



BRILL

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF THE PLATONIC TRADITION (2022) 1-12

The International
Journal of the
Platonic Tradition
brill.com/jpt

Is the True Self God at Alcibiades 133c?

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Abstract

Throughout the Platonic tradition, one encounters the idea that the true self of each person is, at bottom, numerically identical to a singular reality and hence that the distinction between one person's true self and another's is either illusory or derivative in some way. I label this idea the Strong Identity Thesis. While several passages might be cited to locate this thesis in the Platonic dialogues themselves, the striking culmination of the First Alcibiades is especially suggestive. In this paper, however, I argue that this passage does not in fact support the attribution of the Strong Identity Thesis to Plato. Instead, I will argue for the Weak Identity Thesis: namely that there is merely an analogical or qualitative link between the true self and some ultimate reality.

Keywords

Personal Identity – self – soul – divinity

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But it is not possible, Theodorus, that evil should be destroyed—for there must always be something opposed to the good; nor is it possible that it should have its seat in heaven. But it must inevitably haunt human life, and prowl about this earth. That is why a man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven; and escape means becoming as like God (ὁμοίωσις θεῶ) as possible; and a man becomes like God when he becomes just and pious, with understanding (μετὰ φρονήσεως)

Theaetetus 176a-b¹

1 Trans. M.J. Levett as revised by Myles Burnyeat.



The idea is sometimes attributed to Plato that at bottom the true self of each individual is identical with some single ultimate reality.² Common candidates for this reality are World Soul, Universal Reason, God, or some kind of Form, and it follows naturally from this that the distinction between individuals must be illusory or derivative in some way.³ I will call this idea the Strong Identity Thesis. We might reach for several passages in the dialogues to support the attribution of this thesis to Plato, but one of the best candidates is the famous passage about self-knowledge and God at *Alcibiades* 133c, since it may appear to equate the rational aspect of the soul with God.⁴

In what follows, I hope to show that Socrates certainly claims that the true self is divine without requiring the Strong Identity Thesis. In order to make clear what I have in mind, we will need to distinguish a number of senses in which we might call something “divine.” First, we might say that something is divine in a strict sense, that it is numerically identical to God or a god. Second, we might say that something is divine in a material sense, that it is made out of God or a god or a part of either. Something like this may lie behind the idea that we all contain a divine spark, a little piece of some great reservoir of god-stuff.⁵ Third, we might say that something is divine in an analogous sense, that it somehow mirrors or reflects God or a god. Christian authors frequently have this sense in mind when they invoke the idea that we are made in the image of God. Fourth, we might say that something is divine in a qualitative sense, that it possesses a quality central to what it means to be God or a god. Someone might exclaim, for instance, that a painting is “simply divine” because it captures a certain kind of beauty. Fifth, we might say that something is divine in a proximate sense, that it has some contact or association with God or a god. In this way, the Greeks frequently refer to a grove, a wind, or a particular bend in the river as divine because a god is thought to dwell there or have dealings with it in some special way.

With all these senses readily available, therefore, we should not make too quick a leap into big metaphysical claims when Socrates describes something

2 For various versions of this see for example: Allen (1962) 188-189; Grube (1964) 148; Lee (1976) 81; Sorabji (2006) 34-35, 115.

3 For this see Lee (1976) 117.

4 Both Annas (1985) 111-38, and Johnson (1999) 1-19, for example, read the passage in this way.

5 This material sense is common in Stoic sources. See, for example, Epictetus’s *Discourses* 1.1.10-12, where Zeus gives Epictetus a portion of him-self by giving him the power of choice, or again *Discourses* 2.8.11 where Epictetus claims that we all contain a particle of God within us.

in our own psychology as divine. We should pause to consider the point because an all-too-easy line of interpretation lies just around the corner. According to some philosophies, the true self is divine in the strict sense.⁶ This perspective has far reaching philosophical, spiritual and ethical ramifications. If my true self is God, your true self is God, and there is only one God, then I may infer that the distinction between my self and your self is illusory. If my true self is God, then I may begin to think that discovering myself and coming to contemplate myself turns out to be just the same as discovering and contemplating God, and vice versa. One need not look far to find such claims in various spiritual and philosophical traditions throughout the world—sometimes heavily influenced by Plato.⁷ But does Socrates make anything like this claim explicitly in the *Alcibiades*? Do we even find him strongly implying such a thesis by employing logic that tacitly assumes the thesis to be true? I will argue that he does neither. Instead, we can make good sense of what Socrates has to say by supplying him with the far less revolutionary Weak Identity Thesis: the true self is divine in the analogous and proximate senses. That is to say, the rational aspect of the soul is both analogous to and receptive of that which is preeminently divine for Plato—intelligible form. The closest we come to the Strong Identity Thesis is this key sentence from 133c:

Then that region in [the soul, where knowledge and understanding take place] resembles God,⁸ and someone who looked at that and grasped everything divine—God⁹ and understanding—would have the best grasp of himself as well.¹⁰

6 See, for example, this claim exactly in Annas's interpretation of the *Alcibiades* (1985) 133: "the true self turns out to be God, the ultimate reality." She also comments on the frequent occurrence of this thought in the history of philosophy: "It is a thought which ... we find perennially tempting and perennially repulsive."

7 As a testament to the widespread and perennial appeal of this line of thinking even at a popular level see the climactic scene of Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* (1993).

8 Reading θεῶν with Burnet rather than θεῖν. While I think the latter is more probable (in agreement with Johnson's reasoning (1999) 10, n. 23), the former lends the strongest support to the interpretation I wish to deny. The variation in meaning between the two, however, is minimal if we grant θεόν in the next line.

9 Reading θεόν with Burnet rather than the emendation θέαν both because I think it is correct and because this reading would lend the strongest support to the interpretation I wish to deny. See (ibid., 11, n. 25) for references to those who wish to emend to θέαν. (Annas, "Self Knowledge in Early Plato," 131, n. 50): "[the emendation to θέαν] is both unwarranted and ludicrous."

10 All translations from the *Alcibiades* are from D.S. Hutchinson.

τῷ θεῷ ἄρα τοῦτ' ἔοικεν αὐτῆς, καί τις εἰς τοῦτο βλέπων καὶ πᾶν τὸ θεῖον γνούς,
θεόν τε καὶ φρόνησιν, οὕτω καὶ ἑαυτὸν ἂν γνοίῃ μάλιστα.¹¹

In order to understand this provocative sentence, however, we must back up and understand the framing metaphor that Socrates uses to get us to this point.

1 Self-Knowledge and Other People's Eyes

Socrates begins, at 132d, by asking Alcibiades what we should do if the Delphic inscription had ordered our eyes to “see thyself,” thinking that the eyes were men themselves. The trouble seems to be that the eye is the very thing by which an eye sees, and the gaze of that eye is always directed outward. We may think of the gaze as a ray that originates from the eye and proceeds in a straight line never to double back or bend upon itself. While the eye may freely turn this gaze in any direction toward any other object in the whole visible cosmos and may roam about in order to get different angles onto objects, the one thing that it cannot gaze upon from any vantage point is itself. This metaphor tells us something important about the self and self-knowledge that may not have occurred to us without it. In the metaphor, the eye represents the self, while its gaze represents knowledge. The self is fundamentally the subject of its own act of knowing and must direct that act toward an object, away from itself. If we are after self-knowledge, then, we must find some trick whereby the self that knows can also become the self that is known.

Alcibiades suggests an easy answer: obviously, eyes can come to see themselves in mirrors. A reflective surface provides a place for the ray of sight proceeding out from the eye to bounce back and return home. The eye that sees becomes also the eye that is seen by existing, as it were, as a miniature copy on the surface of the mirror. But Socrates, even while agreeing to this, presses his own version of a mirror: “Isn't there something like that [i.e. a mirror] in the eye, which we see with?” Socrates points out that if one person looks carefully into another's eye he will see his own face including, I suppose, his own eye. This is true especially of the very center of the eye, the pupil, where a miniature version of the man looking on can be seen.¹² But why should Socrates make this point rather than sticking with Alcibiades's suggestion about mirrors? If I have

¹¹ Greek text is from *Platonis Opera*, ed. John Burnet (Oxford University Press, 1973).

¹² The word “κόρη” can mean both “pupil” and “puppet, doll” or “small votive image” (LSJ). See Johnson, (1999) 9, especially n. 17, for a discussion of the role that this miniature image played in ancient theories of vision.

something in my eye, I do not rush to my wife and say, “Here, let me look into your eye so that I can see my own and get this out.” A polished piece of metal or even the smooth surface of a pond would certainly be more effective if all I wanted were a reflection. Suppose, however, that I were a scientist that wanted to learn *what sort* of thing my own eye is. Under these conditions it would make sense for me to go to my wife and ask to examine her eye for the light it would shed on eyes in general and, by extension, my own eye. Socrates seems to have both modes of learning in view. Certainly he does make a point of the eye reflecting the eye of the beholder, but I suspect that he pushes Alcibiades to think about using other people’s eyes because he also wants to incorporate the second mode of learning whereby we learn about ourselves by encountering and examining something of our own kind.

Socrates also has an ulterior motive for switching from mirrors to eyes. Just before this interchange, at 131e-132a, Socrates makes their whole discussion personal. He takes the claims about the true self being the soul rather than the body and concludes that he, Socrates, is the only one who truly loves Alcibiades himself—the others only love his body. Here again, the force of the eye metaphor seems to be more than an abstract philosophical point. If Alcibiades wants to know himself and so gain virtue he will need to look deeply into another, and Socrates just so happens to be right here ready to hand.

Furthermore, eyes have a structural feature essential for Socrates’s point, that mirrors and ponds do not. Eyes have an internal division between whites, irises, and pupils in a concentric arrangement. It is only in the center of the eye, Socrates insists, that the reflection we are after can be found. What is more, the central part of the eye is also the part of the eye where its most proper activity, sight, occurs. In this place, Socrates says that we find the ἀρετή of the eye. Because the eye in the metaphor stands for the soul, Socrates’s move from flat and homogeneous mirrors to eyes is also a move toward thinking about the internal complexity of the soul. So far, the dialogue has treated the soul as a simple entity and the identification between the self and the soul has rested upon a negative answer to the question whether there is anything more authoritative about us than the soul (130d). Here, however, Socrates uses the structure of the eye to suggest concentric complexity within the soul itself and that the central region (τόπος) of the soul is the region where the ἀρετή of the soul, σοφία, accrues to it (133b). Although Socrates does not name this region, it seems clear enough that he is talking about νοῦς or τὸ λογιστικόν, where we are liable to find σοφία, τὸ εἰδέναι, and τὸ φρονεῖν (see below). By implication, this region of the soul may be more authoritative than the soul as a whole, calling into question the conclusion that the soul *simpliciter* is the self.

2 The Sudden Appearance of Divinity

So far so good. If we stopped the chain of argument right here, we would have a clear lesson. Socrates would be saying to Alcibiades, in effect, “Alcibiades, if you want to know yourself you must look at the soul of another (I just so happen to be right here, ready and willing). Not just this, but you will need to look at the region of the other person’s soul where the soul’s proper excellence and activity are, that is, at the other person’s νοῦς, if you want to truly understand yourself.” But just at this point, Socrates introduces a whole new conceptual category into the discussion: divinity. He asks Alcibiades,

Can we say that there is anything about the soul which is more divine (τῆς ψυχῆς θειότερον) than that where knowing and understanding take place (περὶ ὃ τὸ εἰδέναι τε καὶ φρονεῖν ἐστίν)? (133c)

Securing an agreement to this question allows Socrates to draw the provocative conclusion with which we began:

Then that region in it resembles God, and someone who looked at that and grasped everything divine—God and understanding—would have the best grasp of himself as well. (133c)

Much of the interpretation of this passage hangs on how we understand the inference from Socrates’s question to his conclusion. We might think that he reasons like this:

1. Nothing about the soul is more divine [in the strict sense] than the aspect that knows and understands.
2. This part is the self.
3. So the person who understands God and everything divine will have the best understanding of himself.¹³

Notice that (3) is just a repetition of Socrates’s conclusion and, although (2) has not been argued for, it seems to be where Socrates is leading us with the eye metaphor.¹⁴ The crux of this reconstruction, then, hangs on reading “nothing

13 This reconstruction seems to be what Johnson (1999) 3, thinks: “[Socrates] suggests through the analogy with vision that one’s truest self is the intellectual part of the soul, and that this intellect, being divine, is ultimately to be identified with God.” This also seems implied by Annas’s reading (1985) 132: “[in this passage] knowing one’s real self is knowing God.”

14 Johnson (1999) 8, attempts to reconstruct an argument on Socrates’s behalf for this conclusion using the premises from 128a-130c.

more divine” in the strict sense.¹⁵ Do we really need, however, the strict sense of “divine” to yield the conclusion that Socrates makes? Certainly if he had the strict sense in mind it would be big news, something that should be the conclusion of an argument rather than merely slipped in quietly. Instead, I suggest that he has something much weaker in mind:

1. Nothing about the soul is more divine [in the analogous sense] than the aspect that knows and understands.
2. This part is the self.
3. One can come to understand something best by understanding the model to which it is analogous.
4. So the person who understands God and everything divine will have the best understanding of himself.

On this interpretation, Socrates is silently drawing upon the notion of kinship between νοῦς in us and God. We continue learning about the self by looking at the soul of another but we deepen what we learn by attending to that aspect of the other by which he knows and understands and the way that this aspect more than anything else about him mirrors the divine. Hence, we broaden our gaze to include both God and everything divine for the light all this can shed on our own nature.¹⁶

A few textual points support this interpretation. At 133b, using the eye metaphor, Socrates says that the soul, if it is going to know itself, should look at another soul, “and especially at that region in which what makes a soul good (ἡ ψυχῆς ἀρετή), wisdom, occurs, *and at anything else which is similar to it* (καὶ εἰς ἄλλο ᾧ τοῦτο τυγχάνει ὁμοιον ὄν).”¹⁷ This addition expands the metaphor from eyes looking directly at the pupil of another eye to eyes looking at *anything else* that is similar to a pupil, presumably on the principle that looking at things similar to something will help someone understand it. Further, in

15 See for example Annas (1985) 133: “Self-knowledge is not of the paradigmatically subjective, the embodied individual; it is of the paradigmatically objective, so that the true self turns out to be God, the ultimate reality.”

16 The phrase “and someone who looked at that and grasped everything divine,” is ambiguous between two readings. Socrates could have in mind two separate cognitive acts: (i) looking at the rational aspect of another person’s soul *and as a separate act* (ii) grasping everything divine. Or Socrates could mean a single cognitive act, taking καὶ as epexegetic: looking at the rational aspect of another person’s soul *and thereby* grasping everything divine. In neither case do we need to suppose a strict identity between the rational aspect of another person’s soul and everything divine. The second reading makes good sense on the principle that one can come to grasp something in the act of looking carefully at its analogue.

17 I agree with Johnson (1999) 10, that the final phrase which I have emphasized must be retained as essential to the argument.

the primary sentence that we have been examining, Socrates does not limit the range of things that will help someone to understand himself to God, but rather includes “everything divine (πάν τὸ θεῖον),” listing “God and understanding (θεὸν τε καὶ φρόνησιν)” as examples. Surely the highest aspect of the soul is not to be identified in the strict sense with *everything* that qualifies as “divine.” This advice makes sense, however, if the tacit principle is that if *X* belongs to class *Y*, or is at least akin to members of *Y*, then any member of *Y* will help us understand *X*.

So far, I have omitted any discussion of the disputed lines 133c8-17 because I think that a fairly clear picture of what Socrates means emerges without them.¹⁸ When we consider these lines, however, we find further support for the idea that looking at God helps us to understand ourselves without implying that the self *just is* God:

Just as mirrors are clearer, purer, and brighter than the reflecting surface of the eye, isn't God both purer and brighter than the best part of the soul (καὶ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ ἐν τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ψυχῇ βελτίστου καθαρώτερον τε καὶ λαμπρότερον τυγχάνει ὄν)?... So the way that we can best see and know ourselves is to use the finest mirror available and look at God and, on the human level, at the virtue of the soul (εἰς τὸν θεὸν ἄρα βλέποντες ἐκεῖνῳ καλλίστῳ ἐνόπτρω χρώμεθ' ἂν καὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων εἰς τὴν ψυχῆς ἀρετὴν, καὶ οὕτως ὀρώμεν καὶ γινώσκοιμεν ἡμᾶς αὐτούς).

If this text is genuine, Socrates returns to the option of looking to mirrors that he had earlier suppressed. Just as looking at a mirror will be a clearer, more effective way for an eye to see itself than looking at another eye, so too looking at God will be a clearer, more effective way for someone to come to understand himself than looking at the best part of another human soul. These lines give us a clear distinction between these two modes, one horizontal and the other vertical. The former may be useful but murky, while the latter is much more direct and clear. No one would think that looking at a mirror would help an eye see itself because the mirror *just is* the eye that is looking into it. At best, by applying Socrates's comments about the pupil, we find in the mirror a miniature

18 For a review of the relevant facts for and against inclusion of these lines see Johnson (1999) 11-14, who favors their inclusion. See (Annas, “Self Knowledge in Early Plato,” 132, n. 51) for an argument against. Whether these lines are genuine or not does not greatly affect my argument. Annas thinks that the inclusion of these lines “spoils the metaphor” of looking into another's pupil, but only because she thinks the earlier passage means that “a soul should look at another soul, and *there* see God,” i.e. that God is “inside the soul.” As I have tried to argue above, the earlier passage does not actually say this.

copy, the reflection of that which is set before it. This would mean that somehow by standing before God and gazing into the divine nature one might find a copy of oneself in miniature. This would happen, however, not because the divine nature *just is* the self, but because, like a mirror, it presents back a reflection of *whatever* one sets before it. At the risk of reading this passage anachronistically (after all, it may be a later addition), the underlying idea may be that, just as a mirror contains in potentiality the visible form of anything you can set before it, by analogy the divine nature formally contains all things *simpliciter*. Be that as it may, this much is clear: God, along with “everything which is divine,” is intrinsically more intelligible than anything in the human sphere. After all, while looking at the highest part of another human soul, one must sort through any layers of vice along with any lower aspects of human psychology that may get in the way. Looking straight at God (ὁ θεός), by contrast, provides a clear field for inquiry into what being divine (θεός) means. Ultimately this understanding will give us the best insight into our own true self because there is not “anything about the soul which is more divine.”

3 Auto to Auto

In this whole discussion about self-knowledge and reflections two key concepts have emerged as crucial: (i) the region of the soul in which we can find σοφία, τὸ εἰδέναι, and τὸ φρονεῖν, presumably νοῦς or τὸ λογιστικόν and (ii) the divine. With these two notions in hand, we may return to a very puzzling passage earlier in the dialogue where Socrates alludes to an investigation into αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό (130d). We may now ask whether Socrates means to foreshadow by this phrase either (i) or (ii), or whether it instead refers to some entirely different notion.

As we saw in Chapter 2, Socrates argues from 128a to 130c that the soul, rather than the body or the soul—body composite, is the self (ὁ ἄνθρωπος). At the end of this portion of argument, however, he qualifies their conclusion by commenting that what he and Alcibiades have agreed upon so far is proven “fairly well, although perhaps not rigorously” (μὴ ἀκριβῶς ἀλλὰ καὶ μετρίως). Instead, Socrates says they will have “a rigorous proof when we find out what we skipped over, because it would have taken quite a lot of study” (130c-d). This refers back to 129a-b where Socrates alludes to another way of inquiring into “what we are”:

Tell me, how can we find out what ‘itself’ is, in itself (τὴν ἄν τρόπον εὐρεθῆναι αὐτὸ ταῦτό)? Maybe this is the way to find out what we ourselves might be (τί ποτ’ ἐσμὲν αὐτοί)—maybe it’s the only possible way.

He expands on his requirements for the longer path that they are not taking:

We should first consider what ‘itself’ is, in itself (εἴη αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό). But in fact, we’ve been considering what an individual self is, instead of what ‘itself’ is (νῦν δὲ ἀντὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ αὐτὸν ἕκαστον ἐσκέμμεθα ὅτι ἐστί).¹⁹ Perhaps that was enough for us, for surely nothing about us has more authority (κυριώτερόν) than the soul, wouldn’t you agree? (130d)

The cryptic and abbreviated nature of these comments makes it impossible to say anything conclusive about the nature of what Socrates means by αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό.²⁰ To make matters worse, because the authorship of the dialogue is in doubt we cannot look to other works with any certainty to flesh out our picture. Nevertheless, the reference to a thorough analysis of αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό is too juicy to pass up without speculating about what it means. The Neoplatonic commentators Olympiodorus and Proclus identify it as the rational soul (τὴν λογικὴν ψυχὴν). I think that this identification, i.e. (i) above, is more probable than Johnson’s identification of αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό ultimately with God, i.e. (ii) above. As I read it, a clear implication of the mirror passage is that the rational part of the soul is a better candidate for the self than the soul *simpliciter*. A rigorous discussion of the rational part of the soul and its relationship to the divine, however, lies outside the scope of what Socrates hopes to achieve with the young Alcibiades here and now. On this reading, Socrates would be saying that he and Alcibiades know enough now to “pick out” each individual self (αὐτὸς ἕκαστος) from the vast field of other objects by distinguishing the soul from the body, but they have not properly understood the “true self” or “what exactly it means to be this ‘self’ that we have been talking about” (paraphrasing αὐτὸ τὸ αὐτό) because they have not undertaken a dialectical analysis of the self on its own terms. In order to begin *that* discussion they would need to properly answer Socrates’s question whether there is anything “about us” that has “more authority than the soul.” While Alcibiades does not think that there is, Socrates is foreshadowing that “region” of the soul where wisdom, knowing, and understanding are (i.e. νοῦς).

While I favor this reading there are two potential problems. First, the inclusion of ἕκαστος in the first phrase suggests that the more rigorous account will

19 The manuscript text reads αὐτὸν ἕκαστον and this is the reading adopted by both Hutchinson and Johnson. Burnet emends to αὐτὸ ἕκαστον. See Allen (1962) 188 n. 4, for support.

20 I agree with Allen (1962) 187-88, that we can make some headway in ruling *out* some interpretations that are grammatically impossible. Primarily, I agree that it must be substantival rather than pronominal.

move away from a plurality of distinct individuals. For example, Richard Sorabji understands $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\ \tau\acute{o}\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}$ as the rational part of the soul but he also thinks that the contrast with $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ precludes its numerical plurality in multiple individuals. He concludes, therefore, that we must identify the rational part of the soul, and by extension the self, with Universal Reason. Hence, the mind of Socrates (his true self) is numerically identical to the mind of Alcibiades.²¹ Similarly, Julia Annas argues that “my real self, if you like, is just the self-itself, and is not *my* self in any intuitive sense at all, since it is just as much your real self as mine.”²² This particular shift and the interpretation of it as a shift from plurality to singularity appears to be the crucial piece that Johnson needs for his argument that the self is ultimately God in the mirror passage.²³ Second, the shift from the masculine in $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\kappa\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\nu$ to the neuter in $\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}\ \tau\acute{o}\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o}$ suggests a shift away from the personal into an impersonal register.²⁴ This problem works in conjunction with the first because it reinforces the suspicions of those who want to ultimately identify the true self with a single impersonal reality whether that is God (Johnson) or Reason (Annas and Sorabji) or the Form of Self (Allen).

I think both of these problems can be addressed, however, by taking a more careful look at what a shift from the masculine to the neuter might signal.

On any interpretation, Socrates is urging Alcibiades to reconsider his entirely conventional understanding of himself. So far, Socrates achieved a major victory with the handsome Athenian by getting him to consider the features of his body as external to his true self. The identification of the self with the soul as against the body, however, leaves untouched many other features of one’s idiosyncratic “personality” that conventionally belong to one’s identity. A rigorous and thoroughgoing move from the soul in general to the rational part of the soul would complete this process by stripping away even those more psychological features of individuals that serve to distinguish one from another. In the end, after removing Alcibiades’s body and removing Alcibiades’s personality we will be left with a bare, naked mind, indistinguishable, perhaps, from every other mind. It does not follow from this, however, that we have arrived at God

21 Sorabji (2006) 116.

22 Annas (1985) 131. She has further grounds for thinking this since she thinks that the identification of the self with the soul rather than the body means that the self must lose its individual personality. The implicit principle seems to be that souls cannot be individuated without bodies. Throughout, however, she does not make clear whether she means that there is a numerical plurality of selves that are qualitatively indistinguishable or simply a single self shared by all.

23 Johnson (1999) 16.

24 So Annas (1985) 131, and Johnson (1999) 7.

or Reason or a Form. Interpretive moves which collapse the numerical plurality of distinct selves should not be taken lightly, and if Socrates had meant to say that my true self and your true self were really one and the same, with all the enormous ethical implications that would flow from this, he certainly could have been a lot more clear about it.

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