with knowing right action and speech.
- **150d.** The proposed education applies toward gods and people alike.

In this edition. Burnet deletes ē at 150b2, as the apparatus and Editorial Note record, and the translation follows the printed construction. The edition's choice intelligence keeps the connection with phronēsis visible. Justice here must not be confused with payment or a reciprocal commercial balance between worshippers and gods.

See also. Holiness and piety · Gifts and divine bribery · Gods and divine giving · Teacher, care and waiting

Knowing and thinking one knows

εἰδέναι (eidenai); οἴεσθαι εἰδέναι (oiesthai eidenai); δοκεῖν εἰδέναι (dokein eidenai); τῷ ὄντι εἰδέναι (tōi onti eidenai)

The word. The dialogue distinguishes knowing, thinking that one knows, seeming to know and really knowing. Eidenai supplies knowledge; oiesthai supplies the agent's belief; dokein supplies seeming, whose perspective depends on the construction. Their common practical effect can be readiness to act, but that does not make their claims to truth equivalent.

In Alcibiades II. At 144d–e Socrates proposes that before we readily act or speak we must either think we know or actually know what we are about to do. Orators instantiate the alternative: some may know how to advise, while others only think they do. This is a claim about the states supporting confident action. It is not a demonstration that every action, including reflexes or hesitant conduct, requires a prior explicit judgment of knowledge.

The argument then makes a more surprising move than merely exposing false confidence. Even genuine expertise can be harmful without knowledge of the best. The expert and the pretender are different epistemically, yet both may act more eagerly because of their respective assurance. At 146d both are included in the warning, under the condition that acting makes the agent more often harmed than benefited.

This means that the usual contrast between ignorance and pretended knowledge is insufficient to state the dialogue's complete claim. Correcting a false belief about one's technical ability may remove one source of danger; acquiring genuine technical skill without judgment can

introduce another. The necessary distinction is also between knowledge of an operation and knowledge of its proper employment. Socrates' argument relies on preserving both distinctions, not collapsing belief into knowledge.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **144d–e.** Real or believed knowledge is proposed as preceding ready action.
- **144e–145a.** The orators exemplify the alternative in civic advice.
- **145b–e.** Real specialist knowledge can still fall short of intelligence.
- **146b.** The earlier condition is recalled and supplemented by beneficial action.
- **146d.** Both knowing and thinking one knows can encourage harmful activity.

In this edition. The edition keeps "think we know, or really know" and "what he knows or seems to know" distinct where the Greek varies. "Really" renders tōi onti. The repeated formula at 146b should be read back against 144d, while preserving the stronger point that genuine knowledge can also be misdirected.

See also. Knowledge of the best · Opinion · Sense · Protective ignorance · Action and speech · Craft and expertise

Knowing badly

ἐπίστασθαι κακῶς (epistasthai kakōs); κακῶς (kakōs); κακόν (kakon); ἠπίστατο (ēpistato); ἐπίστασθαι (epistasthai)

The word. The phrase “to know badly” combines knowing with the adverb kakōs. Socrates instead proposes that the poem’s point is the badness for its subject of knowing the works. His grammatical distinction turns on adverb against adjective and finite past-tense verb against infinitive. It is an interpretive reconstruction of verse, not an ordinary definition of epistēmē.

In Alcibiades II. The Margites line at 147b says that its subject knew many works but knew them all badly. Alcibiades objects that it has no bearing on the argument. Socrates responds that poets speak in riddles and that Homer, called the wisest and most divine poet, could not have been ignorant of the impossibility of knowing badly. That impossibility is asserted; the dialogue does not separately prove that knowing is incapable of degrees, limitation or poor execution.

The proposed solution at 147d is to take “badly” in place of “bad” and “knew” in place of “to know”. The reconstructed sense is: he knew many works, but it was bad for him to know them all. This does not describe faulty knowledge of the crafts. It describes genuine acquisition as harmful to a person lacking its proper direction, thus fitting the argument that has just been made.

Socrates openly concedes that putting the words together this way takes them outside the metre. That concession prevents treating the reconstruction as a recovered literal text of the poem. It is a claimed riddling intention, plausibly playful and certainly shaped by the philosophical

argument. The conclusion that Margites was a sorry fellow is then made dependent on trusting those prior arguments, rather than established by the poem independently.

The apparatus also shows that the quoted wording itself is mediated by editorial choice. A careful account must distinguish what Burnet prints, what Socrates says Homer means, and what the reader may judge about that interpretation. None should be passed off as an uncontested external fact about the lost poem's original intention.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **147b.** The line is quoted and Alcibiades questions its relevance.
- **147b–c.** Riddling poetry is invoked to explain the difficulty.
- **147c–d.** The impossibility of knowing badly is asserted and the grammar is reinterpreted.
- **147d.** The reconstructed sense is acknowledged to fall outside the metre.
- **147d–e.** The conclusion relies on earlier arguments and receives Alcibiades' trust.

In this edition. Burnet prints kakōs at 147c where T has kalōs, and Bekker's ēpistato at 147d1 where B and T have epistasthai. The English italicises the contrasted words. "Bad for him to know" must not be flattened back into "he was bad at knowing", which would undo Socrates' entire move.

See also. Knowledge of the best · Many crafts · Learning and much learning · Trust · Good and bad · Wisdom

Knowing what to do and say

εἰδέναι (eidenai); ἃ δεῖ πράττειν καὶ λέγειν (ha dei prattein kai legein)

The word. Eidenai is to know; the phrase “what one must do and say” supplies the content of the practical knowledge sought. Dei marks what is required or fitting to do, not simply what one has the physical ability to accomplish. The phrase is a definition by the object of knowledge, not a new technical noun for morality.

In Alcibiades II. At 140e Socrates proposes that the intelligent are those who know what they must do and say; the unintelligent know neither. He then says that those who lack both will unwittingly speak and act as they should not. This makes error in prayer one form of a broader failure of conduct. The inference is stated forcefully: lack of knowledge is taken to issue in misconduct, although the passage does not separately argue that ignorance must produce a wrong act on every occasion.

The intervening discussion gives the formula a more discriminating content. An orator may know how to advise without knowing whether and when advising is better, and the soldier may know war without knowing its right time and duration. Knowing “what one must do” must therefore include the practical appropriateness of deploying a skill. At 145c the knowledge of the best supplies the condition under which technical capacity can make someone a sufficient adviser.

At 150b the formulation returns, now of both intelligent and just people and explicitly toward gods and human beings. The expansion prevents religious speech from

being isolated as a technical ritual accomplishment. The person who can pay for magnificent sacrifice but repeatedly makes mistakes toward gods and people does not thereby satisfy the condition. At 150d education is correspondingly described as learning how one must be disposed toward both.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **140e.** Knowledge of required action and speech defines the intelligent.
- **144e–145c.** Ability to advise or act is tested against when and whether it is better.
- **149e–150b.** The soul, justice and conduct matter more than costly ritual.
- **150d.** The educational task becomes learning the right disposition toward gods and people.

In this edition. The edition retains “must” in the defining phrase, keeping its normative force audible. Burnet brackets an intrusive ē at 150b2, and the English follows the resulting text. “Those who know” should not be expanded into a claim that every knowledgeable specialist is just.

See also. Intelligence and unintelligence · Knowledge of the best · Action and speech · Timing and duration · Advice and oratory

Knowledge of the best

ἡ τοῦ βελτίστου ἐπιστήμη (hē tou beltistou epistēmē); ἡ τοῦ ὠφελίμου (hē tou ōphelimou)

The word. Epistēmē is knowledge; its genitive object here is what is best. At 145c the expression is identified with knowledge of what is beneficial. The text uses this knowledge as the condition governing the proper exercise of other capacities. It does not give an independent account of its acquisition, a formal curriculum, or a named technical science with fully specified contents.

In Alcibiades II. The need for it emerges from ignorance of the best at 143e and the dangerous opinion illustrated at 144a. The first general claim at 144d says that possession of the other kinds of knowledge "without the best" seldom benefits and mostly harms. At 145b the missing content is made concrete: whether and when to advise, when and for how long to wage war, and against whom coercive action is better. These examples identify matters practical guidance must settle without proving that they comprise an exhaustive definition.

At 145c knowledge of the best "accompanies" a person who knows an activity. Under that condition he is intelligent and sufficient to advise both city and self. At 145e the imagined commonwealth lacks both this knowledge and the person who knows when and toward whom its experts should be used. The knowledgeable guide is a distinct grammatical element; the passage cannot be reduced to a list of detached skills that somehow order themselves.

The restatement at 146e expressly names knowledge of the best, followed by the requirement that city and soul hold

fast to it. The doctor and pilot images represent direction and dependence. They establish its claimed governing role, not that Socrates or any other named figure is demonstrated to possess it. At 150d the educator is described only as the person who cares for Alcibiades, and the needed teaching remains ahead.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **143e–144a.** Ignorance of the best allows destructive practical judgment.
- **144d.** Other knowledge is assessed when possessed "without the best".
- **145b–c.** Timing, duration and object exemplify its practical task; best and beneficial are identified.
- **145e–146a.** The commonwealth lacks both the knowledge and the knowledgeable user of specialists.
- **146e–147a.** City and soul must depend on it as patient and voyager depend on guides.

In this edition. At 144d Burnet retains "without the best"; Dobree proposed adding the article needed for "without that of the best". The edition does not insert that conjecture silently. At 146e the fuller expression is in the printed Greek, making the later clarification explicit.[13]

See also. Ignorance of the best · Intelligence and unintelligence · Benefit and harm · Craft and expertise · Possession and guidance · City and soul

13 The compressed formulation of 144d is 'without the best'. As the edition's note 19 records, Dobree proposed an additional article that makes it 'without that of the best', namely the corresponding knowledge. At 146e the recapitulation explicitly says knowledge of the best. The later expansion illuminates the earlier expression without becoming its printed wording.

Learning and much learning

πολυμαθία (polymathia); μανθάνειν (manthanein); μάθῃ (mathēi); παιδεύειν (paideuein)

The word. Polymathia is much learning, the possession of knowledge in many areas. Manthanein is to learn, and paideuein to educate; the dialogue uses the forms mathēi, "learns", and ho paideusōn, "the one who is to educate". Quantity of learning and the learning still required of Alcibiades are related by the argument, but they are not interchangeable expressions.

In Alcibiades II. At 147a the man of what is called much learning and much craft is imagined as an orphan of the knowledge of the best. Each of his other kinds of knowledge can lead him, leaving him without a pilot in a storm. The criticism targets learning deprived of ordering judgment. The text does not claim that knowing many subjects necessarily harms, or that a smaller stock of information by itself constitutes wisdom.

The transition to Margites sharpens the point: according to Socrates' reinterpretation, knowing many works was bad for him, rather than all his knowing being technically poor. Alcibiades resists the relevance of the quotation before accepting the argument. The poetic example therefore reinforces a contestable valuation of many things known; it is not independent evidence that all learning is an obstacle to living well.

At 150d the positive need to learn is explicit. Alcibiades must wait until he learns how he should be disposed toward gods and people, and asks who will educate him. The answer requires removal of the soul's mist before the materials enabling discrimination of bad and good can be

supplied. Learning is accordingly sequenced by the pupil's condition and the character of the object, rather than opposed to an ideal of permanent ignorance.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **147a.** Much learning without knowledge of the best is compared with being unguided at sea.
- **147b–d.** The Margites interpretation connects many things known with possible harm.
- **150d.** Alcibiades asks when the necessary learning will occur and who will educate him.
- **150e.** Removal of the mist must precede instruction enabling moral discrimination.

In this edition. Burnet prints polymathia from T at 147a, while B has philomathia, "love of learning". The edition's "much learning" follows the printed text; it is not evidence that the dialogue condemns a love of learning. The accompanying polytechnia has a parallel manuscript variation.[14]

See also. Many crafts · Knowledge of the best · Possession and guidance · Knowing badly · Ignorance

14 At 147a Burnet prints polymathia from T against B's philomathia, and polytechnia from B against T's philotechnia with poly- written above. The supplied note 25 distinguishes 'much learning' and 'much craft' from the alternatives 'love of learning' and 'love of craft'. Criticism of accumulated capabilities should not silently be rewritten as criticism of loving study.

Madness

μανία (mania); μαίνεσθαι (mainesthai); μαινόμενος (mainomenos)

The word. Mania is madness; mainesthai is to be mad, and the participle can describe a mad person. In this dialogue the terms occur within an ordinary polemical classification, not a clinical account. Their argumentative role depends on what the speakers are prepared to call mad and on the behaviours Socrates associates with that label.

In Alcibiades II. Alcibiades first uses the label to separate himself from Oedipus: a healthy person would not dare to pray as Oedipus did. Socrates replies by obtaining agreement that madness is opposite to intelligence. Together with an exhaustive division into intelligent and unintelligent people and a rule permitting only one opposite, this yields the conclusion that every unintelligent person is mad. Its shocking consequence is that the many fellow citizens whom Alcibiades calls unintelligent should all behave like the violent madmen invoked at 139d.

The corrected comparison is with kinds of illness and craft. At 140c the mad are those who possess the largest share of unintelligence; people with somewhat less receive other labels. The passage combines differences of degree with differences of kind, and does not supply a medical boundary between them. Its useful negative conclusion is clearer: sharing the wider description “unintelligent” does not make all cases identical to the conspicuous extreme.

Oedipus returns at 141a as an unintelligent person acting in anger, while many present-day people act without that anger and believe their requests good. The subsequent

argument therefore no longer needs to diagnose every mistaken suppliant as mad. Alcibiades' "madcap" at 148a belongs to margos, the word played upon through Margites, rather than to the mania family; it should not be treated as a formal return to the initial classification.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138c.** Alcibiades calls Oedipus a madman, and Socrates asks about the opposite of intelligence.
- **139b–d.** The identity thesis leads to the rejected picture of a city of violent madmen.
- **140c–d.** Madness becomes the largest share of a differentiated unintelligence.
- **141a.** Angry Oedipus is distinguished from people who mistake bad requests for good.
- **148a.** "Madcap" uses a different Greek word and recalls Margites.

In this edition. The edition distinguishes "mad", "madman" and "madness" as the syntax requires, but retains the lexical family. Its "thunderstruck" at 140c is embrontētos, not another occurrence of mania. The classification and its potentially insulting names belong to the dialogue's speakers.

See also. Intelligence and unintelligence · Health and sickness · Opposites · Division and parts · Knowing badly

Many and few

οἱ πολλοί (hoi polloi); ὀλίγοι (oligoi); τὰ πολλά (ta polla); ὀλιγάκις (oligakis)

The word. Hoi polloi means the many, oligoi the few. Ta polla can mean for the most part, and oligakis seldom or rarely. The expressions concern different quantities: the number of people described, the frequency of their failures, or the frequency of benefit from knowledge. They should not be treated as interchangeable logical quantifiers.

In Alcibiades II. At 139c Alcibiades agrees that intelligent citizens are few and unintelligent ones many. When unintelligence has just been identified with madness, this produces the absurdly dangerous city of madmen. The demographic premise survives the rejection of that identification: Socrates resumes it at 145a and 146c. The many are not being rediagnosed as the violent extreme; they are people who lack the guiding practical judgment.

The numerical contrast supplies no census, social class or named party. Although it takes place in a civic conversation, “the many” cannot automatically be equated with a particular constitutional faction. The experts of the imagined commonwealth can be included in the deficiency despite being exceptionally skilled. Technical distinction is not a guarantee of membership in the intelligent few.

Frequency language separately qualifies the central thesis. Other knowledge without the best seldom benefits and mostly harms at 144d and 146e; the many have in most things trusted opinion without sense at 146c. These are broad empirical-sounding assertions for which examples and analogies are offered, not numerical findings.

Preserving the qualifiers avoids converting “for the most part” into “in every case”.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **139c–d.** The many/few contrast makes the proposed identity of madness and unintelligence untenable.
- **145a.** The numerical contrast is resumed without that identity.
- **146c–d.** The many’s typical judgment and readiness to act sustain the warning.
- **144d; 146e.** Seldom and mostly qualify the assessment of ungoverned knowledge.

In this edition. The edition retains both the many/few opposition and the frequency adverbs. At 146e Burnet prints oligakis, “seldom”, while Cobet proposed oliga, “few things”. The printed text therefore makes a frequency claim that should not be silently converted into a count of beneficial items.

See also. Intelligence and unintelligence · Madness · Generality and qualification · Knowledge of the best · Knowing and thinking one knows

Many crafts

πολυτεχνία (polytechnia); τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιστημῶν (tōn allōn epistēmōn)

The word. Polytechnia means possession of many crafts or much craft. Its only occurrence in the dialogue, at 147a, joins much learning. The surrounding language of "the other kinds of knowledge" makes the relevant contrast: plurality of competencies can equip a person to do many things while leaving their direction unsettled.

In Alcibiades II. The thesis about the other kinds of knowledge is introduced at 144d and restated at 146e. It is a claim about their possession without knowledge of the best, not about an inherent defect in their particular subject matters. The intervening examples include skilled advice, war, horsemanship, boxing and flute-playing. Accumulating such abilities does not automatically answer the question of when and toward whom each should be used.

At 147a plurality becomes a source of competing direction. The person of many crafts is "led by each one of the others" while orphaned of the governing knowledge. This recalls the commonwealth whose experts promote their own fields. The one person and the collective suffer analogous problems: the available powers do not select or coordinate their own appropriate employment merely by existing together.

The nautical image gives this deficiency a consequence. A stronger favourable wind can make the unguided course more dangerous, just as greater capacity can enlarge mistakes. The argument does not supply a numerical threshold beyond which craftsmanship becomes excessive.

Its decisive condition is lack of a pilot, so the remedy is guidance rather than a stipulated maximum number of crafts.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **144d.** Possession of other kinds of knowledge is first assessed without the best.
- **145e–146a.** A multiplicity of capable specialists fails to govern itself.
- **146e–147a.** The guiding knowledge is required for both city and soul.
- **147a–b.** Much craft without a pilot becomes a storm-bound course of life.

In this edition. At 147a Burnet prints polytechnia from B. T has philotechnia, “love of craft”, with poly- written above its opening letters. “Much craft” therefore follows a stated textual choice; it must not be casually restated as the manuscript-unanimous “love of arts”.

See also. Learning and much learning · Craft and expertise · Knowledge of the best · Possession and guidance · City and soul

Margites

Μαργίτην (Margitēn); μάργον (margon); πολλὰ μὲν ἠπίστατο ἔργα (polla men ēpistato erga)

The word. Margites is the fool of the comic poem whose statement that he knew many works badly Socrates brings to bear on knowledge without knowledge of the best. The adjective margos, rendered madcap at 148a, supplies an audible possible play on the character's name.

In Alcibiades II. The poem is introduced at the end of the pilot-and-storm argument. A person with much learning and craft but no governing knowledge becomes an intelligible counterpart to the fool with many works. Alcibiades challenges the relevance, which gives Socrates occasion to explain that poets characteristically speak in riddles and may conceal what they mean.

The name's literary force should not be reduced to the grammatical reconstruction alone. Margites is already a recognizable figure of misdirected multiplicity: many accomplishments do not secure a well-conducted life. Socrates' eventual judgement that he is a sorry fellow aligns him with the sorry commonwealth of experts, whose several talents likewise fail to produce sound direction.

At 148a Alcibiades calls the problem of making a safe choice madcap. The edition notes that the word can be heard as a pun on Margites. That possible echo lets the literary fool's predicament approach the speaker's own: the inability to judge a request is no longer merely someone else's comic defect. The pun remains a reading, not a stage direction announcing laughter.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **147b.** The comic quotation follows the picture of knowledge without a pilot.
- **147c–147d.** Socrates names Margites and attributes the poem to Homer.
- **148a.** Alcibiades' madcap may recall the name of the poem just discussed.

In this edition. Note 27 says the poem was commonly ascribed to Homer in antiquity and cites Aristotle, Poetics 1448b30, alongside the dialogue's own attribution. The article therefore records that attribution without asserting established Homeric authorship. Note 29 treats the margos echo as a possible pun. The detailed shifts from badly to bad and knew to to know belong with the separate account of poetic interpretation.

See also. Homer · Physician, pilot and storm · Alcibiades · Praying in ignorance

Mist and seeing

ἀχλύς (achlys); ἀπὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν (apo tōn ophthalmōn); ἀπὸ τῆς ψυχῆς (apo tēs psychēs); γνώσεσθαι (gnōsesthai)

The word. Achlys is mist, first located in the Homeric eyes of Diomedes and then transferred to Alcibiades' soul. The image distinguishes removal of an obstruction from the subsequent capacity to know bad and good. It is a metaphor of preparation and discrimination, not an anatomical account of thought.

In Alcibiades II. The dialogue begins with Alcibiades looking at the ground, but that visible posture does not itself diagnose what the final mist is. Socrates says he looks like someone pondering; the following conversation establishes the uncertainty of his judgements. The final image gives that epistemic condition a perceptual form after it has been displayed in argument.

Athena removes Diomedes' mist so that he can distinguish god from man. Socrates adapts the structure rather than equating its objects: the educator will remove mist from Alcibiades' soul and then bring what enables knowledge of bad and good. The analogy transforms seeing into the capacity to discriminate the values needed for action and prayer.

The order first and then is important. More information or skill, supplied while the mist remains, would not necessarily give the learner the governing understanding the dialogue demands. The image therefore summarizes why much learning and much craft were insufficient. It also prevents treating the refusal to pray as a permanent conclusion: the obstruction is pictured as removable.

Alcibiades consents enthusiastically, even to removal of something other than the mist if the teacher wishes. His assent shows readiness for a process, not proof that the obstruction has disappeared. The ending remains a promise of clearer vision whose success the dialogue does not narrate.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138a.** The downward gaze begins the encounter without yet explaining its significance.
- **147e–148a.** Alcibiades' changing judgements exhibit the instability the later metaphor addresses.
- **150d–150e.** The Homeric optical mist becomes a condition of the soul to be removed before instruction.

In this edition. Note 40 identifies Iliad 5.127–128 and explains the change from Athena's first-person speech to third-person report. The soul's mist is not explicitly identified with a named metaphysical substance or a later religious doctrine of sin. The connection to the opening gaze is a literary observation, not a gloss supplied by the dialogue.[15]

See also. Athena and Diomedes · Teacher, care and waiting · Soul and life · Praying in ignorance

15 The edition's note 40 identifies Iliad 5.127–128. Athena there removes mist from Diomedes' eyes so that he can distinguish god and man. Socrates changes the report to the third person and adapts the formula to bad and good. The educational application is expressed through that change, not by equating the two discriminations without explanation.

Names of unintelligence

ἠλίθιος (ēlithios); ἐμβρόντητος (embrontētos); μεγαλόψυχος (megalopsychos); εὐήθης (euēthēs); ἄκακος (akakos); ἄπειρος (apeiros); ἐνεός (eneos)

The word. The list moves from blunt terms for stupidity or stupefaction to descriptions that can sound charitable or complimentary: idiot, thunderstruck, great-souled, simple, innocent, inexperienced and tongue-tied. These are names applied to persons, not seven demonstrated psychological species.

In Alcibiades II. After abandoning the identification of all unintelligence with madness, Socrates describes people as having different portions of unintelligence. The largest portion earns the name mad. Those with less receive the first two labels; those wishing to use the most auspicious names offer the following five. The difference between the seven labels and the five expressly auspicious ones matters: calling the whole sequence complimentary would erase the joke's movement.

The polite names do not merely substitute modern clinical categories for an offensive one. Their ordinary positive or mitigating associations allow Socrates to expose the flattering relabelling of a defect. "Great-souled" is the clearest trap for an ambitious young man. "Simple" can suggest goodness of character or lack of sophistication; "innocent" absence of malice; "inexperienced" lack of practice; "tongue-tied" incapacity to speak. Their grouping is rhetorically pointed without proving that all such traits are morally or intellectually identical.

Two labels return. The Athenian reasoning about expensive offerings is "simple" at 149e. Alcibiades'

unwillingness to adopt the Spartan prayer is predicted from his greatness of soul at 150c, where Socrates explicitly recalls its place among the names of unintelligence. These recurrences make the early comic list part of the final religious and educational judgment.

The register defines each label separately because its lexical meaning remains different from the use imposed by the list. This article explains the structure that connects them. Neither definition licenses using the dialogue as a contemporary classification of mental illness.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **140c.** Idiot and thunderstruck precede the turn to auspicious naming; great-souled and simple begin the flattering sequence.
- **140d.** Innocent, inexperienced and tongue-tied complete the sequence.
- **149e.** “Simple” returns in the criticism of a transactional view of sacrifice.
- **150c.** Greatness of soul becomes a direct ironic description of Alcibiades.

In this edition. The edition renders euphēmotata as “most auspicious,” keeping it in the same family as the religious speech of 143d and 149b. “Kindest” would make the local politeness intelligible but weaken this larger connection.[16]

See also. Unintelligence · Madness · Auspicious speech · Great-souled · Simple

16 Supplied note 7, 140c–d, and notes 37–38, 149e and 150c. The last three labels begin in 140d. The noun megalopsychia at 150c returns to the adjective megalopsychos at 140c; that local ironic relation takes priority over any later technical portrait of magnanimity.

Oedipus and his sons

Οἰδίπουν (Oidipoun); τοὺς ὑεῖς (tous hyeis); χαλκῷ διελέσθαι τὰ πατρῷα (chalkōi dielesthai ta patrōia)

The word. Oedipus is introduced through the reported prayer that his sons should divide their paternal inheritance with bronze, meaning by the sword. The dialogue does not name the sons; the edition's note identifies them as Eteocles and Polynices and supplies their tragic background.

In Alcibiades II. The story is an inaugural warning about asking gods for harm. Oedipus could have prayed for relief from existing troubles, but calls down additional ones. The fulfilment and its dreadful sequels establish that a prayer's being answered is not a sufficient measure of its success for human life.

Alcibiades' reply treats Oedipus as a madman and attempts to separate his own situation from the example. This initiates the inquiry into madness, intelligence and unintelligence. When Socrates eventually returns to Oedipus, the emphasis changes: he belongs among those who do and say what they must not, but his anger and conscious harmful intention distinguish him from people who mistakenly seek apparent good.

The figure therefore performs two tasks. He unsettles the assumption that prayer must aim at benefit, and he supplies a limit-case that Socrates must refine before it can reach Alcibiades. The dialogue's argument does not require that all ordinary prayer reproduce Oedipus' psychology. It requires only that divine fulfilment can have a damaging object, whether knowingly or ignorantly chosen.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138b–138c.** The curse on the sons gives the opening danger its tragic illustration.
- **138c–138d.** Alcibiades' charge of madness launches the first conceptual inquiry.
- **140e–141a.** Oedipus is reassigned to those who do not know what they must do and say, then distinguished by anger.

In this edition. Notes 1–2 cite Aeschylus, Seven against Thebes 785–790, and Euripides, Phoenician Women 66–70. Those tragedians name iron where this dialogue has bronze. The request concerns the sons' inheritance, not a division of Oedipus' body or a general prayer for war. The supplied son-names should remain labelled as background.

See also. Curse · Anger · Praying in ignorance · Children and parenthood · Euripides

Opinion

δόξα (doxa); δοκεῖν (dokein); οἴεσθαι (oiesthai)

The word. Doxa is what a person thinks or believes, and also the estimation in which someone is held. Dokein means to seem or think, and oiesthai to think or suppose. The noun's local function varies: a practical judgment, an unsupported reliance, and a favourable assessment at the close should not be treated as identical uses.

In Alcibiades II. At 144a an opinion can occur to someone ignorant of the best, making even the worst seem best. At 144c the benefit of non-recognition is expressly for people disposed in this way and holding such opinions. Opinion is thus not merely a weaker description of technical skill: it can determine the end toward which technical and identifying capacities are directed.

At 146a and 146c the recurrent criticism is trusting opinion "without sense". The qualification matters. The text does not say that every opinion whatsoever is necessarily harmful, nor provide a full theory classifying true and false belief. It explains the experts' and the many's failure through reliance on an inadequately governed seeming, which lets a limited strength masquerade as the best for city and self.

The many occurrences of "it seems" in the conversation also display its provisional character. Alcibiades says the thesis now seems right at 146e, and at 147e his response can be read as another change of view. At 151b, however, Socrates welcomes Alcibiades' doxa as an omen: in the edition's reading it is his good opinion of the advice, expressed by the wreath. This is a favourable relational

judgment, not a retraction of the earlier warning about senseless reliance.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **144a; 144c.** An opinion of what is best can set a harmful aim.
- **146a; 146c.** Opinion without sense is trusted in place of adequate guidance.
- **146e–147e.** What seems right to Alcibiades remains unstable.
- **151a–b.** The wreath expresses the favourable opinion Socrates accepts as an omen.

In this edition. The edition preserves doxa as “opinion” at 151b, while its note records proposed readings meaning “gift”. At 147e it takes palin au moi dokei as renewed reversal but records the possible further assent. The ambivalence should not be converted into certainty about Alcibiades’ settled belief.

See also. Knowing and thinking one knows · Sense · Trust · Agreement and admission · Ignorance of the best

Opposites

ὑπεναντίον (hypenantion); ὑπεναντία (hypenantia); ἐναντία (enantia); τἀναντία (tanantia)

The word. These expressions name what is opposite or contrary. Tanantia contracts ta enantia, “the opposite things”. The dialogue uses opposition both in an explicit argument about classification and in ordinary descriptions of contrary conduct or outcomes. A reader should not impose a single fully developed logical theory on every occurrence.

In Alcibiades II. At 138c madness is said to be opposite to being intelligent. At 139b Socrates recalls this admission and asks how two things could be opposite to one thing. Alcibiades’ denial allows unintelligence and madness to be identified. The crucial extra assumption is uniqueness: it is not supplied merely by the claim that one cannot be neither intelligent nor unintelligent. Describing two conditions as opposed to a third does not without further specification establish their identity.

The dialogue itself refuses the resulting extension of “mad” to the unintelligent majority. Its replacement account makes madness a differentiated share of unintelligence. It does not return to provide a formal correction of the earlier rule about opposites, and a reading companion should leave that argumentative gap visible rather than silently rewrite the first argument into a valid demonstration.

Elsewhere the word works without this uniqueness principle. At 141a the opposite condition concerns people who think their prayers good, unlike Oedipus; at 143d it is the opposite assertion about Alcibiades’ willingness to

commit matricide. At 145c and 146c the opposite is the unfavourable condition of someone without guiding knowledge or beneficial action. At 148d the gods may give what was requested or its opposite. These uses mark contrasts whose content comes from their immediate context.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138c.** Madness is first described as opposite to intelligence.
- **139b–d.** The uniqueness-of-opposite premise produces an identity subsequently rejected.
- **141a.** Contrary attitudes to the goodness of a prayer are distinguished.
- **145c; 146c.** The favourable practical condition is contrasted with its opposite.
- **148d.** Divine giving is not bound to match the request.

In this edition. The English usually says “opposite” for both hypenantion and enantion. The entry therefore separates the logical role at 139b from later ordinary contrasts without pretending that the translation marks a technical distinction between the Greek expressions.

See also. Excluded middle and the third condition · Madness · Division and parts · Good and bad · Agreement and admission

Orestes

Ὀρέστην (Orestēn); τῇ μητρί (tēi mētri); ἠγνόησεν (ēgnoēsen)

The word. Orestes is the matricide whose case connects ignorance of the best with knowledge of a particular person. Socrates invokes the familiar deed, while the edition's note supplies the names Clytemnestra and Agamemnon and the motive of vengeance.

In Alcibiades II. The first question at 143c denies that Alcibiades would be willing to do to his own mother what Orestes and Alcmaeon did. Alcibiades' protest against ill-omened speech shows how shocking the association is. Socrates insists that his denial, rather than the hypothetical act itself, is what was actually asserted.

Orestes is then considered under two different counterfactuals. If he had been intelligent and known what was best for him to do, he would not have dared the deed. This supports the badness of ignorance of the best. Later, if he had failed to recognize his mother, he would not have attacked her, since his intention was directed at his own mother rather than any woman whatsoever.

The two arguments must remain distinct. The first alters the governing judgement; the second leaves the harmful intention in place but removes information necessary to carry it out. The practical prevention is similar, but the cognitive condition is not. Their conjunction is what establishes that some particular ignorance can be beneficial without making ignorance of the best good.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **143c–143d.** Orestes and Alcmaeon make matricide the limit-case provoking Alcibiades' protest.

- **143d–143e.** Knowledge of the best would prevent the act.
- **144b–144c.** Failure to recognize the mother would also block it, for a different reason.

In this edition. The dialogue does not here tell the surrounding tragic story, cite an oracle commanding the murder, or debate Apollo's responsibility. Adding those complications as the stated premises would replace the example the speakers actually use. Note 16 supplies only the essential family background.

See also. Alcmaeon · Pericles · Auspicious speech · Praying in ignorance

Pericles

Περικλέα (Periklea); ἐπίτροπόν τε καὶ φίλον (epitropon te kai philon)

The word. Pericles is Alcibiades' own guardian and friend. He appears as the intended victim in an explicitly hypothetical case, not as someone whom the dialogue alleges Alcibiades actually wished to kill. His personal closeness intensifies the example while recognition makes its logic work.

In Alcibiades II. Socrates imagines that Alcibiades comes to believe it better to kill Pericles and arrives at his house armed with a dagger. He immediately disavows saying that Alcibiades is willing to do this. The case isolates a false judgement of the best: nothing prevents an ignorant person from mistaking the worst action for the best.

If Alcibiades sees Pericles but fails to recognize him, he will not attack, because he wishes to kill this particular man and nobody else. Repeated failure of recognition would repeatedly block the intended deed. A lack of particular knowledge can therefore protect the agent and victim when the governing judgement is corrupt.

The example does not recommend permanent ignorance of one's guardian or imply that failed recognition supplies moral understanding. It supports a conditional comparison: for someone so disposed and holding such opinions, this ignorance is better than the corresponding ability to identify the target. The need for knowledge of the best remains, and the example immediately helps explain why other knowledge is not sufficient.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **143e–144a.** The guardian and friend becomes the target of a carefully qualified hypothetical intention.
- **144a–144b.** Failure to recognize the particular intended victim prevents the attack.
- **144b–144c.** The comparison with Orestes establishes the conditional benefit of such ignorance.

In this edition. Note 18 gives the guardianship background from Alcibiades I 104b and 112c, including Cleinias' death at Coronea. The edition's introduction notes that treating Pericles as alive points before his death in 429 BC, incompatible with the recent death of Archelaus in 399. The future doxei at 144a is translated as Burnet prints it, not as Buttmann's proposed optative.

See also. Alcibiades · Orestes · Praying in ignorance · Teacher, care and waiting

Perplexity and reversal

ἀπορία (aporia), perplexity; μεταβαλλόμενος (metaballomenos), changing; πάλιν αὖ μοι δοκεῖ (palin au moi dokei), it seems to me again / back the other way

The word. Aporia is lack of a way through, difficulty or perplexity. A reversal is a change in what seems right. The experience can disclose an inadequacy in one's practical judgment without furnishing the knowledge that would remedy it.

In Alcibiades II. Following the examination of ignorance and knowledge, Alcibiades initially accepts the reading of the Margites. His next very short reply, palin au moi dokei, is difficult to fix in isolation. Palin can mean again or back; this edition reads it as a fresh turn in the opposite direction. Socrates immediately says that Alcibiades changes up and down, giving that reading contextual support. The alternative of renewed assent remains possible and is recorded in the note.

Socrates describes the extent and character of the perplexity and includes himself in it. This self-inclusion prevents the exchange from becoming a simple exhibition of another person's stupidity. Yet it does not erase the difference between Socrates' guidance and Alcibiades' uncertainty. The imagined divine offer is repeated to show whether Alcibiades can now choose responsibly, and he says that he cannot answer in that fashion.

At 150b Socrates asks whether Alcibiades remembers saying he was in much perplexity about praying. A careful reader notices that the noun has been supplied by Socrates in the earlier exchange. Alcibiades has displayed and acknowledged the difficulty, but the text need not be

rewritten as though he independently formulated every term Socrates uses to characterize it.

The recommendation to wait is a response to this practical condition. Perplexity is not celebrated as an indefinitely sufficient end in itself. It opens an educational need that is accepted but not fulfilled before the conversation closes.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **147e.** The ambiguous reply is followed by Socrates' description of repeated change and shared perplexity.
- **148a–b.** Alcibiades cannot responsibly select the object of the divine grant.
- **150b–d.** Socrates recalls the difficulty and recommends postponement until learning has occurred.

In this edition. Note 28 explicitly records both readings of the short reply. The lexicon follows the printed English's reversal while retaining the alternative; the edition's final record also observes that the word perplexity at 150b is Socrates' characterization.[17]

See also. Argument and revision · Agreement and admission · Prayer and wishing · Teacher, care and waiting

17 Supplied note 28, 147e. The phrase palin au moi dokei can be read as "it seems so to me again," while the translation takes palin as a turn back. Socrates' following description of moving up and down supports the latter without eliminating the lexical alternative.

Physician, pilot and storm

ἰατροῦ (iatrou); κυβερνήτου (kybernētou); χειμῶνι (cheimōni); ἐν πελάγει (en pelagei); κλύδωνι (klydōni)

The word. Iatros is a doctor and kybernētēs a ship's pilot or steersman. Cheimōn is the storm awaiting the person whose many skills lack direction; klydōn is the rough sea of the closing Euripidean comparison. The images make dependence on guiding judgement concrete without defining that knowledge exhaustively.

In Alcibiades II. At 146e a city and a soul must hold fast to knowledge of the best as the sick hold to a doctor and someone wanting to sail safely holds to a pilot. The analogies make the need structural. Having an illness or a destination does not supply the expertise required to reach health or safety, just as having resources and skills does not determine their beneficial use.

The pilot image is then expanded. A favourable wind supplies more power, but without the relevant knowledge the resulting mistakes grow with it. The person of much learning and craft is an orphan of the governing knowledge and is led by each lesser capacity. Going on at sea without a pilot ends in a storm and a short course of life. The danger is fragmentation of direction, not merely a shortage of technical accomplishments.

The earlier physicians at 140b support a different point: diseases have distinct effects while remaining species of disease. That taxonomic use should not be conflated with the later doctor as guide. Together the examples display how ordinary expertise can clarify an argument even while expertise itself is denied sufficiency for living well.

The final rough sea returns through Creon's words and Socrates' hoped-for victory. It is no longer simply the ignorant individual's unpiloted life; it expresses the uncertainty of the educational and erotic contest. The repeated maritime language joins the need for direction with the fact that Socrates' success is still prospective.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **140b.** Doctors are cited for differences among diseases in the earlier analogy.
- **146e–147a.** Doctor and pilot model the dependence of city and soul on knowledge of the best.
- **147a–147b.** Fair wind, multiple skills and absence of a pilot culminate in storm.
- **151b–151c.** The Euripidean rough sea describes Socrates' uncertain prospect of victory.

In this edition. Notes 24–26 expose the textual work behind 147a–147b: the fair-wind wording and fortune are corrected readings; much learning and much craft are selected across the two main witnesses; of life and running are Stephanus' readings, with Schanz proposing sailing. The printed running need not be silently changed to keep the nautical metaphor uniform.[18]

See also. Wealth, bodily strength and fortune · Soul and life · Margites · Creon and Teiresias · Erotic rivalry and victory

18 At 147b the edition follows Stephanus' biou, 'of life', and the participle theōn, 'running'. Note 26 records the manuscripts' accusative bion and their differing accentuation of the following form, as well as Schanz's pleōn, 'sailing'. The nautical context can motivate the last proposal without making it the edition's printed word.

Poetry, riddle and authority

ποιητική (poiētikē), poetry; ποιητής (poiētēs), poet; αἰνίττεσθαι (ainittesthai), speak in riddles; αἰνιγματώδης (ainigmatōdēs), riddling

The word. A poet makes and voices verse; a riddling expression conveys something indirectly or obscurely. Quotation can authorize a claim, supply an image, make a joke or become the object of reinterpretation. These functions need to be distinguished even when the same poet is invoked.

In Alcibiades II. The dialogue draws repeatedly on poetry. The opening curse recalls tragedy; the “two together” tag encourages joint inquiry; the quoted Zeus criticizes human blame; an anonymous prayer supplies a desirable alternative; Euripides describes how each person gives attention to a favoured activity; Homeric scenes illuminate rejected sacrifice and the removal of mist. The end adapts tragic victory wreaths to Socrates’ own situation.

The Margites discussion makes the act of interpretation itself explicit. At 147b Alcibiades questions how the quotation bears on their discussion. Socrates answers that poets speak in riddles; at 147c he then asserts that it is impossible to know badly. A knowledgeable interpreter is needed, and the problem becomes harder if a poet is envious or unwilling to reveal his wisdom.

This portrait of the withholding poet should not be silently converted into a doctrine that all poetry has a single esoteric philosophical message. Socrates reconstructs this line by replacing an adverb with an adjective and a finite verb with an infinitive; he says the reconstructed sense falls outside metre. He is showing how the line can be

made to fit the prior argument. Whether that is persuasive exegesis remains open to the reader.

Textual transmission adds another difficulty. The Trojan sacrificial verses are not all found at the quoted place in the surviving Homeric text, and the anonymous prayer has variant wording in other witnesses. A quoted line is therefore not a transparent window into a single invariant source. The lexicon marks the edition's own apparatus and explanatory notes rather than assimilating every quotation to a modern standard text.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **140a.** The "two together" adaptation makes a Homeric tag serve cooperative inquiry.
- **142d–143a.** Homeric blame and the anonymous prayer redirect the evaluation of petitions.
- **146a.** Euripides' verse is adapted to the expert commonwealth.
- **147b–d.** The riddling poet becomes an explicit hermeneutic problem.
- **149d–e.** The Trojan verses raise a separate issue of quotation and textual transmission.
- **150d–151c.** Homeric vision and tragic crowns supply the closing educational images.

In this edition. Greek letterspacing and verse layout determine the edition's English quotation marks. The words "or unintelligence" at 142d belong to Socrates' addition, not to the cited Homeric wording; "of the commonwealth" at 146a is an adaptation. The *Margites* is traditionally attributed to Homer within the dialogue, not treated here as securely Homeric authorship.[19]

See also. Homer · Margites · Euripides · Knowing badly · The unnamed poet's prayer

19 Supplied notes 6, 13–14, 23, 27, 36 and 40–41. At 147d Socrates expressly describes substitutions and a reconstruction outside metre. The lexicon discusses this as interpretation performed by a speaker rather than independently certifying it as the original poet's intention.

Possession and guidance

κτῆμα (ktēma); κεκτημένος (kektēmenos); ἀντέχεσθαι (antechesthai); παρέπεσθαι (parepesthai); ὀρφανός (orphanos); κυβερνήτης (kybernētēs)

The word. Ktēma is a possession, and kektēmenos describes someone who has acquired or possesses something. Antechesthai is to hold fast to; parepesthai to accompany or follow alongside. Orphanos means orphaned or bereft, and kybernētēs is a pilot or helmsman. The image contrasts having capacities with having their proper direction.

In Alcibiades II. The first thesis calls other knowledge a possession at 144d. Acquisition by itself is insufficient because the possessor may lack the best. At 145c the governing knowledge must accompany the skilled person, while at 146e city and soul must hold fast to it. These expressions describe a relation between capacities and guidance. The dialogue does not present the best as simply one more interchangeable specialist item in a collection.

The commonwealth passage strengthens the personal dimension by distinguishing the knowledge from the one who knows when to use the experts. At 147a the learned and many-skilled man is called an orphan of the required knowledge and is led by each of his other attainments. The language makes lack of an ordering relation feel like abandonment, even in the midst of abundant possessions.

The doctor and pilot are models of useful dependence. A sick person and a voyager do not benefit merely from owning instruments, and a strong wind is dangerous without direction. Yet the comparison does not establish blind obedience to any claimant of expertise: what makes

the guide adequate is the knowledge whose possession is at issue. The dialogue ends by describing a caring teacher without proving a general institutional solution for identifying every such guide.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **144d.** Other knowledge is explicitly described as a possession.
- **145c.** Knowledge of the best must accompany the skilled person.
- **145e–146a.** Knowledge and the person able to employ specialists are separately lacking.
- **146e–147a.** Holding fast to knowledge is compared with dependence on doctor and pilot.
- **147a.** Much learning can leave a person orphaned and pulled by separate capacities.

In this edition. The edition retains the material vocabulary of “possession” and the relational images “accompanies”, “hold fast” and “orphan”. The storm passage at 147a follows several conjectures printed by Burnet; its language should be cited as the text of this edition, not as an unproblematic manuscript consensus.

See also. Knowledge of the best · Use and misuse · Many crafts · City and soul · Learning and much learning

Prayer and wishing

εὔχεσθαι (euchesthai); εὐχή (euchē); προσευξόμενος (proseuxomenos); ἀνεύκτοις (aneuktois)

The word. The verb euchesthai can mean to pray, vow or wish; euchē names a prayer or vow. The opening compound proseuchesthai directs the act toward the god. The range matters because the dialogue moves continuously between requesting something from a god, desiring its possession and accepting it when offered. No separate theory of vows is developed.

In Alcibiades II. The conversation interrupts a religious errand, not an abstract inquiry proposed in advance. Socrates asks what Alcibiades must understand before he speaks to a god. The danger is surprisingly the success of the request: a person can ask for something damaging while thinking it good, and the gods may actually give it. Prayer therefore exposes a problem in the judgement that selects an object, not merely a failure to secure divine attention.

Tyranny, generalship and children supply progressively less exceptional instances. Oedipus deliberately wishes harm in anger, but ordinary people sincerely ask for benefits and obtain misery. Their subsequent wish to reverse the request shows that confidence at the time of praying cannot certify the goodness of its object. The same test applies to accepting a divine offer without first making a request: unsolicited possession is no safer if its use will harm its recipient.

Two forms of guarded prayer emerge. The unnamed poet asks Zeus for good things whether requested or not and for protection from damaging things even when requested.

The Spartans ask only for fine things in addition to good ones. Both leave the specification of successful human wishing subordinate to goodness. Yet Alcibiades is not simply instructed to repeat one of these formulas. Socrates doubts that his greatness of soul will allow the Spartan restriction, and the practical outcome is postponement until education changes how he is disposed toward gods and people.

The end preserves worship as a future possibility. Alcibiades promises the gods wreaths and the customary offerings when the anticipated day comes, if they are willing. The movement is from unexamined asking to a willingness to learn before asking; it is neither an abolition of prayer nor a guarantee that correct words mechanically secure favourable events.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138a–138c.** The journey to pray opens onto the risk that a harmful request will be fulfilled.
- **141a–141d.** Acceptance of an offered tyranny and the act of asking for it receive the same test.
- **142b–143b.** Parents, retrospective unpraying and the unnamed poet reveal competing forms of petition.
- **148b–148d.** Caution leads to the restricted Spartan prayer.
- **150c–151b.** Alcibiades postpones the sacrifice and looks toward a future return to customary worship.

In this edition. The translation keeps pray and prayer for the same Greek family throughout. The lexical senses vow and wish explain the word's range; they should not be converted into additional ceremonies asserted to occur in the scene. At 143a aneuktois means when we pray not, whereas the differently formed aneuchesthai at 142d and 148b means to unpray.

See also. Unpraying and palinode · Curse · Praying in ignorance · The unnamed poet's prayer · Sparta · Teacher, care and waiting

Praying in ignorance

ἄγνοια (agnoia); λελήθαμεν ἡμᾶς αὐτούς (lelēthamen hēmas autous); τὰ κάκιστα (ta kakista); δοκῶν δὲ ἀγαθά (dokōn de agatha)

The word. This thematic heading gathers the conjunction of ignorance, failure to notice and the mistaken judgement that harmful objects are good. The problem is not simply having no information: it is confidently turning a false valuation into a request for the worst things for oneself.

In Alcibiades II. Oedipus is initially an imperfect model because he consciously asks harm in anger. Socrates clarifies that people can be calm and believe themselves to be seeking good while reproducing a harmful result. Alcibiades' appetite for dominion is introduced precisely as such a sincere attraction to an apparent benefit. The danger belongs to ordinary practical judgement, not only to exceptional disturbance.

At 143a–143b Alcibiades draws the sweeping conclusion that ignorance causes many human harms and, at its extreme, makes people pray for the worst things. Socrates then qualifies the general denunciation: some ignorance, for some people in particular conditions, is beneficial. The would-be killer saved by failing to recognize the victim is the crucial counterexample. The discussion of dangerous prayer therefore does not warrant the simple rule that every increase of knowledge is always an improvement.

The qualification leads to a hierarchy. What is unconditionally damaging in the examples is ignorance of the best; particular skills, information and possessions require direction by knowledge of benefit. Prayer is one application of that more general problem. Knowing how to

address a god or how to acquire an object does not tell one whether acquiring it is good.

The final warning repeats the opening form and makes Alcibiades its subject. The remedy is not merely to remember examples of unlucky tyrants and parents but to learn how to distinguish good from bad. The concluding willingness to wait records progress in recognizing that need, not proof that the mist has already been removed.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138b.** The initial risk combines unnoticed error with possible divine fulfilment.
- **141a–141c.** A sincere desire for apparent good replaces Oedipus' consciously harmful request.
- **143a–143e.** Alcibiades condemns ignorance, and Socrates distinguishes ignorance of the best from other ignorance.
- **148a–148b.** The divine offer is reconsidered after the knowledge argument.
- **150c–150e.** Alcibiades' own prayer remains unsafe until educational preparation.

In this edition. At 143a Burnet prints hosōn kakōn, how many bad things, from a correction, where B and T read how great a bad thing. The translation preserves the epistemic family ignorance and be ignorant even when recognition is at issue. This entry's title is thematic and should not be mistaken for an independent Greek phrase.

See also. Prayer and wishing · Forethought and caution · Orestes · Pericles · Mist and seeing

Processions and rites

πομπάς (pompas); ἱερά (hiera); πολυτελεστάτας καὶ σεμνοτάτας (polytelestatas kai semnotatas); ἀν' ἕκαστον ἔτος (an' hekaston etos)

The word. Pompai are ceremonial processions; hiera can designate sacred things, sanctuaries or rites according to context. The Athenian embassy stresses processions that are supremely costly and solemn and recur annually. Festival is a useful contextual label, but no particular named festival is identified.

In Alcibiades II. In the embassy's speech ceremonial expenditure is cumulative: sacrifices, sanctuary dedications, processions and money all support the claim that Athens honours the gods more fully than Sparta. Annual recurrence adds regularity to splendour. The argument therefore cannot be dismissed as concern with an isolated gesture; it examines the proposed merit of an established public pattern of worship.

Ammon's answer compares Spartan auspicious speech with all the Greeks' rites together. Socrates then repeats costly processions beside sacrifices when explaining what the gods reject. Repetition turns the Athenians' own evidence against their inference: being able to finance such acts does not entail a sound petition or a just soul.

At 150a both private people and cities can maintain the annual cost while having made many mistakes toward gods and humans. The inclusion of both agents prevents a simple opposition between collective ceremony and individual inwardness. The relevant divide runs through each: visible observance may coexist with wrongful action,

and neither agent can purchase exemption from scrutiny of its conduct.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **148e–149a.** The Athenian complaint claims unsurpassed annual splendour and spending.
- **149b.** Ammon sets Spartan speech above the totality of Greek rites.
- **149c.** Costly processions are rejected along with defective prayers.
- **150a.** Annual payment is compatible with repeated mistakes by a person or city.

In this edition. The source's rendering rites at 149b and temples at 148e reflects the immediate action attached to hiera. No Panathenaic procession, Mysteries or other named festival should be silently inserted. The headword gathers the text's ceremonial vocabulary rather than asserting a separate Greek word for festival in these passages.

See also. Votive offerings · Sacrifice · Athens · Sparta · Gifts and divine bribery

Profit

λυσιτελεῖν (lysitelein); λυσιτελούντως ἔχειν (lysitelountōs echein)

The word. Lysitelein means to pay, be worthwhile or be advantageous; the edition's "profit" need not mean a monetary return. The associated adverbial phrase at 146b describes being in a profitable state. This family is kept separate from the words for benefit, even though the argument closely connects the two.

In Alcibiades II. At 146b–c Socrates considers acting upon what one knows or seems to know when "the beneficially" accompanies the action. Such a condition is profitable both for the city and for oneself. The contrary case is not. The beneficiary is thus expressly specified, and the question concerns the outcome of enacted knowledge, rather than the prestige of being considered an expert.

At 146d the conclusion turns paradoxical. Given that the many have missed the best and trusted opinion without sense, neither knowing nor thinking one knows is presented as advantageous when either makes them more eager to act and thereby more exposed to harm. The Greek places the negated infinitives under lysitelei: being without these action-enabling states is what the many stand to gain under the stated condition. The printed English's "it profits the many neither to know anything nor to think they know" should be read with the whole following condition, not as a maxim against knowledge in every setting.

The argument does not claim that the absence of knowledge has an independent positive yield, like a possession added to someone's estate. Its value is comparative and preventive. Remove the stipulated

harmful consequences, or supply the knowledge of the best, and the rationale for this valuation changes. The city and soul are immediately told to hold fast to that governing knowledge at 146e.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **146b–c.** Action is profitable for city and self when it is accompanied by beneficially acting.
- **146c.** The many are characterised as missing the best.
- **146d.** The paradoxical profit of not knowing is conditional on harmful eagerness to act.
- **146e.** The positive requirement is dependence on knowledge of the best.

In this edition. “Profit” translates lysitelein, while “benefit” translates ōphelein. The unusual wording at 146d carries the scope of the negation; paraphrases should make its conditional structure explicit rather than turn it into the simple claim that knowledge never pays.

See also. Benefit and harm · Protective ignorance · Knowing and thinking one knows · Knowledge of the best · Action and speech

Protective ignorance

ἡ ἔστιν ὧν τε ἄγνοια (hē estin hōn te agnoia); τοῖς οὕτω διακειμένοις (tois houtō diakeimenois); τοιαύτας δόξας (toiautas doxas)

The word. “Protective ignorance” is an explanatory heading, not a phrase supplied by the Greek. The text speaks of ignorance of some things, for some people in a certain condition, and of people “so disposed” who hold “such opinions”. These restrictions are essential to the valuation: the same absence of knowledge need not benefit another person or the same person differently disposed.

In Alcibiades II. The initial generalisation that ignorance causes men’s worst mistakes is corrected at 143c. Socrates introduces a wiser possible objector who would demand qualifications. The Pericles and Orestes cases provide them: ignorance of a particular identity is good for someone already committed to a destructive action against that individual. It interrupts the means through which a mistaken practical judgment would become an accomplished deed.

The prevention is counterfactual and carefully bounded. Socrates imagines that whenever Alcibiades approaches the attack he continues not to recognise Pericles. The conclusion follows because his object is Pericles rather than an arbitrary victim. “Better” therefore compares ignorance with recognition while holding the harmful disposition fixed; it does not compare ignorance with a complete knowledge of the best, which would correct the purpose itself.

The later thesis about ungoverned expertise generalises this concern with enabling conditions. Knowledge or

believed knowledge makes a person readier to act, and readiness can increase harm when judgment is missing. The final pause in prayer similarly protects Alcibiades while education remains necessary. Protection through restraint is an interim achievement; the text does not recommend preserving destructive opinions or make ignorance the positive content of wisdom.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **143b–c.** Blame of ignorance is restricted by object, person and condition.
- **144b.** Repeated non-recognition would repeatedly prevent the specified attack.
- **144c.** The conclusion explicitly concerns those so disposed and holding such opinions.
- **146d.** Readiness produced by knowledge explains how it may worsen an agent's condition.
- **150c–151a.** Postponing unsafe prayer and sacrifice provides a practical parallel, not the same lexical claim.

In this edition. The translation keeps the sequence "of some things", "for some people", "in some state" at 143c and 144c. Removing those phrases turns a conditional argument into the unqualified praise of ignorance that the text does not give.

See also. Ignorance · Recognition and misrecognition · Ignorance of the best · Knowledge of the best · Generality and qualification

Recognition and misrecognition

ἀγνοεῖν (agnoein); γιγνώσκειν (gignōskein); γνωρίσαι (gnōrisai); ἄλλον εἶναι (allon einai)

The word. Recognition is represented chiefly by the same language as knowing and failing to know. Agnoein can mean not recognising someone; gignōskein is to know or discern. The decisive hypothesis adds the positive mistake of thinking the person before one to be someone else. The dialogue does not coin a distinct technical word for misrecognition.

In Alcibiades II. At 144a–b the would-be attacker enters and sees Pericles himself, yet is ignorant of him and thinks he is someone else. Seeing the person is expressly compatible with failing to identify him. The case is therefore more specific than lack of sensory contact: the intended victim is perceptually present, but not available to the attacker under the identity that directs his intention.

The argument depends on an intention fixed on this individual. Alcibiades has not wished to kill whichever person he meets, and Orestes has not wished to kill any woman or anyone's mother. Under those conditions, repeated failure to recognise the target repeatedly prevents the attack. The text does not establish that all misidentification is harmless; a different intention or error could produce a different outcome. What matters is the fit between this ignorance and this specified purpose.

At the end, recognition becomes an image for improved understanding. Athena's removal of the mist enables Diomedes to know god and man; the unnamed educator must similarly clear Alcibiades' soul before he can know bad and good. The parallel is interpretive, not a claim that

the earlier identity error itself constitutes moral insight. Elsewhere gnōrisai at 147b–c concerns making out a poet's meaning, another discernment whose object must be kept distinct.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **143c.** Alcibiades asks whether ignorance could ever be preferable to knowing.
- **144a–b.** Seeing Pericles does not entail identifying him.
- **144b–c.** The prevention argument depends on an individually specified victim.
- **147b–c.** Making out poetry uses another verb of discernment.
- **150d–e.** The mist image transfers discernment from persons to bad and good.

In this edition. The translation's deliberate "were ignorant of him" keeps agnoein connected to the broader discussion of ignorance. It also preserves "thought he was someone else", which excludes treating the hypothesis as mere failure to see. The Greek forms listed cover distinct objects of discernment, not a single specialised faculty.

See also. Ignorance · Protective ignorance · Ignorance of the best · Knowing badly · Learning and much learning

Responsibility and blame

αἰτιᾶσθαι (aitiasthai), blame; ἀτασθαλίη / ἀτασθαλία (atasthaliē / atasthalia), recklessness; ἀφροσύνη (aphrosynē), unintelligence

The word. Blaming identifies an alleged cause or responsible agent for a bad outcome. Recklessness is heedless or presumptuous misconduct; unintelligence names failure of practical judgment. The dialogue uses the difference between requesting, receiving and using to complicate where blame belongs.

In Alcibiades II. After describing prayers that people later reverse, Socrates quotes Zeus' complaint that mortals blame the gods for their sufferings although their own recklessness contributes to them. The speech introduces unintelligence alongside the Homeric expression. It is not enough that the requested thing came from a god to infer that responsibility for the damaging course lies wholly with divine action.

This point neither makes every misfortune deserved nor explains away the gods' role in granting a harmful request. The initial warning explicitly includes divine fulfilment, and the anonymous poet asks Zeus to ward off harmful things even if requested. The safest reading keeps the two claims together: human judgment is responsible for an important part of the danger, and the prayer itself acknowledges dependence beyond the petitioner's control.

The ignorance counterexample sharpens this concern with agency. Acquiring information can make a bad intention effective. The later commonwealth generalizes it to institutions: experts can carry out what they know while lacking the judgment that would make their activity

beneficial. Skill then increases an agent's power to produce consequences without settling the responsibility for choosing them.

Near the end, sacrifices cannot purchase favourable treatment from the gods as though they were a corruptible lender. The quality of the worshipper's soul matters. This offers an ethical interpretation of religious success and failure, not a formula for calculating every individual's fate.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138b–c.** Harmful wishing can coincide with divine fulfilment.
- **142d–143a.** Zeus' complaint and the protective prayer distinguish agency from the mere receipt of a gift.
- **144a–c.** Recognition would enable a harmful intention.
- **146c–d.** Knowing or thinking one knows can increase readiness for harmful action.
- **149e–150b.** The gods' ethical scrutiny rejects a merely transactional view of offerings.

In this edition. Note 13 identifies the Odyssey passage and explicitly separates Socrates' addition from the quoted words. "Recklessness" and "unintelligence" must therefore not be merged as though they were alternative translations of a single Homeric term.[20]

See also. Gods and divine giving · Praying in ignorance · Opinion · Gifts and divine bribery

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20 Supplied note 13, on Odyssey 1.32–34. The source marks the Homeric words separately from Socrates' "or unintelligence." The text attributes some suffering to human recklessness; it does not offer an exhaustive doctrine that every sufferer is responsible for everything suffered.

Sacrifice

θυσία (thysia); θυσίας (thysias); θύειν (thyein); ἀνάπηρα (anapēra); τεληέσσας ἑκατόμβας (telēessas hekatombas)

The word. Thysia is sacrifice and thyein is to sacrifice or offer to the gods; the dialogue also contrasts maimed victims with the perfect hecatombs of the Trojan quotation. Its question is what makes a sacrifice acceptable, not a systematic description of sacrificial procedure. A hecatomb is a large sacrificial offering, conventionally associated with a hundred cattle; the word here does not establish that exactly one hundred animals were offered.

In Alcibiades II. The Athenian embassy claims religious superiority by quantity, excellence and expense. It opposes its own lavish sacrifices to the Spartans' allegedly maimed victims. This is an advocate's comparison inside a reported complaint, not an independently established inventory of both cities' worship. Ammon's reply refuses the proposed scale of assessment by preferring Spartan auspicious speech.

The Trojan scene sharpens that refusal: even perfect hecatombs cannot secure divine acceptance where the worshippers are hated by the gods. The adjective perfect may be read as answering the Athenian criticism of maimed Spartan victims. The association is pointed but remains a reading of the juxtaposition; the text does not pause to explain it.

Socrates supplies the positive criterion at 149e–150b. The gods attend to whether the soul is holy and just, whereas both a city and an individual may continue paying for grand ceremonies despite many wrong actions. This

subordinates the rite to the condition of its agent. It does not declare animal sacrifice inherently unacceptable or ordinary worship pointless.

The closing action makes the distinction concrete. Alcibiades puts off his own sacrifice and says that the gods will receive wreaths and customary things when he is ready. Postponement is safer than risking another unexamined approach. The intended rite is deferred for education; it is not replaced with a newly instituted permanent cult of Socrates.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **148e–149a.** The Athenians advertise their sacrifices and criticise Spartan victims.
- **149c.** The gods reject expensive sacrifices with ill-omened requests.
- **149d–150a.** Trojans and corrupt donors show why ritual completeness and expenditure are insufficient.
- **150c–151b.** Alcibiades defers the particular sacrifice he was about to offer.

In this edition. The edition notes the imperfect attestation of the five Iliadic lines quoted at 149d–149e: only line 549 stands at this place in the Homeric manuscripts, though the last quoted line recurs elsewhere. The comparison of perfect and maimed victims must preserve that textual caution. The source does not name the god or sanctuary of Alcibiades' errand.

See also. Votive offerings · Processions and rites · Gifts and divine bribery · Holiness and piety · Troy, Trojans and Priam · Wreath and crowning

Sense

νοῦς (nous); ἄνευ νοῦ (aneu nou); νοῦν ἔχειν (noun echein); ἀνόητος (anoētos)

The word. Nous is mind or intelligence and, in practical idioms, good sense. “Without sense” and “having sense” provide opposed assessments of judgment. Anoētos is senseless. The edition keeps this family separate from phronēsis and sophia, although their uses intersect in the argument about appropriate conduct.

In Alcibiades II. At 142e the prudent poet has senseless friends whose conduct and prayers are not better although they seem so to them. He provides a prayer that allows the gods to withhold harmful requests. Sense here is connected to recognising the inadequacy of the friends’ own preferences, not to knowing a larger repertoire of things they could request.

The commonwealth’s specialists at 146a and the many at 146c have missed what is best by trusting opinion without sense. Nous marks the missing intelligent direction of judgment, but the passage does not separately define it as a faculty or systematically distinguish its operation from the knowledge of the best. One should therefore preserve the lexical distinction without inventing a fully worked psychological taxonomy.

At 150a–b people who have sense join the gods in especially honouring justice and intelligence. Elsewhere the same noun occurs in ordinary conversational idioms: Alcibiades is asked to apply his mind at 140a, and the partners can have something “in mind” to offer at 143a and 150b. Attention and having a response in mind are not

by themselves proof of the sound judgment required in the more evaluative uses.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **140a.** The noun appears in the idiom for paying attention.
- **142e.** The poet's friends are senseless in their choices and prayers.
- **146a; 146c.** Opinion is trusted without the sense needed to judge the best.
- **150a–b.** Those with sense honour justice and intelligence.
- **143a; 150b.** "In your mind" invites a possible response.

In this edition. The edition reserves "sense" for nous except where idiom requires "pay attention" or "in your mind". At 142b "there would be some reason in it" translates logos, not nous. "Senseless" at 142e translates anoētos and must not be treated as a further occurrence of aphrōn.

See also. Intelligence and unintelligence · Opinion · Attention and joint discovery · Knowledge of the best · Wisdom

Silence and postponement

ἡσυχία (hēsychia), quiet; ἀναβάλλεσθαι (anaballesthai), put off; περιμένειν (perimenein), wait

The word. Quiet can be the refraining from an action or utterance, not an absence of thought. Postponement moves an intended act to a later time. In this dialogue it is a cautious response to not yet knowing how to act and speak rightly.

In Alcibiades II. Socrates does not advise Alcibiades to repeat the Spartan formula immediately and suppose himself cured. He predicts that the young man's greatness of soul will make him resist its modesty, and warns that his sacrifice may be rejected or accompanied by another unwelcome result. Quiet is preferable while his petition remains vulnerable to ignorance.

The waiting has an intelligible condition: learning how one must be disposed toward gods and people. Alcibiades asks who the teacher is and when that time will arrive, expressing readiness rather than indifference. The image of mist removed from the soul gives a positive shape to the expected change. It is an educational delay, not a claim that silence alone has made him intelligent.

Alcibiades then explicitly puts off the sacrifice. The wreath passes to Socrates, and gifts to the gods are promised when the anticipated day comes. Thus the action begun at 138a is interrupted and redirected. Future worship remains in view, and the book ends before the fulfilment of the promise.

The conclusion is sometimes attractive as a general endorsement of withholding action under uncertainty. Its local limits should remain visible: it addresses a particular

petitioner and a form of knowledge he has not acquired. The dialogue has not proved that all hesitation is wise or that every ordinary action must await exhaustive certainty.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **150c.** Quiet is preferable to the risky sacrifice and ill-omened petition.
- **150d–e.** Waiting is connected with teaching and a changed disposition.
- **151a–b.** Alcibiades postpones the sacrifice and promises future observances.

In this edition. The source's "put off" is temporal and practical. Rendering the ending as an abandonment of religion would contradict the promised wreaths and customary gifts to the gods. The teacher remains unnamed even though crowning Socrates makes the association inviting.[21]

See also. Teacher, care and waiting · Perplexity and reversal · Wreath and crowning · Prayer and wishing

21 At 150c the preference for quiet is joined to a warning about Alcibiades' own condition; at 150d it receives the condition of learning. The promises of 151a–b establish that worship is postponed rather than renounced. Supplied note 39 preserves the uncertainty about the educator.

Socrates

Σωκράτης (Sōkratēs); ὦ Σώκρατες (ō Sōkrates); οὗτος ᾧ μέλει περὶ σοῦ (houtos hōi melei peri sou)

The word. Socrates is the questioner and Alcibiades' sole interlocutor. His name is repeatedly spoken in direct address, and the absence of a narrator leaves his claims, jokes, reported stories and hypothetical constructions within his own dramatic voice.

In Alcibiades II. He interrupts the errand by treating prayer as something requiring the greatest thought. His method includes distinctions, analogies, counterexamples, imagined divine offers and poetic interpretation. He also allows a faulty early conclusion to be abandoned: if all unintelligent people were mad in the ordinary sense, civic life would be intolerable. The replacement analysis is offered through comparison rather than announced as a final doctrine.

Socrates' authority is carefully staged. He claims firsthand knowledge of the generals' fortunes, but says he heard the story of Ammon from certain people. He introduces a hypothetical man wiser than both interlocutors when qualifying the condemnation of ignorance. He interprets the oracle and the poets, sometimes explicitly saying I think. None of these different evidential positions should be turned into a uniform omniscient narration.

The concluding educator is only described as the man who cares about Alcibiades. The surrounding action invites identification with Socrates: he has been giving the advice, says the man is eager, receives the wreath and wishes to triumph over Alcibiades' lovers. Yet he does not explicitly name himself in response to the question. The educational

promise remains indirect, and the knowledge of the best has not been demonstrated as his possessed curriculum.

The final erotic competition gives the advising relationship a personal stake. Socrates accepts the wreath as an omen of Alcibiades' favourable opinion while comparing his predicament to Creon's rough sea. His wish to win is prospective. The conversation ends with hope for a continuing relation, not with a narrated victory or a guarantee about Alcibiades' future.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138a–138b.** Socrates interrupts the errand and reframes its practical demands.
- **139c–140a.** He corrects an overbroad inference and invites joint inquiry.
- **141e–142a.** He claims direct acquaintance with civic examples.
- **143b–143c.** A wiser imagined critic qualifies the general attack on ignorance.
- **148d–149b.** The oracle story is explicitly reported and then interpreted.
- **150d–151c.** Care, the wreath and erotic rivalry frame the prospective education.

In this edition. The source's Introduction treats authorship as doubtful and notes that the dramatic dates cannot be reconciled. This Socrates is the dialogue's represented speaker, not a documentary transcript of a historically possible meeting. Note 39 marks identification with the unnamed educator as a reading, not an explicit statement.

See also. Alcibiades · Teacher, care and waiting · Erotic rivalry and victory · Ammon, oracle and prophet · Homer

Soul and life

ψυχή (psychē); ἀντί γε τῆς σῆς ψυχῆς (anti ge tēs sēs psychēs); βίος (bios)

The word. Psychē is translated soul throughout, but can also mean life. The dialogue uses it for what Alcibiades would not exchange for dominion, for what requires guiding knowledge, for what the gods assess and for what contains a mist needing removal. Those uses are connected without becoming an explicit theory of soul.

In Alcibiades II. At 141c the choice is stark: dominion over the land of Greeks and barbarians is unacceptable in exchange for Alcibiades' psychē. His explanation is that he would not be able to use the acquisition at all. This answer favours the sense life in context. The passage does not independently establish an immortal soul or a preference for an afterlife over political power.

The following question extends the test beyond bare survival: harmful use would also make the gift unacceptable. At 146e soul and city are both said to require knowledge of the best, as a patient requires a doctor and a sailor a pilot. The soul is thus a bearer of direction and a subject of right living; a mere inventory of information or advantages is insufficient.

At 149e the gods' proper focus is the soul rather than gifts and sacrifices. They attend to whether the person is holy and just. At 150e the educator must remove the present mist from Alcibiades' soul before applying what will enable him to know good and bad. The religious and educational uses converge on the condition of the agent, but the dialogue leaves the nature and acquisition of the highest knowledge largely undeveloped.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **141c–141d.** Soul or life limits the worth of universal dominion and harmful possession.
- **146e–147a.** A soul and a city need the directing knowledge required for right living.
- **149e.** The soul, not sacrificial wealth, is the gods' proper object of attention.
- **150e.** Mist must be removed from the soul before further instruction.

In this edition. Note 9 expressly marks the life-sense at 141c while retaining soul for consistency. At 147a Burnet's fortune, tychē, is Stallbaum's conjecture where the principal manuscripts have psychē. That rejected reading should not be imported into an interpretation of the printed wind-of-fortune image.[22]

See also. Ambition and tyranny · Holiness and piety · Mist and seeing · Physician, pilot and storm · Teacher, care and waiting

22 At 141c psychē is retained as 'soul', but the edition's note 9 points out that Alcibiades' response takes the loss in terms of no longer being alive to use the promised power. At 149e–150a the same word carries the condition of the worshipper. Those contexts should inform, rather than be erased by, a consistent English rendering.

Sparta

Λακεδαιμόνιοι (Lakedaimonioi); τὰ καλὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς (ta kala epi tois agathois); εὐφημίαν (euphēmian)

The word. The Spartans are named as Lakedaimonioi. Their prayer asks the gods for fine things on top of good ones and nothing more. They serve as the central civic example of restrained asking, while the Athenians' hostile account of their ritual practices supplies a contrasting valuation.

In Alcibiades II. Socrates says the Spartans have either emulated the unnamed poet or independently examined the matter in the same way. He does not claim to know a definite line of literary influence. Their public and private prayer thus illustrates a practical convergence: requests are limited by goodness rather than filled with particular objects presumed good.

Their good fortune supports the example but is immediately qualified. If not everything has gone well, that is not because of the prayer; the gods may give the requested things or their opposites. The formula is therefore recommended for the quality of what it asks, not as a guaranteed technology of military or civic success.

The Athenians portray Spartan sacrifice as negligent and its victims as maimed despite sufficient wealth. Ammon's preference for their auspicious speech turns that accusation around. Socrates understands the oracle as praising the prayer. The account should distinguish the Athenians' complaint, the oracle's terse preference and Socrates' interpretation rather than combining them into a neutral ethnography.

The final obstacle is Alcibiades' unwillingness, as Socrates predicts it, to use so modest a prayer. His greatness of soul is the flattering name for an intellectual defect already analysed. Sparta consequently remains an available model whose imitation would require more than memorizing its words: it would challenge the young man's conception of fitting aspiration.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **148b–148c.** Spartan public and private prayers parallel the unnamed poet's restraint.
- **148c–148d.** Their fortune is praised without making prayer a guarantee of results.
- **148e–149b.** The Athenian accusation is overturned by Ammon's preference.
- **149b–149c.** Socrates interprets auspicious speech as the content of their prayer.
- **150c.** Alcibiades' grand aspirations may prevent its adoption.

In this edition. Note 32 cites the same formula in Plutarch, Instituta Laconica 27, Moralia 239a. Burnet's not at 148c is supplied from a correction in a Florentine manuscript. This particular parallel does not remove note 34's warning that the Athenian consultation of Ammon is otherwise unattested.[23]

See also. Prayer and wishing · Auspicious speech · Ammon, oracle and prophet · Athens · The unnamed poet's prayer

23 At 148c the negative printed in angle brackets comes from a correction in a Florentine manuscript, as the edition's note 32 explains. Its source is therefore different from the conjectural additions at 141b and the Euripidean supplement at 151b. The English translates adopted supplements without reproducing the brackets.

Teacher, care and waiting

τίς ὁ παιδεύσων (tis ho paideusōn); οὗτος ᾧ μέλει περὶ σοῦ (houtos hōi melei peri sou); περιμένειν (perimenein); προθυμίαν (prothymian)

The word. The prospective educator is described as the man who cares about Alcibiades; paideusōn names the one who will educate. Waiting is perimenein, and the man's eagerness is prothymia. Care and willingness frame instruction as a continuing personal relation rather than the delivery of a prayer formula.

In Alcibiades II. The recommendation follows a precise practical difficulty. Alcibiades cannot safely specify what to pray for, and Socrates thinks he would reject the Spartan formula because of his greatness of soul. Keeping quiet and waiting are therefore tailored to the learner's present condition. They are not instructions that all people must stop every prayer until they possess complete philosophical knowledge.

What he must learn is how to be disposed toward gods and humans. The teacher's work begins by removing mist from the soul and only then applying what enables the distinction between bad and good. The ordered sequence suggests that an impediment to understanding must be addressed before further contents can help; it does not narrate an actual complete curriculum.

Alcibiades responds with readiness to undergo what the man orders, whoever he is, if this will make him better. Socrates says the care is reciprocal in eagerness. The exchange prepares an educational commitment, but the day of its fulfilment remains future. Alcibiades postpones

sacrifice until then and expects it to come soon if the gods are willing.

The identity of the man is deliberately unspoken. Socrates' conduct, the wreath and the closing rivalry make him a persuasive candidate. The edition offers parallels from Alcibiades I supporting that reading. The indirection should remain visible: the text says neither I am your teacher nor that a named divine emissary will appear.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **150c–150d.** Silence and waiting are recommended until Alcibiades learns the proper disposition.
- **150d–150e.** The man who cares will first remove mist, then enable discrimination of bad and good.
- **150e–151a.** Alcibiades accepts the prospective direction, and the man's eagerness is affirmed.
- **151a–151b.** Sacrifice is deferred to the hoped-for day of readiness.

In this edition. Note 39 explicitly says Socrates does not identify the man. Its supporting comparisons are Alcibiades I 124c and 131d–131e; crowning at 151a–151b supplies evidence internal to this scene. The account should preserve the difference between plausible Socratic identification and explicit naming, and avoid later monotheistic readings not made by the source.[24]

See also. Socrates · Alcibiades · Mist and seeing · Athena and Diomedes · Forethought and caution · Wreath and crowning

24 The man who cares about Alcibiades at 150d is not named. Supplied note 39 suggests Socrates as a reading, drawing on the First Alcibiades and the forthcoming crown. The present dialogue does not say 'I am the teacher', and the image should not be replaced by an otherwise unidentified later religious saviour.

Text and apparatus

Editorial heading: ⟨ ⟩, supplements; [ ], words judged spurious; B and T, manuscript sigla

The word. An apparatus criticus records selected evidence and editorial decisions about the wording. A supplement adds material absent from the principal witnesses; a deletion marks material regarded as intrusive. A reading printed by Burnet and a proposal merely reported in his apparatus do not have the same status in this edition.

In Alcibiades II. The supplied Greek reproduces Burnet's page divisions, lineation and apparatus. Its principal witnesses in this dialogue are B and T. The separate letter W, familiar from the preceding dialogue's apparatus, does not appear here. Lowercase b and t identify later hands; rec. t is interpreted cautiously by the edition rather than treated as fully explained by Burnet's list of sigla.

Angle brackets do not all have one origin. At 141b they mark conjectural additions; at 148c a supplied negative comes from a corrector in a later manuscript; at 151b the missing possessive is supplied from the quoted Euripidean text. Words in square brackets at 148d, 148e and 150b are not translated. The reading text and the note must be considered together before a dictionary entry treats an expression as unqualified manuscript evidence.

Several decisions affect the argument directly. The "when" of 145b changes the object of deliberation; the "whom" of 145e changes the group referred to; the fair wind of fortune at 147a rests on a transposition and corrections; the final "opinion" at 151b is the printed reading against proposed gifts. These are not cosmetic variants. Yet no

article is licensed to rewrite the dialogue silently to a reading it finds more attractive.

The source's count at the start of the fifteenth Burnet page follows Burnet's own mismatch in numbering 146e. Stephanus section references are therefore safer general locators than an independently recomputed line number. Readers needing a textual history should consult an apparatus and later scholarship as well as this reading companion.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **141b.** The god's extended promise includes bracketed supplements.
- **145b–e.** Adopted readings affect timing, predication and the experts referred to.
- **146e–147b.** Line numbering and conjectural wording affect the navigational argument.
- **148b–e.** Palinode, negative, reported informants and a conjunction require distinct textual treatment.
- **150b.** A bracketed conjunction is omitted from the translation.
- **151b.** The possessive in the verse is supplied; opinion remains the printed prose reading.

In this edition. The “Editorial Note” is unusually detailed and should govern claims about this edition’s signs and sigla. Its “What remains undone” expressly distinguishes Burnet’s apparatus from manuscript collation and later editorial work. The lexicon follows that boundary.[25]

See also. Authorship and attribution · Knowing badly · Opinion · Wealth, bodily strength and fortune

25 Supplied “Editorial Note,” particularly “The Greek text,” “Reading the apparatus,” “The witnesses” and “The English.” The separate print checks confirm selected visible readings, not the authority of each conjecture or the full history of the manuscripts.

The unnamed poet’s prayer

Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ (Zeu basileu); τὰ μὲν ἐσθλά (ta men esthla); καὶ εὐχομένοις καὶ ἀνεύκτοις (kai euchomenois kai aneuktois); τὰ δὲ δειλά (ta de deila)

The word. The unnamed poet addresses King Zeus, asking for good things with or without prayer and for the warding off of wretched things even when requested. The prayer is a short literary model for subordinating a speaker’s wishes to an assessment of what is genuinely good.

In Alcibiades II. Socrates introduces the poet as apparently intelligent and imagines him surrounded by senseless friends who act and pray for what seems better to them but is not. The common prayer is presented as care for that group. This imagined occasion is Socrates’ reconstruction, not independent biographical information about an identified author.

The two halves correct opposite limitations of ordinary petition. A person may fail to request something beneficial, so good should be given even without the request; a person may request harm, so a damaging object should be withheld even with the request. The structure breaks the supposed equivalence between compliance with desire and benefit to its owner.

Socrates calls the wording both good and safe, and Alcibiades finds it hard to oppose. When caution returns at 148b, Socrates recalls the same prayer and suggests that the Spartans have either imitated its poet or reasoned similarly. The inference of resemblance is stronger than any claim of a documented historical line of influence.

The poem does not directly resolve every educational problem. Alcibiades still needs to learn how to be disposed and how to discriminate good from bad, and Socrates doubts he will consent to modest asking. A guarded formula illustrates practical wisdom, but possession of the words alone is not shown to confer the knowledge of the best.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **142e–143a.** Socrates introduces the intelligent poet, imagines his friends and quotes the prayer.
- **143a–143b.** Alcibiades' response turns toward ignorance as the cause of harmful petitions.
- **148b–148c.** The poet is recalled and the Spartan prayer is offered as an analogous practice.

In this edition. Note 14 reports the couplet without an author's name in Greek Anthology 10.108 and in Proclus' commentary quoting this passage. Those witnesses read lygra, baneful things. Burnet prints Buttmann's deila, wretched things, against deina in the principal Platonic manuscripts; note 31 records the parallel choice at 148b. No author should be invented from the phrase that poet.[26]

See also. Prayer and wishing · Zeus · Sparta · Praying in ignorance · Forethought and caution

26 The edition's note 14 compares the anonymous couplet with Greek Anthology 10.108 and Proclus' quotation of this dialogue. They have lygra, 'baneful things'; Burnet prints Buttmann's deila, 'wretched things', against the Platonic manuscripts' deina, 'dreadful things'. At 148b the repeated couplet again prints deila, with different readings reported for B and T in note 31. These are textual alternatives, not three adjectives simultaneously present in the prayer.

Timing and duration

ὅτε (hote); ὁπότε (hopote); χρόνος (chronos); τοσοῦτον χρόνον ὅσον βέλτιον (tosouton chronon hoson beltion); καιρός (kairos)

The word. Hote and hopote ask or specify when; chronos is time or duration. Kairos can designate the fitting occasion or point to hit, and appears in the question at 148a rendered “hit the right mark”. These ordinary temporal expressions make the appropriateness of a skilled action dependent on more than an ability to perform it.

In Alcibiades II. At 145b the adviser must know whether it is better to advise and when it is better. War requires the further discrimination of how long it is better to continue, and coercive action requires knowing when and against whom it is better. These are not incidental embellishments to an already complete account of intelligence: they are the examples through which the difference between technical ability and guiding judgment becomes visible.

At 145e–146a the imagined commonwealth lacks the person who knows when to use each expert and toward whom. Here timing belongs to the coordination of people and capacities, not simply to the internal technique of one craft. At 148a Socrates applies the wider problem to Alcibiades’ immediate choice before a god: accepting an offered gift or specifying a request still requires hitting what is appropriate.

The end turns temporal discrimination into action. Alcibiades must wait until he learns; he asks when that time will arrive; and he postpones the sacrifice until then. This is a practical boundary linked to readiness, not a

scheduled date. His hope at 151b that the day will come before long remains conditional on the gods' willingness and does not show that the education has already been completed.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **145b.** Advice, war and coercion require discriminating time, duration and object.
- **145e–146a.** The right user of specialists must know when to employ each.
- **148a.** The choice of a request is described as hitting the appropriate mark.
- **150d–151a.** Waiting is tied to learning and postponement to readiness.
- **151b.** The hoped-for day remains future and dependent on divine willingness.

In this edition. At 145b Burnet's "when" follows a correction in the Venetus 184; B and T have ho, which would yield "what is better". The edition follows the printed reading but makes the variation explicit. Kairos at 148a is translated by a target image, not mechanically as "time".[27]

See also. Knowledge of the best · Advice and oratory · Use and misuse · Better and best · Error and missing the mark

27 Burnet's 'when' at 145b follows a correction in Venetus 184. B and T instead have a relative form that would yield 'whether it is better and what is better'. Supplied note 20 therefore identifies a real textual basis for the timing question, rather than treating it as a paraphrase that can be freely exchanged for a question about the object.

Troy, Trojans and Priam

Τρῶας (Trōas);Ἴλιος ἱρή (Ilios hirē); Πρίαμος (Priamos); λαὸς ἐυμμελίω Πριάμοιο (laos eummeliō Priamoio)

The word. The Trojans, holy Ilium and Priam appear in the Homeric passage about sacrifices the gods refuse. Ilium is Troy, and Priam is the named ruler whose people share the gods' hatred. Their function is collective exemplification of religious expenditure that cannot purchase acceptance.

In Alcibiades II. The Trojans make camp and offer perfect hecatombs. The savour reaches heaven on the wind, so the failure is not represented as a material failure to present the offering. The blessed gods refuse their share because the city, its king and its people are hateful to them. Socrates infers that the sacrificing and gift-paying were useless.

The scene answers the Athenian emphasis on magnificent religious provision. Perfect victims do not guarantee favour, while the allegedly maimed Spartan victims have not prevented divine preference for Spartan prayer. The contrast moves evaluation away from the material completeness of the gift toward the giver's relation to the gods.

The adjective holy attached to Ilium should not be treated as a counter-proof that the Trojans satisfy the later condition of a holy and just soul. It is a poetic designation within the quotation, using a different Greek form. Nor does the dialogue specify the entire cause of the gods' hostility or derive a comprehensive moral judgement of every Trojan. The limited inference concerns the impotence of gifts to compel favour.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **149c–149d.** Socrates introduces the Homeric parallel and the Trojans' perfect sacrifices.
- **149d–149e.** The gods refuse the savour and are said to hate Ilium, Priam and his people.
- **149e.** The failure of these gifts supports the rejection of a bribable divinity.

In this edition. Note 36 assigns the quotation to Iliad 8.548 –552 but says only line 549 stands at this location in the Homeric manuscripts; the last line also occurs at 4.47, 4.165 and 6.449. The other lines are known here through this dialogue.[28]

See also. Homer · Sacrifice · Gifts and divine bribery · Holiness and piety · Sparta

28 The edition's note 36 warns that of the verses associated with Iliad 8.548–552, only the line turned into prose stands there in the surviving Homeric manuscripts. The final line recurs elsewhere in the Iliad. The passage's use of Homeric authority and the textual history of its quotation are consequently distinct questions; 'perfect' Trojan offerings may also answer the Spartan 'maimed' victims without that echo becoming a stated argument.

Trust

πιστεύειν (pisteuein); πεπιστευκότα (pepisteukota); πεπιστευκότας (pepisteukotas)

The word. Pisteuein is to trust, believe or rely upon; the perfect participles at 146a and 146c describe people who have placed their reliance in something. The object of trust matters. Confidence in an opinion and trust in an argument can have different warrants and results, even though the same verbal family is used.

In Alcibiades II. The experts at 146a and the many at 146c have missed the best because they have trusted opinion without sense. The fault is not merely having an opinion available, but allowing it to support action and allocation of power without adequate judgment. Trust turns a seeming into a practical guide, which is why the subsequent discussion concerns eagerness and harm.

At 147d the interpretation of Margites depends on trusting the arguments already stated. Socrates' reconstructed meaning is that knowledge of many works was bad for him; the inference to his being a sorry fellow is warranted only if the earlier account of knowledge and benefit is accepted. The poem is thus interpreted through the argument as much as offered in support of it. Treating the quotation as wholly independent corroboration would conceal that dependence.

Alcibiades responds at 147e that he could hardly trust other arguments if he could not trust these. In the edition's reading, his next words nevertheless signal another reversal. Strongly expressed trust is therefore not the same as stable comprehension. The closing good opinion of Socrates' advice is encouraging, but it cannot by itself

show that Alcibiades now possesses the missing knowledge.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **146a.** The specialist has relied on opinion without sense.
- **146c.** The same explanation is extended to the many.
- **147d.** The Margites conclusion is made dependent on the foregoing arguments.
- **147e.** Alcibiades expresses strong trust before the possible renewed reversal.

In this edition. The edition uses “trusted” for the perfect participles and “trust” for the later arguments. Its note on palin at 147e acknowledges that the supposed reversal is an interpretive choice; on the alternative reading, Alcibiades gives further assent, while Socrates still describes his instability.

See also. Opinion · Sense · Agreement and admission · Knowing badly · Knowledge of the best

Unpraying and palinode

παλινῳδοῦσιν (palinōidousin); ἀνευχόμενοι (aneuchomenoi); παλινῳδῇ (palinōidēi)

The word. Palinōidein is to sing a recantation, a second song taking back the first; aneuchesthai is the striking compound translated unpray. The combination gives disappointed desire a literary and religious form: the same speaker tries to withdraw an earlier prayer after discovering what its fulfilment brings.

In Alcibiades II. At 142d Socrates gives the movement a short timescale. People eagerly desire offices and possessions, obtain them, and after a little interval take back what they asked. The interval separates seeming good from experienced harm. It does not prove that the objects are invariably bad; it proves that the original desire did not contain adequate knowledge of whether they would benefit this person.

Alcibiades repeats the formulation at 148b in his own account of the need for caution. That repetition is an advance over simply approving Socrates' examples: he now imagines himself making an ill-judged request and wishing to undo it. Nevertheless a verbal recollection is not complete education. The end requires waiting for a changed capacity to distinguish good and bad, rather than trusting the recantation to repair every outcome.

The musical image gives the prayer a second utterance but offers no assurance that events can be reversed. A dead child, a lost life or an exile cannot simply be cancelled by saying the opposite. The dialogue exploits that disproportion between revisable words and possibly irreversible consequences. Its practical alternative is to

defer the first ill-informed act, not to depend upon the efficacy of the second song.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **142d.** The many sing a palinode and unpray their original requests after a short delay.
- **148b.** Alcibiades repeats the paired verbs while acknowledging the risk of his own prayer.

In this edition. Note 12 says that aneuchesthai is known to the lexicon only from this dialogue, not that the author can be proved to have coined it. The note compares Stesichorus' recantation as reported in Phaedrus 243a–b. At 148b Burnet follows a later correction in T that restores the wording of 142d, but prints the subjunctive required by the sentence; the principal manuscripts instead have praying a palinode.[29]

See also. Prayer and wishing · Forethought and caution · Generalship, exile and informers · Children and parenthood

29 At 148b Burnet adopts a later hand's restoration of 'sing a palinode, unpraying', corresponding to 142d, but puts the verb in the subjunctive required by the warning construction. The manuscripts' main reading is 'praying a palinode'. Supplied note 30 keeps the adopted wording, the corrector's mood and the underlying reading separate.

Use and misuse

χρῆσθαι (chrēsthai); κακῶς (kakōs); βλαβερῶς (blaberōs)

The word. Chrēsthai is to use or employ, with a wide range of objects; it can also mean to experience or undergo when used with a condition or event. “Misuse” is an explanatory English heading for using badly and harmfully at 141c, not a separate Greek technical noun in the text.

In Alcibiades II. Alcibiades rejects unlimited rule if it costs his soul because he would have no use of it. Socrates adds the sharper condition: what if he would use it badly and harmfully? Alcibiades rejects that too. The distinction separates mere possession, the opportunity to use, and a worthwhile exercise of that opportunity. A gift’s size and prestige cannot determine its value without this relation to the recipient’s life.

At 145e–146a the verb describes using each of the commonwealth’s specialists. The city lacks both knowledge of the best and the person who knows when and toward whom each should be employed. The relevant “use” is therefore wider than a craftsman operating a tool: it concerns directing organised capacities within a political whole.

The word also appears in contexts that should not be forced into this governing-use thesis. Children “meet with” misfortunes at 142c, and the unguided learned man meets a storm at 147a. At 150c Socrates doubts Alcibiades would be willing to use the Spartans’ prayer, because of his grand self-conception. That final case brings willingness into view: a safe verbal form is available, but possessing or

hearing it does not ensure that the ambitious hearer will employ it.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **141c.** No use, bad use and harmful use qualify Alcibiades' wish for rule.
- **142c.** The same verb describes meeting with misfortune rather than employing a resource.
- **145e–146a.** A knowledgeable guide must judge the use of each specialist.
- **147a.** The verb accompanies the storm image.
- **150c.** Alcibiades' disposition may prevent him from using the restrained Spartan prayer.

In this edition. The edition translates chrēsthai idiomatically according to its complement, so not every occurrence says "use". At 141c the adverbs are "badly and harmfully"; their force should not be weakened into a neutral inability to extract maximum advantage.

See also. Benefit and harm · Possession and guidance · Knowledge of the best · Timing and duration · Craft and expertise

Votive offerings

ἀναθήμασι (anathēmasi); ἀναθήματα (anathēmata); κεκοσμήκαμεν τὰ ἱερά (kekosmēkamen ta hiera)

The word. Anathēmata are dedicated offerings, gifts set up in a sanctuary. Their dative plural appears in the Athenian boast about adorning the gods' temples and again among the offerings of Greeks who pray indiscriminately. They are distinct items within the larger account of gifts and expenditure.

In Alcibiades II. The Athenians present the visible enrichment of sanctuaries as evidence that the gods owe them greater favour than Sparta. Their complaint assumes that the amount and splendour of what worshippers supply should predict the help they receive. The dialogue lets that assumption become explicit before the oracle rejects it.

At 149c votive gifts stand beside cattle with gilded horns. The different material forms do not change the defect: those presenting them still ask for anything at all, good or bad. The list thus broadens the argument beyond one kind of sacrifice. Costly objects and conspicuous presentation share the same limitation when a giver cannot judge what to ask.

The critique is relational rather than a prohibition of dedication. The gods' regard should turn toward the soul, and the concluding promise of customary offerings leaves an appropriate future for religious gifts. What fails is the use of dedicated property as a substitute for holiness, justice and intelligence, or as leverage that can outweigh their absence.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **148e.** Dedicated offerings adorn temples in the Athenians' claim of religious superiority.
- **149c.** Offerings accompany the other Greeks' uncontrolled petitions.
- **149e–150a.** The larger argument rejects material gifts as a substitute for the quality of the giver.

In this edition. The Key Words distinguish anathēmata from sacrifices, processions and gifts in general. Hiera is rendered temples at 148e because the objects are adorned, but rites at 149b in Ammon's comparison. That contextual distinction should be preserved rather than treating the noun as one unvarying kind of object.

See also. Sacrifice · Processions and rites · Gifts and divine bribery · Athens · Ammon, oracle and prophet

Wealth, bodily strength and fortune

χρημάτων κτῆσιν (chrēmatōn ktēsin); σώματος ῥώμην (sōmatos rhōmēn); τύχης (tychēs); ἐπουρίσῃ (epourisēi)

The word. The acquisition of money and strength of body are named advantages carried by the fair wind of fortune. Rōmē is strength, and tychē fortune. The image treats external or bodily resources as amplifiers of action whose value depends on direction.

In Alcibiades II. At 147a Socrates makes an initially paradoxical comparison: without the relevant knowledge, the more strongly the fair wind blows, the greater the mistakes. Favourable circumstances do not become literally unfavourable weather; rather, greater available force accelerates a badly directed course. The example generalizes the earlier distinction between possessing an apparent good and using it beneficially.

The man of much learning and much craft provides the immediately adjacent case. His capacities may be real, but lacking the governing knowledge he is carried by each of them without a pilot. Wealth and bodily strength belong to the same pattern as specialized knowledge: adding resources need not repair the error that directs their use.

The argument reappears in religious expenditure. Athens claims abundant money and magnificent offerings while charging Sparta with under-spending despite comparable wealth. Socrates' answer makes the amount spent secondary to the soul's justice and intelligence. Financial means can sustain impressive wrong-headed action as easily as they can supply a genuine benefit.

This conditional critique should not be flattened into the thesis that poverty, weakness or misfortune are inherently

desirable. The condition without this knowledge governs the warning. The dialogue proposes a standard for using advantages, while the present action is to avoid treating their acquisition as self-evidently safe.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **141c.** Possessions must be assessed by the possibility and quality of their use.
- **147a–147b.** Money and strength accelerate mistakes when fortune supplies power without a pilot.
- **148e–149a.** Athenian spending becomes the alleged basis of a claim on the gods.
- **149e–150a.** Expensive observance can coexist with a defective soul and repeated wrongdoing.

In this edition. The fair-wind sentence at 147a rests on three editorial changes recorded in note 24: Lennep's relocation of without it and his reading more strongly, and Stallbaum's fortune for the manuscripts' soul. The interpretation here is of Burnet's printed text. The source distinguishes fortune from the more specific terms for misfortune and ill fortune.[30]

See also. Physician, pilot and storm · Gifts and divine bribery · Soul and life · Ambition and tyranny

30 The fair wind of fortune at 147a rests on editorial choices recorded in note 24: Lennep's placement of 'for without it', his 'more strongly', and Stallbaum's 'fortune' where the manuscripts have 'soul'. The image is fully present in the text translated by this edition, but its exact wording is not an unproblematic agreement of B and T.

Wisdom

σοφία (sophia); σοφός (sophos); σοφώτερος (sophōteros); σοφώτατος (sophōtatos)

The word. Sophia is wisdom, with sophos and its comparative and superlative describing someone wise, wiser or wisest. The dialogue uses this family sparingly and keeps it linguistically distinct from intelligence and sense. Its bearers are invoked as possible or poetic authorities rather than introduced through a separate definition of wisdom.

In Alcibiades II. At 143b Socrates imagines a man wiser than both interlocutors who might object to their indiscriminate criticism of ignorance. The comparative does work: neither Socrates nor Alcibiades is allowed to settle the matter by confidence in their present standing. The wiser objector articulates the need for qualification, and the conversation must then show what would make that objection justified.

At 147c poets may hide their wisdom rather than display it, making their riddling speech difficult to interpret. Homer is then named the most divine and wisest poet, a commendation used to exclude the idea that he literally meant an impossibility by “knowing badly”. The claim of wisdom thus supports the proposed reinterpretation, but it also creates a pressure to read the verse so that it agrees with Socrates’ earlier argument.

The dialogue does not demonstrate Homer’s comprehensive knowledge of the best or define poetic wisdom as equivalent to it. Nor does the unnamed hypothetical wiser man become an identified teacher at the end. These invocations show how authority can

provoke inquiry and interpretation, while the actual arguments still require assessment. The sparse occurrences should not be expanded into a doctrine in which all forms of intelligence, sense and wisdom are either identical or formally separate sciences.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **143b–c.** A hypothetically wiser man requires more careful judgment of ignorance.
- **147c.** Poetic wisdom may be concealed and Homer is called the wisest poet.
- **147c–d.** The authority of Homer supports the grammatical reinterpretation.

In this edition. The edition reserves “wisdom” for sophia and “wise” for the related adjectives. Phronimos is “intelligent” and nous “sense”. This lexical care identifies differences of wording; it does not itself establish a philosophical taxonomy that the short dialogue never supplies.

See also. Intelligence and unintelligence · Sense · Knowing badly · Inquiry · Generality and qualification

Wreath and crowning

στέφανον (stephanon); στεφάνους (stephanous); στέφη (stephē); περιθήσω (perithēsō)

The word. Stephanos is a wreath or crown, and the plural stephē in the Euripidean quotation names garlands. Alcibiades' physical wreath becomes the final scene's decisive object: he puts it on Socrates because he thinks the advice good, while deferring gifts to the gods.

In Alcibiades II. The wreath gives visible expression to an evaluative change. Alcibiades began ready to pray and ends prepared to delay. Crowning Socrates acknowledges the benefit of the intervention rather than the granting of the originally desired object, which has never been specified. What is honoured is advice that makes the act safer.

The transfer does not abolish religious observance. Alcibiades promises gods wreaths and the other customary things when the hoped-for day arrives. The dialogue therefore differentiates the present gratitude to Socrates from a future properly prepared act of worship. It supplies no basis for declaring that Socrates has become the object of sacrifice.

Socrates receives the wreath and compares its significance with Teiresias' garlands, which Creon takes as an omen. The comparison shifts the crown from an already achieved compliment to a sign of hoped-for victory over rival lovers. The danger expressed by the rough sea remains. A favourable gesture is meaningful but does not settle the learner's future allegiance.

The printed opinion at 151b makes the relation between object and judgement especially important. The wreath

manifests Alcibiades' good opinion of Socrates' advice; that opinion is what Socrates says he takes as an omen. Translating the phrase directly as gift would erase a textual choice that the edition deliberately retains.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **151a.** Alcibiades postpones sacrifice and offers his present wreath for good advice.
- **151b.** Future customary wreaths for the gods are promised; Socrates accepts the present one.
- **151b–151c.** Teiresias' garlands and Creon's omen recast the gesture as hope of victory.

In this edition. Note 41 identifies the Euripidean source and Burnet's supplied your in the quotation. It explains doxa as the good opinion embodied by the wreath. Ast's dōrea and Buttmann's dosis are conjectures for words meaning gift, not the printed reading. The edition does not establish an additional ritual performed when the crown is transferred.[31]

See also. Creon and Teiresias · Erotic rivalry and victory · Teacher, care and waiting · Sacrifice · Gifts and divine bribery

31 At 151b Burnet supplies sa, 'your', in the Euripidean quotation from Phoenician Women 858–859. The following prose prints doxa, 'opinion'; Ast and Buttmann propose words for gift. Supplied note 41 treats Alcibiades' opinion as his favourable judgment of Socrates' advice, shown by the crown. The physical gift and the printed abstract noun are thus connected without being identical readings.

Zeus

Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ (Zeu basileu); πρὸς Διός (pros Dios); μὰ Δία (ma Dia)

The word. Zeus is directly named in appeals and oaths and is addressed as king in the unnamed poet's prayer. His speech from the Odyssey is also quoted without a fresh identification in the dialogue; the edition's note supplies that speaker and context.

In Alcibiades II. The casual appeals by Zeus or for Zeus' sake belong to the texture of conversation and should not all be treated as the substantive petition under examination. Alcibiades invokes Zeus even in asking Socrates to speak auspiciously. That setting makes the difference between formulaic religious language and informed judgement about a request especially visible.

The Odyssey quotation at 142d–142e gives Zeus' complaint that humans blame the gods for the troubles their own recklessness brings upon them. Socrates inserts unintelligence as an alternative description. The adaptation directs the inherited accusation of human responsibility toward the dialogue's epistemic account, without reproducing the full Homeric narrative surrounding the speech.

The prayer to King Zeus at 143a requests good things whether the speakers ask or do not ask, and protection from damaging things even when asked. Zeus is approached as able to separate the good from the defective petition. This guarded form of asking does not demand a specified office, child or possession; it acknowledges the possibility that the worshipper's desired object is wrongly judged.

Ammon is identified as Zeus Ammon in the edition's note. That background does not establish that the unnamed god of Alcibiades' opening errand is Zeus. Different textual roles must be retained: conversational invocation, epic speaker, addressee of a quoted prayer and externally identified oracle-deity.

The places. Selected annotated passages.

- **138b.** A conversational appeal to Zeus precedes the question about divine giving.
- **142d–143a.** Zeus' Homeric complaint and the poet's petition form complementary accounts of human error.
- **143d.** Alcibiades invokes Zeus while objecting to the mention of matricide.
- **148b.** The earlier poet's request that Zeus ward off harmful things is recalled.

In this edition. Note 13 locates the speech at Odyssey 1.32–34 and identifies unintelligence as Socrates' own addition. Notes 14 and 31 distinguish Burnet's deila, wretched things, from the principal manuscripts' deina and other witnesses' lygra. The edition translates King Zeus without adding our.

See also. The unnamed poet's prayer · Homer · Gods and divine giving · Ammon, oracle and prophet

Defined vocabulary register

These shorter records define ordinary words, source forms and secondary expressions in their local use. They supplement the full articles without claiming to be independent major concepts. An attested form and its normalized lemma may differ; the wording of each record specifies the intended relation.

A quarrel arose

διαφορᾶς γενομένης (diaphoras genomenēs)

A dispute or conflict coming into being between the two cities. The oracle anecdote starts with this unnamed conflict rather than specifying a campaign or date, and the lexicon should retain that limited identification.

Attestations. 148d: Provides the situation for repeated Athenian military reverses.

A short course of life

χρόνον οὐ μακρὸν βίου θέων (chronon ou makron biou theōn)

Running a course of life that will not be long. Burnet prints Stephanus' corrected "of life" and "running," so the phrase should not be silently converted into the proposed reading "sailing," even within the surrounding nautical metaphor.

Attestations. 147b: The warning extends from mistakes to a shortened life.

Accept

δέχεσθαί (dechesthai); ἀποδέχονται (apodechontai); δέχομαι (dechomai)

To receive what is offered, with acceptance itself subject to judgment. The human recipient must not accept a divine gift randomly, the gods may reject offerings, and Socrates finally accepts Alcibiades' wreath as an encouraging sign.

Attestations. 141c: Receiving a gift can be unsafe; **149c**: The gods refuse or might refuse costly worship; **150c**: The gods refuse or might refuse costly worship; **151b**: Socrates accepts the wreath.

Accompany

παρέπηται (parepētai)

To be present alongside a person or act. Knowledge of the best must accompany the specialist, and "the beneficially" must accompany action; the repeated construction makes the needed qualification something more than the bare ability to perform.

Attestations. 145c: The accompanying knowledge qualifies the intelligent adviser; **146b**: The accompanying beneficial manner qualifies practical success.

According to one's power

εἰς δύναμιν τὴν ἐμήν (eis dynamin tēn emēn); κατὰ τὴν αὐτῆς δύναμιν (kata tēn hautēs dynamin)

Capacity in the attention promised by Alcibiades and effective power in the action of each disease. These related

uses concern what a person or condition can do locally, not the political power Alcibiades imagines receiving.

Attestations. 140a: Alcibiades attends as well as he can; **140b**: Each disease acts according to its own power.

Adorn

κεκοσμήκαμεν (kekosmēkamen)

To have furnished with adornment or ordered display, here the gods' temples with offerings. The completed action forms part of the Athenian case for special favor, but outward enhancement is not accepted as a sufficient measure of the worshipper's character.

Attestations. 148e: The Athenians boast of their unmatched temple offerings.

After waiting a little

ὀλίγον δὲ ἐπισχόντες (oligon de epischontes); ὀλίγον ἐπισχών (oligon epischōn)

After a short interval of delay. Experience between the original request and its retraction supplies the force of the expression: regret follows when the consequences of the desired object become visible.

Attestations. 142d: People retract their earlier prayers; **148b**: Alcibiades repeats the same pattern in his admission of caution.

Again, the other way

Πάλιν αὖ μοι δοκεῖ (palin au moi dokei)

Alcibiades' brief response can mean a renewed assent or another reversal, since "back" and "again" overlap in the wording. This edition reads it as turning the other way again, supported by Socrates' immediate complaint that he keeps shifting.

Attestations. 147e: The translation deliberately preserves a reading of unstable assent.

Agree

ὡμολόγηται (hōmologētai); Ὡμολόγησα (hōmologēsa); ὡμολογήθη (hōmologēthē)

To assent or reach a shared formulation. The different tenses mark current agreement, a remembered personal assent, and an agreement previously reached; the partners repeatedly use these commitments as premises without making them irreversible.

Attestations. 138d: Existence of the intelligent and unintelligent is agreed; **139b**: Alcibiades acknowledges what he previously agreed; **140a**: Socrates recalls and reuses the jointly accepted starting points; **140d**: Socrates recalls and reuses the jointly accepted starting points.

Always and never

αἰεὶ (aiei); οὔποτε (oupote)

The paired temporal terms make the Pericles case general across repeated occasions: continuing failure of recognition means no attack on the recognized target. The

result remains conditional on that particular ignorance and intention.

Attestations. 144b: Always failing to recognize him implies never carrying out the intended attack.

Anger

ὀργῇ (orgēi)

The angry condition associated with Oedipus' harmful prayer. Socrates immediately distinguishes people who lack this anger yet still pray for harm while believing it good, so the risk cannot be confined to furious or openly malicious requests.

Attestations. 141a: Anger explains the contrast with other mistaken petitioners.

Apart from

χωρὶς (chōris); ἄνευ (aneu)

Without an accompanying condition that the argument regards as necessary for right direction. The words distinguish skill in an activity from judgment about its beneficial use; they do not deny that the isolated skill is genuinely a skill.

Attestations. 145b: Advice, warfare, and coercive acts can be known apart from when they are better; **145e**: The city and learned person lack guiding knowledge; **147a**: The city and learned person lack guiding knowledge.

Appear openly

ἐμφανὴς γενόμενος (emphanēs genomenos)

To become manifest or appear before the addressee. The god's appearance is part of a hypothetical offer, not an event asserted to occur in the dramatic scene.

Attestations. 141a: The imaginary appearance frames a test of what Alcibiades would choose; **148a**: The imaginary appearance frames a test of what Alcibiades would choose.

Apply

προσφέρειν (prospherein)

To bring or apply to someone what will enable the subsequent learning. The passage leaves these means undescribed, making the word part of a promised educational sequence rather than a specified curriculum.

Attestations. 150e: What follows removal of the mist will enable discrimination of good and bad.

Archery and archer

τοξεύειν (toxeuein); τοξοτῶν (toxotōn)

Shooting with a bow and the practitioners of that skill. Archers may be good at their craft yet belong to a commonwealth unable to determine when or toward whom their competence should be used.

Attestations. 145c: Archery is an example of something known by craft; **145e**: Good archers populate the inadequately guided commonwealth.

Assign

νέμοντα (nemonta)

To allot or distribute a share. The act is distorted when each expert allocates the largest part of the commonwealth according to his own strongest activity; allocation therefore requires a criterion beyond local excellence.

Attestations. 146a: The city's shares are assigned through the specialists' self-preference.

At first

τὸ πρῶτον (to prōton)

At the original stage, before a later reversal. It identifies the prayer that the ensuing palinode attempts to undo, making the change one of valuation of the same desired object.

Attestations. 142d: The later unpraying is measured against the first request; **148b**: The later unpraying is measured against the first request.

At random

εἰκῇ (eikēi)

Without adequate discrimination or examination. Socrates applies the phrase to accepting gifts, condemning ignorance indiscriminately, and casually mentioning a dreadful act; in each case it marks speech or choice insufficiently qualified for its object.

Attestations. 141c: Indiscriminate acceptance is unsafe; **143b–c**: An unqualified attack on ignorance is challenged;

143d: The phrase is used in the discussion of mentioning matricide.

At the beginning

ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ λόγου (en archēi tou logou)

At the beginning of the argument or conversation. The expression organizes recollection across a dialogue that repeatedly returns to its initial practical problem, while allowing that "beginning" can be relative to the portion being recalled.

Attestations. 140d: Recalls the question who the intelligent are; **148b**: Recalls the previously quoted poet's prayer.

Attack

ἐπίθοιο (epithoio); ἐπιθέσθαι (epithesthai)

To set upon a person. The question is whether the intended victim can become the object of an attack when the agent does not recognize that person, rather than whether the agent knows how to wield a weapon.

Attestations. 144b: Both Pericles and Orestes' mother are considered under this condition.

Be at a loss

ἀπορῶ (aporō); ἀπορουμένους (aporoumenous)

To be unable to find a way through a difficulty. Alcibiades is at a loss over the relation between a disease and disease in general; Socrates wonders whether human blame of the gods is really misplaced; the Athenians are baffled by

repeated military defeat despite their religious expenditure. These logical, theological and civic instances prepare the more sustained perplexity of the ending without making every occurrence the same experience.

Attestations. 139e: Alcibiades acknowledges difficulty in what he is saying about disease and ophthalmia; **142d**: Socrates introduces his doubt about mortals blaming the gods; **148d–e**: The Athenians are at a loss what means could avert their continuing defeats.

See also. Perplexity and reversal

Be disposed toward

διακεῖσθαι (diakeisthai); διακειμένοις (diakeimenois); διάκεινται (diakeintai)

To stand in a particular state or attitude toward the people, acts, or objects concerned. A harmful disposition can make ignorance advantageous, while the ending demands learning the right disposition toward gods and humans before resuming prayer.

Attestations. 144c: The benefit of ignorance is limited to persons so disposed; **149a**: The Athenians charge the Spartans with negligent disposition; **150d**: Proper disposition is the object of the required learning.

Be willing

ἐθέλειν (ethelein); ἐθέλοις (ethelois); θελόντων (thelontōn)

To consent or be prepared to do something. The form is kept distinct from ordinary wishing: it appears in refusals to impute a terrible intention, in the gods' refusal of

offerings, and in the final qualification that the hoped-for day depends on their willingness.

Attestations. 143c–d: Alcibiades' actual willingness is expressly not alleged; **144a**: Alcibiades' actual willingness is expressly not alleged; **149d**: The gods are unwilling to partake; **151b**: The arrival of the future day depends on divine willingness.

Before long

οὐ διὰ μακροῦ (ou dia makrou)

After no long interval. Alcibiades hopes the awaited day will come soon, but immediately qualifies the hope by the gods' willingness rather than fixing a date.

Attestations. 151b: The optimistic timetable remains conditional.

Bereaved

στερηθῆναι (sterēthēnai)

To be deprived, in context deprived of children through misfortune. The passive form leaves the particular cause of loss unspecified, concentrating on the parent's deprivation rather than inventing a narrated death scene.

Attestations. 142b–c: Even worthy children can become the source of grief through their loss.

Besieged

πολιορκούμενοι (poliorkoumenoi); πολιορκίαν (poliorkian)

Surrounded and pressed, here metaphorically by informers after actual campaigning. The repetition of the

siege word compares civic prosecution with enemy pressure and makes the apparent contrast between war and home unstable.

Attestations. 142a: The generals' legal troubles are likened to an enemy siege.

Between, in the middle

διὰ μέσου (dia mesou)

Between two stated alternatives. The spatial idiom is used to ask whether a third mental condition can intervene between intelligence and unintelligence, rather than to locate an actual person or place.

Attestations. 139a–b: An intermediate condition is considered and excluded.

Beyond one's lot

ὑπὲρ μόρον (hyper moron)

Beyond the portion or lot assigned, in the quoted description of sorrows brought on by human recklessness. The phrase distinguishes self-produced excess suffering within the quotation; it is not expanded here into a systematic theory of fate.

Attestations. 142d–e: The poetic wording supports the question of responsibility for harmful requests.

Blame

αἰτιῶνται (aitiōntai); ψέγοντας (psegontas)

To assign responsibility or find fault, with distinct local objects. The first form comes from the poetic complaint

about men blaming gods; the second introduces Socrates' objection that condemning ignorance without qualification may itself be mistaken.

Attestations. 142d: The Homeric quotation contests a transfer of responsibility to the gods; **143b–c**: The partners' blanket fault-finding with ignorance is challenged.

Blessed gods

θεοὺς μάκαρας (theous makaras)

The blessed gods, a poetic designation in the account of the Trojan sacrifices. Their exalted description accompanies refusal to partake of the offering, so its sweetness and magnificence do not oblige their acceptance.

Attestations. 149d: The gods decline the share of sacrificial savor offered to them.

Boxing and boxer

πυκτεύειν (pykteuein); πυκτικόν (pyktikon); πυκτικὴν (pyktikēn)

The activity and expertise of boxing. The craft has its own internal better and worse, which can justify calling someone a boxer without establishing the broader practical judgment Socrates calls intelligence.

Attestations. 145c–d: A second explicit example of craft-relative competence.

Bronze

χαλκῷ (chalkōi)

The metal names the weapon by which the sons are to divide their inheritance. The edition explains this as the sword; the Greek here says bronze, so a lexicon should not replace it with the iron of parallel tragic accounts.

Attestations. 138c: Instrumental wording gives the prayer its violent sense.

By itself on its own

αὐτὴ καθ’ αὑτήν (autē kath’ hautēn)

The city acting in its own affairs, contrasted with its dealings toward another city. The pair makes the argument about advice apply both internally and externally.

Attestations. 144e–145a: The scope of civic action is expanded beyond foreign policy.

By land and by sea

κατὰ γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλατταν (kata gēn kai kata thalattan)

The two arenas of military action. The pairing makes the reported failure comprehensive across theaters rather than dependent on one kind of warfare.

Attestations. 148d: Athens is represented as losing whenever battle occurs in either arena.

By nature

φύσει (physei)

As belonging to the character of poetry itself in Socrates' explanation. He then adds the separate condition of a grudging poet, distinguishing a general difficulty of poetic language from an individual wish to conceal wisdom.

Attestations. 147b–c: Poetry's riddling character and a poet's concealment are separate factors.

Camp

ἔπαυλιν ποιουμένους (epaulin poioumenous)

Making a camp or encampment, the Trojans' situation in the Homeric example. Their actual ritual activity in that setting supplies another test of whether splendid sacrifice necessarily obtains divine acceptance.

Attestations. 149d: Introduces the Trojans' rejected hecatombs.

Carpenter

τέκτονας (tektonas); τέκτονές (tektones)

A worker in carpentry, treated as one craftsperson among others. The example makes the same point as disease and its varieties: membership in a broader class is not identity with every subclass.

Attestations. 140b–c: Carpenters exemplify a determinate part of craftsmanship.

Cast a vote against

ἀντίψηφον (antipsēphon)

Voting or taking a side in opposition. Alcibiades uses civic decision-making language to explain his assent to the god's apparent judgment, but his refusal to oppose is not itself a fresh demonstration of the reasoning.

Attestations. 150b: The political metaphor marks deference to divine authority.

Caution

φυλακῆς (phylakēs)

Watchfulness against committing the error under discussion. Alcibiades applies it to his own prayer, and Socrates later couples it with examination of what one should and should not say, making caution an active demand on judgment.

Attestations. 148b: Prayer requires care against unnoticed harmful requests; **149c**: Caution is paired with scrutiny of speech.

Charge someone with

καταγνώσομαι (katagnōsomai)

To attribute a fault or make an adverse judgment about someone. Socrates explicitly refuses to impute willingness to commit matricide to Alcibiades, separating a hypothetical examination from an accusation about his actual intentions.

Attestations. 143c: Socrates denies that the example charges Alcibiades with the deed.

Clearly follows

δῆλον οὖν ὅτι (dēlon oun hoti)

A marker that Socrates takes the next conclusion to be evident from what precedes. In the Margites interpretation, the apparent clarity still depends on the assumption that the previous arguments are trustworthy.

Attestations. 147d: Introduces the inference that harmful knowledge shows Margites to be a sorry fellow.

Come to the end of life

τὸν βίον ἐτελεύτησαν (ton bion eteleutēsan)

To have died or reached the end of life. This ordinary statement about some former generals does not by itself specify suicide, execution, or another cause of death; the edition deliberately avoids the misleading English “ended their lives.”

Attestations. 142a: Death is one outcome for men who obtained the office they wanted.

Come, then

φέρε (phere)

An invitation to attend to the next question or example, not an instruction to carry an object. Its repetitions help Socrates restart or redirect the conversation after assent, difficulty, or apparent completion.

Attestations. 138b: Introduces the first religious question and the examination of intelligence; **138d**: Introduces the first religious question and the examination of intelligence; **139c**: Reopens the practical implications of an

argument; **147e**: Reopens the practical implications of an argument.

Condition undergone

πάθος (pathos); πεπονθέναι (peponthenai); πεπόνθασιν (peponthasin)

A state in which a person finds himself or a condition he has undergone. In the opening reasoning it covers the mental states between which the speakers attempt to divide people; it does not here mean emotion alone.

Attestations. 139a–b: A third condition is denied and one of the alternatives required; **141a**: Other petitioners are said to be in the opposite condition from Oedipus.

Confusion

ταραχῆς (tarachēs)

Disturbance or disorder in the imagined commonwealth. It is the practical result predicted when many experts compete for precedence without knowledge of the best or someone able to direct their appropriate use.

Attestations. 146b: The city's condition is described as full of great confusion.

Contests and athletes

ἀγωνίας (agōnias); ἀθλητῶν (athlētōn)

Competitive exercises and their trained performers. Their inclusion broadens the illustrative city beyond political and military professionals, so the problem is coordination of genuine but partial competences.

Attestations. 145c: Other contests extend the examples of knowable crafts; **145e**: Athletes form part of the imagined city of specialists.

Costly and solemn

πολυτελεστάτας (polytelestatas); σεμνοτάτας (semnotatas); πολυτελεῖς (polyteleis)

Very expensive and impressive in religious dignity or display. These are the Athenians' descriptions of their processions, whose magnificence is subsequently set against the gods' attention to prayer and soul.

Attestations. 148e: Forms part of the Athenians' comparative self-praise; **149c**: Costly display is explicitly denied automatic acceptance; **150a**: Costly display is explicitly denied automatic acceptance.

Customary things

τὰ νομιζόμενα (ta nomizomena)

The other conventional observances or offerings associated with worship. Alcibiades promises these along with wreaths later, which makes the postponement compatible with continuing religious practice.

Attestations. 151b: The promised future worship includes established customary acts.

Dagger

ἐγχειρίδιον (encheiridion)

A handheld dagger, the concrete instrument in the hypothetical attack on Pericles. Having the equipment and

intention does not suffice to carry out the act if recognition of the intended victim is missing.

Attestations. 143e: The weapon belongs to the hypothetical example, not an action performed in the scene.

Dangers and fears

κινδύνων (kindynōn); φόβων (phobōn)

Exposure to peril and the fear accompanying it. Socrates includes both during command and after returning home, so relief from wartime danger cannot be assumed to follow civic success.

Attestations. 142a: Even generals thought to have fared best pass through many dangers and fears.

Dare

τολμῆσαι (tolmēsai); τολμήσαις (tolmēsais)

To venture on an act, with the agent's recognition and judgment affecting whether it can be attempted. Alcibiades initially rules out sane daring to make Oedipus' prayer; the later examples test whether recognition of a victim would permit a mistaken intention to become an act.

Attestations. 138c: A healthy person is not expected to dare such a prayer; **143d**: Orestes' action and the hypothetical attack on Pericles test conditions of daring; **144b**: Orestes' action and the hypothetical attack on Pericles test conditions of daring.

Deliberate

βουλευομένοις (bouleuomenois)

To consider what course to take before acting. The Athenians deliberate and decide to consult Ammon, but this deliberation does not yet correct the assumption that the quantity of offerings should determine divine favor.

Attestations. 148e: Consultation is chosen as the next step.

Desire and strive

ἐπιθυμήσαντες (epithymēsantes); σπουδάσαντες (spoudasantes)

Wanting an object and working seriously to obtain it. Socrates allows that the agents attain what they actively seek, then asks whether the outcome rewards that effort; desire and effort are not themselves measures of the good.

Attestations. 141d: Men strive to acquire tyranny; **141e–142a**: Citizens desire and obtain a generalship.

Despise

καταφρονοῦσιν (kataphronousin)

To regard as having little claim on one's judgment or favor. The gods' disregard concerns gifts and ceremonial expense offered as inducements, since they are not takers of gifts; it does not mean that the dialogue abolishes worship altogether.

Attestations. 150a: Outward expenditure is denied controlling weight.

Device or means

μηχανῇ (mēchanēi)

A means of bringing about the desired escape from present troubles. In their perplexity the Athenians seek a practical way out, but the oracle redirects attention from a new technique of winning favor to the character of their prayer.

Attestations. 148d–e: The search for a device leads to consultation.

Differ

διαφέρειν (diapherein); διαφέρουσα (diapherousa)

To differ in operation or character while still belonging to a shared category. The disease-and-craft examples permit differences inside unintelligence; later the Spartan prayer is said to differ greatly from other prayers in what it requests.

Attestations. 140b: Different effects and different crafts support distinctions within a class; **140d**: Different effects and different crafts support distinctions within a class; **149b–c**: The Spartan prayer is distinguished from indiscriminate requests.

Divide among themselves

διειληφότες (dieilēphotes)

To have taken or apportioned distinct shares. The completed division provides an analogy rather than a measured psychological scale: Socrates moves from

distributed crafts to differently named portions of unintelligence.

Attestations. 140b–c: The same form links the craft analogy to the mental classification.

Do and say

πράττειν καὶ λέγειν (prattein kai legein)

The paired activities make sound judgment cover action and speech together. Since prayer is spoken conduct, it belongs inside this ordinary pair rather than occupying an exempt sphere where good intentions suffice.

Attestations. 140e: Knowing what one must do and say identifies the intelligent; **150b**: The same formulation is extended explicitly toward gods and human beings.

Doctor

ἰατροὺς (iatrous); ἰατροῦ (iatrou)

The practitioner cited as able to distinguish diseases by their effects. The same occupation returns as the person on whom the sick depend, making expertise an admitted need even while the dialogue questions knowledge detached from the best.

Attestations. 140b: Doctors identify differences among diseases; **146e**: Dependence on a doctor models holding fast to guiding knowledge.

Doors and being inside

τὰς θύρας (tas thyras); ἔνδον (endon); εἴσω (eisō)

The doors, being within, and movement inside establish the spatial sequence of the Pericles example. Access to the correct house and sight of the actual man leave room for failure to recognize him, isolating the effect of that particular ignorance.

Attestations. 144a–b: The hypothetical attacker reaches the intended place but may not identify its occupant.

Dreadful

δεινά (deina); δεινὸν (deinon)

Terrible or alarming in consequence, as distinct from the edition's "wretched" in the poet's prayer. The word describes both legendary calamities and the thought that the gods might prefer gifts to the giver's character.

Attestations. 138c: Further dreadful consequences follow Oedipus' curse; **143d**: Alcibiades treats matricide as too dreadful to mention casually; **149e**: Divine attention to gifts rather than soul would be dreadful.

Emulate

ἐζηλωκότες (ezēlōkotes)

To follow a model with admiration or imitation. Socrates offers emulation of the poet only as one explanation of Spartan practice, leaving open that the Spartans reached their prayer by their own examination.

Attestations. 148b–c: The relation between the poet's prayer and Spartan prayer remains an alternative explanation.

Every year

ἀν' ἕκαστον ἔτος (an' hekaston etos)

Annually, a repeated rhythm of expenditure and observance. Regularity adds to the Athenians' boast but cannot establish righteousness, since a person or city with many mistakes can still afford the same yearly rites.

Attestations. 148e–149a: The Athenians emphasize repeated annual payments; **150a**: Annual ritual can coexist with wrongdoing.

Evidently

δῆλον ὅτι (dēlon hoti)

An inference presented as evident by the speaker. Socrates uses it to explain why the prophet gives no other answer, attributing the limitation to the god; it is the narrator of the anecdote's explanatory comment, not a separate quoted pronouncement.

Attestations. 149a–b: Marks the inferred reason for the prophet's restricted answer.

Exactly as

ἀτεχνῶς ὥσπερ (atechnōs hōsper)

Quite simply or precisely as in the proposed comparison. Although the adverb contains the letters of the word for

craft, here it strengthens the analogy and does not mean that the doctor or pilot lacks expertise.

Attestations. 146e: Introduces dependence on the doctor and pilot as clarifying comparisons.

Exile

φυγάδες (phygades); φυγάδα ποιεῖν (phygada poiein)

A person excluded from his city or fatherland. Exile appears first as a consequence suffered by officeholders and later as an action whose technical execution is insufficient without knowing when and against whom it is better.

Attestations. 142a: Some who obtained generalship remain exiles; **145b**: Making someone an exile is distinguished from judging its proper use.

Eyes on the ground

εἰς γῆν βλέπειν (eis gēn blepein)

To look toward the ground, the bodily posture accompanying Alcibiades' gloomy expression. Socrates reads it as suggesting thought, so a direction of sight starts an inquiry into the direction of practical judgment.

Attestations. 138a: A visible posture is treated as a possible sign of pondering.

Fair victor

καλλίνικος (kallinikos); καλλίνικα (kallinika)

Winning finely or gloriously, first attached to the garlands in the tragic verse and then made Socrates' aspiration. The

verbal recurrence transforms Alcibiades' wreath into a hoped-for victory over his other lovers, not a victory already secured.

Attestations. 151b: The quoted garlands carry the language of victory; **151c**: Socrates hopes to become the fair victor over Alcibiades' lovers.

Fall far short

πολλοῦ φήσομεν ἐνδεῖν (pollou phēsomen endein)

To lack a great deal of what would be needed for the proposed status. Alcibiades agrees emphatically that possessing one specialized expertise falls far short of making a person intelligent.

Attestations. 145d–e: Marks the denied inference from technical knowledge to intelligence.

Fever

πυρέττειν (pyrettein); πυρέττοντες (pyrettontes)

To have fever, used as another particular form of illness. All who have it are sick, but the reverse statement is rejected; the resulting asymmetry prepares the division of unintelligence into kinds.

Attestations. 139e: A familiar case illustrates inclusion without equivalence; **140a**: A familiar case illustrates inclusion without equivalence.

First, then at last

πρῶτον (prōton); τὸ τηνικαῦτ’ ἤδη (to tēnikaut’ ēdē)

A sequence in which one preparation must precede further instruction. The mist must first be removed from the soul before the means of recognizing bad and good can be applied, so the ending does not pretend Alcibiades already has that capacity.

Attestations. 150e: Removal precedes positive educational application.

Fitting

εἰκὸς (eikos)

Suitable or what one would reasonably expect. Alcibiades’ statement that opposition to the god would not be fitting expresses the propriety of his response in this context, not a statistical claim about how often people disagree with gods.

Attestations. 150b: Qualifies his refusal to cast an opposing vote.

Flute-playing and flute-player

αὐλητικὴν (aulētikēn); αὐλητικόν (aulētikon); αὐλητῶν (aulētōn)

The craft and practitioner rendered “flute-playing” and “flute-player” by the edition. The example behaves like horsemanship and boxing: technical excellence gives a specific professional description, not an automatic title to direct the whole commonwealth.

Attestations. 145d: The craft-to-practitioner pattern is extended; **145e**: Flute-players appear among the city's competent but unguided specialists.

For some people in some state

ἔστιν οἷς καὶ ἔχουσί πως (estin hois kai echousi pōs)

A qualification of the persons and circumstances to which a judgment applies. Socrates needs it to turn the general condemnation of ignorance into a discriminating claim: ignorance of a particular object can help a person already disposed to misuse recognition.

Attestations. 143c: The repeated qualification defines the scope of beneficial ignorance; **144c**: The repeated qualification defines the scope of beneficial ignorance.

Forethought

προμηθείας (promētheias)

Consideration beforehand, needed because the error may enter the request itself. It is not merely preparation for how to obtain a desired object; it is advance care about whether that object is good.

Attestations. 138b: Prayer is said to need a great deal of forethought.

Fortunate and unfortunate

εὐτυχεῖς (eutycheis); εὐτυχεῖν (eutychein); δυστυχεῖν (dystychein)

Faring well or badly in what happens. The Spartans are not claimed to succeed in every event, and the Athenians'

repeated defeats motivate their consultation; such outcomes raise but do not by themselves answer questions about the quality of worship.

Attestations. 148c: Spartan fortune is favorable but explicitly not universal; **148d**: Athenian lack of success prompts the oracle story.

Fortune's following wind

ἐπουρίσῃ τὸ τῆς τύχης (epourisēi to tēs tychēs)

Fortune imagined as a favorable wind blowing behind the voyager. Without direction, stronger favorable conditions produce greater mistakes rather than greater safety; Burnet's "fortune" follows Stallbaum's conjecture where the principal manuscripts read "soul."

Attestations. 147a: The nautical metaphor joins external advantage to the risk of misguided action.

From the plain into heaven

ἐκ τοῦ πεδίου (ek tou pediou); οὐρανὸν εἴσω (ouranon eisō)

The upward route of the sacrificial savor from the battlefield plain into heaven. Physical arrival at the gods' sphere is contrasted with refusal of participation, making mere transmission insufficient for successful worship.

Attestations. 149d: The winds carry the savor, but the gods decline it.

Fulfilled

ἐξετελέσθη (exetelesthē)

Brought to completion or accomplished. The fulfilment of Oedipus' words supplies the first concrete example of why successful prayer cannot simply be counted as a good result.

Attestations. 138c: The requested bad things and their consequences come about.

Full of

μεστὴν (mestēn)

Filled or permeated with the stated condition. The word intensifies the description of a commonwealth whose expertise has produced confusion and lawlessness instead of coordinated good.

Attestations. 146b: The predicted disorder is pervasive rather than a single isolated error.

Getting money

χρημάτων κτῆσιν (chrēmatōn ktēsin)

The acquisition of material resources. It is one example of favorable fortune whose increased scale can enlarge the mistakes of an unguided possessor, rather than an independently sufficient good.

Attestations. 147a: Money is the first explicit external advantage in the wind image.

Gilded-horn cattle

χρυσόκερως βοῦς (chrysokerōs bous)

Oxen with gilded horns, a visibly splendid form of sacrificial offering. Socrates includes them among the material gifts that cannot redeem an indiscriminate prayer for whatever occurs to the worshipper.

Attestations. 149c: The ornate victims form part of the contrast with Spartan prayer.

Give

διδόναι (didonai); δίδου (didou); δώσομεν (dōsomen)

To give or bring about what is requested, with no guarantee that the recipient can use it well. The opening distribution of gifts, the poet's appeal to Zeus, and Alcibiades' final promise all retain the ordinary language of giving, but reverse who gives to whom.

Attestations. 138b: The gods give some requests to some people; **143a**: The poet asks Zeus to give the good things; **151b**: Alcibiades promises customary gifts to the gods later.

Gloomy face

ἐσκυθρωπακέναι (eskythrōpakenai)

To wear a gloomy or downcast expression. Socrates begins from an observable appearance, but only compares it to the look of someone pondering; the text does not disclose an independently narrated cause of Alcibiades' mood.

Attestations. 138a: The expression supplies the opening question's occasion.

Go back and start again

πάλιν ἐπανέλθωμεν (palin epanelthōmen)

To return to an earlier starting point in the discussion. After the classification has been repaired, Socrates resumes the original question of who the intelligent and unintelligent are rather than pretending that the intervening analogy already answered it.

Attestations. 140d: The inquiry returns to its original task.

Go on one's way

πορεύῃ (poreuēi); πορευόμενος (poreuomenos)

The opening verb makes the inquiry an interruption of an actual journey to pray. The same participle returns in the imaginary divine offers, keeping speculation attached to the errand Alcibiades is about to perform.

Attestations. 138a: Socrates asks about Alcibiades' destination; **141a**: The god is the one to whom Alcibiades is on his way; **148a**: The god is the one to whom Alcibiades is on his way.

Good enough

ἱκανὸς (hikanos)

Adequate to perform the specified task. Here it is the competence everyone assumes he has to pray for his own best; the dialogue has made that ordinarily modest self-assessment doubtful.

Attestations. 143b: Universal confidence in one's ability to pray well is exposed.

Gout

ποδαγρᾶν (podagran); ποδαγρῶσιν (podagrōsin)

To have gout, one specified bodily disease in the analogy. Its point is not medical explanation but non-exhaustiveness: a person can be sick without having gout, just as a general class need not be identical with one of its members.

Attestations. 139e: Gout is one illness among others; **140a**: Gout is one illness among others.

Great-souled

μεγαλοψύχους (megalopsychous); μεγαλοψυχίαν (megalopsychian)

A high-sounding description made into a euphemism for unintelligence. Its return as Alcibiades' "greatness of soul" explains why Socrates thinks he will reject the modest Spartan prayer: grand aspiration is being gently redescribed as an obstacle to prudent limitation.

Attestations. 140c: The first expressly auspicious label; **150c**: The noun is mockingly called the finest name in unintelligence.

Grief

λύπας (lypas); λυπούμενοι (lypoumenoi)

Painful distress, here the parents' sustained response to their children's condition or fate. The vocabulary connects the harm to the person who made the original prayer, rather than considering birth only as an isolated successful request.

Attestations. 142b: Parents can spend their whole lives grieving.

Grudging

φθονερῦ (phthonerou)

Unwilling to share what one knows. Applied to the hypothetical poet, it intensifies the difficulty of interpretation when someone uses an already riddling medium to hide wisdom deliberately.

Attestations. 147c: A poet's refusal to disclose is added to poetry's intrinsic obscurity.

Happy or prosperous

εὐδαίμων (eudaimōn)

Faring well or enjoying a successful life, the condition Archelaus' killer imagines tyranny will bring him. His death after a few days of rule exposes the gap between the anticipated prosperous condition and the actual consequences of acquiring the desired office.

Attestations. 141d–e: The hoped-for happiness is the killer's expectation, not the narrator's judgment of his success.

Hard to make out

δύσγνωστον (dysgnōston)

Difficult to recognize or understand. The difficulty concerns what each poet means, and results in the explanation from both poetic riddling and the poet's reluctance to show his wisdom.

Attestations. 147c: Describes the interpreter's problem.

Hateful or hated

ἀπήχθετο (apēchtheto); ἀπηχθημένους (apēchthēmenous)

Being an object of aversion to the gods. This relation explains the uselessness of the Trojans' gifts in the cited example; the passage does not give a general formula by which every military defeat proves divine hatred.

Attestations. 149d–e: Ilium, Priam, and his people are unwelcome despite perfect offerings.

Have it in mind

διενοεῖτο (dienoeito); ἐν νῷ ἔχεις (en nōi echeis)

To intend a particular act or entertain a thought relevant to the discussion. The first construction specifies Orestes' determinate target; the second invites Alcibiades to disclose a response rather than letting apparent assent stand without inquiry.

Attestations. 144c: Orestes' intention concerns his own mother; **143a**: Socrates asks what countervailing thought Alcibiades has; **150b**: Socrates asks what countervailing thought Alcibiades has.

Having been there

αὐτοὶ παρόντες οἴδαμεν (autoi parontes oidamen)

Knowing through one's own presence at events. The claim strengthens the generals' example by distinguishing it from the preceding remote story; it does not name any general or particular trial.

Attestations. 141e: Socrates invokes shared first-hand knowledge.

Healthy

ὑγιαίνων (hygiainōn); ὑγιαίνοντές (hygiainontes)

Being healthy, with an initial implication of soundness of mind. Alcibiades uses the singular to exclude a sane person from Oedipus' conduct; Socrates then takes up the word in a bodily contrast with sickness, which becomes an analogy for mental classifications.

Attestations. 138c: Soundness of mind is implied in the response about Oedipus; **138d**: Bodily health is contrasted with sickness.

Hear from others

ἄλλων ἀκηκόαμεν (allōn akēkoamen); ἤκουσα (ēkousa)

To receive information through someone else's report. Socrates explicitly distinguishes this from first-hand presence when discussing Athenian generals, but presents the Ammon story as something once heard from unspecified people.

Attestations. 141e: Second-hand report is contrasted with personal knowledge; **148d**: The oracle anecdote is introduced as a report; "the older men" is bracketed by Burnet.

Hecatombs

ἑκατόμβας (hekatombas)

Large sacrificial offerings, bearing a conventional name associated with a hundred cattle. The quoted passage calls the Trojans' hecatombs perfect without enumerating victims, and the gods' refusal shows that ritual completeness does not guarantee acceptance.

Attestations. 149d: The perfect hecatombs can be compared with the allegedly maimed Spartan victims at 149a.

Hit the right mark

τοῦ καιροῦ τυχεῖν (tou kairou tychein)

To arrive at what is fitting or apt in the circumstances. The question concerns both accepting an offered object and selecting one's own request, so the right mark is not identical with getting whatever one initially wants.

Attestations. 148a: Socrates asks how either form of choice could now be made correctly.

Hold fast to

ἀντέχεσθαι (antechesthai)

To cling to or maintain dependence on what can guide one. The city and soul should relate to knowledge of the best as the sick person does to a doctor and the sailor to a pilot; the image concerns continuing reliance, not merely acquiring an isolated fact.

Attestations. 146e: Introduces the two practical analogies of guidance.

Hold for a few days

τρεῖς ἢ τέτταρας ἡμέρας (treis ē tettaras hēmeras)

Three or four days, the brief duration assigned to the killer's possession of tyranny. The approximate number matters as a measure of unstable success, not as an independently confirmed historical dating.

Attestations. 141e: The new tyrant's apparent advantage lasts only a few days.

Horseman and riding

ἱππεύειν (hippeuein); ἱππικόν (hippikon); ἱππικὴν (hippikēn)

Riding and competence in horsemanship supply a deliberately limited description of expertise. Knowing what is better according to this craft warrants the title horseman, but the argument refuses to infer unqualified intelligence from it.

Attestations. 145c–d: Horsemanship is the first named example of domain-specific competence.

I think

οἶμαι (oimai); ᾠήθην (ōiēthēn)

The speaker's ordinary avowal of belief or judgment, with the past form allowing an earlier thought to be reconsidered. Socrates often marks an assertion as his own assessment with "I think," while Alcibiades can acknowledge that matters are not as he thought; neither expression alone supplies a proof.

Attestations. 139d: Alcibiades revises the belief produced by the failed classification; **141a–b**: Socrates describes

what he thinks Alcibiades would welcome; **147c–d**: The interpretation of the poet is presented as Socrates' judgment.

Idiots

ἠλιθίους (ēlithious)

The first of the two blunt labels for those said to have a little less unintelligence than the mad. The word occurs before Socrates introduces people who choose the "most auspicious names," so it should not be represented as itself one of those five expressly flattering descriptions.

Attestations. 140c: Paired with "thunderstruck" in the lower degree of the classification.

If I can

Ἄν δυνηθῶ (an dynēthō)

Alcibiades' qualified agreement to follow what comes next. The response admits a possible limit to his ability, unlike the unqualified confidence about choosing goods attributed to ordinary petitioners.

Attestations. 145a: Alcibiades agrees conditionally to consider the next implication.

If indeed

εἴπερ γε (eiper ge); εἴπερ (eiper)

A condition treated as important to the inference that follows. It preserves the dependence of the claim on the stated premise, especially when Socrates says that

ignorance profits the many if their knowledge would only make harmful action more eager.

Attestations. 146d: The startling conclusion about the many is explicitly conditional; **147d–e**: The reading of Margites and trust in the arguments are tied to stated assumptions.

In a word

ἑνὶ δὲ λόγῳ (heni de logōi)

A signal that several examples are being gathered into one summary. Socrates broadens the list of public advice to what the city does toward other cities or on its own, rather than supplying a new technical sense of λόγος.

Attestations. 144e–145a: Summarizes the civic reach of orators' advice.

In especial honor

διαφερόντως τετιμῆσθαι (diapherontōs tetimēsthai)

To be particularly valued or honored. Justice and intelligence receive this status with gods and sensible people, reversing the scale of value implied by Athens' boast about its costly rites.

Attestations. 150a–b: The standard of honor is moral and practical rather than monetary.

In exchange for

ἀντί (anti)

In place of or as the price of something else. The comparison between universal dominion and Alcibiades'

own soul or life breaks the assumption that more external possession is always preferable; the later poetic discussion uses the same ordinary preposition for replacing one word with another.

Attestations. 141c: Land and tyranny are rejected if acquired at the cost of soul or life; **147d**: Socrates describes substitutions in his reading of the poet.

In fact

τυγχάνομεν εὐχόμενοι (tynchanomen euchomenoi);
τυγχάνουσιν ἄφρονες ὄντες (tynchanousin aphrones ontes);
τυγχάνει κράτιστος ὤν (tynchanei kratistos ōn)

With a participle, this construction presents what is actually so and is consistently rendered "in fact" in the edition. It should not be translated as chance occurrence in these uses, though other constructions of the same verb can concern what happens or is obtained.

Attestations. 138b: What people in fact pray for; **139c**: People of Alcibiades' age who are in fact unintelligent; **146a**: The specialist's actual strongest pursuit in the adapted verse.

In private and in public

ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ (idiai kai dēmosiai)

The paired adverbs cover personal and civic prayer. Their recurrence in the Spartan example makes the proposed alternative apply to both scales already included in the opening question.

Attestations. 138b: The danger concerns both kinds of prayer; **148c**: The Spartans use the modest prayer in both settings.

In proportion to these

ἀνὰ λόγον τούτοις (ana logon toutois)

By the same corresponding pattern as the preceding cases. Socrates uses it to extend the naming of practitioners from their crafts without individually listing every expertise; it does not introduce a mathematical proportion to be calculated.

Attestations. 145d: Generalizes from horseman, boxer, and flute-player.

In vain

μάτην (matēn)

Pointlessly or without the result that would justify an action. Men may blame the gods in vain for self-caused troubles, while sacrifices may be vain when their givers' condition makes them unacceptable.

Attestations. 142d: Blaming the gods may misidentify the source of trouble; **149e**: Gifts cannot secure acceptance for the hated Trojans.

Inexperienced

ἀπείρους (apeirous)

Lacking experience, used as one of the softened names given to the unintelligent. No particular craft or life stage

is specified in this occurrence, so the word should not be turned into a diagnosis of Alcibiades' age alone.

Attestations. 140d: A polite designation within the list, not a separate educational theory.

Inheritance

τὰ πατρῷα (ta patrōia)

The paternal possessions that Oedipus' sons are to divide. The familial object makes the curse concrete: division of an inheritance becomes destruction of the heirs through the specified means of division.

Attestations. 138c: Oedipus prays for his sons' division of their inheritance.

Innocent

ἀκάκους (akakous)

Free from badness or guile in its favorable sound, here another polite designation for unintelligence. The list does not establish that ignorance makes someone morally innocent; it exposes how a reassuring name may obscure the defect under discussion.

Attestations. 140d: The first of the final three names, on the line where section d begins.

It lies with the gods

ἐπὶ τοῖς θεοῖς (epi tois theois)

The outcome is within the gods' power or discretion. Even the defended form of prayer is not presented as a

mechanism compelling its fulfilment, since the gods can give what is asked or its opposite.

Attestations. 148c–d: Divine discretion qualifies the appeal to Spartan fortune.

Just now

ἄρτι (arti)

A short time before the current point in the conversation. It lets the argument explicitly compare a new conclusion or example with something the partners recently said, without treating their earlier view as their permanent position.

Attestations. 144c: The earlier belief that ignorance is simply bad is recalled; **145e**: The specialists in war and killing are the people mentioned just now.

Keep from a gift

ἀπόσχοιτο (aposchoito); ἀπόσχοιντο (aposchointo)

To refrain or hold oneself back from accepting what is offered. The action is harder than admitting that a type of possession can cause harm, which explains why the warning concerns reception as well as prayer.

Attestations. 142c: Few would refrain when tyranny or generalship was actually available.

Keep quiet

ἡσυχίαν ἔχειν (hēsychian echein)

To remain at rest or refrain from the immediate action. Here it is the prudent alternative to going ahead with a

prayer one cannot judge; the next sentence gives that restraint a positive endpoint in learning.

Attestations. 150c: Socrates recommends restraint before the proposed sacrifice.

Keep silent

μὴ σιώπα (mē siōpa)

Do not remain silent when there is something to say against the proposal. Socrates invites an objection after praising the poet's prayer, keeping favorable evaluation open to the partner's response.

Attestations. 143a: Alcibiades is asked to state any opposing thought.

Labors

πόνοι (ponoi)

Troubles or efforts endured in pursuing or exercising office. Socrates does not reject difficulty as such; he says that dangers and labors would have a rationale if they led to benefit.

Attestations. 142b: The value of effort depends on its result.

Land or territory

χώραν (chōran)

The land associated with dominion over Greeks and non-Greeks. As an object Alcibiades could possess only while alive to use it, territory belongs among the external goods whose value depends on the possessor's condition.

Attestations. 141c: The largest imagined territory is set against the loss of soul or life.

Leave it to someone

ἐπιτρέψειεν (epitrepseien)

To entrust or permit a choice to the person himself. The second divine-offer scenario tests whether Alcibiades could choose safely even if the god did not restrict him to a preselected gift.

Attestations. 148a: The god might let Alcibiades formulate his own prayer.

Led astray by gifts

ὑπὸ δώρων παράγεσθαι (hypo dōrōn paragesthai)

To be diverted or induced by presents from the proper basis of judgment. Socrates denies that the gods act this way, making the bad moneylender a negative comparison rather than a description of divine conduct.

Attestations. 149e: The ordinary language of inducement exposes the mistaken purchasing model of worship.

Led by each one

ἀγόμενος (agomenos); μιᾶς ἑκάστης (mias hekastēs)

Being drawn or guided successively by the separate kinds of knowledge. Without the knowledge of the best, each partial competence can exert its own pull, reproducing in one person the lack of coordination imagined in the commonwealth.

Attestations. 147a: The learned person's capacities do not supply a single governing direction.

Live rightly

ὀρθῶς βιώσεσθαι (orthōs biōsesthai)

To conduct or pass one's life correctly. Socrates applies the phrase to both soul and city, giving the guiding knowledge a practical purpose larger than successful execution of any single craft.

Attestations. 146e: Right living is the end for which the knowledge must be held fast.

Long ago

πάλαι δὴ (palai dē)

Already a long time before now. The duration strengthens the objection: if nearly everyone around them were mad, harm ought not still to be merely a future possibility.

Attestations. 139d: Elapsed ordinary civic life tests the proposed equation of madness and unintelligence.

Look at it this way

τῇδέ πῃ ἀθρητέον (tēide pēi athrēteon)

The proposal that the matter must be viewed along another line. The deliberately provisional "somehow this way" marks the move from the failed opposition argument to distinctions within disease and craft.

Attestations. 139d: Introduces the replacement analogy.

Look into

ἐπισκεψώμεθα (episkepsōmetha); σκεπτέον (skepteon); σκόπει (skopei)

To examine or consider a question rather than accept its first appearance. These are related forms of the dialogue's inquiry vocabulary, directing attention first to who the intelligent are, then to the possible benefit of ignorance and the limits of specialized knowledge.

Attestations. **138d**: The identity of intelligent and unintelligent people is proposed for examination; **140d**: The identity of intelligent and unintelligent people is proposed for examination; **143e**: Further examples are introduced for scrutiny; **144d**: Further examples are introduced for scrutiny.

Look to

ἀποβλέπουσιν (apoblepousin); ἀποβλέπων (apoblepōn)

To direct attention to the relevant object or criterion. Alcibiades must have something in view when classifying people, and the gods are said to attend to soul rather than gifts; the visual verb thereby expresses evaluative orientation.

Attestations. **145a**: The classification of intelligent and unintelligent presupposes a criterion; **149e**: The decisive object of divine attention is the giver's soul.

Looks as though

κινδυνεύει (kindyneuei)

A guarded formulation meaning that something looks likely or seems to be the result. It is not always a claim about danger: Socrates uses it for conclusions about madness, the poet's intelligence, and the value of knowledge, keeping an inferential reserve in the wording.

Attestations. 139c: Introduces the provisional identity of madness and unintelligence; **142e**: Qualifies the favorable assessment of the praying poet; **144d**: Qualifies major claims about knowledge and divine honor; **150a**: Qualifies major claims about knowledge and divine honor.

Lose one's life

τοῦ βίου ἀπαλλαγῆναι (tou biou apallagēnai); τὸν βίον ἀφῃρέθησαν (ton bion aphēirethēsan)

To be separated from life or robbed of it. These expressions state the most extreme possible cost of apparent success, making the warning about harmful gifts concrete without asserting that all who obtain power die violently.

Attestations. 141c–d: Loss of life is the final risk of an indiscriminately accepted gift; **141d**: Plots deprive some successful aspirants to tyranny of life.

Madcap

μάργον (margon)

Rash or foolishly unrestrained, Alcibiades' description of making such a choice offhand. The edition notes its verbal

connection with Margites, allowing a comic echo of the fool just discussed without making Alcibiades literally that character.

Attestations. 148a: Alcibiades recognizes the recklessness of an immediate answer.

Make an attempt

ἐγχειροῖς (encheirois)

To try to put the intended action into effect. The hypothetical repetition shows that ignorance of the victim's identity blocks the act even if the intention and attempts continue.

Attestations. 144b: Many attempts still fail if Pericles is never recognized.

Mean or have in view

νοοῦσιν (noousin); βούλεται (bouletai)

To intend a meaning, rather than merely to wish for an object. These ordinary verbs frame the poetic reinterpretation as an attempt to recover what the poet has in mind behind a grammatically altered paraphrase.

Attestations. 147c: The question is what the poets mean; **147d**: Socrates claims that his metrically altered version preserves the intended meaning.

Misfortunes

συμφοράς (symphoras); συμφοραῖς (symphorais)

Adverse events befalling people, distinguished in the translation from the more general language of ill fortune.

Parents may suffer them through worthless children or through the loss of worthy ones, so good character alone does not remove the possible pain of the requested gift.

Attestations. 142b–c: The example of children gives two different routes to parental suffering.

Miss the best

διημαρτηκότα (diēmartēkota); διημαρτηκέναι (diēmartēkenai)

To fail to reach or hit the appropriate good. The directional force fits the dialogue's later question about hitting the right mark: successful performance in one craft can coexist with missing the good of the city and oneself.

Attestations. 146a: The ambitious specialist misses the relevant best; **146c**: The majority's error is described by the same verb.

Mistakes

ἁμαρτήματα (hamartēmata); ἡμαρτηκότας (hēmartēkotas)

Failures or wrongful errors in action. The noun names the enlarged mistakes caused by unguided good fortune; the participle later identifies people or cities whose costly rites coexist with many mistakes toward gods and humans.

Attestations. 147a: Stronger favorable resources increase the scale of mistakes; **150a**: Mistakes are not cancelled by the ability to pay for annual worship.

Mixed among them

ἀναμεμειγμένων (anamemeigmenōn)

Combined or mingled with the first group. The imagined commonwealth assembles different genuine abilities, including war and killing, but mixture alone does not yield a principle for their beneficial use.

Attestations. 145e: Military and coercive specialists are added to the other craftsmen.

Moneylender

τοκιστήν (tokistēn)

One who lends at interest, specified here as bad in the comparison. Socrates invokes the familiar venal figure to deny that divine judgment can be redirected by gifts; he does not make a general claim about every lender.

Attestations. 149e: The gods are contrasted with a bad moneylender.

More eager

μᾶλλον προθυμήσονται (mallon prothymēsontai); προθυμίαν (prothymian)

Readiness or eagerness to act, whose value depends on its direction. Greater confidence can make the many more active in harming themselves, whereas the unnamed educator's eagerness is directed toward Alcibiades' improvement.

Attestations. 146d: Increased knowledge or presumed knowledge may intensify harmful action; **151a**: The

prospective educator is said to have remarkable eagerness about Alcibiades.

More strongly

λαμπρότερον (lamproteron)

More vigorously or strongly, describing the fair wind of fortune in this edition. Burnet prints Lennep's correction here, with an accompanying transposition; the resulting sense should not be treated as an uncontested manuscript wording.

Attestations. 147a: Intensified good fortune increases mistakes in the absence of guidance.

Most extreme

τό γε ἔσχατον (to ge eschaton)

The furthest or most startling point of the preceding sequence. Praying for the worst for oneself is presented as an intensification beyond simply doing it, since the person explicitly asks for the harmful outcome.

Attestations. 143a–b: The phrase marks the climax of Alcibiades' admission.

Most gladly

ἥδιστα (hēdista); ἡδέως (hēdeōs)

With the greatest pleasure or willingly and gladly. Alcibiades' eagerness to meet the educator and Socrates' pleasure in receiving a further gift register the warmth of the ending without guaranteeing that its educational promise has already been fulfilled.

Attestations. 150d: Alcibiades would gladly see who the educator is; **151b**: Socrates gladly accepts the token and welcomes more.

My dear fellow

ὦ μακάριε (ō makarie)

A familiar form of address, rendered “my dear fellow.” It accompanies a gentle warning to reconsider the result and should not be taken as a philosophical assertion that Alcibiades is blessed or happy.

Attestations. 139d: Socrates softens the invitation to see that the conclusion may be wrong.

My excellent friend

ὦ βέλτιστε (ō beltiste)

A courteous or gently ironic address using the language of “best.” It does not establish that the addressee already possesses the knowledge of the best whose absence the discussion is investigating.

Attestations. 143b: Introduces the imagined wiser critic of the partners; **147b**: Accompanies the explanation that poets speak in riddles.

Name or call

καλοῦμεν (kaloumen); κατονομάζειν (katonomazein); ὀνόματα (onomata); ὀνομάτων (onomatōn)

To give someone a designation, with a contrast between blunt descriptions and socially agreeable labels. The passage makes naming itself part of the joke: a favorable-

sounding word can conceal the very unintelligence it names.

Attestations. 140c–d: Socrates enumerates names for different degrees or forms of unintelligence; **150c**: He returns to the flattering force of “greatness of soul”.

Necessity

Ἀνάγκη (anankē); ἀναγκαῖον (anankaion)

What must follow or be the case under the conditions being considered. The word can mark a proposed logical division, a supposed requirement of action, or the practical need to wait; it therefore needs its local premise, rather than functioning everywhere as an unconditional law.

Attestations. 139a–b: Necessity is claimed for occupying one of two states; **144d**: Knowing or thinking one knows is proposed as a prerequisite of ready action; **150c–d**: Waiting for education is judged necessary.

Neglectfully disposed

ὀλιγώρως διάκεινται (oligōrōs diakeintai)

Taking little care in one’s attitude toward the gods, as the Athenians allege of the Spartans. This is a claim inside the reported complaint, not Socrates’ independent conclusion about the adequacy of Spartan worship.

Attestations. 149a: The charge explains the Athenians’ bewilderment at Spartan victories.

Neither condition

μηδέτερα τούτων (mēdetera toutōn)

Neither member of the pair under examination. First denied as a possible alternative to bodily health or sickness, the construction then helps exclude a third mental condition; its force depends on which two states have been specified.

Attestations. 139a: Socrates asks whether anyone is in neither bodily condition; **140e**: Neither of the required kinds of knowledge means knowing neither what to do nor what to say.

Never a general

ἀστρατηγήτους (astratēgētous)

Not having served as generals, the counterfactual status some former officeholders now desire. The rare word sharpens their reversal: merely ceasing to hold office would not undo the experience they regret.

Attestations. 142a: Successful aspirants pray to have never held their command.

No less money

χρήματα οὐδὲν ἐλάττω (chrēmata ouden elattō)

Resources at least equal to those of the comparator. The Athenians add the point to prevent Spartan less costly worship being excused by poverty, but the oracle rejects the assumption that equal resources require equal ritual display.

Attestations. 149a: The financial comparison strengthens the complaint it will help overturn.

No less than

οὐκ ἐν ἐλάττονι (ouk en elattoni)

Not in a smaller degree or quantity than the comparison supplied. In the ending it makes Socrates' rough sea at least equal to Creon's without specifying an exact measure of danger.

Attestations. 151c: The comparative intensifies the uncertainty of Socrates' hopeful position.

Non-Greeks

βαρβάρων (barbarōn)

The people grouped as outside the Greeks, rendered "barbarians" in the edition's pairing. In the imagined offer, Greeks and non-Greeks together give the widest human scope to land and tyranny, yet even that scope cannot compensate Alcibiades for the loss of his life.

Attestations. 141c: The paired peoples enlarge the offer whose price would be one's soul or life.

Not because of the prayer

(οὐ) διὰ τὴν ἐκείνων εὐχήν (ou dia tēn ekeinōn euchēn)

The denial that occasional Spartan misfortune should be attributed to their prayer. The negative is supplied in Burnet from a corrector of a later manuscript, a textual fact essential to the translated claim rather than a decorative editorial mark.

Attestations. 148c–d: The supplied negative preserves the defense of the modest prayer.

Nothing further

οὐκέτι περαιτέρω (ouketi peraiterō)

No additional reply beyond what has just been said. The prophet's brevity puts weight on the single contrast between Spartan auspicious speech and the combined rites of the Greeks; the narrative gives no fuller divine explanation.

Attestations. 149b: Closes the oracle's reported answer.

Nothing prevents

οὐθὲν κωλύει (outhen kōlyei); οὐδὲν κωλύει (ouden kōlyei)

There is no obstacle sufficient to exclude the proposed possibility. The same construction allows that an ignorant person could mistake the worst for best and that wrongdoers could still afford expensive worship; it establishes compatibility, not that every such person acts in that way.

Attestations. 144a: Ignorance leaves room for a disastrous judgment; **150a**: Costly rites can coexist with many mistakes against gods and men.

Now, even if not then

Καὶ εἰ μὴ τότε, ἀλλὰ νῦν (kai ei mē tote, alla nyn)

A temporal concession rather than an unqualified retrospective endorsement. Alcibiades accepts how the

claim appears to him at the current point, leaving open whether he accepted it when first stated.

Attestations. 146e: His answer is weaker than Socrates' request for acknowledgment of genuine demonstration.

Occur to someone

παρεσταίη (parestaiē); παραστῆναί (parastēnai)

To present itself or arise in someone's thought. A disastrous plan can occur to a person ignorant of the best, and Socrates makes that possibility explicit without asserting that Alcibiades presently entertains it.

Attestations. 143e–144a: The plan and the opinion of its value are hypothetical mental occurrences.

Of no use

οὐδὲν αὐτοῖς ἦν προύργου (ouden autois ēn prourgou)

Serving no useful purpose toward the hoped-for outcome. The phrase evaluates the Trojans' sacrifices as ineffective because the gods will not accept them, not because the rites lack material cost or ceremonial completeness.

Attestations. 149e: Payment of gifts is fruitless in the specified condition.

On behalf of all

κοινῇ ὑπὲρ ἁπάντων (koinēi hyper hapantōn)

In common for everyone concerned. Socrates imagines the poet formulating one protective prayer for his senseless friends together, replacing their separate ill-judged

requests with a shared qualification of what should be given.

Attestations. 142e: The poet's prayer is made for all his misguided friends.

On top of what is already there

πρὸς τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν (pros tois hyparchousin)

In addition to troubles already possessed or present. The expression gives the curse an accumulative structure: prayer can increase the very burden from which its speaker might instead ask release.

Attestations. 138c: Oedipus calls down further bad things.

One or the other

τὸ ἕτερον τούτων (to heteron toutōn)

One of two conditions presented as exhaustive. The expression turns the refusal of an intermediate condition into the positive claim that a person must occupy one side of the contrast.

Attestations. 139b: Used in the attempted identification of madness and unintelligence.

Open sea

ἐν πελάγει (en pelagei)

Out at sea, where continued motion without a pilot is exposed to danger. The phrase places the learned person in a setting that requires direction, not just additional propulsion.

Attestations. 147a–b: The unguided possessor continues his perilous course.

Ophthalmia

ὀφθαλμία (ophthalmia)

An inflammation of the eyes, the disease singled out for the clearest formulation of the class-and-member distinction. The speakers agree that all ophthalmia is disease while denying that all disease is ophthalmia.

Attestations. 139e–140a: The explicit two-way test repairs the preceding confusion.

Orders

προσταττομένων (prostattomenōn)

Things prescribed or directed by the educator. The language gives the hoped-for teacher practical authority, but the dialogue does not enumerate commands or show their execution.

Attestations. 150e: Alcibiades promises not to evade what is prescribed.

Orphaned of guidance

ὀρφανὸς (orphanos)

Deprived of the knowledge that would guide the other kinds. The familial metaphor portrays intellectual abundance together with crucial absence; it does not state anything about the person's literal parents.

Attestations. 147a: The man of much learning and craft lacks the directing knowledge.

Outside the meter

ἔξω μὲν τοῦ μέτρου (exō men tou metrou)

Outside the verse's metrical pattern once the proposed meaning is put together. Socrates acknowledges this cost of his paraphrase, claiming fidelity to the intended sense rather than to the original poetic form.

Attestations. 147d: The reconstructed statement is prose-like in rhythm.

Overjoyed

περιχαρῆ (perichar̄e)

Exceedingly glad at an apparent great acquisition. The joy belongs to a hypothetical first response before the possibility of harmful use is raised; it is therefore an index of confident valuation, not proof that the gift is good.

Attestations. 141b: Alcibiades imagines leaving the god's offer in delight.

Part or share

μέρη (merē); μέρος (meros)

A portion assigned within a larger whole. The language first divides craftsmanship and unintelligence among different bearers, and later exposes each specialist's ambition to give his own field the largest share of the commonwealth.

Attestations. 140b–c: Craft and unintelligence are described through distributed portions; **146a**: The specialist assigns his strength the largest civic share.

Pay attention

προσέχῃς τὸν νοῦν (prosechēis ton noun); προσέχω (prosechō)

To attend with one's mind to the speaker's reasoning. Alcibiades promises the best attention within his power, so the exchange presents inquiry as cooperative effort even when the result remains uncertain.

Attestations. 140a: Socrates requests attention before reformulating the disease analogy.

Pay out

ἐτελοῦμεν χρήματα (eteloumen chrēmata); δῶρα τελεῖν (dōra telein)

To spend resources or render gifts. The monetary emphasis makes explicit the mistaken expectation that greater expenditure should secure greater favor; paying is distinguishable from the moral condition of the payer.

Attestations. 148e–149a: The Athenians compare their spending with all other Greeks; **149e**: The Trojans' payment of gifts proves useless.

Pay the penalty

δίκην δεδωκέναι (dikēn dedōkenai)

To have suffered the consequence or paid for one's exposure. The phrase here describes being attacked while living among supposed madmen; it does not narrate a court judgment or establish that Socrates and Alcibiades deserve legal punishment.

Attestations. 139d: The imagined penalty has not in fact overtaken the speakers.

Perceive

αἰσθήσεσθαι (aisthēsesthai)

To become aware of or recognize an evident fact. In the offer of tyranny, universal recognition by others is part of the attraction: Alcibiades is imagined not merely possessing rule but being known to possess it.

Attestations. 141b: Everyone will perceive that Alcibiades is tyrant.

Perhaps

τυχὸν (tychon); ἴσως (isōs)

Expressions of possibility that leave an assertion short of certainty. The dialogue uses them both hopefully, for a discovery made together, and cautiously, for an unwelcome consequence or an unexpected objection.

Attestations. 140a: The partners may discover the answer together; **143b**: An imagined wiser critic or a strange-looking implication is introduced tentatively; **144d**: An imagined wiser critic or a strange-looking implication is introduced tentatively; **150c**: An additional consequence of bad prayer is left unspecified.

Pilot

κυβερνήτου (kybernētou)

The person who directs a vessel through its course. A pilot models the directing knowledge that keeps other resources

from becoming dangerous; being without one then develops into the extended image of storm and a shortened voyage of life.

Attestations. 146e: The sailor needs a pilot for safety; **147a–b**: The learned but unguided person is at sea without one.

Plot against

ἐπιβουλευθέντες (epibouleuthentes); ἐπιβουλευθεὶς (epibouleutheis)

To become the target of another person's hostile plan. Tyranny exposes both its original holder and his successful attacker to the same danger, so acquisition repeats the threat rather than resolving it.

Attestations. 141d–e: Both successful tyrants and Archelaus' killer become targets.

Political blast

πολιτικὸν φύσημα φυσώντων (politikon physēma physōntōn)

Blowing a civic or political puff, the vivid phrase for the rhetoricians' contribution to the imagined city. The repeated root gives their impressive public sound a comic bodily image without treating that sound as evidence of wise guidance.

Attestations. 145e: Rhetorical display is added to the unguided collection of skills.

Pondering

συννοούμενος (synnooumenos); σύννοιαν (synnoian)

Thinking something over or being absorbed in thought. Socrates playfully answers the question what anyone might ponder with “the greatest pondering,” immediately specifying the danger in prayer rather than supplying a report of what Alcibiades was already thinking.

Attestations. 138a–b: The opening exchange turns an apparent private preoccupation into a shared problem.

Possession

κτῆμα (ktēma); κεκτημένος (kektēmenos)

Something acquired and held, here especially knowledge available to its possessor. The material language makes an important question possible: possessing an intellectual resource does not establish that one is benefiting from it.

Attestations. 144d: The possession of other kinds of knowledge is evaluated by its use; **146d–e**: The possession of other kinds of knowledge is evaluated by its use; **147a**: Much learning and craft may be possessed without the guiding knowledge.

Possible

οἷόν τε (hoion te)

Able to be so or possible. At 139a Burnet prints this wording in a question whose argument might seem to want “necessary”; the edition notes the proposed correction but translates the printed text. Later the negative form expresses the alleged impossibility of

“knowing badly” on which Socrates’ poetic reinterpretation depends.

Attestations. 139a: The printed text asks about possibility, not a silently corrected necessity; **147c**: Knowing badly is said to be impossible.

Prepared to shrink from nothing

παρεσκεύασμαι (pareskeuasmai); μηθὲν ἂν φυγεῖν (mēthen an phygein)

Being ready to refuse or evade none of the educator’s requirements. Alcibiades makes this expansive commitment conditional on becoming better, so it is a declaration of readiness for care, not evidence that the care has already succeeded.

Attestations. 150e: He accepts the prospective teacher’s demands whoever the man is.

Pretty well all

σχεδόν τι πάντες (schedon ti pantes)

Almost or pretty much all, a qualified generalization. Socrates says poets in general speak in riddles while stopping short of a strictly exceptionless assertion.

Attestations. 147b: Qualifies the extension from the quoted poet to the others.

Private person

ἰδιώτην (idiōtēn)

An individual person in contrast with a city. Both can afford magnificent ritual while having made many

mistakes, so neither personal nor civic expenditure substitutes for the condition of the worshipper.

Attestations. 150a: The criticism applies on both personal and public scales.

Promise

ὑποσταίη (hypostaiē)

To undertake or promise that the offered dominion will be Alcibiades'. The added immediate fulfilment removes mere delay as a reason for hesitation, so the test is about the value of possession itself; the repeated "and this" and contrasting "but" in Burnet's sentence are supplied conjectures.

Attestations. 141b: The god promises wider rule and its fulfilment that same day.

Put in place of

παράγων (paragōn)

To substitute or redirect the wording in Socrates' reading of the verse. The verbal operation replaces "badly" with "bad" and finite "knew" with "to know," producing a claim about harmful knowledge rather than defective performance.

Attestations. 147d: The alteration is explicitly described rather than hidden.

Put off

ἀναβάλλεσθαι (anaballesthai)

To defer the proposed act until later. Alcibiades now makes the practical decision the discussion has prepared: the sacrifice will wait until the relevant education is available.

Attestations. 151a: The initial errand is suspended rather than completed.

Put on a wreath

περιθήσω (perithēsō)

To place the wreath around or upon Socrates. The action is Alcibiades' concrete response to advice he now judges good, redirecting the available ceremonial object at the close of the interrupted errand.

Attestations. 151a–b: Alcibiades announces the crowning of Socrates.

Rare to find

σπάνιον εὑρεῖν (spanion heurein)

Uncommon to encounter in experience. The phrase qualifies the claim about restraint: Socrates says abstainers are rare, rather than denying that any person can refrain from a tempting gift.

Attestations. 142c: Few decline the gifts whose dangers have been illustrated.

Readily

προχειροτέρως (procheiroterōs); προχείρως (procheirōs)

With readiness or facility in proceeding to speech or action. The comparative form appears in the first statement and the simpler form in the recapitulation, linking confidence or knowledge to increased willingness to act rather than automatically to better results.

Attestations. 144d–e: Ready performance is connected to knowing or thinking one knows; **146b**: The proposition is restated before its consequences are drawn.

Really or in reality

τῷ ὄντι (tōi onti)

In fact or genuinely, used to distinguish actual knowledge from the thought that one knows and to strengthen a claimed conclusion. Its force must be kept apart from a merely apparent result, especially when Alcibiades' response grants only how matters seem to him now.

Attestations. 144d: Real knowledge is contrasted with thinking one knows; **146b**: Real knowledge is contrasted with thinking one knows; **146e**: Socrates asks whether his claim was really shown right; **147a**: The expression emphasizes a real consequence or difference; **149b**: The expression emphasizes a real consequence or difference.

Receive first-fruits

ἀπαρχὰς (aparchas)

An initial or dedicatory portion of what has been won, here the garlands received by Teiresias from the enemy

because of his craft. Within the quoted comparison, the token of victory becomes something that Creon and then Socrates can take as an encouraging sign.

Attestations. 151b: The literary example gives the wreath its association with successful expertise.

Release from troubles

ἀπαλλαγὴν (apallagēn)

A getting free of present bad things. The Athenians ask what they must do to find this release; the answer offers a comparison of prayer rather than a newly prescribed scale of expenditure.

Attestations. 149a: The practical objective of the oracle consultation.

Remember

μέμνησαι (memnēsai)

To recall an earlier assent or admission and make it available for the present argument. Socrates uses the same ordinary request for memory in the early logical exercise and when bringing Alcibiades back to the practical danger of prayer.

Attestations. 139b: Recalls the conceded opposition of madness and intelligence; **150b**: Recalls the danger of unnoticed error in prayer.

Rough sea

κλύδωνι (klydōni)

A swell or turbulent sea, used first in the tragic quotation and then by Socrates of his own position. It revives the dialogue's maritime danger imagery at the ending, now locating the uncertainty in his rivalry for Alcibiades' allegiance.

Attestations. 151b–c: Socrates declares himself in no less turbulence than Creon.

Run a risk

παρακινδυνεύειν (parakindyneuein)

To venture despite exposure to a serious hazard. Socrates approves postponement as safer than this course, turning the abstract problem of bad requests into an immediate choice about conduct.

Attestations. 151a: The risk of proceeding justifies the delay.

Safe

ἀσφαλές (asphales); ἀσφαλῶς (asphalōs); ἀσφαλέστερον (asphalesteron)

Secure from the harmful consequence at issue. Safety does not mean successful acquisition of whatever one wants: the safer course may be the poet's qualified request, guided sailing, or postponement of the sacrifice.

Attestations. 141c: Acceptance of a gift is unsafe when it will harm its recipient; **143a**: The poet speaks safely and a sailor seeks safe passage; **146e**: The poet speaks safely and

a sailor seeks safe passage; **150c**: Prayer is postponed because delay is safer; **151a**: Prayer is postponed because delay is safer.

Sail

πλεῖν (plein)

To make a sea voyage. The desire to sail safely makes guidance a familiar practical requirement before the image is transferred to the conduct of life.

Attestations. 146e–147a: Safe sailing is the second analogy for dependence on guiding knowledge.

Savor

κνῖσαν (knisan)

The aroma of the sacrificial offering, carried upward in the quoted poetic description. Its sweetness and successful ascent do not guarantee acceptance, since the gods refuse to take a share.

Attestations. 149d: Sensory attractiveness is separated from divine willingness to partake.

Sculptor

ἀνδριαντοποιοὺς (andriantopoious); ἀνδριαντοποιοί (andriantopoioi)

A maker of human statues, rendered “sculptor” in this edition. The specific occupation completes the named trio used to show that a plurality of different crafts can all fall under craftsmanship.

Attestations. 140b–c: The third named occupation in the class-and-kind analogy.

Seem and appear

δοκεῖ (dokei); φαίνεται (phainetai); ἔοικεν (eoiken)

To present itself as so to the interlocutor, in ordinary statements of appearance and assent. These forms can register acceptance of a provisional result or a changed assessment, so their repeated use must not erase the difference between how a claim now seems and what has been established by an argument.

Attestations. 139c: Alcibiades says the provisional identification appears so; **144c**: The qualification of ignorance is accepted as seeming so; **147e**: Apparently firm assent is followed by renewed reversal.

Seldom and for the most part

ὀλιγάκις (oligakis); τὰ πλείω (ta pleiō)

Infrequently and in the larger share of cases. These qualifications are integral to the claim that other knowledge without knowledge of the best tends to harm: the wording allows exceptions and must not be summarized as “knowledge always harms.”

Attestations. 144d: The principal claim includes both qualifications; **146e**: The principal claim includes both qualifications; **146d**: The majority’s harmful action is likewise described as prevailing rather than exceptionless.

Shoemaker

σκυτοτόμους (skytotomous); σκυτοτόμοι (skytotomoi)

A particular craftsman in the division of craftsmanship. Shoemakers belong to the larger class without exhausting it, so their inclusion does not justify calling every craftsman a shoemaker.

Attestations. 140b–c: One of the three explicitly named crafts.

Show and hide

ἐνδείκνυσθαι (endeiknysthai); ἀποκρύπτεσθαι (apokryptesthai)

To make one's wisdom apparent or conceal it from others. Their opposition explains Socrates' proposed need to read beyond the surface wording, though it remains his account of what the poet intends.

Attestations. 147c: The imagined poet chooses maximum concealment rather than disclosure.

Sick or weak

ἀσθενοῦντες (asthenountes); ἀσθενοῦντα (asthenounta)

Being sick or in a weakened bodily condition. The early classification example and the later dependence on a doctor share this practical meaning: the sick person has need of direction that bodily resources alone cannot supply.

Attestations. 138d: Sick people are contrasted with healthy people; **146e**: The sick person holds fast to a doctor.

Simple

εὐήθεις (euētheis); εὐήθη (euēthē)

Good-natured or simple, a favorable-sounding name that the list turns toward lack of judgment. Its later application to the argument that costly Athenian worship should buy superior favor activates the earlier joke: apparent innocence becomes foolish reasoning.

Attestations. 140c: The second expressly auspicious label; **149e**: The argument from greater expenditure is called simple.

Slip out of

ἐκδεδυκέναι (ekdedukenai)

To have got out of or slipped free from a position. The bodily image makes an apparently firm opinion something Alcibiades soon escapes, explaining why a fresh practical test is needed.

Attestations. 147e–148a: His strongest-seeming judgments do not remain settled.

So to speak

ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν (hōs epos eipein)

A qualification of the manner in which the broad claim is being put. Alongside “looks as though,” “seldom,” and “for the most part,” it prevents the sentence about unguided knowledge from becoming an unqualified universal indictment.

Attestations. 144d: Moderates the formulation of the knowledge claim.

Some and not others

τὰ μὲν διδόναι, τὰ δ’ οὔ (ta men didonai, ta d’ ou)

The opening contrast limits what is granted before the conversation asks what should be requested. A second contrast between recipients immediately follows, so divine giving is selective in both object and person.

Attestations. 138b: Some requested things are given and others are not.

Some reason in it

εἶχεν ἄν τινα λόγον (eichen an tina logon)

It would have some rationale or defensible point. The phrase is conditional on benefit and must not be turned into a claim about possessing νοῦς, the separately rendered “sense.”

Attestations. 142b: Hardship would be intelligible if it brought benefit.

Something else besides

ἕτερόν τι προσαπολαύσῃς (heteron ti prosapolausēis)

To receive something additional as a consequence, ominously left unspecified. Socrates suggests that bad prayer might bring more than refusal of the sacrifice, but the text does not identify a particular punishment.

Attestations. 150c: A further risk reinforces the recommendation to delay.

Sometimes

ἐνίοτε (eniote)

On some occasions, rather than invariably. The word qualifies both the gods' giving of requested things and people's subsequent reversal of their prayers, avoiding a claim that every prayer is fulfilled or regretted.

Attestations. 138b: Divine giving is intermittent and selective; **142d**: Prayers are sometimes retracted after experience.

Sorrows

ἄλγε' (alge')

Pains or sorrows in the Homeric words Socrates invokes. Their connection to the agents' own recklessness or unintelligence makes them consequences in the argument, rather than merely signs of divine hostility.

Attestations. 142e: Completes the quotation about human responsibility for additional suffering.

Speak against

ἀντιλέγειν (antilegein)

To contradict or argue in reply. Alcibiades says it is hard to oppose what has been well said, but this does not end the inquiry: his next generalization about ignorance is itself immediately tested.

Attestations. 143a: Praise of the poet precedes a fresh claim that requires qualification.

State or disposition of the giver

ἕξει (hexei)

The state in which the gods are envisaged as giving what is prayed for. This local use identifies one part of the danger, since the mistakenly desired object may actually be granted; it does not introduce a developed account of divine habits.

Attestations. 138b: The gods may be in the state of granting the request.

Stop

παύσαιτο (pausaito); παύῃ (pauēi)

To cease an ongoing activity. Socrates contrasts the scarcity of people willing to stop praying for dangerous goods with Alcibiades' later inability to stop shifting his judgment, two very different failures of settled direction.

Attestations. 142c: Stopping a prayer is a possible but rare response to danger; **147e**: Alcibiades does not stop moving between opinions.

Storm

χειμῶνι (cheimōni)

A storm or severe weather, the consequence awaiting the person at sea without a pilot. The image makes the danger of unguided expertise more vivid than mere theoretical inconsistency.

Attestations. 147a: A great storm is the counterpart of the earlier apparently favorable wind.

Strange

ἄτοπον (atopon)

Unexpected or apparently out of place. Socrates anticipates this reaction to the claim that possessing other kinds of knowledge without the best can mostly harm their possessor, and offers an argument instead of demanding acceptance because it is paradoxical.

Attestations. 144d: Introduces the startling next step about knowledge.

Strength of body

σώματος ῥώμην (sōmatos rhōmēn)

Bodily vigor or strength. Like money, it expands an agent's capacities without determining the right use of those capacities, so more strength can bring larger mistakes under poor guidance.

Attestations. 147a: The second explicit example of favorable resources.

Strive for honor

φιλοτιμούμενόν (philotimoumenon)

Competing or pressing one's claim for honor. Each specialist's ambition helps explain why he assigns the largest civic share to his own field, rather than considering what is best for the city as a whole.

Attestations. 146a: Specialist self-importance contributes to civic disorder.

Strongest

κράτιστος (kratistos)

At one's greatest strength within a particular pursuit, in the adapted poetic quotation. The wording does not establish that this pursuit is best for the city; Socrates immediately distinguishes craft-relative superiority from civic and personal good.

Attestations. 146a: Describes the specialist's own favored field in the quotation.

Struck and pelted

παιομένους καὶ βαλλομένους (paiomenous kai ballomenous)

Being hit and having things thrown at one. The blunt bodily vocabulary supplies the comic practical test of a purely verbal conclusion: a city mostly populated by the mad should already have injured the interlocutors.

Attestations. 139d: Imagined consequences force reconsideration of the classification.

Suffice

ἐξαρκέσει (exarkesei)

To be enough for the recipient. In the imagined divine offer, the question tests the scale of Alcibiades' ambition; its repetition after the argument tests whether he can now identify any sufficient and safe good to accept.

Attestations. 141a: Tyranny of Athens is offered as a possible sufficient possession; **148a**: The question is repeated after the argument has unsettled confident choice.

Sufficient adviser

ἀποχρῶντα σύμβουλον (apochrōnta symboulon)

An adviser adequate for the city and for himself. Adequacy is attributed when relevant skill is accompanied by knowledge of the best, not when the speaker merely knows the mechanics of giving advice.

Attestations. 145c: Public and personal adequacy share the same condition.

Suppose

ὑπολαμβάνομεν (hypolambanomen); ὑπολαμβάνεις (hypolambaneis)

To take someone or something to fall under a description. Socrates uses ordinary accepted classifications as the foothold for argument; the verb itself does not certify that every supposition so elicited is correct.

Attestations. 139d: Ill people and craftsmen are taken as familiar kinds; **140b**: Ill people and craftsmen are taken as familiar kinds; **140e**: Alcibiades is asked whom he counts intelligent.

Surpass

περιεῖναι (perieinai)

To have an advantage over or exceed someone. Athens' claim to surpass the Spartans "in this" refers to the material-religious comparison under discussion, which Socrates treats as a simple or foolish basis for expecting favor.

Attestations. 149e: The supposed advantage in offerings is exposed as an inadequate standard.

Sweet

ἡδεῖαν (hēdeian)

Pleasant to the senses, here describing the rising savor. The adjective heightens the contrast between an attractive offering and the moral or personal reason for its refusal.

Attestations. 149d: The gods reject even the sweet sacrificial savor.

Take a share

δατέεσθαι (dateesthai)

To partake or receive a portion, in the quoted account of the blessed gods. Their refusal of a share shows that the sacrifice is not accepted merely because the offering reaches them.

Attestations. 149d: The gods decline participation in the Trojan sacrifice.

Take away property

χρήματα ἀφαιρεῖσθαι (chrēmata aphaireisthai)

To deprive someone of possessions or money. It is included among actions that can be performed with technical competence while remaining in need of judgment about occasion and target; the dialogue does not authorize any particular confiscation.

Attestations. 145b: A coercive skill is distinguished from knowing its beneficial use.

Take in

ἐννοῶ (ennoō)

To grasp or bring something into one's thought. Alcibiades uses it for his recognition that ignorance causes many bad things, a recognition that Socrates then sharpens by distinguishing kinds and conditions of ignorance.

Attestations. 143a: Alcibiades identifies what he takes the discussion to have shown.

That very day

αὐθημερόν (authēmeron)

On the same day, without a period of waiting. The speed makes the offer more attractive and isolates Alcibiades' imagined joy from the labor ordinarily required to gain power.

Attestations. 141b: The promised tyranny can become manifest immediately.

The few and the many

ὀλίγους (oligous); τοὺς πολλούς (tous pollous)

Relative numbers used to describe the intelligent minority and unintelligent majority. Their argumentative role is to expose the absurd practical consequence of calling all unintelligent people mad and later to extend the risks of uninformed expertise to ordinary civic life.

Attestations. 139c: The numerical contrast makes a city of madmen the apparent consequence; **145a**: The majority's lack of the best grounds the qualified argument against

their knowledge; **146c–d**: The majority's lack of the best grounds the qualified argument against their knowledge.

The first person one meets

τὸν ἐντυχόντα (ton entychonta); τὴν προστυχοῦσαν (tēn prostychousan); τοῦ προστυχόντος (tou prostychontos)

An arbitrary person encountered, contrasted with the particular intended victim or qualified interpreter. Not attacking just anyone explains why failure of recognition can block murder; not everyone being able to interpret poetry makes mere encounter inadequate to understanding.

Attestations. 144b–c: Pericles and Orestes' mother are determinate targets, not interchangeable passers-by; **147b–c**: Poetry cannot be understood by just anyone.

Those of one's age

ἡλικιωτῶν (hēlikiōtōn)

People of the same age as Alcibiades. The nearby addition of older people prevents the conclusion about unintelligence from being confined to youthful inexperience.

Attestations. 139c: Socrates extends the consequence of the definition to young and older citizens.

Throughout life

διὰ τέλους (dia telous); ὅλον τὸν βίον (holon ton bion)

Continuance to the end or over the whole of one's life. The children's continuing bad character and the parents'

continuing grief enlarge the example beyond one passing disappointment.

Attestations. 142b: The endurance of both the cause and the suffering is emphasized.

Thunderstruck

ἐμβροντήτους (embrontētous)

Stupefied or stunned, rendered through the vivid literal-sounding “thunderstruck.” It is a label for unintelligence, not a report that the people concerned have been physically struck by thunder; like “idiots,” it precedes the explicitly auspicious names.

Attestations. 140c: The second blunt designation in the list.

To the point

πρὸς λόγον (pros logon)

Relevant or fitting to the matter being discussed. Alcibiades initially denies that the poet’s words meet this standard, and Socrates’ reinterpretation of the quotation is offered to show why they do.

Attestations. 147b: The disagreement concerns the quotation’s relevance, not merely its literal wording.

Tongue-tied

ἐνεούς (eneous)

Speechless or unable to speak, rendered “tongue-tied” in this catalogue. It is one of the softened names for

unintelligence, not evidence that the dialogue identifies a physical speech impairment with a moral defect.

Attestations. 140d: The final named label before Socrates allows that many others could be found.

Trivial and sorry

φαῦλον (phaulon); Φαύλην (phaulēn); φαῦλός (phaulos)

Of little worth, with the translation adjusted to its object. Athens alone may look "trivial" to an ambitious chooser, whereas a disordered commonwealth and the inadequately guided Margites are "sorry"; the later uses do not mean socially obscure or insignificant people.

Attestations. 141a: Possible contempt for an apparently limited offer; **146a**: Alcibiades judges the unguided commonwealth; **147d**: Margites is judged by the harm his knowledge causes.

Trust

πεπιστευκότα (pepisteukota); πιστεύσαιμι (pisteusaimi); πιστεύειν (pisteuein)

To rely on an opinion or argument. The dialogue distinguishes misplaced trust in opinion without sense from Alcibiades' avowed trust in the reasoning just given, while his subsequent wavering leaves the firmness of the latter in question.

Attestations. 146a: Unguided opinion is trusted; **146c**: Unguided opinion is trusted; **147d–e**: Trust in the preceding arguments is invoked and affirmed.

Two together

σύν τε δύο σκεπτομένω (syn te dyo skeptomenō)

The two participants considering the matter together. The edition identifies an adaptation of a Homeric phrase about two going together; replacing travel with examination makes shared inquiry the local point of the allusion.

Attestations. 140a: Joint consideration is proposed as a possible way to discover the answer.

Unborn

ἀγένητα (agenēta)

Not having come into being, the state the grieving parents would prefer to their children's birth. The form supplies another reversal of an earlier successful wish and does not express a universal judgment that children should not be born.

Attestations. 142c: Some parents wish the original object of prayer had never come about.

Up and down

ἄνω καὶ κάτω (anō kai katō)

In opposite directions, used metaphorically for unstable judgment. The spatial contrast depicts Alcibiades' repeated reversals rather than a literal bodily movement in the scene.

Attestations. 147e: Socrates describes his partner's persistent changes of mind.

Up to the present time

εἰς τὸ παρῆκον τοῦ χρόνου (eis to parēkon tou chronou)

Over the time that has elapsed so far. This limits the favorable comparison of Spartan fortune to the period under discussion, rather than promising permanent or exceptionless success.

Attestations. 148c: The Spartans' record is stated with a temporal boundary.

Very plain

καταδήλων (katadēlōn)

Manifest or clearly evident. Socrates sets the apparent obviousness of disastrous examples against people's continuing eagerness to acquire the same things, showing that noticing others' outcomes is not yet reliable judgment of one's own requests.

Attestations. 142c: Plain examples nevertheless fail to deter most aspirants.

Vexed

ἀγανακτοῦντας (aganaktountas)

Distressed or indignant at an unwelcome situation. The Athenians' reaction belongs to their experience of defeat and motivates deliberation; it does not establish that their judgment of comparative religious merit is correct.

Attestations. 148d: Frustration precedes the inquiry at Ammon.

Wait until

περιμένειν ἕως (perimenein heōs)

To remain waiting until a specified condition has been met. The condition is learning the proper disposition toward gods and humans, so the delay is educational rather than an unexplained postponement for its own sake.

Attestations. 150c–d: The required knowledge supplies the endpoint of waiting.

Walls and harbors

τειχῶν οἰκοδομίας (teichōn oikodomias); λιμένων κατασκευῆς (limenōn kataskeuēs)

The building of walls and construction of harbors, practical civic works offered as examples of public advice. Technical knowledge about such works does not itself decide whether or when the city should undertake them.

Attestations. 144e: Material infrastructure joins war and peace among the orators' subjects.

Way out

ἀποτροπήν (apotropēn); ἀποτροπὴν (apotropēn)

A turning away or averting of existing bad things. Oedipus could have sought this instead of adding calamity, while the Athenians later deliberate how to find it in their continuing military misfortunes.

Attestations. 138c: A possible object of prayer left unchosen; **148d–e**: The Athenians seek a device for averting their troubles.

What diseases bring about

τὴν ἀπεργασίαν αὐτῶν (tēn apergasian autōn)

The effects or working-out produced by the diseases. Their membership in a common class does not erase differences in how they act, which is precisely the qualification needed for the subsequent varieties of unintelligence.

Attestations. 140b: Doctors are cited for the different effects of diseases.

Whatever comes

ἅττ' ἂν τύχῃ (hatt' an tychēi)

Whatever happens to present itself as a request, without discrimination between good and bad. Here the chance expression differs from the participial idiom translated "in fact," and depicts the arbitrariness of other Greeks' prayers.

Attestations. 149c: Indiscriminate requests explain why costly gifts can be refused.

When and for how long

ὁπότε βέλτιον (hopote beltion); τοσοῦτον χρόνον ὅσον βέλτιον (tosouton chronon hoson beltion)

The appropriate occasion and duration of an action. These temporal questions supply concrete content to guidance by the best: knowing how to wage war does not determine when to begin or how long to continue.

Attestations. 145b: Warfare is the explicit example of timing and duration; **145e–146a**: The commonwealth needs someone who knows when to use each specialist.

Whom and in relation to whom

ὅντινα βέλτιον (hontina beltion); πρὸς τίνα (pros tina)

The person appropriately affected by an action or the recipient toward whom a skill is used. The qualification prevents the beneficial from being reduced to competent execution independently of its target.

Attestations. 145b: Knowing how to kill, dispossess, or exile does not identify the proper person; **146a**: Guidance must decide toward whom to use each civic expertise.

Why on earth

ἀνθ’ ὅτου ποτὲ (anth’ hotou pote)

An emphatic request for the reason in exchange for which or because of which something happens. The Athenians ask why victory goes to the Spartans despite their own asserted ritual superiority, exposing the expectation the oracle will challenge.

Attestations. 148e: Introduces the Athenians’ comparison of sacrifice and success.

Win or obtain

κεκυρηκότα (kekyrēkota); τυχόντες (tychontes)

To come into possession of the desired object. The first form marks the imagined gain of the greatest good things; the later form records that some men really obtained generalship, which did not protect them from exile, death, or prosecution.

Attestations. 141b: The apparent success that produces joy; **141e–142a**: Obtaining the desired office begins rather than ends the test of its value.

Wish and prefer

βουλόμενοι (boulomenoi); βουληθείης (boulētheiēs); βούλεσθαι (boulesthai); βουλοίμην (bouloimēn)

To wish, choose, or prefer, distinct from the prayer verb even where desire supplies a prayer's object. Its local constructions include wishing to use flattering names, refusing dominion at the cost of life, preferring one form of worship, and the polite "I should like"; it therefore should not everywhere be rendered as an act of prayer.

Attestations. 140c: Some wish to name the unintelligent auspiciously; **141c**: Alcibiades would not wish for universal dominion at the stated price; **149b**: Ammon would rather have Spartan auspicious speech; **150b**: Socrates expresses what he would like to learn or achieve; **151c**: Socrates expresses what he would like to learn or achieve.

With impunity

χαίροντας (chairontas)

Literally a form associated with being glad, here rendered "with impunity" in the question whether the speakers could live safely among innumerable madmen. It belongs to an idiom about escaping unpleasant consequences, not a claim that the citizens are positively happy.

Attestations. 139c–d: The absurd conclusion is tested against the speakers' uninjured civic life.

Without noticing it

λήσεται αὐτὸν (lēsetai hauton); λήσουσιν αὐτοὺς (lēsousin hautous); λάθῃς σεαυτὸν (lathēis seauton)

To fail to notice what one is oneself doing. With the accompanying participles the expression makes the agent's error internal to apparently deliberate speech and action: someone can knowingly ask for an object while missing that the request is harmful.

Attestations. 138b: One may pray for bad things while taking them to be good; **140e**: Ignorant agents fail to notice their improper speech and conduct; **150b–c**: The same danger is recalled before the sacrifice is postponed.

Wonderful eagerness

θαυμαστὴν ὅσην (thaumastēn hosēn)

Remarkably great in degree, an exclamatory description of the educator's interest. Socrates offers reassurance about the strength of that concern while leaving the educator's identity indirect.

Attestations. 151a: The teacher's eagerness answers Alcibiades' willingness.

Worthless and worthy children

μοχθηρῶν (mochthērōn); χρηστῶν (chrēstōn)

Bad or worthy in character, the two contrasting descriptions of the children. The contrast is crucial: prayer for children can bring grief even when they turn out well, because bereavement remains possible.

Attestations. 142b–c: Two opposed kinds of child lead to similarly unhappy parental outcomes.

Wrestling

παλαίειν (palaiein)

To wrestle, one of the named competitive activities a person may know. It joins riding, archery, and boxing in illustrating the variety of specialized skills that do not independently settle the good of their exercise.

Attestations. 145c: Included in the list before Socrates states the general craft-relative criterion.

Yesterday and the day before

χθιζά τε καὶ πρωϊζὰ (chthiza te kai prōiza)

An expression of very recent events, quoted from poetry in the story of Archelaus. The edition flags the historical mismatch created by treating his death as recent in a conversation with Alcibiades; the phrase must not be used to harmonize the dialogue's chronology.

Attestations. 141d: The supposedly recent death illustrates the hazards of tyranny.

Contextual phrase glosses

These passage-based glosses explain the force of complete phrases and constructions. They are a second route through the text, not a count of additional Greek lemmas; some intentionally revisit a word treated in a full article or register record.

Some requests and some people

τὰ μὲν διδόναι, τὰ δ’ οὔ (ta men didonai, ta d’ ou)

138b. The gods give some requested things and not others. The following contrast adds that some people receive them and others do not. The two distinctions keep the opening from implying either that every prayer is answered or that every petitioner is treated identically.

Without noticing oneself

λήσεται αὑτὸν εὐχόμενος (lēsetai hauton euchomenos)

138b. The danger is not simply that the person prays in secret. He fails to notice the character of his own petition, thinking the harmful objects good. The same structure returns when acting and speaking wrongly pass unnoticed.

When it was open to him

ἐξὸν αὐτῷ (exon autōi)

138c. Oedipus had an available alternative: to pray for an escape from his existing troubles. His curse adds harms instead. The participial expression makes the contrast one

between available courses of action, not a claim that no other prayer was possible.

The same thing, tentatively

κινδυνεύει ταὐτὸν εἶναι (kindyneuei tauton einai)

139c. Madness and unintelligence look as though they may be the same. The wording is tentative; the next consequence leads to withdrawal and a division into kinds or shares. It should not be detached as an unqualified final definition.

Having paid the penalty

δίκην δεδωκέναι (dikēn dedōkenai)

139d. The speakers would long since have suffered for living among a cityful of people imagined as violently mad. This is a comic consequence of the proposed identification. It does not describe a named court judgment against Socrates or Alcibiades.

Together, two looking into it

σύν τε δύο σκεπτομένω (syn te dyo skeptomenō)

140a. Joint examination adapts the Homeric thought that two travellers can perceive more than one. The change from going together to looking into a problem makes a poetic tag serve cooperative inquiry. It is an invitation, not evidence that agreement between two people guarantees truth.

All these, yet different

πάντα δὲ ταῦτα ἀφροσύνη ἐστίν (panta de tauta aphrosynē estin)

140d. The assorted labels all fall under unintelligence, but their cases differ as crafts and diseases differ. The claim combines class membership with internal differentiation. It reverses the earlier collapse of unintelligence into a single madness.

In exchange for your soul

ἀντί γε τῆς σῆς ψυχῆς (anti ge tēs sēs psychēs)

141c. The proposed exchange asks whether dominion would be worth losing the soul or life. Alcibiades' reason is practical: without life he could not use the possessions. This local answer does not yet provide the fuller account of moral character attached to soul near the end.

Accepting at random

εἰκῇ δέχεσθαι (eikēi dechesthai)

141c. Receiving what is offered without discrimination is unsafe. The point extends the inquiry beyond spoken prayer to acceptance of a gift or apparent opportunity. Being given something does not establish that possessing it is beneficial.

What is most extreme

τό γε ἔσχατον (to ge eschaton)

143b. Alcibiades marks harmful prayer for oneself as an especially startling culmination of ignorance. The

expression intensifies the preceding harmful doing. Its force is rhetorical; it is not a formal ranking of every possible bad action.

A wiser person might say

φαίη ἄν τις ἀνήρ (phaiē an tis anēr)

143b. Socrates introduces an imagined wiser critic of their shared conclusion. This softens the transition to the claim that some ignorance can be good and prevents the previous assent from ending the inquiry. The unnamed person is not presented as a historically identified authority.

Without the best

ἄνευ τοῦ βελτίστου (aneu tou beltistou)

144d. Burnet prints the compact phrase without an explicit word for knowledge after “without.” The later recapitulation at 146e spells out knowledge of the best. The source note records the proposed expansion rather than silently inserting it into the Greek.

Seldom and for the most part

ὀλιγάκις μὲν … τὰ πλείω (oligakis men … ta pleiō)

144d. The central claim is asymmetrical and qualified: other knowledge without the best seldom benefits and mostly harms. “Always harms” would be stronger than the wording here. The contrast belongs to the possession and exercise of knowledge under the specified condition.

Whether, when and for how long

πότερον βέλτιον καὶ ὅτε βέλτιον (poteron beltion kai hote beltion)

145b. The adviser needs to know whether an action is better and when it is better, with duration added for warfare. These questions concern the appropriate exercise of an ability. The printed “when” itself rests on the reading discussed in the source note.

The accompanying beneficially

παρέπηται δὲ τὸ ὠφελίμως (parepētai de to ōphelimōs)

146b. The adverb is explicitly treated as something accompanying the action: the acting must be done beneficially. The edition preserves the grammatical oddity as “the beneficially.” Skill at the act does not supply this qualification merely by being skill.

If they will be more eager

εἴπερ γε μᾶλλον προθυμήσονται (eiper ge mallon prothymēsontai)

146d. The severe claim about knowing or thinking one knows carries this condition: it increases eagerness for actions that will harm more often than benefit. Removing the if-clause would turn a conditional warning about agency into a general recommendation against all knowledge.

Holding fast to the knowledge

ταύτης τῆς ἐπιστήμης ἀντέχεσθαι (tautēs tēs epistēmēs antechesthai)

146e. City and soul must adhere to the knowledge just discussed as sick people to a doctor or a sailor to a pilot. The image concerns reliance on guiding judgment. It does not identify every political ruler or every self-confident adviser as the required expert.

To the point

πρὸς λόγον (pros logon)

147b. Alcibiades questions the relevance of the poetic line and Socrates insists that it bears directly on the argument. Here logos concerns the connection between quotation and discussion. It is not a separate occurrence of nous or a new account of rational mind.

Outside metre

ἔξω μὲν τοῦ μέτρου (exō men tou metrou)

147d. Socrates explicitly reconstructs the verse's alleged sense in a form that no longer preserves its metre. The phrase tells the reader that a grammatical and interpretive transformation is being performed. The paraphrase must not be cited as the unchanged poetic line.

Fine things on top of good

τὰ καλὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς (ta kala epi tois agathois)

148c. The Spartan prayer asks for what is fine in addition to what is good. The wording connects the two evaluations

without merely treating them as one English adjective. It restrains the specification of particular possessions while preserving an aspiration to fine outcomes.

More than that

πλείω δ’ οὐδεὶς (pleiō d’ oudeis)

148c. No one would hear the Spartans asking for more than the stated prayer. The limit belongs to the content of the petition, not to a claim that their lives contain no other wishes or that their worship has no other practices.

The way of the gods

τὸ τῶν θεῶν (to tōn theōn)

149e. The compressed expression concerns what is characteristic of the gods. Socrates denies that it can be diverted by presents like a bad moneylender. The translation does not turn it into a separately named divine substance or a systematic theological definition.

Something else besides

ἕτερόν τι προσαπολαύσῃς (heteron ti prosapolausēis)

150c. The warning suggests an additional unwelcome consequence beyond rejection of the sacrifice. It deliberately leaves that consequence unspecified. Naming a particular divine punishment would go beyond the words.

If these are willing

τούτων θελόντων (toutōn thelontōn)

151b. The hoped-for day will come soon with the gods' willingness. The phrase qualifies Alcibiades' expectation instead of recording a secure date or an already fulfilled promise. Its pronoun looks to the gods just mentioned.

This opinion as an omen

τὴν δόξαν ταύτην οἰωνὸν τίθεμαι (tēn doxan tautēn oiōnon tithemai)

151b. Socrates takes Alcibiades' good opinion, manifested in the crown, as a favourable sign. Opinion is the printed reading, while gifts are proposed alternatives in the apparatus. Even under the printed reading, an omen is not proof of the educational victory hoped for.

No smaller a storm

οὐκ ἐν ἐλάττονι κλύδωνι (ouk en elattoni klydōni)

151c. Socrates compares his present situation with Creon's storm in the tragic quotation. The image introduces risk at the very moment of accepting a crown. The final wish to be the fair victor over Alcibiades' lovers is therefore framed as an uncertain contest, not a completed triumph.

Lexical index

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ἄγνοια (agnoia); λελήθαμεν ἡμᾶς αὐτούς (lelēthamen hēmas autous); τὰ κάκιστα (ta kakista); δοκῶν δὲ ἀγαθά (dokōn de agatha) — Praying in ignorance (p. 156)

ἀγόμενος (agomenos); μιᾶς ἑκάστης (mias hekastēs) — Led by each one (p. 252)

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αἰεὶ (aiei); οὔποτε (oupote) — Always and never (p. 210)

αἰσθήσεσθαι (aisthēsesthai) — Perceive (p. 270)

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