

**A n a l e l e**

**Universității din Craiova**

**Seria:**

---

**F i l o s o f i e**

**Nr. 38 (2/2016)**

*ANNALES DE L'UNIVERSITÉ DE CRAIOVA – SERIE DE PHILOSOPHIE*, nr. 38 (2/2016)  
13 rue Al. I. Cuza, Craiova, ROUMANIE

On fait des échanges des publications avec des institutions similaires du pays et de l'étranger

*ANNALS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA – PHILOSOPHY SERIES*, nr. 38 (2/2016)  
Al. I. Cuza street, no. 13, Craiova, ROMANIA

We exchange publications with similar institutions of our country and abroad

Annals of The University of Craiova. Philosophy Series publishes two issues per year, in June and December. The journal is available in print, but it is also available for download as PDF document at [http://cis01.central.ucv.ro/analele\\_universitatii/filosofie/](http://cis01.central.ucv.ro/analele_universitatii/filosofie/)

**Editor-in-Chief:**

Adriana Neacșu, University of Craiova

**Managing Editor:**

Adrian Niță, University of Craiova

**Editorial Board:**

**Anton Adămuț**, Alexandru Ioan Cuza  
University of Iași  
**Alexandru Boboc**, Romanian Academy  
**Giuseppe Cacciatore**, University of Naples  
Federico II  
**Giuseppe Cascione**, University of Bari  
**Teodor Dima**, Romanian Academy  
**Gabriella Farina**, Roma Tre University  
**Ștefan Viorel Ghenea**, University of Craiova  
**Vasile Muscă**, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-  
Napoca

**Niculae Mătășaru**, University of Craiova  
**Ionuț Răduică**, University of Craiova  
**Vasile Sălan**, University of Craiova  
**Giovanni Semeraro**, Federal University  
of Rio de Janeiro  
**Alexandru Surdu**, Romanian Academy  
**Tibor Szabó**, University of Szeged  
**Cristinel Nicu Trandafir**, University  
of Craiova  
**Gheorghe Vlăduțescu**, Romanian Academy

**Secretary:** Cătălin Stănciulescu

**Responsible for this number:** Adriana Neacșu

ISSN 1841-8325

e-mails: [filosofie\\_craiova@yahoo.com](mailto:filosofie_craiova@yahoo.com); [neacsuelvira2@gmail.com](mailto:neacsuelvira2@gmail.com)

webpage: [http://cis01.central.ucv.ro/analele\\_universitatii/filosofie/](http://cis01.central.ucv.ro/analele_universitatii/filosofie/)

Tel./Fax: +40-(0)-251-418515

This publication is present in following **scientific databases:**

SCOPUS, Philosopher's Index (USA), European Reference Index for the Humanities (ERIH, Philosophy), Regesta Imperii - Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur Mainz, Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA), COLCIENCIAS - Instituto Colombiano para el Desarrollo de la Ciencia y la Tecnología Francisco José de Caldas, Columbia, and meets on the list of scientific magazines established by l'Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur (AERES).

# PAIDEIA AND EROTIC SEDUCTION IN "ALCIBIADES"

Ștefan VLĂDUȚESCU<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *The present paper is a philosophematic lecture of the dialogue "Alcibiades" by Plato. The method used represents a combination among the meta-analytical, the comparative and the hermeneutical procedures. Overall, the method is associated with the philosophical hermeneutics. First of all, a relative convergence related to the dialogue comprehension can be noticed after having studied the previous interpretations. Well-known specialists, such as A. Koyré, A. Posescu, V. Muscă, J. Brun, Y. Brès, E. R. Dodds, R. M. Hare and N. Denyer interpret "Alcibiades" as illustrating the dialogue experience of becoming aware of the imperative according to which the political man should be primarily educated, learned and then rich. Professor Gheorghe Vlăduțescu suggests a different type of comprehension. He considers "Alcibiades" a "dialogue on self-knowledge," where the interpretation is based on the philosopheme "gnôthi seauton" ("know yourself"). A third paradigm of comprehension is shown by Michel Foucault, who establishes the philosopheme "epimeleia heauton" ("be preoccupied with yourself") as a framework of interpretation. In relation to these three positions, our article analyzes the dialogue under discussion, according to a synthesizing idea. Our thesis lies on the fact that "Alcibiades" represents a paideic seduction, structured argumentatively on the sophistic recurrence to two philosophemes: "gnôthi seauton" ("know yourself") and "epimeleia heauton" ("be preoccupied with yourself"). According to the initial remark, Socrates organizes, reshapes erotically Alcibiades' ambitions to accede to accede to the high-level political power. As a conclusion, the amorous Socrates sets an erotic trap for Alcibiades. Consequently, in the communicational situation developed within the dialogue, we can clearly notice the intricate functioning of both a paideic and erotic situation. The complexity imposed by the process of dialogue decodification originates in the absence of a clear assumption concerning the double relation in progress: apart from the paideic relation, there takes shape, by means of seduction, an erotic relation. By seduction exercised by Socrates, Alcibiades appears both as the object of a paideia and as an erotic object. Paideia (the transformation of cultural acts into life acts) takes place, in the case of Alcibiades, as a pedagogy within a life of spirit: the passage of culture into nonexistence (the paideic instruction) takes place on a seductive, erotic curve.*

**Keywords:** *Platon, paideia, seduction, gnôthi seauton, epimeleia heauton.*

## I. Ethics – the beginning of philosophy

If Philosophy has a message, then this message cannot have to do with itself, it does not speak about itself. Philosophy does not philosophize on itself, except as supplement of thinking about anything. The beginning of philosophy cannot be the cogitation on oneself. It cannot be so, as before the beginning, there is no beginning, there is not

---

<sup>1</sup> University of Craiova, Romania.

even the “object,” whose source to designate. Consequently, the message of philosophy fundamentally represents an utterance about anything else, but not about itself. The message of philosophy is about any thing in the universe, including nothingness, the void and silence. The sensation is that philosophy has finished its initial major energies in an amorphous, viscous and irrelevant matter. These remain valid until philosophy is conceived as a wise knowledge about everything. There is nothing outside wisdom, not even the love for wisdom. Consequently, philosophy missed its “object.” Its beginnings are not clear, which is also visible in the inaccuracy of its initial message. If we were to judge things from a broader perspective, we should mention that the message of philosophy is on the one hand about the reality. On the other hand, it is linguistic, the philosophematic message par excellence, as a way of human communication.

Before shaping into a complex of wisdom with different roots, philosophy represented a wise reflection on each of them. The Ontology, Ethics<sup>1</sup> and Gnoseology, as roots, represented, separately, decisive pieces of wisdom<sup>2</sup>.

The first piece of wisdom seems to have been the Ethics. We must mention that Emmanuel Lévinas still considers Ethics to be the primary philosophy<sup>3</sup>. The pre-Socratic ancients knew exactly the meanings of the terms “knowledge” and “spirituality”<sup>4</sup> what an event of knowledge or a spiritual event meant<sup>5</sup>. Taking into account the fact that in Plato’s times the scientific knowledge had a reduced perimeter, we should have in view the fact that it represented a small part of the cogitative capacity specific to the epistemic subject.

## II. Plato: the ethics of dialogues

A lecture of Plato’s dialogues makes us realize that the objects of philosophy always have an ethical side and a core of spirituality. Some dialogues stand for real spiritual exercises. One thing is sure:

---

<sup>1</sup> Smith, N. D. (2016). Moral Psychology as the Focus of Early Greek Ethics. *Philosophical Inquiry*, 40(1/2), 58-73.

<sup>2</sup> Friedlander, P. (2015). *Plato: An Introduction*. Princeton University Press.

<sup>3</sup> Lévinas, E. (1999). *Totalitate și infinit. Eseu despre exterioritate*. Traducere, glosar și bibliografie de Marius Lăzurcă, Postfață de Virgil Ciomoș, Iași, Polirom.

<sup>4</sup> Irwin, T. (1995). *Plato’s ethics*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>5</sup> Ghită, C. (2016). *Oriental Europei romantice. Alteritatea ca exotism în poezia engleză, franceză și română*. Tracus Arte.

philosophy divides between the strictly philosophical knowledge and a certain practical spirituality. Philosophy means theoretical knowledge and spiritual practice.

Plato analyzes in the dialogue "Charmides" the relation between the theoretical and the practical knowledge, between the moral and the functional pieces of knowledge determined by the mundane existence. "Sophrosyne," (the theoretical knowledge) represents a moral-conceptual thinking and it does not have an immediate applicative-useful character, ("Charmides" - 175e). The useful pieces of knowledge have a mediated theoretical character. Practice differs from the theoretical wisdom. The theoretical knowledge represents "the knowledge of the pieces of knowledge (...)" (personal translation in Engl.) ("Charmides", 166c). The theoretical knowledge is the knowledge of the theoretical and practical pieces of knowledge, but also a self-knowledge. The main object of the theoretical wisdom is represented by general principles, such as the good, the truth and the beautiful, as the pragmatic Idea of what is good<sup>1</sup>, true and beautiful. Knowledge has an absolute character. However, the pieces of knowledge are relative. This is how the possibility of the existence of some theoretical pieces of knowledge in parallel with practical pieces of knowledge is explained.

Pierre Hadot<sup>2</sup> starts from the idea that at Plato, knowledge is less a purely theoretical knowledge. It is a great skill, this means that life comprehension prevails over the theoretical knowledge. For Plato, philosophy would be "the art of talking correctly and living in good conditions"<sup>3</sup>. To live wisely implies an intellectual and spiritual life. In the VIIth Letter, Plato shows that if we do not live our life in wisdom, then life is not worth living. Those who really philosophize are only those people that experience their philosophical ideas. The wise existence is immediate and true. However, in order to live wisely, we need spiritual exercises. Plato's philosophy mainly deals with the arts and the technique of living.

The spiritual practice specific to the initial philosophy prevails over the theoretical knowledge. The message has an extended pedagogical

---

<sup>1</sup> Ionescu, A. (2016). Étude comparative des évolutions sémantiques et pragmatiques des adverbes bien en français et bine en roumain. *Analele Universității din Craiova. Seria Științe Filologice. Lingvistică*, (1-2), 195-214.

<sup>2</sup> Hadot, P. (1997). *Ce este filosofia antică*. Iași: Editura Polirom.

<sup>3</sup> Hadot, P. (1997). *Ce este filosofia antică*. Iași: Editura Polirom, p. 82.

component; it instructs within the practical wisdom, without disregarding the theoretical wisdom. Philosophy aims at and succeeds in shaping a pedagogy of the spirit, too. It trains the subject for the penetration into a world philosophically built. The spiritual element is described according to an order based on several moral elements: the good, the beautiful, the truth and justice. Cogitative aspects are moral. Theoretical knowledge is welcomed by the moral aspects<sup>1</sup>. Socratic order is moral order. Essence of the message is ethical. Moral dimension is more important than the theoretical dimension. Plato's dialogues are moral. The moral aspect represents the "primary philosophy." E. Lévinas<sup>2</sup> will bring numberless arguments, expanding this thesis to the level of the whole philosophy: "Ethics is not a branch of philosophy, it is primary philosophy".

### III. The paideic message

The generic message of Plato's philosophy is fundamentally a paideic, moral-spiritual message. If the instruction (education, paideia) confer a certain power, then Plato's dialogues stand for messages of the paideic power. Desire for different forms of power is in the nature of man: the intellectual power, (knowledge), the moral power (virtue), the physical power, the power of self-control, etc.

The paideic relation is a psychological and cogitative power relation.

### IV. Paideia, pure self-knowledge or paidetic seduction

This is how this type of relation is configured in one of Socrates' replies, in the dialogue "Alcibiades": "The loving person finds it hard to address a man that does not let himself conquered by the ones that love him (...). Now I will divulge some other thoughts that you foster into your mind (...). After having demonstrated the Athenians that you are (worthy of honours), you will have gained full, absolute power (s.n.) in the fortress and you will thus reign over the other Greeks (...). You will be able to bring to an end all these plans of yours without my help; this is the level of power I myself believe I have on your plans, as well as on you (...). No other man is capable of giving you the power you are

<sup>1</sup> Neacșu, A. (1992). Problema binelui în filozofia antică greacă. *Analele Universității București: Filosofie*, 41.

<sup>2</sup> Lévinas, E. (1999). *Totalitate și infinit. Eseu despre exterioritate*. Traducere, glosar și bibliografie de Marius Lăzurcă, Postfață de Virgil Ciomoș, Iași, Polirom, p. 271.

craving for” (Alcibiades 105a, b, c, d, e) (personal translation in Engl.).

In love with Alcibiades, Socrates finds it difficult to address a familiar man that does not let himself convinced. Love is described as a power relation: the act of sharing love turns into a form of defeat. By answering an erotic initiative, the beloved gives up his or her indifference. Socrates stands for the *erastes*, more precisely an old man that is in love with a young man, who could be his student. Alcibiades is the *eromenos*, that is a young male, without a solid life experience, that lets himself guided by the *erastes*. Love proves to be in this case a constituent of the paideic relation: the *erastes* focuses his erotic and paideic power on an adolescent; this *erastes* had long desired for and that he had kept an eye on sagaciously.

Let us put an end to the reasoning, in order to notice that the oddity of the indecent proposal, (that Socrates suggests to Alcibiades, in relation to the erotic component of the planned paideia), is part of the normality associated with the expectancy of the hermeneut, as contemporary to the drat.

The erotic proposal is frustrating for the contemporary hermeneut of this maieutic dialogue. This is how we can explain the fact that some of the interpreters of the “Alcibiades’ dialogue,” such as A. Koyré (1945)<sup>1</sup>, A. Posescu (1971)<sup>2</sup>, V. Muscă (1994)<sup>3</sup>, J. Brun (1983)<sup>4</sup>, Y. Brès (1973)<sup>5</sup>, E. R. Dodds (1971)<sup>6</sup>, R. M. Hare (1982)<sup>7</sup>, N. Denyer (2001)<sup>8</sup> abandon the erotic scenario of the dialogue with a perspective to put in relief the dialogue experience of the realization by Alcibiades of the political man’s necessity to be not only rich, but also educated. This hermeneutical paradigm relies on the theoretical need of education and elides the persuasive, seductive dimension. The explanatory axis becomes part of the paideia and the interpretation remains unilateral.

A different type of comprehension in hermeneutical terms is

---

<sup>1</sup> Koyré, A. (1945). *Discovering Plato*, trans. Leonora Cohen Rosenfield. New York, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Posescu, A. (1971). *Platon. Filosofia dialogurilor*. București: Editura Științifică.

<sup>3</sup> Muscă, V. (1994). *Introducere în filosofia lui Platon*. Editura Dacia.

<sup>4</sup> Brun, J. (1983). « *Platon et l’Âme du Monde* », *Sophia et l’Âme du Monde*. Paris, Albin Michel.

<sup>5</sup> Brès, Y. (1973). *La psychologie de Platon* (Vol. 4). Presses Universitaires de France.

<sup>6</sup> Dodds, E. R. (1971). *Plato and the irrational soul*. In *Plato* (pp. 206-229). Palgrave Macmillan UK.

<sup>7</sup> Hare, R. M. (1982). *Plato*. Oxford University Press on Demand.

<sup>8</sup> Denyer, N. (2001). *Plato: Alcibiades*. Cambridge University Press.

initiated by professor Gheorghe Vlăduțescu, who considers “Alcibiades” a “dialogue on self-knowledge”<sup>1</sup>; the interpretation lies on the philosopheme “gnôthi seauton” (“know yourself”)<sup>2</sup>. In his turn, M. Foucault<sup>3</sup> establishes the starting point of his interpretation within the limits of the philosopheme “epimeleia heauton,” (“be preoccupied with yourself”).

The dialogue is a paideic seduction, structured argumentatively according to the sophistic recurrence to two philosophemes, namely: “gnôthi seauton,” (“know yourself”) and “epimeleia heauton,” (“be preoccupied with yourself”). This is our thesis. However, as seduction aims at the persuasion concerned with the act of instilling opinions and ideas in people, (apart from lie, joke, manipulation, disinformation, influence, collusion, rumour), and not at conviction, we can say that the eromenos Alcibiades falls victim to a sophism of paideic seduction. Socrates organizes erotically Alcibiade’s ambitions to accede to the political power. The desire for power is mapped to the force of the paideic power. Alcibiades craves for the political power. Relying on this, Socrates sets him an erotic trap.

The dialogue begins with a paideic situation presided by an erotic interest. Furthermore, the dialogue shapes a philosophical scenario concerned with the realization of the effects produced by the open situation. The aim is to convey a philosophical message: the power of love for wisdom prevails over the love for power, deprived of wisdom; any kind of power is inferior to wisdom. We have to do here with a paideic situation.

Unlike other peoples, subjugated to the cult of Zeuse, the ancient Greeks, as Werner Jaeger<sup>4</sup> shows, are anthropocentric and have a vocation for the human. The Greek man is the product of education. Instruction represents the procedures necessary for the education of mankind, for a cultural reproduction. The instances that coordinate the cultural reproduction are the state, the community, the family, the

---

<sup>1</sup> Vlăduțescu, G. (2005). *Ontologie și metafizică la greci: Platon*. București: Editura Academiei Române, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> Vlăduțescu, G. (2013). Ontology and Metaphysics: Whether They Are One. *Balkan Journal of Philosophy*, (1), 73-74.

<sup>3</sup> Foucault, M. (2004). *Hermeneutica subiectului*. Iași: Polirom, pp. 45-69.

<sup>4</sup> Jaeger, W. (1986). *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture: II. In Search of the Divine Centre* (Vol. 2). Oxford University Press on Demand.



individual<sup>1</sup>. The shaping in the spirit of tradition is achieved by agents that act in a social or personal interest, or both. The method of instilling traditional values consists in the creation by the educational agent of an ideal image impregnated with social or personal interests, as well as in the educational guidance of the subject towards the achievement of the educational process by different means.

The paideic process relies on a predetermined image. First of all, to the educational subject is induced an ideal. Then, the subject is guided towards the instaurated image. Once the ideal has been shaped, the paideic direction has been established. The final step is to allocate the energy necessary to penetrate into the model. The educational subject<sup>2</sup> should realize that his ideal, that must coincide with the system of values managed socially, can only be achieved by the known educational agent<sup>3</sup>. The paideic power manifests itself by the acceptance of an ideal. Once the aspiration has been mentioned, the paideic road becomes inevitable. It all depends on the way the subject succeeds in becoming responsible. Responsibility represents one of the fundamental achievements of the Greek philosophy. The subject must become responsible for the aspiration of making up for his insufficiency. He must not perceive the lack as deprivation. He must, as P. Hadot states, think about himself as being "poor:" "philosophy is defined by what it lacks"; Plato's philosophy is essentially "the art of living"<sup>4</sup>.

Education propagates the wise life; it reproduces the art of living<sup>5</sup>. Paideia represents the training of spiritual life, the transformation of cultural acts into life acts. Paideia is the passage of culture into existence. In Lewis Mumford's opinion, paideia stands for the education as transformation, throughout the existence of the human personality, where each aspect of life plays a part. Paideia is not limited to the process of conscious training, or to the initiation of young men in the social

---

<sup>1</sup> Archie, A. (2015). *Instances of Decision Theory in Plato's Alcibiades Major and Minor, and in Xenophon's Memorabilia*. In *Politics in Socrates' Alcibiades* (pp. 69-84). Springer International Publishing.

<sup>2</sup> Dypedokk Johnsen, H. (2016). *Erôs and Education: Socratic Seduction in Three Platonic Dialogues* (Doctoral dissertation, Department of Philosophy, Stockholm University).

<sup>3</sup> Stan, C. (2014). Idei despre educație în opera lui Platon. *Astra Salvensis-revista de istorie si cultura*, (4), 175-179.

<sup>4</sup> Hadot, P. (1997). *Ce este filosofia antică*. Iași: Editura Polirom, p. 75 and p. 82.

<sup>5</sup> De Marzio, D. M. (2006). The care of the self: Alcibiades I, Socratic teaching and ethics education. *The journal of education*, 187(3), 103-127.

heritage of the community. It is the task that consists in the animation of the act of living: treating each life occasion as a way of shaping oneself<sup>1</sup>.

Plato's philosophy is based on the art of living. Paideia gives life to the act of living wisely.

In order to avoid the discovery of wisdom on our own, we need paideia. Consequently, paideia does not start from the individual. The meaning of paideia is wisdom, whereas wisdom is an idea. As Werner Jaeger<sup>2</sup> shows, paideia "does not start from the individual, but from the idea" and it deals with man as an idea. Paideia is not any instruction. It is that continuous spiritual training, a plenitude in the life of spirit under two aspects: theoretical, (as far as the appropriation of theoretical knowledge is concerned) and spiritual, (related to the spiritual exercises necessary to the consolidation of the theoretical knowledge or to the development of a practice based on the assimilated theoretical notions). In Socrates' times, paideia referred to the training of the young men in the political issues of the city government. Politics turns thus into an inculcated ideal, a desired model. Paideia is also concerned with the training that aims at the settlement of the most important civic issues, especially the access to power. Paideia forces us to notice, together with Mumford<sup>3</sup>, that education and breeding cannot be separated. Consequently, Alcibiades wants to become the leader of the city. At the same time, shaped in paideic terms, he learns that in order to become well-known, we must assume our responsibility for the training necessary to become what we want to become. Neither knowledge nor training represent an ideal for him. They represent an ideal if they lead to the achievement of the aim<sup>4</sup>.

In love with Alcibiades for a long time, Socrates finds the decisive element of his seductive reasoning: the young man's desire for power. Taking advantage of the aspiration for power and the paideic consciousness of an Alcibiades that has already finished an erotic paideic school, Socrates approaches him in the same inflamed regime related to the exercise of power.

---

<sup>1</sup> Mumford, L. (1957). *The transformations of man*. London, England: Allen and Unwin.

<sup>2</sup> Jaeger, W. (1986). Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture: II. In Search of the Divine Centre (Vol. 2). Oxford University Press on Demand.

<sup>3</sup> Mumford, L. (1957). *The transformations of man*. London, England: Allen and Unwin.

<sup>4</sup> Braicovich, R. S. (2014). Conocimiento de sí y paideia política en el Alcibiades I de Platón. *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica. Estudios griegos e indoeuropeos*, 24, 111.