



(450–404 B.C.)

Athenian statesman and general. Of the family of Alcmaeonidae, he was a ward of Pericles and was for many years a devoted attendant of Socrates. He turned to politics after the Peace of Nicias (421 B.C.), and during the Peloponnesian War he was the leader in agitating against Sparta. He was so successful that Athens joined an alliance against Sparta. When Sparta attacked (418 B.C.) Argos, Alcibiades led an Athenian force to help the Argives, but Athens and the allies were beaten at Mantinea. He was (415 B.C.) the chief promoter of the Sicilian campaign and was one of the three leaders (with Nicias and Lamachus) of the Athenian forces. When the forces reached Sicily, he proposed an attempt to win allies rather than attacking the hostile cities of Selinus and Syracuse at once. Nicias carried out this policy to ultimate disaster. Alcibiades had meanwhile been summoned home to stand trial for the mutilation of the statues of Hermes, a crime of which he was almost certainly innocent. Instead he fled to Sparta, where he gave advice to King Agis I, who was successful against Athens.

Alcibiades later fell into trouble with the Spartan king, and c.413 he fled to the protection of the Persian satrap Tissaphernes and then sought to return to Athens. After the oligarchy of the Four Hundred fell (411), he was recalled at the request of Thrasybulus. Athens had a short era of greatness as Alcibiades directed brilliantly the Athenian fleet in the Aegean and in 410 won a victory over the Peloponnesian fleet off Cyzicus, and later recovered (408) Byzantium. However, Lysander, a new Spartan commander, defeated the Athenian fleet at Notium in c.406 B.C., so Alcibiades was exiled. He went to a castle he owned on the western shore of the Hellespont. There in 405 B.C. he attempted to warn the Athenian fleet at Aegospotamos against a surprise attack by the Spartans, but his advice was ignored. In 404 at the behest of Lysander, the Persian satrap Pharnabazus had Alcibiades murdered.