THE DAIMONION OF SOCRATES: A SEARCH FOR DEFINITION AND AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

by

ALTON R. POPE

B.M.E., Cornell University, 1951
S.T.B., Boston University, 1957

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Approved by:

Major Professor

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"This Socratic daimonion has always been a crux philologorum, a difficulty that has nevertheless operated more enticingly than forbiddingly, and by its mysterious spell even deceptively. Since time immemorial one finds a strong propensity to say something about this thing, but there the matter usually ends. The curiosity which is tickled by whatever is mysterious is satisfied as soon as the thing is given a name, and profundity accepts satisfaction when one says with a thoughtful air: 'Ah, what is one to say?'"

Soren Kierkegaard

The Concept of Irony, p. 185.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For more than 2400 years, the Greek philosopher Socrates has been held in high honor as among the world's foremost heroes of thought and action. Countless are the men who have given him their full measure of respect and admiration, and who have rallied around his conviction that "an unexamined life is not worth living,"[1] joining him in the effort to understand the meaning and purpose of human existence.

There are two impressive observations concerning Socrates that motivate the present discussion. The first of these is the indisputable claim that Socrates was a man committed to the fullest possible use of his reason. This is apparent from even the most superficial examination of his life and teaching, and is often made explicit in his own words. In one of the dialogs of Plato regarded as among those most faithful to the historical Socrates, he tells his friend Crito that he is incapable of obeying anything other than the rule of reason: "I am still what I have always been--a man who will accept no argument but that which on reflection I find to be truest."[2] Later in the same dialog he expressly calls reason

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[1]Plato Apology 38 a. [2]Plato Crito 46 b.

his "guide."[1]

That Socrates was without question a man of reason receives further support from a trio of eminent Socratic scholars. One refers to his "obstinate rationality."[2] Another cites his obeying "one law only, the oracle of the higher reason in his breast."[3] A third, calling him "a man who was common-sense personified,"[4] reflects further that "Socrates paused at every step to interrupt the flow of thought in order to test its depth and purity. Each fresh conception had to deliver its passport in the course of cross-examination; every slumbering doubt was awakened, every hidden contradiction was exposed."[5]

If the commitment to a full use of human reason is one sure fact about Socrates, however, there is another fact--if the evidence from primary sources can be trusted--which is just as certain. Socrates received unquestionably and unquestioningly the guidance of the daimonion. His reliance on the daimonion was well known; he spoke of it often, and in no less than eight dialogs attributed to Plato and three writings

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[1] 48 c.

[2] A. E. Taylor, Socrates (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday Co., Inc., 1953), p. 46.

[3] Paul Shorey, What Plato Said (Abridged ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 14.

[4] Theodor Gomperz, The Greek Thinkers, trans. Laurie Magnus (2 vols., London: John Murray, 1964), II, 89.

[5] Ibid., I, 385.

of Xenophon are there specific references to it.

When these two observations are brought together, the resulting picture is of a man dedicated to using his reason and at the same time obeying without question the counsel of his daimonion. "This man, who more than any other proposed to clarify by the power of his intellect what was unclear and ambiguous, recognized mysterious forces which he obeyed without examining their claim."[1]

What was the daimonion of Socrates? How did it function? What is its significance? And why did the one who was always pressing for understanding and definition, who was forever asking--whether of piety or beauty or friendship or justice--"What does it mean?", follow unhesitatingly the guidance of the daimonion? Surely it appears inconsistent for the man of reason to be so uncritical of something as nonrational as the sudden warning of the daimonion.

If the daimonion constitutes a problem for the student of Socrates, there arises a further problem for the student of philosophy, respecting the epistemological status of Socrates' experience of the daimonion and the value and correctness of its counsel. Specifically, did the daimonion in its monitions and silences present serious claims to truth; and were those claims in fact true?

In the two areas of Socratic studies and epistemology,

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[1]Paul Friedlander, Plato, trans. Hans Meyerhoff (2 vols., Vol. I, New York: Harper & Row, 1964; Vol. II, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), I, 32.

the daimonion poses important and enticing questions: (1) What was the daimonion of Socrates, and how did he reconcile his reliance on it with his firm commitment to reason? and (2) What is the verdict of epistemology upon this kind of experience and its claims?

The thesis that is here presented answers these questions, in the light of certain important assumptions in the two general areas of Socratic studies and epistemology. On these assumptions the discussion builds, and the conclusions reached depend heavily upon them.

Within the area of Socratic studies, the first and crucial assumption which is here granted is that Socrates actually experienced a form of inner communication or assurance which was not totally a subjective phenomenon; i.e., there was an objective source for the guidance he received. It may of course be doubted that Socrates really had his daimonion. Plato and Xenophon, the major primary sources, do not establish the fact that Socrates had a daimonion, but only the fact that he spoke as if he did. The only possible evidence for it is the unsupported testimony of Socrates himself, and he may have completely misunderstood--in the light of his religious inheritance--what was simply a subjective process within his sub-conscious mind, or even a psychotic manifestation. Clearly, some position must be taken concerning what only Socrates himself experienced, and

what even he might not have been able accurately to conceive. The assumption here is that Socrates did experience a real, not an imagined or purely subjective, form of communication.

A second assumption in the area of Socratic studies relates both to the veracity of Socrates' statements about the daimonion, and to his honesty in reporting it. It is here granted that Socrates was not wholly mistaken about the daimonion; and further that when he spoke of it, he did so without any intent to dissemble. This last point, which has occasionally been challenged in the Socratic literature, appears reasonable in the light of the "whole" Socrates. It is clear that he was a man of intellectual and moral integrity. For him to pretend to be guided by a daimonion when he was not would be a brand of dishonesty wholly inconsistent with all that is known of him. On occasion, to be sure, he adopted the counterfeit methods of the sophists, but it was for the purpose of showing up the pretensions of men who were trying to pass off cleverness for true wisdom. In general, his life presents the testimony of a man whose word can be trusted, and should be trusted. Neither Ryle nor Winspear, the two contemporary scholars who most severely challenge the accepted Platonic portrait of Socrates, suggests that for Socrates to speak of his daimonion was a deliberate falsification or pretense.

There is a very serious problem concerning the

historical Socrates, and therefore the first major task of this thesis will be to assess the historical data available especially in the dialogs of Plato, with special reference to the daimonion. Subsequent chapters will consider the degree to which the portraits of Socrates by Plato and Xenophon may misrepresent the historical Socrates, but will establish too a consensus on the fact of the daimonion in his experience, and on the broad nature of its effects.

With reference to the total life and personality of Socrates, the majority view of modern scholarship concerning the dialogs of Plato and Plato himself will be adopted. Scant notice will be taken, e.g., of the conclusions reached by Ryle, who on what he himself calls a "seemingly unhistorical hypothesis"[1] doubts the standard accounts of Plato's philosophical life and believes Plato to have written the Apology around 372-371 B.C. as a protest against his having been found guilty of defamation of character and forbidden any longer to practice or teach the Socratic method.[2] "The martyr's name was not 'Socrates' but 'Plato.'"[3] That there may have been this "crisis" in Plato's career is a provocative hypothesis, but its effect on the historicity of what

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[1]Gilbert Ryle, Plato's Progress (Cambridge: The University Press, 1966), p. 154.

[2]Ibid., pp. 7, 222, 153.

[3]Ibid., p. 152.

Plato reports about Socrates' daimonion is not crucial.

Similarly only brief consideration will be given to the minority view of Winspear that Socrates is to be understood not only as a reflective thinker but also as a political reactionary, a man kept by Athenian conservatives as an apologist and virtual puppet for the aristocracy,[1] "the protagonist of landed reaction in a small city-state."[2] Here again the different viewpoint is suggestive and even helpful, especially as regards the mistaken tendency to see Socrates as a pre-Christian teacher of a quasi-Christian morality. It does not, however, affect what Socrates says about his daimonion. To follow the majority view of modern scholars, concerning both the Platonic and the historical Socrates, is in any case a fair alternative, and especially so when--as for the daimonion--the minority views do not substantially alter the interpretations which might be given to the evidence.

The second area in which important assumptions are made is that of epistemology. Specifically, there are three assumptions granted within this discussion. The first is that not all human experience is reducible to rational experience. A second assumption is that all the forms of human

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[1]Alban D. Winspear and Tom Silverberg, Who Was Socrates? (n.p.: The Cordon Company, 1939), p. 54.

[2]Alban D. Winspear, The Genesis of Plato's Thought (New York: Dryden Press, 1940), p. 107.

experience, not just the rational, can contribute to the search for the truth. The third is that comprehensive coherence, especially as exemplified in the philosophical school of Personalism, is a usable criterion of truth.

As the thesis proceeds, the assumptions here noted in the areas of Socratic studies and epistemology will receive further attention and elaboration, but will not be established in any conclusive sense. Where it seems to strengthen the presentation, and particularly so in the epistemological chapters, there will be the attempt to stress the reasonableness of the assumption that is granted. However, in keeping with the necessarily limited scope of the thesis, the assumption in each case remains just what it is--a position or fact granted to be true, on which to build reasonable conclusions.

With the noting of these major assumptions, attention may now turn to the way in which the thesis develops. Two opening chapters will set the stage for subsequent discussion. The first of these will consider the religious inheritance of fifth century Greece, with special reference to the commonly received beliefs in gods and daimons and their relations to men, and to the popular religious practices of the day. The second of the two background chapters will present a general sketch of Socrates, the man and his mission.

Following presentation of these background chapters, the discussion will move to a consideration of the daimonion

and its effects as seen in the primary sources, principally the dialogs of Plato and the writings of Xenophon. Each of more than twenty references to the daimonion will be cited and considered, with a view towards understanding its nature and function. An estimate will be made of the degree to which the writers may have colored their reporting the daimonion to harmonize it with their own beliefs and biases.

In an attempt to see further into the phenomenon of the daimonion, a number of secondary sources will be consulted in order to bring to bear upon the discussion the insights of those who over the centuries have thought deeply about Socrates and his daimonion. Among the early philosophers and Platonists, four especially will be cited: Cicero, Plutarch, Apuleius, and Proclus. From a number of modern philosophers who have written on the daimonion, special attention will be given to Descartes, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard.

Turning finally to the varied interpretations of a large group of modern Socratic scholars, the discussion will center upon the three views of the daimonion which, in light of the assumptions that have been granted, are most credible: the voice of reason, the voice of the sub-conscious, the voice of God. Each of these views will be set forth with liberal citation from those scholars who most convincingly expound it. Based upon these and all of the preceding discussion, the attempt will then be made to summarize the

nature and effects of the daimonion of Socrates, and to give it its true definition.

With the daimonion defined, the thesis will proceed to its second and epistemological focus. An assessment will be made, revealing that Socrates' experience may be seen as a type that can be classified as both parapsychological and religious experience. Similar experiences of others will be cited, and a pragmatic and then a theoretical evaluation will show the reasonable grounds for concluding that the daimonion may have validity as a source of good counsel.

The cognitive value of the claims contained in the daimonion's monitions and silences will then be assessed, beginning with an elaboration of comprehensive coherence as a criterion of truth. Following this will be a presentation of three twentieth century views of the cognitive value of claims to truth which arise out of the kind of experience of which the daimonion gives one instance. Philosophers from the Personalist, Quaker, and Empiricist traditions will be cited.

In light of this, the specific claims extrapolated from the monitions and silences of the daimonion will be examined, leading to the conclusion that, on the assumptions granted, there are reasonable grounds for holding that the daimonion may have been for Socrates a "voice of truth." Finally, the hypothesis will be advanced that contrary to the general assumption Socrates himself, at an earlier stage of

his life than reflected by Plato or Xenophon, had wrestled with his experience of the daimonion and the cognitive value of its claims, and had rationally justified his reliance on the daimonion.

A Conclusion will summarize the entire discussion.

Before moving to a consideration of the necessary backgrounds with which the development of the thesis begins, it will be well to note a few incidental procedures that will be followed. In referring to the writings of Plato and Xenophon, a number of different translations will be cited. There has not been one standard text selected. The advantages which accrue from this decision are, firstly, that a comparison of translations is encouraged, with a resulting deepening insight into the passage; and secondly, that in each case a translation widely regarded as among the best and most accurate may be used.

Except where otherwise noted, the following are the translators cited for the dialogs of Plato: Church for the _Apology_, _Crito_, _Euthyphro_; Jowett for the _Phaedrus_, _Republic_; Lamb for the _Alcibiades I_, _Theages_; Rouse for the _Ion_, _Symposium_; and Warrington for the _Euthydemus_, _Theaetetus_. For the writings of Xenophon, Marchant is the translator for the _Memorabilia_, and Todd for the _Apology_ and _Symposium_.

In respect of formal matters within the discussion, current usage among Socratic scholars is being followed. The Greek words _daimon_ and _daimonion_ are transliterated into

English without either change of spelling or capitalization, and are rendered without italics.

For convenience in marking the various steps in the development of the thesis, the discussion is divided into twelve chapters, comprising four Parts: Necessary Backgrounds, The Daimonion of Socrates, An Epistemological Assessment, and Conclusion.

PART I

NECESSARY BACKGROUNDS

CHAPTER II

THE RELIGIOUS INHERITANCE OF FIFTH CENTURY GREECE

In preparing to make an inquiry into the daimonion of Socrates, and an epistemological assessment of the claims to knowledge which it presents, it becomes necessary first of all to understand as far as possible the beliefs about the supernatural that the Greeks of the fifth century B.C. inherited from their forebears. As with all the races of men, various beliefs in spiritual influences and beings characterized the religious history of the men of Greece. Socrates' own understanding of his daimonion, as well as the interpretations given it by Plato, Xenophon, and the early Platonists, must be seen and can only be appreciated against this background.

To trace the development of belief among the Greeks in what they termed gods and daimons will be the major task of this opening chapter. Various of the early Greek poets and philosophers will be cited to indicate the successive conceptions and attitudes towards the gods and daimons, and the changing ways in which they were seen to relate themselves to men. From this will emerge the somewhat ambiguous religious inheritance of Socrates and his contemporaries. A minor focus within the chapter will be upon religious practices current in

the time of Socrates, including the consulting of oracles, the reading of omens, etc. A few grammatical considerations, relative to the Greek words daimon and daimonion, will complete the discussion.

Gods and Daimons, and Their Relation to Human Beings

When attention is turned to the religious beliefs of the Greeks, the immediate reference is apt to be to the pantheon of Greek gods and goddesses of Mount Olympus. Originally, however, the Greeks had no such fully developed conception of separate supernatural beings. As Cornford remarks, "Behind the clear-cut and highly differentiated personalities of the Olympians [are] older figures far less distinct and hardly personal. The proper term for them in Greek is not theos but daimon."[1] Whereas in the Greek theos always connotes individuality, the original daimones had no distinguishing "figure," nor were they separated by function one from the other. Moreover, they were not cosmic powers, but rather local spirits, and in general good spirits.[2] Most scholars concur in regarding a daimon as a mere manifestation of power, indeterminate and impersonal at this early time in Greek religious thought. A few, notably Dodds, disagree, holding that the conception of daimon, before it became re-personalized,

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[1] F. M. Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 37.

[2] Ibid., p. 38.

had developed from a personal "apportioner" to an impersonal "luck."

At this early stage, daimon carried two closely related meanings, only bordering on the personal, and all derived from the common consciousness of a group rather than the consciousness of a single individual. The daimon was understood as the force, working through blood-kinship, which bound the social group together; and it was seen as similar to a fertility god, being the life-giving power of the portion of land inhabited by the group. It was upon these vague conceptions about indistinct daimons that the Greek poet Homer, or that succession of eighth to sixth century Greek poets we call "Homer," superimposed his Olympian figures.

The arbitrariness of Homer's establishing distinct gods with distinct characters is reflected in his writings. For while the poet himself always is aware of which god it is who intervened, and even gives his name, those who recount their experiences speak vaguely of a god or a daimon or the gods in general as responsible for what has happened.[1]

Certain it is that there was never any consistent distinction made between a god and a daimon before or after the time of Homer. Homer himself occasionally uses the word daimon to refer to an anthropomorphic being, but far oftener it means an indefinite, undifferentiated divine power. Thus

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[1]Martin Nilsson, Greek Piety, trans. Herbert J. Rose (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1948), p. 59.

in the Odyssey it is to anonymous daimons that men attribute the events of their lives. While only vaguely conceived, the daimons are credited for the sudden insights or monitions that come to a man. As Dodds summarizes it:

> Whenever someone has a particularly brilliant or a particularly foolish idea; when he suddenly recognizes another person's identity or sees in a flash the meaning of an omen; when he remembers what he might well have forgotten or forgets what he should have remembered, he or someone else will see in it, if we are to take the words literally, a psychic intervention by one of these anonymous supernatural beings.[1]

In these situations, Homer himself tends to name the source of the monition a god if the result is favorable to the individual, or a daimon if it is detrimental to his welfare. This became, from Homer forward, a common distinction, such that if a man felt some obscure power leading him against his will toward an unwanted result, he would ascribe that influence not to one of the gods but to a dark, indefinite, unknown supernatural power; i.e., a daimon.[2]

It is in the Greek poet Hesiod that there is first encountered the concept of a daimon who is attached to a particular individual, usually from birth, and who very largely determines that person's life and destiny. An individual's moira (portion or fate) that is often mentioned in Homer is thus given in Hesiod a personal form. The daimons of Hesiod are intermediate beings, neither heavenly nor earthly, who dwell in the air, invisible, and who are in fact the

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[1]E. R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), p. 11

[2]Nilsson, p. 60.

disembodied spirits of men of a Golden Age long ago, now serving as the guardians of men. These men of the Golden Age became after their death, according to Hesiod, "good daimons through the will of the great Zeus, dwelling over the earth, guardians of mortal men, who watch over righteous and evil deeds, going up and down over the land clad in darkness."[1]

Theognis, a Greek poet and moralist reknowned for his sound common sense, emphasizes the misleading of men by their daimons. Many a man conscientiously pursuing virtue is deliberately led astray by his daimon, so that he mistakes evil for good. When this happens, there is little that a man has power to do. As Theognis writes, "If your daimon is of poor quality, mere good judgment is of no avail--your enterprises come to nothing."[2]

The poet Pindar likewise conceives of a man's daimon as his personal genius or guardian spirit, but goes further in reconciling the daimon's influence with the will of the great god Zeus: "The great purpose of Zeus directs the daimon of the man he loves."[3] As to the actual manner in which a daimon affects a man, Pindar writes, "It sleeps when the limbs are active, but to men asleep it reveals in many a dream the

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[1] Works and Days 121-25, quoted in W. K. C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy (2 vols., Cambridge: The University Press, 1962), II, 264.

[2] Theognis 161-66, quoted in Dodds, p. 42.

[3] Pythagoras 5. 122-23, quoted in Dodds, p. 42.

pleasant or painful issues of things to come."[1]

Turning from the Greek poets to the early Greek philosophers, there is revealed a similar interest and attention to gods and daimons and their relations to men and to the world. Aristotle cites Thales, with whom philosophy is said to begin, as believing that "all things are full of gods."[2] Aetius writes that "Thales said the mind of the world is god, and the sum of things is besouled, full of daimons; right through the elemental moisture there penetrates a divine power that moves it."[3] Fifty years later Pythagoras reflects a similar belief in gods and daimons, though he explicitly refers to the daimons as half-divine, beings intermediate between gods and men. He in fact believed himself to be a daimon, and was probably the author of the doctrine associated with his school that there are gods, there are men, and there are beings like Pythagoras.[4]

Heraclitus makes a bold attempt to rationalize the concept of daimon, denying it all transcendence. His scarcely translatable Fragment 119, "A man's character (or individuality) is his daimon (or destiny),"[5] means essentially that what happens to a man depends solely upon himself. Daimon becomes

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[1]Fragment 131, quoted in Guthrie, I, 319.

[2]De Anima A. 5. 411. a. 7., quoted in G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, The Presocratic Philosophers (Cambridge: The University Press, 1957), p. 95.

[3]Aetius i. 7. 11., quoted in Kirk and Raven, p. 95.

[4]Cornford, p. 203. [5]Quoted in Kirk and Raven, p. 214.

then simply a metaphor for the common psychological processes which operate within a man, and "inspiration" is conceived in its least spiritual sense. Zeller understands Heraclitus to believe that the happiness of a man depends upon his internal condition, and that he himself is the force that shapes his life from within, and makes or mars his fortunes.[1]

In fact, however, Heraclitus failed in his attempt to demythologize the supernatural daimons; and the "superstition," as he would call it, persisted. Fifty years later, Empedocles reflects belief in daimons as divine selves persisting through successive incarnations, exiles from the blessed company of the gods, to whom they long to return.[2] By the time of Empedocles, Hesiod's belief that the souls of the men of the Golden Age became good daimons had been developed and altered by Orphic and Pythagorean doctrine to the result that daimons were the surviving parts of the souls of all men. They were immortal, and could enjoy everlasting fellowship with the gods. They could also, however, be seduced into sin, and so committed to an endless round of reincarnations, until by adherence to "the rules" they could escape the human round.

Along with this belief that a daimon is attached to an individual man as a form of punishment, Empedocles also

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[1]Eduard Zeller, A History of Greek Philosophy from the Earliest Period to the Time of Socrates, trans. S. F. Alleyne (2 vols., London: Longman, Green & Co., 1881), II, 98, n.4.

[2]Fragment 115, quoted in Guthrie, I, 318.

allowed great power to a man's daimon. If a man had a good daimon, one that presumably was about to escape the round of reincarnation, that man could exercise great powers over other men and over nature. Such a daimon Empedocles believed himself to possess, or even to be. In a remaining fragment, he declares himself to be almost a god upon the earth, able to exercise and to give to others powers "to excite or abate the winds, to bring about rain or dry weather, to raise men from the dead."[1]

With these beliefs of Empedocles, the account of the beliefs of the Greeks in gods and daimons has progressed well into the fifth century. Before examining the kinds of popular religious practices that accompanied them, however, it will be instructive to add a further note concerning the attempt of the fifty century Greek dramatist Aeschylus to redirect the thinking of his contemporaries. As Dodds express it, he purposed (e.g., in the Agamemnon and the Eumenides) "not to lead his fellow-countrymen back into that world [of the daimonic], but on the contrary to lead them through it and out of it . . . by showing it to be capable of a higher interpretation . . . into the new world of rational justice."[2] In this, however, like Heraclitus before him and--as shall emerge--Socrates after him, he was unsuccessful.

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[1]Fragment v. 390-425, quoted in George Grote, Plato and the Other Companions of Socrates (3 vols., London: John Murray, 1875), I, 49.

[2]p. 40.

For the Greeks of the fifth century, then, the concept daimon was a venerable one, reaching far back into their historic and legendary past. It was far from being a clear concept, however, but carried a number of meanings, complementary if not consistent with each other. In general, daimons were thought to be lesser gods, intermediate supernatural beings who exercised power for good or ill over individual men and communities of men. A man's personal daimon could be an evil genius leading him to his ruin, or a guardian angel watching over and directing him for his good. A community could have daimons affecting the life of whole groups of men, powerful forces in whose grip mankind is helpless. Dodds cites belief in three community daimons who live in a cleft in a hill, whose names are Cholera, Smallpox, and Plague.[1] Besides any independent influence they may wield, however, the daimons are regarded to be equally important as messengers who carry to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands, blessings, and punishments of the gods. So, to the mind of the Greek, the interval between god and man is filled, and the universe bound together.[2]

Popular Religious Practices

From the beliefs of fifth century Greeks concerning the supernatural, there developed a number of specific

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[1] p. 41.

[2] F. M. Cornford, Principium Sapientiae (Cambridge: The University Press, 1952), p. 83.

religious practices and customs designed to curry favor with the gods and daimons and to divine their will. Among these were the consulting of oracles and soothsayers, the sacrificing of animals and a reading of omens in the entrails, observing the flight of birds, and interpreting apparent coincidences. It was taken for granted that the gods and daimons (or the gods through daimons) gave privileged communications to men. Special persons within the community were acknowledged to be the prime recipients of such revelations. There were numerous oracular temples, which anyone might visit to inquire concerning the divine will. In addition, in almost every crossroads town there was the equivalent of Al Capp's "Ol' Man Mose," who could predict the future, interpret omens, read animal entrails, and so reveal the will of the gods.

So important were these divine revelations, however received, deemed to be, that important decisions whether for the individual or for the group were never made apart from them. To understand Socrates and the extent of the revolution in human thought that he posed, it is essential to understand this reliance on objective revelation. Let Hegel express it:

> The Greeks, with all their freedom, did not decide from the subjective will. The general or the people did not take upon themselves to decide as to what was best in the State, nor did the individual do so in the family. For in making these decisions, the Greeks took refuge in oracles, sacrificial animals, soothsayers, or, like the Romans, asked counsel of birds in flight. . . . This element, the fact that the people had not the power of decision but were determined from without, was a real factor in Greek consciousness; and oracles were everywhere

essential . . .[1]

Grammatical Considerations

Before drawing this chapter to a close, it will be well to introduce into the discussion a few grammatical considerations and general definitions of the Greek words daimon and daimonion. The word daimon, as has been indicated, meant to a Greek of the fifth century "a supernatural being of a nature intermediate between that of gods and men; an inferior deity, spirit, genius."[2] The word daimonion, on the other hand, was used only as a neuter noun in classical Greek, meaning some "thing" of divine or daimonic origin. For that reason it has not figured in these pages concerning the Greeks' belief in supernatural beings. A daimonion would be the sign or manifestation of a daimon's activity, but would not itself be an object of worship. Later on, beginning with the Septuagint, daimonion was also used as a diminutive form of daimon, which tended to confirm the Platonists in their interpretation of Socrates' daimonion as equivalent to a personal daimon.

The above considerations, however, though they are accurate, present and imply a rather too "neat" distinction between the two words as they were used in fifth century Greece. Then as now men tended to a certain "sloppiness" in

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[1]George Frederick Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, trans. E. S. Haldane (2 vols., London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co., 1892), I, 423.

[2]Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), III, 184.

the use of words, and even Plato and Xenophon are guilty of confusing the two. Neither one is internally consistent in his usage of daimon and daimonion, and too often the two terms seem almost indistinguishable. Whether this inconsistency is of their doing, or whether they are reporting accurately what Socrates himself said, in his own confusion of the two concepts, is one of those frustrating questions which can never be finally answered, but which make the search for an answer so enticing. The eminent nineteenth century Socratic scholar Grote is one who concludes that in fifth century Greece the very concept of daimonion was "undefined and undefinable,"[1] and that therefore no one need wonder too much if Plato ascribes to it different characteristics and manifestations at different times.

It has been to provide a review of the beliefs of fifth century Greeks in gods and daimons, to indicate what were their popular religious practices, and to present certain grammatical considerations surrounding the usage of the Greek words daimon and daimonion that this chapter has been written. As such, it forms one of two necessary backgrounds to a consideration of the daimonion of Socrates. The second is a look at the "general" person of Socrates, a man conscious of a mission, who for himself and others depreciated all sham and pretense, and who championed the disciplined use of human reason within the context of a reliance on the gods. It is

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[1]Grote, I, 441.

to this man, as he lived out this mission, that the discussion now turns.

CHAPTER III

SOCRATES: THE MAN AND HIS MISSION

"Socrates was the first who brought down philosophy from the heavens, placed it in cities, introduced it into families, and obliged it to examine into life and morals, and good and evil."[1] So does Cicero summarize Socrates' contribution to the history of human thought. As a statement of fact it may be in error, for already in both Heraclitus and Pythagoras philosophy had come "down to earth" and been rigorously applied to the life of men, even to prescribing their diets. However, as a statement of the direction in which Socrates irrevocably turned philosophy, it is certainly true. It is as a seminal philosopher that history honors him, one who was concerned to examine the life of men and bring to birth within them self-awareness. In the eyes of the world, whatever else may be true of him, Socrates is primarily a philosopher.

Yet if this be so, he is a philosopher without a philosophy. The student of Socrates finds no developed system of thought to commend itself to the minds of men, but discovers instead a man who not only wrote nothing but who constantly

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[1]Cicero Tusculan Disputations 5. 4.

represented himself as knowing nothing. Moreover, because of personal eccentricities which invited exaggeration, he became something of a legend even within his own lifetime; so that to find the real Socrates and discover his true thoughts, under layers of legend and deliberate distortion, is no easy task. According to Diogenes Laertius (whose Lives no one credits but everyone quotes!), Socrates is supposed to have exclaimed upon hearing Plato read his Lysis, "By the gods! what things this young man attributes to me!"[1] So it may have been.

The problem of the historical Socrates is in fact a very serious one. To construct one Socrates from the varied representations given by those who wrote about him, and to be confident that he is the true Socrates, is virtually impossible. Yet for that very reason, the weightiest scholars agree that the attempt must be made. Only occasionally will a scholar declare the task utterly fruitless. Such a one within recent years is O. Gigon, whose thesis is that nothing can be known of Socrates, neither that he was a philosopher nor what kind of philosophy he had.[2]

If however there are a number of possible Socrates's, one positive value lies in that the number is large enough to allow a comparison of accounts, and so hopefully a sifting out of the exaggerations and distortions. Plato, Xenophon,

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[1]Diogenes Laeurtius Lives of Eminent Philosophers i. 3. 6.

[2]His book Sokrates was published in Germany in 1947.

and Aristophares reflect quite different understandings of Socrates, yet when all three are considered together a reasonably synthetic picture of the man begins to emerge.

It is then with limited confidence that this sketch of Socrates and his mission is presented. It builds, of course, primarily upon the two pictures given by Plato and Xenophon, younger contemporaries of Socrates. Each is a picture of an older Socrates. Plato was forty-three years younger than he, and Xenophon younger still, so that neither could have had any trustworthy personal recollections of him before he was fifty-five. However it is this older Socrates of whom they write who is of most interest and importance. In Plato, Socrates appears a philosopher with profound metaphysical convictions, well acquainted with the most advanced science of his time, possessing in addition an originality of intellect and a moral earnestness. For Plato, he is the ideal of what a philosopher should be, and to some extent surely a mouthpiece for his own ideas. In Xenophon, by contrast, Socrates appears a prosy preacher of common-sense morality, pre-eminent for piety and self-control, the sworn enemy of all vain speculation which does not contribute to personal integrity and sound citizenship--a man who, if he was as Xenophon suggests, would never have been brought to trial.

Between these two portraits lies somewhere the historical Socrates. Nineteenth century scholars favored the picture

given by Xenophon, while in this century the pendulum has swung toward the Platonic Socrates. At either end or anywhere inbetween, however, Socrates appears as a man for whom the central fact of his life is a sense of mission. Without any question it is a consciousness of being "on mission" that characterizes Socrates' approach to life and his conduct among men.

For that reason this sketch of Socrates in the current chapter concentrates on his mission first of all. He will not be understood apart from it, for he is in truth as much missionary as philosopher. Accordingly, it is to a description of his mission that the discussion now turns; and then following that to related considerations of his personal characteristics and behavior, his beliefs, and his trial and death.

His Mission

Commenting on Socrates' sense of his mission and the way in which it controlled his life, Warbeke suggests that "he might almost be regarded as an ancient prototype of the street and marketplace evangelist, who regarded himself as divinely ordained to confound the wisdom of men and to teach them the ways of righteousness."[1] But it was not always so. For only perhaps the final thirty-odd years of his life did Socrates live under such a commission from the gods. Though

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[1]John M. Warbeke, The Searching Mind of Greece (New York: F. S. Crofts Co., 1934), p. 131.

but little is known of his early life, as for instance whether he ever did follow in the footsteps of his father Sophronicus in a trade, and if so what that trade might have been,[1] nevertheless enough is known to be certain that he received a basic elementary education in gymnastic and music; and that whether by severely limiting his physical needs or by living off the income of property that he inherited, he continued to be able to study and absorb all the knowledge of his day. He was profoundly influenced by Parmenides, Heraclitus, and Pythagoras; and probably the Phaedo is correct in describing an early physicist stage in his philosophical development.[2] He very likely sought eagerly the new teaching of Anaxagoras through his disciple Archelaus, who came to Athens; though, as mirrored again in the Phaedo, he was disappointed in it.[3]

Clearly Socrates from a very early stage was interested not only in the Ionian natural science, but also in human life and in the human soul. Not heat and cold, nor stones falling from the sky, but the life and destiny of man were his primary concerns. With Pythagoras as his mentor, Socrates was undoubtedly something of an Orphic theologian, though on his own terms, for Orphism in his day was corrupted.

Another influence upon Socrates during his early and middle manhood was the intense intellectual life of the

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[1]That Socrates ever was a sculptor or stonecutter, as represented by later writers, is extremely doubtful. See Taylor, Socrates, p. 41.

[2]Plato Phaedo 96 a.

[3]Ibid. 98 b.

Periclean democracy, including the political struggles of an expanding state and also the artistic triumphs of Greek art and especially drama. The plays of Sophocles and Aeschylus, the orations of Pericles, the sense of pride in Athen's political ascendancy and aesthetic glory, all combined to impress on Socrates a near-reverence for the city and the importance of implicit obedience to lawful authority.[1]

In sum, the Socrates of early and middle years was a unique blend of the eager rationalist, the religious mystic, and the conscientious citizen. Of the first two of these ingredients his fellow-countrymen were well aware, of the third hardly at all, for his expressions of patriotism and civic loyalty assumed forms inconceivable to them. But when in the Clouds Aristophanes caricatures Socrates as a votary of science and at the same time a religious ascetic with strange notions of the human soul, he is exploiting two quite real strains in Socrates' nature. In fact, it seems probable that Socrates served for a time as director of an enterprise which combined the features of a scientific school and a religious monastery, much as did the earlier Pythagorean communities. In whatever capacity, however, Socrates achieved an international reputation far beyond Athens in the years before the outbreak of the Pelopponesian War (431 B.C.).

The "spiritual crisis" which was to make the rest of

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[1]This is the central theme of Plato's dialog Crito.

a lifetime's difference to Socrates came sometime in the few years just prior to 430 B.C. While it is sheer guesswork to hunt for specific dates, Plato's dialog Charmides represents Socrates as returning from the Poteidaia campaign (431-430 B.C.) to inquire about "how philosophy was doing at present" in Athens, and about any signs of interest in it among the "young men", implying that his new "way of life" had already then begun.[1]

Apparently it had been his friend Chaerophon's report[2] of the oracle at the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, pronouncing Socrates the wisest of men, that precipitated Socrates' "conversion" from the mere love of learning to the vocation of teaching. Perhaps Socrates himself went to Delphi to confirm the oracle. He might well have thought such confirmation necessary, for Chaerophon in his leading question to the oracle invited the answer he got; and Socrates would surely have known this. Diogenes Laertius quotes Aristotle to say that he did undertake such a journey.[3]

With or without a personal consulting of the oracle, it is certain that if its pronouncement was one major influence towards Socrates' embracing his new vocation, it was by no means the only one; nor is it sufficient to explain the sense of divine calling, not from Apollo but from God, which

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[1] 153 c. Burnet suggests that the Poteidaia trance (Plato Symposium 220 c.) may have been the actual crisis. See Taylor, Socrates, p. 82.

[2] Plato Apology 21 a.

[3] i. 2. 5.

he felt. As Sauvage says, "It could hardly have been the sort of shock which brings about a genuine "conversion" if it had not also included some divine approval of the way in which Socrates at once understood the Delphic injunction: 'Know thyself.'"[1]

Many eminent Socratic scholars discount the importance of the oracle altogether. Despite its prominence in Socrates' own explanation of his mission in his defense at the trial,[2] Taylor believes that "Socrates did not take Apollo and his oracle very seriously."[3] Zeller sees the oracle as simply confirming but in no sense establishing the calling,[4] and Friedlander says that Socrates' mission was "the spontaneous, necessary result of his moral and intellectual constitution, and needed not to be connected with the eternal order of Providence by a tie so frail as a perishable superstition."[5]

That Socrates did have a genuine "conversion" and an abiding sense of being "called" by God to his vocation is beyond doubt. His own words at the trial give abundant

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[1]Micheline Sauvage, Socrates and the Human Conscience, trans. Patrick Hepburne-Scott (New York: Harper & Bros., 1960), p. 36.

[2]Plato Apology 21 b.

[3]A. E. Taylor, "Socrates," Encyclopaedia Britannica, XX, 918.

[4]Eduard Zeller, Socrates and the Socratic Schools, trans. Oswald J. Reichel (New York: Russell & Russell Inc., 1962), p. 60.

[5]I, 587.

witness to it: "the god has commanded me--as I am persuaded that he has done--to spend my life in searching for wisdom, and in examining myself and others . . . I cannot hold my peace because that would be to disobey the god . . . Athenians, I hold you in the highest regard and affection, but I will be persuaded by the god rather than you."[1]

Further, Socrates believed his mission a valid and essential one in reference to his beloved Athens and his countrymen: "I think that no greater good has befallen you in the state than my service to the god."[2] The difference which this sense of being divinely called and commissioned made to Socrates is well expressed by Crossman, who says that "he perceived that what he had previously done through natural curiosity and dislike of humbug was something essential to the salvation of the Athens which he loved."[3]

To define his mission adequately is no small task. Negatively, it was to expose the ignorance of men, especially that ignorance which allowed them to think they knew when they did not know. Here his aim was "to shatter the massive certitudes of unawakened men."[4] Positively, his mission was to strive for the moral and intellectual development of himself and others. He wanted to tear down the old tottering

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[1]Plato Apology 29 a, 37 e, 29 c. [2]Ibid. 30 a.

[3]R. H. S. Crossman, Plato Today (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1959), p. 38.

[4]Sauvage, p. 97.

beliefs not in order to leave the ground strewn with their rubble, but in order to help men build up through the power of self-awareness a more adequate foundation for their lives.[1] He wanted to help men become aware of who they were (i.e., "Know thyself"), so that they could be morally autonomous, taking the powers of decision and action into their own keeping.

To this end, Socrates aimed far less at championing definite doctrines than he did at imparting to men a certain tone of life and thought, an art of intellectual inquiry--in short, a philosophic character. He believed that philosophy was for Everyman, not just for the few. He asked the fundamental questions about life which no one else was asking, questions which affected the life of each Athenian. He pressed for fundamental definitions, not alone to discover what they are, but even more to lead men to consider the first of all questions, "How should man live in the service of the city, which requires virtuous men, and in the service of God, who requires the good man in a well-ordered city?"[2]

Socrates knew that question had its answer, because he himself was that kind of man. Rather than indoctrinate his fellows with a theoretical, rational answer that would be impossible to articulate anyhow, he lived the answer to the question in his own life, offering as any missionary not simply a proclamation in words but in self.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 108. [2] Friedlander, I, 18.

It is the "teaching method" of Socrates that best explains his mission. The figure of speech by which he describes himself is that of a "midwife," one who can assist at birth but who cannot give birth for another. After describing, in the Theaetetus, the midwifery of women, he continues:

> I attend men and not women, and I look after their souls when they are in labor, and not after their bodies; and the triumph of my art is in thoroughly examining whether the thought which the mind of a young man brings forth is false and lifeless, or fertile and true. And again I resemble the midwife in being barren of wisdom, and the reproach which is often made against me, that I ask questions of others and have not the wits to pronounce upon any subject myself, is very just--the reason is, that the god compels me to be a midwife, but has not allowed me to bring forth.[1]

Socrates felt that this was the relationship in which he stood to others, as he tried to help them discover and to bring to birth within themselves the power of self-awareness by which they could become free and responsible with respect both to their city and their God.

Education for Socrates was not then a matter of learning from a "teacher"--hence the proper hesitation in calling Socrates a "teacher"; he would not have consented to it. The task of education, as Socrates conceived it, could not be the direct transfer of ready-made knowledge from teacher to learner. Rather it begins, in Cornford's words, by "opening the eyes of the soul, and clearing its vision from the distorting mists of prejudice, and from the conceit of knowledge

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[1]Plato Theaetetus 150 c, Jowett translation.

which is really no more than second-hand opinion."[1]

The process continues, for Socrates, in his leading another by a kind of conversation called dialectic along his own paths to his own understandings. Gomperz remarks that "the great business of his life was conversation,"[2] and it is for this reason that he takes every opportunity for what Zeller through his translator calls "instructive and moral chit-chat."[3]

With Socrates this dialectical movement enters into Western thought. It is obviously a highly individualized approach, in which written books are of little value, but in which every conversation proceeds in accordance with the needs of the partner. Nietzsche is expressing the Socratic principle of education when he says that "an educator never says what he himself thinks, but only that which he thinks it is good for those whom he is educating to hear upon any subject."[4]

The implication of this is that the arrival at final answers is not nearly so important as the growth of the partners in dialog. Montaigne caught this insight when he saw that Socrates "argues rather for the good of the arguers

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[1]F. M. Cornford, Before and After Socrates (Cambridge: The University Press, 1950), p. 47.

[2]II, 48.

[3]Socrates . . ., p. 68.

[4]Quoted in Friedlander, I, 166.

than for the good of the argument."[1] His aim was never to alter opinion so much as to let the conversation lead on to truth. He thought in terms of a "search" for truth, and himself one of the searchers. To reach the goal was not as important as to keep on traveling even when the goal seemed far off. Thus at the end of the Theaetetus he encourages his partner in what has proved a fruitless search for a definition of knowledge, by asking him to consider the advantages already won: "If, Theaetetus, you should ever conceive afresh, you will be all the better for the present investigation; and if not, you will be soberer and humbler and gentler to other men, and will be too modest to fancy that you know what you do not know."[2]

Socrates' conclusion about the possibility and process of education can be stated, in the Socratic vocabulary, by saying that virtue both can and cannot be taught. It cannot be taught, in that it is not a collection of propositions for sale to anyone who can pay the teacher. It can, however, be taught in that through a mutual search by means of conversation there may come to another a moment of insight, an inner "spark" which brings light to the understanding. The teacher is but a midwife to the event, bringing to light what is already there in the mind of the other.

It will easily be recognized that this concept of

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[1]Michel de Montaigne, The Essays, trans. Charles Cotton (3 vols., London: George Bell & Sons, 1892), III, c. 8.

[2]Plato Theaetetus 210 c, Jowett translation.

education rests upon the epistemological doctrine of reminiscence, according to which knowledge arises from a bringing into consciousness of information already possessed. Socrates believed this to be so, as may be seen in Plato's dialog Meno and also in the Phaedo, where Cebes cites Socrates' claim that "a person will say the right things if one can only put the right questions to him."[1]

Socrates believes too that he has just as much that must be "brought to mind" as does his partner in the conversation. It is a mutual search upon which they embark, and Socrates claims to learn as much as he teaches--a claim which, if untrue, is nevertheless to some extent part of the "equipment" of every able teacher. For this reason Socrates consistently refuses to call those who are with him his students or disciples. They are his companions, and he searches for truth along with them.

With a rare understanding of Socrates' mission, and a deep appreciation for the way he exercised it, Kierkegaard writes:

> He entered into the role of midwife and sustained it throughout; not because his thought "had no positive content," but because he perceived that this relation is the highest that one human being can sustain to another. And in this surely Socrates was everlastingly right . . . for between man and man the maieutic relationship is the highest, and begetting belongs to God. . . . For no human being was ever truly an authority to another, or ever helped anyone by posing as such, or was ever able to take his client with him into truth. . . . So understood, and this was indeed the Socratic

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[1] 73 a, as translated in Friedlander, I, 156.

> understanding, the teacher stands in a reciprocal relation, in that life and its circumstances constitute an occasion for him to be a teacher, while he in turn gives occasion for others to learn something. . . . The disciple gives occasion for the teacher to understand himself, and the teacher gives occasion for the disciple to understand himself. . . . Whoever understands Socrates best understands precisely that he owes him nothing, which is as Socrates would have it, and which it is beautiful to have been able to will.[1]

Personal Characteristics and Behavior

In conducting his mission, Socrates exhibited a personal manner and a way of life which, while appealing to some among the young men of the city, seemed to most of his fellow-Athenians to be not only irritating and objectionable, but at some points positively dangerous. That Socrates and his ideas did actually pose a threat to Athens is quite clear. Aristophanes was not wholly "kidding" when he ridiculed Socrates as leader of a movement fraught with grave peril to established religion and traditional morality. In the Clouds Strepsiades laments, "Oh what madness! I had lost my reason when I threw over the gods through Socrates' seductive phrases."[2]

The main focus of Aristophanes' attack on Socrates is on Ionian natural science, seen to be an atheism which leaves no room for the acknowledgment or worship of the gods;

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[1]Soren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, trans. D. F. Swenson (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 6, 129-30.

[2]Aristophanes Clouds 1476. All translations of Aristophanes are from Aristophanes, Five Comedies, translator's name not given (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1948).

and while Socrates never embraced a total atheism, he certainly was regarded as a "fellow traveler" with the early Greek philosophers who sought naturalistic explanations for the universe. There was enough "smoke," that is to say, to make the cry of "fire" credible.

Similarly for a secondary focus of the attack in the Clouds, the point of sophism. Socrates both was and was not a sophist. Aristophanes made him the representative of the worst form of sophism, as the Clouds gives abundant evidence. The first words of Socrates to be quoted are these: "How many times the length of its legs does a flea jump?"[1] The first sight of him is as he is floating suspended in a basket.[2] The first word he himself utters is, "Mortal, what do you want of me?"[3]

Even without the caricature of Aristophanes, however, to most people Socrates would still have been indistinguishable from the sophists. For the sophists did not form a school, but were rather individual teachers of quite varying type. Some could have been described as professionals of debate, others as sellers of universal knowledge, or virtuosos of propaganda, or searchers of the heavens.[4] The range was wide, encompassing on the one hand men like Protagoras and Prodicus, who were men of integrity engaged in essential reflection; and on the other hand opportunists and charlatans like Gorgias.

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[1] Ibid. 145.

[2] Ibid. 218.

[3] Ibid. 223.

[4] Sauvage, p. 17.

Socrates speaks of some of the sophists with great respect; for others he has only scorn.

Socrates' unlikeness to the "average" sophist would come at the point of the very purpose of his speaking. Whereas the sophist would regard the other as an opponent to be silenced, Socrates looked upon him as a partner in a mutual search. Again, where the sophist would aim at winning an argument, Socrates would aim at discovering new truth.

However, though it was for the higher purpose of leading men to truth rather than reducing them to submission, Socrates nevertheless adopted on occasion the methods of these "intellectual counterfeiters." He could, as read the indictment against him, "make the weaker argument appear the stronger."[1] He could moreover be guilty of "eristic," which Cornford well defines as "verbal contention without regard for truth."[2] Plato's dialog Hippias Major gives the chief instance of this, illustrating the easy and playful manner in which Socrates confuted those--here the sophist Hippias--who pretended to know everything. While ostensibly it is a dialog seeking a definition of the "beautiful," its real purpose is to show up Hippias and his kind; and it succeeds admirably.

The significant point to notice is that Socrates resorts to cristic and similar tricks "only when he is

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[1]Plato Apology 19 b.

[2]Cornford, Before and After Socrates, p. 45.

exposing the pretensions of professional rhetoricians or debaters or of others who claimed some superior wisdom. The wise man can only fight them with their own weapons and so convice their young admirers that verbal cleverness is not wisdom."[1] In this light at least most of the use Socrates makes of the techniques of the sophists seems justified.

Besides being vilified as a sophist of the worst sort, Socrates was also intensely disliked for what is customarily termed his irony. His claiming that he knows nothing, and therefore cannot himself answer the questions he puts to others, was seen by many to be the disagreeable characteristic of a man who disparages his abilities in order to evade his responsibilities. Taylor recalls Aristotle's picture of the ironical man as "the man whose conversation is made offensive by the affectation of mock humility, insincere depreciation of himself and everything connected with himself."[2]

The irony of Socrates, however, is of a different sort and for a different purpose. It is best understood as "the net of the great educator."[3] This is so in two respects. Firstly, it allows Socrates, without an air of pompousness or superiority, and while seeming to leave the initiative with his partner, to lead the conversation as will best benefit the other, whether towards a realization of ignorance to a prideful mind or the dawning of truth to a humble mind. In the hands of a skillful educator, irony is one of the sharpest

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[1] Ibid. [2] Socrates, p. 47. [3] Friedlander, I, 141.

of tools, whether for peeling away pretense or for carving out new truth. Secondly, irony is a "net" for Socrates in that it lets him disarm ridicule by anticipating it, and makes him the kind of man who would be welcomed into a company of men where a more solemn teacher would not be invited.

Actually Socrates' irony comes very near being a sense of humor. Taylor so regards it, terming it "an appreciation of the comic in human nature and conduct that protected him at once against sentimentality and against cynicism."[1] Conscious of his mission for God, Socrates also sensed that he need not and must not go about his task with a scowling face and a sour disposition. His irony is this conviction expressed in practice, as well as his "net" to educate men. His use of it was both deliberate and wise.

To many Athenians, however, the irritation which Socrates caused was not so much a matter either of his seeming sophistry or his irony, but rather arose from the fact that he was always "hanging around" the agora and the gymnasia, pestering people with his bothersome questions, providing unwholesome sport to the young and embarrassment to their elders. Socrates in their eyes set a bad example, spending his days loafing rather than working. Moreover, he had a way of speaking which alienated others. "He had the uncommon gift of proving everybody a fool, . . . an unfailing aptitude

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[1]Encyclopaedia Britannica, XX, 917.

of putting everybody's back up."[1] Often it seems he did make people mad. Diogenes Laertius reports one Demetrius of Byzantium saying that frequently, "owing to his vehemence in argument, men set upon him with their fists or tore his hair out; and that for the most part he was despised and laughed at."[2]

Certainly his physical appearance made him a further object of ridicule and dislike. In a culture where physical beauty was highly valued, Socrates was possessed of bulging bull-like eyes, gaping nostrils, thick lips, and a paunch. "Nature did him wrong," writes Montaigne.[3] And so, in this respect, it did.

When Socrates says in the Theaetetus that "they say of me that I am the strangest of mortals and drive men to their wits' end,"[4] it is not only his physical appearance and his "hanging around" the marketplace to bother people with his questions that makes such a statement credible. For his conduct was singular in other respects as well. He was often seen by others in what appeared to be a state of trance. Two instances of this are quoted in Plato's dialog Symposium,[5]

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[1]Costa Varnali, The True Apology of Socrates, trans. Stephen Yaloussis (London: Zeno Publishers, 1955), pp. 7-8.

[2]i. 2. 21.

[3]III, 311.

[4]Plato Theaetetus 149 a, Jowett translation.

[5]175 a, 220 c. A further reference may be in Aristophanes Clouds 171: "One night when he was . . . gazing open-mouthed at the heavens, a lizard crapped upon him from the top of the roof."

where Erixymachos observes: "That is only his way; he often goes off and stands anywhere."[1] Whether these strange fits of abstraction indicate catalepsy or simply profound meditation, "absorption in consecutive thought" (so Shorey believes Plato to represent them);[2] nevertheless, the effect of them was to make people look upon Socrates as a "queer duck." Far more than the daimonion of which he frequently spoke, the trances gave him the reputation of being odd.

Two other powers which Socrates seemed to possess added to his notoriety. He had a way of speaking which produced sometimes an almost hypnotic effect on his listeners, those especially who were his close companions. If Strepsiades in the Clouds could have claimed to have been seduced by Socrates' phrases,[3] so also were those closest to him profoundly affected by his speech. To refer again to the Symposium, Alcibiades confesses, "When I listen to Pericles or any other orator of the day, I say to myself, 'He is a good speaker,' and that is all. But when I listen to Socrates, my soul is stirred, my eyes fill with tears, and I blush for the trivialities on which I waste my days. There is none like him."

The second of these personal powers over others which in some degree Socrates possessed was through his touch. Just how real this was is hard to determine. A reference in the

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[1]175 a. [2]p. 11. [3]Aristophanes Clouds 1476.

[4]216 a, as translated in Shorey, p. 11.

Symposium may be only playful;[1] but in the Theages it seems genuine, where Aristeides avers that "my progress was far the greatest and most marked whenever I sat beside you and held and touched you."[2] The probably spuriousness of the dialog raises a question as to the trustworthiness of this second reference, but it is surely no exaggeration to say that physical contact with Socrates, as in even a handshake with many great men, could have exercised a singular effect on others, and that in his case it doubtless did.

Another marked feature in Socrates' life and behavior was his almost glad acceptance of the state of poverty in which he lived. Xenophon in his Symposium represents Socrates as saying, "A charming thing, poverty, upon my word! It seldom causes envy or is a bone of contention; and it is kept safe without the necessity of a guard, and grows sturdier by neglect."[3] While doubtless an overstatement of the appeal poverty had for Socrates, it attests his contentment at being poor. Certainly it afforded him the leisure to carry out his mission. Moreover, in his eyes at least, his poverty did not signify a deliberate attachment to penury (as for Diogenes the Cynic) but instead a half-humorous detachment from material possessions, in fact from all forms of possession.

If this is how it looked to him, however, it is not how others regarded it. The sophist Antiphon scored Socrates

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[1] 175 d.

[2] Plato Theages 130 e.

[3] Xenophon Symposium 3. 9.

for what he saw to be his abject poverty: "You are living a life that would drive even a slave to desert his master. Your meat and drink are of the poorest, . . . you never wear shoes or tunic. . . . If you intend to make your companions do that too, you must consider yourself a professor of unhappiness."[1] And if it seldom became a "bone of contention" in Socrates' life, certainly one place where it did so was in his marital life. Poor Xanthippe, whom history on the basis of one questionable reference[2] has judged to be an untamed shrew, surely could feel nothing of her husband's satisfaction with their poverty. Though it gave to Socrates the luxury of teaching for nothing and a certain independence, it afforded his wife neither luxury nor independence. While the questions of Socrates' marital history are not finally to be decided, it is probable to conclude, with Taylor, that he was a widower of about fifty when he married Xanthippe, who may have been around twenty.[3] She had unquestionably a hard and difficult life with Socrates, and the wonder may be that she did not react more strongly than she did. Socrates speaks of her with appreciation in a conversation with his son Lamprocles,[4] and she is represented as a devoted and

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[1]Xenophon Memorabilia i. 6. 2.

[2]Xenophon Symposium 2. 9-10.

[3]A. E. Taylor, "Plato's Biography of Socrates," The Proceedings of the British Academy, VIII (1917), 93ff.

[4]Xenophon Memorabilia ii. 2. 10-11.

inconsolable wife during the final hours of his life.[1]

If Socrates embraced a voluntary poverty, it is equally clear that he was no self-tormenting ascetic. Few citizens of Athens found more enjoyment in the common pleasures of life, or found a heartier welcome among all sorts of men, shams and pretenders excluded. He genuinely loved life, and was constantly criticized not for disavowing the pleasures of the senses but for over-indulging in them. He was of an erotic nature, as is liberally evidenced in the writings of both Plato and Xenophon. The latter's admissions are especially significant in light of his avowed purpose of presenting Socrates with the highest moral standards. But clearly to Xenophon there was no overt homosexuality in the eroticism of Socrates. When Xenophon says, "He often said he loved someone,"[2] it is not to a physical but a spiritual love that he refers.

Others, and especially later biographers, are more inclined to believe that like many Greek males in that day Socrates too engaged in homosexual relationships. Their thinking may have been formed or at least confirmed in light of Socrates' physical appearance. As indicated, he had the very sensual features of one who might be expected to indulge his passions. Apparently a visiting physiognomist, Zopyrus, saw in Socrates' countenance the imprint of strong sensuality. Cicero reports in full this meeting of the two, and cites

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[1]Plato Phaedo 60 b. [2]Memorabilia vi. 1. 2.

Socrates' agreement with Zopyrus regarding his sensual nature and his frank declaration that "such vices were natural to him, but that he had got the better of them by his reason."[1] This seems to have been the case. Socrates did feel the pull of the "flesh," but as Alcibiades so boldly describes it in Plato's Symposium, he never gave in to it no matter what the provocation.[2]

The whole tenor of his life in fact supports the view that while he had the strongest appetites, he also had full and final control over them. He could drink all night and not get drunk. He could savor to the full the delicacies of the banquet table, and yet live for days on the meagerest of diet. So too could he love another male, both for physical and spiritual beauty, without overt homosexuality. To take his love for Alcibiades as an example, that love was finally for the soul of Alcibiades, though appreciation for his physical beauty was a preparation for it. For Socrates, the thoroughly erotic man, the sensual was a stepping-stone to a higher level of relationship. Whereas the ascetic, shunning and perhaps fearing the sensual, detours round it to get to the spiritual, Socrates moves naturally and with self-control right through it.

His sharing the common pleasures of men extended also to his sharing their common life. It is true that he did not seek deep involvement in the political life of Athens. He

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[1] Tusculan Disputations 4. 37. [2] 219 c.

felt that his mission demanded his non-participation, on the grounds that--in his own words--"He who will fight for the right, if he would live even for a brief space, must have a private station and not a public one."[1] His daimonion had forbidden him to take much part in politics, and his subsequent life confirmed for him the wisdom of this. However, he did take his normal turn with others of his fellow-citizens in the routine political responsibilities of Athens, and at one time even consented to serve on the Senate as a member of the Committee of Prytanes. Moreover, he served his city in the military, often and well. At least four times he left Athens to engage in military campaigns, and his courage and valor are well attested. In Xenophon's words, "To public authority he rendered such scrupulous obedience in all that the laws required, both in civil life and in military service, that he was a pattern of good discipline to all."[2]

In similar fashion, Socrates also shared the common life of Athens with respect to religious observances and practices. While he would not have affirmed belief in the individual gods of Mount Olympus, neither would have most of his countrymen. The objects of religious worship were "the gods," a general designation not too accurately defined, and certainly not confined to anthropomorphic deities after the fashion conceived by Homer. The old shrines were still

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[1]Plato Apology 32 a, Jowett translation.

[2]Memorabilia iv. 4. 1.

traditionally related to the separate gods of the pantheon, but worship was of a more general pattern.

Within this context, Socrates was a man of deep piety. He found it possible, using the customary religious media, to worship the deity as he conceived it. The two religious acts just prior to his death, his prayer and his reminder to Crito to sacrifice a cock to Asclepius,[1] were genuine expressions of his inner faith. Grote, citing the sacrifice as quite literally meant, says that "Socrates was a very religious man, much influenced by prophecies, oracles, dreams, and special revelations."[2]

Xenophon's testimony bears this judgment out: "He offered sacrifices constantly, and made no secret of it, now in his home, now at the altars of the state temples, and he made use of divination with as little secrecy. . . . When he prayed, he asked simply for good gifts, 'for the gods know best what things are good.'"[3] Those who knew Socrates well acknowledged his reliance on the gods, and spoke of how the gods favored him with special revelations.[4] These were very often in the form of dreams, and there was of course the guidance he received from the daimonion. In both these forms of divine intervention, Socrates had great confidence. Of the daimonion much will be said later. With regard to dreams, the most trusted of the dialogs of Plato give ample

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[1]Plato Phaedo 117 b, 118 a. [2]II, 195.

[3]Memorabilia i. 1. 2-3, i. 3. 2. [4]Ibid. iv. 3. 12.

illustration.[1]

As for himself, so Socrates too accepted the importance of special revelations of the gods for others. He often counseled men to inquire of an oracle, where the outcome of a course of action could not be foreseen. Xenophon quotes him to say that "those who intended to control a house or a city needed the help of divination."[2] When Xenophon himself asked Socrates if he should join the expedition of Cyrus, Socrates spoke his own mind and then reportedly said, "I have given you the advice of a mere mortal; in matters which involve uncertainty and doubt it is my reasoned judgment that the oracle of Apollo should be consulted."[3] When Xenophon had done so, even though putting the question in such a way as to insure the answer he wanted, Socrates encouraged him to do all that the god had said.[4]

In brief, Socrates accepted for himself and encouraged among others a trusting reliance upon the gods. "Try the gods," he said, "by serving them, and see whether they will vouchsafe to counsel you in matters hidden from man."[5] His own experience was that they would and did.

The sum of this review of Socrates' personal characteristics and behavior is that he suffered an ill-deserved

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[1] Apology 33 c, Crito 44 a, Phaedo 60 d.

[2] Memorabilia i. I. 6. [3] Xenophon Anabasis iii. 1. 3-7.

[4] Ibid. [5] Xenophon Memorabilia i. 4. 18.

reputation as a sophist, a loafer, and a libertine. In fact, he shared fully and gladly the life of his fellow-Athenians, in the marketplace, at the banquet table, in the civic assembly, on the battlefield, and in worship; and he did so not only with a deep personal integrity but also with a profound sense of social responsibility. Perhaps, as Friedlander suggests, "He was the only Athenian practicing the true art of politics";[1] for his concern was not so much to patch up old institutions as to help create new men, beginning with himself.

Nevertheless, as much as his life was the common life of men, it extended beyond that into a higher plane of human wisdom--the wisdom of the one who knows that he knows not--and then even further into the "ineffable." Socrates, living to the full the common life, at the same time transcended it. Appreciating the "finer things" of life, he could nevertheless embrace a voluntary poverty. A thoroughly erotic man, he could still rise above the temptations of the "flesh." Even on the battlefield he could experience the transcendent, through periods of sustained meditation.

It was this resource from beyond the common life that enabled him to move among men with such integrity. He did more than preach his convictions. As a true missionary he lived his convictions, giving them the demonstration of his own life. Neither the unrighteous demands of a little ring

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[1] I, 9.

of oligarchs,[1] nor of an angry populace,[2] could sway his decision to live as the righteous man, serving his city and serving his god.

His Beliefs

In Socrates the missionary, a man with the personal characteristics and behavior that have been described, there are evident certain controlling beliefs concerning man, the state, and the gods. It is to a consideration of these that the discussion now turns.

With reference to man, Socrates believed first and foremost, for himself and for others, in the full use of the faculty of reason, especially for making responsible moral decisions. For Socrates, there is no substitute for reasoned examination of all that is within the province of man's mind to consider and act upon.[3] Reason holds sway, wherever it is competent to rule, over both tradition and inspiration. The customs and institutions of the past, social or political or religious, are subject to reason's continuing appraisal and criticism. Similarly inspiration, even when granted to be divine inspiration, is strictly secondary to human intelligence

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[1]Plato Apology 32 c, re: The Thirty ordering him to bring in Leon the Salaminian for execution.

[2]Ibid. 32 b, re: the people clamoring for the trial of the ten Arginusae admirals as a group.

[3]See Socrates' discussion with Hippias in Plato Hippias Major 298 c, where Socrates commitment to reason will not permit him "to say these things carelessly without investigation." Fowler translation.

on those matters where the mind of man is able to function. For only reason can lead to wisdom and understanding.

Socrates in fact speaks of divine inspiration as sharply opposed to reason. The two stand in marked contrast, with inspiration given only to those of weak intellect. In Plato's dialog Ion he says, "The poet is an airy thing, a winged and a holy thing; and he cannot make poetry until he becomes inspired and goes out of his senses and no mind is left in him. . . . God takes the mind out of the poets, and uses them as his servants."[1] Similarly in the Apology he says, "It is not by wisdom that the poets create their works, but by a certain instinctive inspiration, like soothsayers and prophets who say many fine things, but understand nothing of what they say."[2] As Cornford summarizes it, "Inspired genius would not yield knowledge of the kind Socrates wanted--explicit knowledge able to state its rational grounds."[3]

This search after "explicit knowledge," which only the reason can give, was of utmost importance to Socrates, and in his view not to look for certainty in anything was the worst intellectual habit of all. As he says in the Phaedo, "The greatest misfortune that can befall a man is to become not a misanthropist but a misologist, a hater of reason, argument, and rational discussion."[4]

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[1]Plato Ion 533 c. [2]Plato Apology 22 b.

[3]Principium Sapientiae, p. 67.

[4]Plato Phaedo 89 c, paraphrased in Shorey, p. 127.

A number of Socratic scholars see in Socrates a one-sided reliance on reason, an imbalance of the critical and intellectual faculties.[1] Gomperz calls it an "exaggerated reverence" for what is founded on reason, a view of life "eminently suited to the childhood of the mental and moral sciences."[2]

Yet in fairness it must be said that Socrates, at least, was no prisoner chained to his reason. Reason did come first in his attempts to understand himself, his fellows, and his world; but he was not so obsessed with it that he failed to see its limitations. A whole-hearted rationalist, refusing to be bound by prejudice and tradition, he nevertheless steered clear of an uncritical rationalism which he saw could lead simply to a substitution of one kind of prejudice for another. He believed, in addition, that there is much that only the gods know, beyond the reach of human reason to discover and yet important to man; so that no thoughtful man would want to be purely rational, excluding every other kind of experience that might bring guidance for his life.

It was Socrates' tempered respect for human reason that led to his profound equation of wisdom with ignorance. The wise man is wise precisely because he knows he does not know. This he saw to be the message of the oracle of Apollo to Chaerophon, which Socrates interpreted as the first principle of wisdom, and which he confirmed as he discusses in

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[1]Zeller, Socrates . . ., p. 80. [2]I, 390.

the Apology by examining those thought to be wise--statesmen, poets, artisans--and finding that "the men whose reputation for wisdom stood highest were nearly the most lacking in it."[1] He represents this discovery, repeated time after time, as something of a shock to him; and, while this is undoubtedly an instance of his "accustomed irony," nevertheless the impact of these experiences had a sure and lasting effect. Socrates consistently refused to be "sure" about anything, whether the definition of a word or even the very possibility of knowledge at all. He is a model for the undogmatic man.

Where he most closely approaches "dogma" is in reference to his ethical convictions. An additional measure of his wisdom, besides his knowing that he does not know, is his realization that the fundamental questions of man's life simply were not being asked by the sophists, statesmen, and citizens of Athens. These are the ethical questions, concerned with who is a good man and what is the good life. For the mature Socrates, the necessary considerations were not of "heat and cold, and stones falling from the sky," but of man and his conduct.

Four of his ethical convictions stand out most clearly, and if there can be said to be any Socratic body of "doctrine," these four present it. The first is that virtue is knowledge, a paradoxical statement which infers that true knowledge is not articulated through the lips of an intellectual man but

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[1]Plato Apology 22a.

rather demonstrated in the life of a moral man. The second is that all wrongdoing and error are due to ignorance, which follows from Socrates' belief that it is impossible to make ill use of the knowledge of the good. This is the one kind of knowledge, for Socrates, the mere possession of which guarantees that it will be used rightly. The third of his ethical "doctrines," based on the second, is that no man does wrong willingly. Everyone acts in accordance with what he sees to be good for him and hence, because men in society are interdependent, good for all. The fourth of his ethical convictions, one that he warns his friend Crito "only a few men hold, or ever will hold . . .,"[1] is that it is better to suffer injustice than to inflict it.

One implication that is rather too easily drawn from the foregoing, especially from the second and third convictions cited, is that salvation for man, i.e., his attaining to the full purpose and meaning of his life, is only a matter of education. Socrates, while saying that there is virtue and that men can be virtuous, does not want to say that education can automatically make men good. As previously pointed out in the discussion of his "midwifery," Socrates believed both that virtue can and cannot be taught.[2] There may, but there also may not, be that "spark" touched off in the soul of another which will bring him the knowledge that is virtue, and the virtue that is knowledge.

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[1]Plato Crito 49 c.

[2]Supra, p. 39.

Among others of the beliefs of Socrates concerning man, besides his tempered respect for man's reason and his affirmation of ethical convictions, one of the most controlling is his belief that a man's world centers in himself.[1] While Socrates lived responsibly in relation to his fellowmen, there is in his thinking no primary sense of neighbor, just as there is no primary sense of sin. The only intrinsic good for man is to perfect his own nature. As Varnali imagines Socrates to say, "The true philosopher is the one who can recognize his own nose."[2]

In his reflection upon individual man as an autonomous moral being, Socrates virtually created the Western conception of man's "soul" as the seat of his intelligence and moral character; and this must stand as one of his enduring contributions to the history of man's thought about himself. At the time of Socrates, two quite different conceptions of man's soul existed side by side in religious thought. From Homer's time onward, the soul (Greek psyche) had meant merely man's breath, whether his lifelong breathing or his last dying sigh. In Orphic theology, on the other hand, the soul was more individualized, becoming in effect a subliminal self similar to the id of the Freudians, and opposed to man's ego.[3] Orphics most often equated the soul to the mysterious daimon which was

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[1]Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments, p. 7. [2]p. 18.

[3]M. Whitcomb Hess, "Kierkegaard and Socrates," The Christian Century, LXXXII (June 9, 1965), 736.

undergoing successive incarnations in association with particular individuals, but which in pure essence was divine.

Against these conceptions, Socrates posited the soul of a man as that faculty of insight which can distinguish good from evil and infallibly choose the good. The supreme business of man's life, he thought, is--in relation to himself--to tend his own soul, and--in relation to another--to encourage him to tend his. This again is the oracle's "Know thyself," the motive and the goal of Socrates' mission.

It was his further belief that man's soul partakes of the divine that led Socrates to maintain that the soul is immortal.[1] He did so, of course, not as an article of knowledge but of faith. Yet it was surely a strong faith, for it gave to him a confidence and a fearlessness in his actions. As Shorey expresses it, "He called death and exile and poverty hobgoblins to frighten children,"[2] and his own conduct in the face of all three gives witness to that strength. It is likely that Socrates' "victory" over death justified for Plato belief in the soul's immortality. With Friendlander, "There was something untouched by the fact of the man 'Socrates,' as he was called, lying dead and about to be buried."[3]

Socratic scholars in the nineteenth century doubted, for the most part, whether Socrates himself had any such belief in the soul's immortality. They credited this rather to Plato, even though the Phaedo in which it appears is

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[1]Plato Phaedo 63 c ff. [2]p. 14. [3]I, 30.

generally regarded as historically accurate. Similarly they rejected the Theory of Ideas which Socrates elaborates there,[1] feeling this too is of Plato's conception.

Early twentieth century scholars, especially Burnet and Taylor, tried to recover the claim that these "doctrines" originated in the mind of Socrates, though they were of course developed and systematized by Plato. As Taylor rather convincingly argues, "Unless the Phaedo is a deliberate mystification, it follows at once that its central doctrine, the so-called 'Theory of Ideas,' which is represented as adopted by Socrates in his youth and familiar to all his auditors, really was a Socratic tenet, and is no discovery of Plato's."[2] Recent scholarship, however, while still divided, tends to lean to Platonic organization.[3] It is probable that, however much or little Socrates may have articulated a Theory of Ideas or the immortality of the soul, Plato first perceived the Theory, and the Ideas themselves (e.g., justice, courage, the good, etc.) in and through Socrates; and that a more or less formal doctrine of the soul's immortality would have been firmly based in the thought of the less dogmatic Socrates.

A clue to Socrates' willingness to "believe" beyond the bounds of reason comes in his frequent use of myth. In order to escape a metaphysical dogmatism, and at the same

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[1]Plato Phaedo 100 c, 102 b. [2]Socrates, p. 31.

[3]Cornford is a notable exception, calling such notions the "Taylorian heresy."

time attempt to render intelligible the mysterious aspects of human life, Socrates employed the device of myth. He used it for more than purposes of vague sentiment, but rather in order to lead man in his imagination along a clearly defined path to a non-rational claim, and then back again along the path to a recognition of the moral obligation which the content of the myth establishes. Socrates' myths, as his irony, both conceal and reveal what he would have men consider about those matters outside the province of their reasoning powers. So there are found within Plato's dialogs the Myth of the Cave in the Republic[1] to present the Eternal Forms, the Myth of Diotima in the Symposium[2] to discourse about Love, and the Myth of the Soul in the Phaedo.[3] The latter ends with Socrates saying, "This or something like this at any rate is what happens in regard to our souls and their habitations--that this is so seems to me proper and worthy of the risk of believing; for the risk is noble."[4]

These then are the principal beliefs Socrates has concerning men. Supremely, there is a belief in the full use of human reason to guide conduct, and a respect for reason tempered only by the awareness that in some ranges of human experience it is limited. Only the gods know some things, and in everything man must be careful not to assume that he knows what he does not know; for true wisdom begins in a knowledge

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[1] 514 c ff.

[2] 201 d ff.

[3] 107 b ff.

[4] Ibid. 115 a.

of ignorance. With respect to ethical living, however, there are firm convictions to guide a man, notably that virtue is the true knowledge and is to be exhibited, not argued. Man stands, self-possessed and autonomous, at the center of his world, responsible to realize within himself the good life. He has a soul that is the seat of his intellect and moral character, and that lives on into immortality. This is his faith, as is also his belief, beyond the bounds of his reason, in a Theory of Ideas which--along with his belief in immortality and other non-rational beliefs--he both reveals and conceals by the use of myth. So is reason protected from being over-extended, and man's proper concerns protected from an overzealous and exclusive reliance on reason.

While Socrates' beliefs with reference to man are the most interesting and the most important of his convictions, it is a part of the necessary background to the discussion of his daimonion to inquire also, though much more briefly, into his beliefs in two other areas: the state and the gods.

Concerning the state, Socrates' convictions grew out of his belief that man is morally an autonomous being, endowed with a reason which can guide his living toward personal and social responsibility. Man does not need a tradition of authority, whether political, social, or religious, to make his decisions for him. As pointed out earlier,[1] the Greeks of Socrates' time did not decide the issues of life by taking counsel with themselves in the "inner man," but instead relied

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[1]<u>Supra</u>, 23.

upon the authority of tradition or divine revelation from an external oracle or other form of divination. The genuine revolution in human thought and conduct which Socrates began occurred precisely in this transfer of the power of decision from beyond to within man's self or soul.

Accordingly, Socrates opposed the state in its claim to exercise on behalf of a man powers which Socrates believed were within man. Against the authority of the state Socrates posited the ability of the true self or intelligence to know and to will the good. Further, he believed in the guidance of his daimon, received from outside himself, so he was convinced, but nevertheless received individually. In both respects, he set up his own reason and illumination against the authority of the community as a whole.

The threat which this extremely individualistic, relativistic political ethic poses is obvious even in the stating of it. It threatens forms of government from oligarchy to democracy, and explains why Socrates was often in trouble with both. There is not much question that, between the two forms, Socrates was far more in sympathy with the oligarchy. Democracy, as then practiced in Greece, was thorough-going, with every citizen sharing fully in the making of political, military, and legal decisions. There was little in the way of representative government, and little attempt at a system of checks and balances. Men with little if any qualification were entrusted with political power far beyond their ability to use wisely. Socrates criticized the "Periclean democracy,

the radical vice of which was that it denied the need for expert knowledge in politics."[1] It was, in Nietzsche's phrase, "one flock and no shepherd."[2]

With reference finally to the gods, Socrates is correctly understood as a man of deep piety; although certainly his fellow-Athenians did not so regard him. It was essential to the faith Socrates had that he be both a devout man and at the same time opposed to the conventional, conformist piety of a man like Euthyphro.[3] When he says, in his defense at the trial, "I do believe in the gods as no one of my accusers believes in them . . .,"[4] his statement is true, both as regards his conception of the gods and the intensity and depth of his faith.

In attempting to define the object of Socrates' worship, the translators have adopted different forms of expression. Church, whose translation of the Apology is the one used in this discussion, uses interchangeably the terms "the god" and "the gods." Rouse uses the term "God." Whatever the term, clearly the meaning Socrates gives to it is of a Supreme Being far different from the Homeric conception of a god. Within these pages, the terms "the god" and "God" will be used to indicate the Supreme Being of Socrates.

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[1]John Burnet, Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato (London: Macmillan Co., 1953), p. 188.

[2]Quoted in Taylor, Encyclopaedia Britannica, XX, 917.

[3]Plato Euthyphro.

[4]Plato Apology 35 e.

Socrates' belief in the god had three quite distinct roots within his own experience. He saw in the order of nature one compelling evidence of the god. In his observation of the universality of belief he found another. And in the occurrence of divine revelations in dreams and signs and oracles was a third. As to the way the god acted in relation to the world, Socrates saw him either as an informing mind throughout the universe or as a mighty power ordering the world in keeping with his purposes. More technically, "Socrates' conception of the Deity was either a pantheistic-poetical one, or a deistic-teleological one."[1]

In Socrates' conception, too, is a large element of the "unknown God" to which the Apostle Paul was to refer some 450 years later.[2] He is a god whose name and form are not known, and who yet is worshiped. Certainly the god of Socrates is no Apollo, to be named in a pantheon.

Function, rather than name or form, defines the god. Inspiration, as of the poets, is one such function. Divine revelations concerning those matters of life where the consequences cannot be foreseen comprise another function. Omnipresence and onmiscience, the god knowing even the secret purposes of a man,[3] are other functional characteristics of the god. Furthermore, he is one who keeps to himself the knowledge about celestial bodies and other heavenly matters that

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[1]Gomperz, II, 89. [2]Acts 17. 23.

[3]Xenophon <u>Memorabilia</u> i. 1. 19.

are irrelevant to man, and who in fact grows jealous and displeased when men try to search these out for themselves.[1] So does Socrates surely turn his back on idle metaphysical speculation.

In securing the relation of the god to man, however, Socrates does appear to have adopted a demonology, although it must remain an open question as to where his convictions in this respect might leave off and Plato's begin. It is in the dialog Cratylus that Socrates cites his belief in wide and holy daimons who are the spirits of good men who have died and who live on to guard and guide mortal men.[2] In both the Phaedo and the Republic, Socrates uses myth to present his belief that daimons lead men to and from the last tribunal after death, whether on to Hades or back to life. The details differ from one myth to another, but some sort of demonology figures in Socrates' understanding, or rather his attempt to understand, issues beyond the power of his reason to penetrate. Again, it must be remembered that the very use of myth is Socrates' way of warning against a dogmatism in these matters. Of such views as he thus sets forth he is quick to say, "This or something like this at any rate . . . seems to me proper and worthy of the risk of believing."[3]

The existence and mediation of daimons seems to Socrates a credible myth, which allows for communication between the

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[1] Ibid. iv. 7. 6. [2] Plato Cratylus 398 b.

[3] Plato Phaedo 114 d.

god and man. So in the myth of Diotima in Plato's Symposium, Love is defined as a great daimon (note the inconsistency with the definition of daimon in the Cratylus); a daimon with power "to interpret and to ferry across to the gods things given by men, and to men things from the gods, from men petitions and sacrifices, from the gods commands and requitals in return; and being in the middle it completes them and binds all together into a whole."[1]

His Trial and Death

Writing of Socrates, Diogenes Laertius claims that "he was the first who discoursed on the conduct of life, and the first philosopher who was tried and put to death."[2] In the circumstances of Socrates' trial and death, and in his conduct during the period of these events, the man and his mission are brought to sharp focus. It will complete this necessary "general" look at Socrates to inquire briefly into these last days.

Without question it was a political reaction that occasioned the charge against Socrates, and his subsequent trial and death. The final years of the fifth century were militarily and thus politically disastrous for Athens. The "Golden Age" had passed, the empire crumbled, and there was within the city itself a chaotic succession of governments, each one seemingly less responsible than the one before. Following the brief but brutal reign of The Thirty, an

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[1] 202 e.

[2] i. 2. 20.

oligarchy, democracy was re-established in 403 B.C. With the restoration of the democracy came "a hardening of the public conscience."[1] Even as communities in trouble always seek for a scapegoat on whom to lay the blame, so did Athens; and Socrates became a marked man. Not only was he regarded to have been over-friendly with The Thirty, largely through his earlier close relationship with Critias, but in addition he had consistently opposed an unquestioning acceptance of the authority of tradition.

Ever since the time of Solon, Athenian democracy had been based upon the guarantees of the past. Salvation did not lie forward in the future, but only in strict adherence to the customs and beliefs of the past. All innovation was therefore wrong and dangerous, whether in religion or law. To interpret religion, as Socrates did, was to destroy religion. To want to have reasons for obeying the law, as Socrates did, was to destroy respect for the law. Conservative Athenians, looking for someone to blame for their political misfortunes, saw in the innovator Socrates an incarnation of everything that had led to their downfall. He was the perfect scapegoat.

The formal charge brought against him was two-fold: that he rejected the gods of the state and introduced new gods of his own, and that he corrupted the youth.[2] But there were other, hidden charges too, as Socrates himself said at the

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[1]Sauvage, p. 13.

[2]Xenophon Memorabilia i. 1. 1; Plato Apology 24 b.

trial, dating back to Aristophanes' caricature of him twenty-four years previously as a speculator about the heavens and a sophist; and in addition there was the suspicion, not entirely unfounded, that his political sympathy was for an oligarchical form of government.

At the core of all the charges, new and old, lay a base of solid facts. He had been disloyal to the "spirit" of Athenian life, tied to the past; he had been critical of the democracy and its leaders; and he had out of his earlier, intimate association with foreign Pythagoreans imported religious "novelties" into Athens.[1] The last was the real impiety of Socrates: conceiving and serving the gods, or in his term "the god," in a manner alien to the religion of Athens. Coupled with his radical political convictions, it added up to a strong case against him, though not one that could legitimately have been made the basis of an accusation and trial.

One element in the belief and behavior of Socrates, however, that formed no part of the charge against him was his daimonion; and in light of the focus of this entire discussion, that emphasis needs to be made. At no time do his friends warn him against speaking of his daimonion, as if it were a religious "novelty" alien to Athenian orthodoxy. Nor would he have referred to it himself in his defense if it were.

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[1]A. E. Taylor, Varia Socratica (Oxford: James Parker Co., 1911), pp. 22ff.

As Taylor points out, "If the 'sign' had played any part in the speech of Meletus, the language of Socrates as reproduced by Plato would be ridiculous. He could not possibly fall back on one of the very points of the accusation as an innocent explanation of a suspicious course of conduct."[1] He was in no trouble with the Athenians over his daimonion. The "irreligion" would be on the part of anyone who would have questioned this experience.

With respect to the trial itself, it is probable that Socrates did in fact improvise his own defense. His daimonion had warned him against preparing a formal defense, and there is no reason to believe that he did not take its advice. Some have objected to Plato's Apology being an impromptu address, since it is too well constructed for this. A far better solution to this objection than that Socrates disobeyed his daimonion, however, is that Plato reconstructed the actual words of Socrates into the present literary form, retaining the substance but recasting the statement of his defense.

Three characteristic notes in the defense mark it as faithful to the true Socrates. Again and again during his speaking, he waxes ironical at the expense of his accusers and his judges. Secondly, he refuses to be restricted to the accepted form of monolog, and engages Meletus in conversation, in the process giving abundant evidence of his skill in eristic. Thirdly, he reflects a reluctance to be dogmatic, even regarding

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[1] Ibid., p. 13.

his own death and the meaning of it. His final words in Plato's Apology are these: "But now the time has come, and we must go away--I to die, and you to live. Which is better is known to the god alone."[1]

A further characteristic of Socrates, his humor, is focused at the trial if an incident, reported in Xenophon's Apology, is historical. Upon leaving the trial Socrates observes that his friends are all weeping, and he tries to cheer them up. When Apollodorus confesses that what he finds hardest to bear is that Socrates is being put to death unjustly, the reply he receives is, "My beloved Apollodorus, would you rather see me put to death justly?"[2]

The judgment must be that, by all the standards of fifty century Athens, Socrates was in fact guilty as charged. As Zeller comments, "To one starting from the old Greek view of right and the state, the condemnation of Socrates cannot appear to be unjust."[3] He was guilty of not believing wholeheartedly in the gods of the state and introducing novel conceptions of the gods and what it means to obey them. He was guilty, by Athenian standards, of corrupting the young. Well might Socrates have been surprised, as he said he was, that the vote was so close. Had thirty people voted otherwise on the first ballot, he would have been acquitted. As it was, 221 of the 502 jurors voted him innocent. Even after his

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[1] 42 a. [2] Xenophon Apology 28.

[3] Socrates . . ., p. 231.

highly irregular and ironic suggestion that his "penalty" be to be maintained at public expense in the Prytaneum, as if he were a military or athletic hero, 141 jurors still judged him not guilty.[1]

As for the majority of the jurors who that day sentenced Socrates to death, it is foolish to believe, with Montaigne, that within a few years they were ostracized by a repentant Athens, and that each one of them finally went and hanged himself.[2] The fact is that the collective conscience of Athens was untouched by Socrates' sentencing. There was no "Socrates Scandal," either then or later. In Sauvage's very apt summary:

> We may be sure that the 361 judges who gave their vote for death, one February day, slept that night and ever after with a quiet conscience, with never another thought for the case of that garrulous loafer who for too many years had plagued the citizens, forcing them to tackle problems and look at themselves in a moral looking glass.[3]

The interim period between the sentencing and the day of execution was prolonged for Socrates to almost a month, owing to a religious custom of the Athenians. Every year a sacred boat sailed to the shrine of Apollo in Delos, commemorating a fabled deliverance of Athens by the god Theseus from the requirement of seven boys and seven girls to be paid in tribute to Minos of Knossos. While the boat was away, the

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[1]Taylor, Socrates, pp. 118-20.

[2]III, 307. See also Diogenes Laertius Lives . . . i. 2. 43.

[3]p. 9.

rules of ceremonial purity forbad any executions. Instead of the customary twenty-four hours, therefore, Socrates waited in prison until the boat returned, a period of approximately one month.

Plato's dialog Crito reports the attitudes and actions of Socrates during that time, and reinforces both the rational tenacity and personal integrity that are characteristic of him, as well as showing him still a man who gives much importance to the non-rational, especially as regards divine revelation. The Crito reveals a Socrates who puts great store in his dreams; e.g., "I am counting on a dream I had a little while ago."[1] Here too is a Socrates who can conceive the Laws of Athens personified and speaking to him, such that "the sound of these arguments rings so loudly in my ears, that I cannot hear any other arguments."[2] A further reference to a dream in the Phaedo underlines Socrates' respect for divine revelation coming to him in such a manner. He mentions a dream that frequently came to him over the years, encouraging him to compose music; and he says that he had always interpreted it to mean the "music" of philosophy and the good life. He confesses, however, that now he is not sure if really he had obeyed the revelation, and so he is busily composing verses as he awaits execution: "I ought not to . . . go away before getting it off my conscience by composing poetry, and so obeying the dream."[3]

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[1] 44 a. [2] Ibid., 54 d. [3] Plato Phaedo 61 b.

So are seen to be confirmed in the final events of his life many of the characteristic attitudes and actions of Socrates, the man with a mission who championed the full use of human reason within its proper bounds, and who looked beyond reason to divine revelation for what lay outside the power of the mind to discover.

In the immediate sense of fifth century Athens, it must in fairness be marked that the man failed in his mission. Loving truth, he could only make sceptics of men. Loving the god, he converted others to atheism. Himself a true patriot, he convinced his hearers that patriotism is a delusion. As Crossman observes about Socrates, "Preaching the rule of reason, he taught a technique of argument which was used to justify the rule of might. Concerned above all to challenge the selfish individualism of the Athenian intelligentsia, he produced by his teaching the worst specimens of that type."[1] And so he did.

Yet in every sense beyond the immediate, the mission succeeded and the man merits every honor history has paid him. For Socrates was one who was open to life on all its levels: intellectual, moral, emotional, religious. Gomperz writes that while every century has had its quota of men with cool heads, and that while there has never been a lack of men with warm hearts, "the two are rarely combined; and the rarest phenomenon of all is a heart of mighty power working with all

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[1]p. 64.

its might to keep the head above it cool."[1] Yet this was precisely the singularity of Socrates, whose passion was for intellectual clarity and ethical righteousness.

Socrates appears on the stage of history as a man consciously in control of his own life, who attained in himself the self-awareness he sought to bring to birth in others. He "tended his own soul" and while he was well aware of the limitations of his knowledge, he accepted the responsibility of being a morally autonomous man, living with ethical integrity and in the faith, as he says, that "no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death."[2]

In retrospect it seems certain that it was Socrates himself, not his jurors, who decided his case. By the manner and content of his defense, he determined the final outcome of his trial. No doubt his accusers wanted nothing more than that Socrates leave Athens and go into exile. But to Socrates himself, that was not an option; and in effect he sentenced himself to death. Xenophon proposes that he deliberately provoked the court to the death penalty so that he could die without having to suffer the infirmities of old age.[3] Taylor dismisses this as a "ludicrous suggestion,"[4] which surely it is. It was Socrates' choice to die rather than live, but it was not fear of old age that prompted it. In a recent article, Greenberg discusses the ethical motive to

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[1] II, 45.

[2] Plato Apology 41 b.

[3] Memorabilia iv. 8. 1.

[4] Socrates, p. 116.

which Socrates responded:

> Somehow or other we all seem to be struck by the rightness of Socrates' decision to remain and die--and this too for those who are not impressed by the cogency of the arguments in the Crito. The rightness lies not in the inviolability of the contract of citizenship, but in what might be called the ethical structure of the game. We cannot escape the conclusion that Socrates entered the game voluntarily, that he raised the stakes in a most flambouyant and heroic manner, and that he played the game with style. . . . On this hypothesis it is no longer puzzling why Socrates chose to die. By his own actions, he made death a peculiar test of his own sincerity, and being the man he was, he had no other choice.[1]

It is often said of Socrates that he had not a philosophy, but that he himself was philosophy. Such is surely the case, for all alike--conservatives and revolutionaries, rationalists and mystics--have appropriated him. From the beginning, when Aristippus drew his hedonism from Socrates and Antisthenes his cynicism, all manner of philosophy has flowed from him. His real and abiding contribution to philosophy, which has been his alone uniquely to make, is "a personality, a method, an inspiration, a moral and religious ideal."[2]

Socrates said it himself: "You will not easily find another like me. . . ."[3]

The ground is now prepared for a thorough examination of the daimonion of Socrates, and for a responsible estimate of its nature and effects. The two necessary backgrounds to

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[1] N. A. Greenberg, "Socrates' Choice in the Crito," Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, LXX (1965), 81.

[2] Shorey, p. 14.

[3] Plato Apology 31 a, John Stuart Mill translation.

such an attempt have been sketched. The religious inheritance of fifth century Greece has been considered, covering current religious beliefs about the gods and daimons and popular religious practices. A broad picture of Socrates himself has been presented, focusing in turn upon his mission, his personal characteristics and behavior, his beliefs, and finally his trial and death. With these backgrounds as the two foundation pillars, the discussion may now proceed to the more specialized concern with the daimonion.

It is to the primary sources that first attention must be given. The next two chapters accordingly concentrate upon the daimonion of Socrates as it is reflected in the writings of Plato and Xenophon.

PART II

THE DAIMONION OF SOCRATES

CHAPTER IV

THE DAIMONION IN PLATO

The dialogs of Plato provide the first and most abundant source of specific references to the daimonion of Socrates. In no less than eight of the dialogs is there a reporting of this characteristic phenomenon that Socrates frequently experienced and always obeyed. Of thirteen literal uses of the Greek daimonion in the eight dialogs, eleven are by Socrates himself. It is with the examination of these references that this chapter is primarily concerned.

As the dialogs are considered, one by one, the procedure will be to excerpt the relevant passages and to set them down within the current discussion, in order that the references may be seen and evaluated in context. Key words, referring to the daimonion, will be underlined and alternate translations noted. In this way deeper insight can be achieved into the nature and effects of the daimonion.

The Apology will be the first of Plato's dialogs to be examined, for the reasons that there are several references within it to the daimonion, and that it is generally conceded to be among the most trustworthy of the dialogs historically. The remaining seven will be considered in the order adopted by

Shorey in his definitive work on the Platonic corpus, What Plato Said. It is not with certainty a chronological order (such a determination is impossible to make), but it is the order commonly adopted and in Shorey's own phrase "the most convenient sequence."[1] The last two dialogs are placed purposely out of chronological order, as their Platonic authorship is in serious question. In the case of the Theages especially, the question of its genuineness becomes important, since the picture given of the daimonion is considerably different from that offered by Plato anywhere else. Accordingly, this dialog will receive a somewhat extended treatment in relation to the others.

Following the evidence from the eight dialogs, a furthur consideration of the chapter will be to assess the effect of Plato's own personal and philosophical views upon his reporting of the daimonion. The question of how far he may have colored the references, whether intentionally or not, is an important one. In attempting to decide it, attention will be directed in turn to his personal relationship to Socrates, his method of presentation in the dialogs, his own philosophy, and his own demonology. From this will come a fair estimate of how far Plato may be trusted in what he reports about Socrates' daimonion.

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[1]Paul Shorey, What Plato Said (Unabridged ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 73. Further references to Shorey will be, as previously, to the abridged ed., unless otherwise noted.

The discussion now turns to the eight dialogs where there is specific reference to the daimonion: Apology, Euthyphro, Euthydemus, Phaedrus, Republic, Theaetetus, Alcibiades I, and Theages.

The Eight Dialogs

The Apology

Among the dialogs of Plato, the Apology occupies a rather privileged position, both in the minds of scholars and laymen. It is the dialog in which Socrates makes his defense before 502 jurors, and for the very reason that it is so public a statement it is conceded by most to be historically fairly accurate. Plato could not have seriously misrepresented Socrates in what he said, when there were literally hundreds of witnesses who could and would have challenged any obvious fiction or over-elaboration of what actually transpired. Further, it is this dialog in which the personal integrity and philosophic spirit of Socrates are manifestly evident. Generations of schoolboys have been awakened, intellectually and spiritually, by the claims and conduct of the Socrates of the Apology; and most find their admiration and fascination for Socrates to continue unabated. Finally, as regards the dialog, the insight and competence of Plato himself are credited, finding expression in such a judgment as Cornford gives: "The Apology is a document of unique authority. It is the only direct statement of the meaning of Socrates' life written by a man

capable of penetrating to that meaning."[1]

There are three passages in the Apology where Socrates refers to his daimonion. The two Greek words he uses in citing it are daimonion and semeion (sign). The translation used is that of F. J. Church, with alternate translations of key words as noted:

31 c Perhaps it may seem strange to you that, though I go about giving this advice privately and meddling in others' affairs, yet I do not venture to come forward in the assembly and advise the state. You have often heard me speak of my reason for this, and in many
d places: it is that I have a certain divine guide.[2] . . . I have had it from childhood. It is a kind of voice which, whenever I hear it, always turns me back from something which I was going to do, but never urges me to act. It is this which forbids me to take part in politics. And I think it does well to forbid me.

. . . . . .

40 a An amazing thing has happened to me, judges--for I am right in calling you judges. The prophetic guide[3] has been constantly with me all through my life till now, opposing me even in trivial matters if I were not going to act rightly. And now you yourselves see what has happened to me--a thing which might be thought, and which is sometimes acutally reckoned, the
b supreme evil. But the divine guide[4] did not oppose me when I was leaving my house in the morning, nor when I was coming up here to the court, nor at any point in my speech when I was going to say anything; though at other times it has often stopped me in the very act of speaking. But now, in this matter, it has never once opposed me, either in my words or my actions. This thing that has come upon me must be a good; and those of us who think that death is an
c evil must needs be mistaken. I have a clear proof that

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[1] Before and After Socrates, p. 59.

[2] Greek daimonion: "something divine and spiritual" (Rouse); "divine monitor" (Mill); "oracle or sign" (Jowett).

[3] Greek daimonion: "familiar prophetic voice of the spirit" (Rouse); "accustomed daimonic warning" (Mill); "divine faculty of which the internal oracle is the source" (Jowett).

[4] Greek semeion: "signal of God" (Rouse); "divine monitor" (Mill); "oracle" (Jowett).

that is so; for my accustomed guide[1] would certainly have opposed me if I had not been going to meet with something good.

. . . . . .

41 d I am persuaded that it was better for me to die now, and to be released from trouble; and that was the reason why the guide[2] never turned me back. And so I am not at all angry with my accusers or with those who have condemned me to die.[3]

The daimonion appears here as a "kind of voice" (31 d), heard by Socrates since his childhood, and always inhibitory in its operation. It opposes him in trivial matters as well as crucial issues such as his defense itself. By its silence, Socrates seems to feel an assurance that what will happen "must be a good" (40 b). Otherwise, his "guide" (40 b, 40 c, 41 d) would have warned him.

The Euthyphro

The principal focus of the conversation between Socrates and Euthyphro is on finding a suitable definition of piety. The dialog, however, has more purposes than one. It serves to contrast Socrates with Euthyphro, and to satirize popular religion. The reference to the daimonion comes early in the dialog, when Euthyphro indicates that he knows the reason why Meletus is charging Socrates with the introduction of strange

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[1]Greek semeion: "usual signal" (Rouse); "accustomed warning" (Mill); "customary sign" (Jowett).

[2]Greek semeion: "signal" (Rouse); "sign" (Mill); "oracle" (Jowett).

[3]F. J. Church (trans.), Euthyphro, Apology, Crito (revised ed., Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1956).

divinities. Church supplies the translation:

> 3 b I understand, Socrates. It is because you say that you always have a divine guide.[1] . . . Why, they laugh even at me, as if I were out of my mind, when I talk about divine things in the assembly and tell them what is going to happen. . . . They are resentful of people like us. We must not worry about them; we must meet them boldly.[2]

The daimonion here is likened by Euthyphro to a quite orthodox prophetic gift that the gods give to certain men, of whom he and Socrates are two. Euthyphro feels no objection to Socrates' gift. In his mind, it has no connection with strange deities, but is rather a normal (though rare) means of revelation by the gods of Athenian religion.

The Euthydemus

Very often in the dialogs of Plato, play and seriousness are intimately mixed. Such is the case in the Euthydemus, a masterpiece of satire which on the one hand ridicules a pair of professors trying to capture the mind of a handsome youth, and on the other hand deftly contrasts truth and falsehood, being and appearing, genuine education and eristic. It is a comedy, but with a deeper purpose of showing the superiority of Socrates' method of teaching over that of the sophists, who would rather win an argument than discover a truth. Mention of the daimonion comes very early in the dialog, as

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[1]Greek daimonion: "familiar sign" (Jowett); "divine presence" (Woodhead).

[2]Church (trans.), Euthyphro, Apology, Crito.

Socrates explains why he remained in the gymnasium, and so happened to be present when the two sophists, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, came in. The translation is that of John Warrington:

> 272 e Providence had decreed that I should be sitting alone in the place where you saw me, in the undressing room. I was just intending to get up and go; but the moment I did so I was visited, as so often, by that spiritual sign.[1] So I resumed my seat, and presently these two persons entered. . . .[2]

The daimonion is again cited as an inhibitory sign which came often to Socrates. Here is an instance of the prohibition coming in relation to a trivial matter.

The Phaedrus

There are two somewhat distinct subjects in the discussion between Socrates and Phaedrus that takes place outside the city walls along the banks of the Ilisus. The one subject is love, and the other literary criticism. Socrates hears Phaedrus' recital of a speech of Lysias praising love and the lover in a manner both commonplace and unworthy, and presents a speech of his own which in mocking fashion enumerates the advantages of the non-lover over the lover. Following his eloquent but impious discourse against love, Socrates starts

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[1]Greek daimonion coupled with semeion: "familiar divine sign" (Jowett); "my wonted spiritual sign" (Lamb); "accustomed signal of my Genius" (Burges).

[2]John Warrington (trans.), Symposium and Other Dialogs (London: Everyman's Library, 1964).

to go home, when the daimonion stops him, forbidding him to leave until he has made amends with another, more truthful speech. Benjamin Jowett supplies the translation:

> 242 c I mean to say that as I was about to cross the stream the usual sign[1] was given to me--that sign which always forbids, but never bids, me to do anything which I am going to do; and I thought that I heard a voice saying in my ear that I had been guilty of impiety, and that I must not go away until I had made an atonement. Now I am diviner, though not a very good one, but I have enough religion for my own use. . . . Some time ago, while I was still speaking, I had a sort of misgiving. . . . Now I recognize my error.[2]

Several of the usual characteristics of the daimonion are confirmed in this account, with the additional suggestion that it may operate in a way that is only formally inhibitory. By forbidding him to depart until he has made another speech, the daimonion is in effect commanding him to make one.

The Republic

In this major dialog of Plato, combining a search for the definition of justice with a description of the ideal state, the daimonion is mentioned just once. This occurs midway in the Sixth Book, where Socrates is discussing how rare will be the number of true philosophers. He indicates to

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[1]Greek daimonion coupled with semeion: "spirit and sign that usually come to me" (Fowler); "my divine monitor's wonted sign" (Wright); "familiar divine sign" (Hackworth).

[2]Benjamin Jowett (trans.), The Dialogs of Plato (5 vols., 3rd ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), I.

Adeimantus that there is only a remnant among men to pursue philosophy, and mentions examples of circumstances that may help to hold a man within the remnant. It is in this context that he refers to his daimonion. The translation is Jowett's:

> 496 c My own case of the internal sign[1] is hardly worth mentioning, for rarely, if ever, has such a monitor been given to any other man.[2]

In this citing of his daimonion, Socrates stresses its rarity, even to the extent of implying that it may be unique with him.

The Theaetetus

In this mutual search for a definition of knowledge, Socrates and Theaetetus apparently fail. Along the way, however, Socrates voices some of the most profound and provocative thoughts ever to fall from his lips. Fairly early in the dialog, Socrates explains that he may be able to help his companion clarify his thoughts about knowledge, for he has skill as a midwife in this respect. He reviews for Theaetetus how he has performed this function for others, and how his daimonion has affected his continuing relationships with his friends, including those who for a time have drifted away from him and then returned to converse with him again. Warrington

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[1]Greek daimonion coupled with semeion: "spiritual sign" (Rouse); "divine sign" (Cornford, Shorey).

[2]Jowett (trans.), The Dialogs of Plato, III.

gives the translation:

151 a When they come back, with melodramatic appeals for the renewal of our association, sometimes the divine spirit[1] forbids it; but with others it is allowed, and these begin once more to make progress.[2]

The daimonion is seen again in this reference to operate in a manner that is inhibitory only in the formal sense. In effect it permits Socrates to continue in association with some among those whom Jowett calls the "truants"[3] who return to him. Clearly, however, it is not Socrates himself who makes this decision. It comes, without his prior knowledge of what will be said, through the daimonion.

The Alcibiades I

According to one early Platonist, Iamblichos, the Alcibiades I contains all the wisdom of Plato "like a seed."[4] Wide-ranging and rich in suggestion as it is, though, it is today regarded as most probably a spurious dialog. While it is included in the Stephanus edition of 1556, it is rejected by the large majority of modern scholars. Since its reference to the daimonion introduces a new insight into its nature, it becomes important to assess, at least briefly, its supposed

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[1]Greek daimonion: "familiar" (Jowett); "divine warning" (Cornford); "spiritual monitor" (Fowler).

[2]John Warrington (trans.), Parmenides, Theaetetus, Sophist, Statesman (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1961).

[3]Plato Theaetetus 151 a, Jowett translation.

[4]Quoted in Friedlander, II, 231.

Platonic authorship.

The case for Plato as author is based on the quite obvious fact that Plato had to write some "first" dialogs, which naturally would appear inferior to his later works. Lamb is one scholar who sees the Alcibiades I as such an early sketch, relatively immature and inartistic, but none the less genuine. Summing up the evidence, he concludes that "on the whole there seems no sufficient reason for doubting, with some eminent scholars, the authenticity of the dialog."[1]

The case against Platonic authorship is ably expressed by Shorey, though with the suggestion that portions of it may be the real Plato, as for instance 121 ff., which he cites as "almost too good to be by anyone except Plato."[2] Nevertheless, he maintains that to attribute the dialog to Plato is to "assume the improbability that he thought it worthwhile to elaborate a tedious, if scholastically convenient, summary of a long series of ideas that are better and more interestingly expressed in other dialogs, and that he repeats or quotes himself more often than in any other genuine work."[3]

It is at the very beginning of the dialog that reference to the daimonion occurs. Socrates for the first time strikes up a conversation with the youthful Alcibiades, and suggests the surprise that the lad must feel that, after all

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[1]W. R. M. Lamb (trans.), Vol. VIII, Works of Plato (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1927), p. 97.

[2]Shorey, What Plato Said (Unabridged ed.), p. 654.

[3]Ibid., p. 415.

these years, he is now at last speaking to him. He cites the resistance of his daimonion as the reason for his silence until now. Besides the passage containing the actual reference to the daimonion, two additional passages are here presented, to indicate the way in which the daimonion is conceived. The translation is that of W. R. M. Lamb:

103 a Son of Cleinias, I think it must surprise you that I, the first of all your lovers, am the only one of them who has not given up his suit and thrown you over, and whereas they have all pestered you with their conversations I have not spoken one word to you for so many years. The cause of this has been nothing human, but a certain spiritual opposition,[1] of whose power you shall be informed at some later time. How-
b ever, it opposes me now no longer, so I have accordingly come to you; and I am in good hopes that it will not oppose me again in the future.

. . . . . .

105 d I believe that the god[2] has so long prevented me from talking with you, and I was waiting to see when he would allow me. . . . Now he has set me on; for
106 a now you will listen to me.

. . . . . .

124 c Soc: My guardian[3] is better and wiser than your one, Pericles.
Alc: Who is he, Socrates?
Soc: God,[4] Alcibiades, who until this day would not let me converse with you.[5]

Here the daimonion is very explicitly related to the god of Socrates, such that the action of the daimonion is equated to the command of the god. Adjectives such as "divine"

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[1]Greek daimonion: "power more than human" (Jowett); "daimon" (Burges).

[2]Greek theos: "god" (Jowett, Burges).

[3]Greek beltion: "guardian" (Jowett, Burges).

[4]Greek theos: "God" (Jowett); "a deity" (Burges).

[5]Lamb (trans.), Vol. VIII, Works of Plato.

and "spiritual" have appeared before in translations of the Greek daimonion, but never has there been so plain an identification of the daimonion as a manifestation of, or even as the equivalent to, the god.

The Theages

At the end of the Theages, a dialog ascribed to Plato, there occurs a remarkable account of the daimonion. In degree if not in kind, it is like nothing else encountered in the Platonic corpus concerning Socrates' daimonion. For this reason a somewhat extended discussion becomes necessary.

The dialog as a whole is the conversation between Socrates and a father and his son, concerning whether or not the son should become a "pupil" of Socrates. Yet its focus, coming at the end, is on the limits imposed on education by the daimonion. In contrast to the education offered by the sophists, which is available to anyone who will pay for it, the education which Socrates may impart is limited only to those whose association with him the daimonion approves. In establishing just how important his daimonion is, Socrates relates a number of instances of its operation and effects.

The picture of the daimonion which emerges from the examples Socrates gives, both as to its nature and effects, is different enough from that in the other dialogs so that, on this basis alone, the dialog has been declared spurious. Though it is included in the Stephanus edition of 1556, there is hardly a modern scholar who will support its Platonic

authorship. Most see it as a bit of hackwork put together by a later writer who sought to emphasize Socrates' mysticism.

The case for Plato as author rests in the judgment of scholars like Grote and, to lesser extent, Friedlander who say that even though in content and style the Theages is an inferior dialog, and though there are some features that are too dissimilar from other dialogs and other features too similar (hence bad imitations), these marks alone do not warrant a verdict of spurious.[1] No writer is everywhere consistent with himself, either regarding what he says or the way he says it, and the best of writers have been known to repeat themselves. The Theages might well be an early work of Plato, portions of which he elaborated more expertly later on, itself written during a time when the impact of Socrates' life and beliefs was still dawning upon him. Furthermore, as shall become clear in the next chapter, there is nothing said of the daimonion here that is not said by Xenophon.

The case against Platonic authorship of the Theages builds upon the apparent exaggeration of the daimonion, its importance, and the manner of its functioning. These striking differences will appear in the quoted passages. Further, the array of examples cited simply do not contribute to the point of the discussion, which is the importance of the daimonion in making possible education. Even Lamb, who stands in a minority supporting Platonic authorship for the Alcibiades I,

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[1]Grote, I, 433; Friedlander, II, 150.

rejects this dialog, saying that it is hard to believe that Plato could have presented Socrates as relating "stories about his friends which tend to prove not his main point--that it depends on the spiritual sign whether they are to benefit or not from his society--but rather the great importance to them of associating with him and heeding his prophetic warnings."[1] An additional suspicion may and perhaps should be aroused by the notice that the name Theages means "god-guided," and may well have been an invention of a much later Platonist wanting to stress the mystical side of Socrates' nature.

Though, in sum, it cannot be maintained that the Theages is a genuine dialog of Plato, it is still important to consider the evidence it presents concerning the daimonion. Often what men believe to be true about a man like Socrates is essential to the best possible understanding of him. The relevant passages are these, in the translation of Lamb:

128 d There is something spiritual[2] which, by a divine dispensation, has accompanied me from my childhood up. It is a voice that, when it occurs, always indicates to me a prohibition of something I may be about to do, but never urges me on to anything;[3] and if one of my friends consults me and the voice occurs, the same thing happens: it prohibits, and does not allow him to act. And I will produce witnesses to convince
e you of these facts. You know our Charmides here, who has grown so handsome, the son of Glaucon: he once

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[1]Lamb (trans.), Vol. VIII, Works of Plato, p. 345.

[2]Greek daimonion: "a certain daimon" (Burges).

[3]Note the very similar wording in Plato Apology 31 d.

happened to be consulting me on his intention of training for the Nemean races, and he had no sooner begun to say that he intended to train than the voice occurred, and I tried to prevent him, saying--"just as you were speaking my spirit-voice[1] has occurred: no, you must not train." "Perhaps," said he, "it indicates to you that I shall not win; but even if I am not to win, at any rate the exercise I shall get in the meantime will do me good." So
129 a saying, he went and trained; and so you may as well inquire of him as to the results he got from his training. Or, if you like, ask Cleitomachus, brother of Timarchus, what Timarchus said to him when he was going straight to the prison to meet his death. . . . "I am going to my death now, because I would not take Socrates' advice." . . . When Timarchus and Philemon,
b son of Philemonides, got up from the wine-party to kill Nicias . . . then occurred that voice of mine, and I said to him: "No, no, do not get up; for my
c accustomed spiritual sign[2] has occurred to me." . . . Again the voice occurred, and so again I constrained him to stop. . . . The third time . . . he went right off and committed the deed which was the cause of his
d going then to his death. . . . And moreover, in regard to the Sicilian business, many will tell you what I said about the destruction of the army. . . . There is an opportunity now of testing the worth of what the sign[3] says. For as the handsome Sannio was setting out on campaign, the sign occurred to me. . . . I accordingly expect him to be either killed or brought very near it, and I have great fears for our force as a whole.

Now I have told you all this, because this spiritual power[4] that attends me also exerts itself to the full in my intercourse with those who spend their time with me. To many, indeed, it is adverse, and it is not possible for these to get any good by conversing with me, and I am therefore unable to spend my time in conversing with them.

. . . . . .

130 e Such, Theages, is the intercourse you would have with me: if God so wills, you will make very great

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[1]Greek daimonion: "voice of the daimon" (Burges).

[2]Greek daimonion coupled with semeion: "usual daimon signal" (Burges).

[3]Greek semeion: "daimon signal" (Burges).

[4]Greek daimonion: "power of this daimon" (Burges).

and rapid progress, but otherwise, you will not. Consider therefore if it is not safer for you to be educated by one of those persons who have command themselves of the benefit which they bestow on mankind, rather than follow the course on which you may chance with me.

131 a The: Well then I decide, Socrates, that our plan shall be to make trial of that spiritual sign[1] by associating with each other. Thus, if it leaves us free, that will be best of all; if it does not, it will be time then for us to consider, at the moment, what we shall do--whether we shall associate with someone else, or try to conciliate the divine sign[2] itself that occurs to you with prayers and sacrifices and anything else that the seers may indicate.[3]

In this dialog in which the daimonion plays a major role, the startlingly new element to be introduced is the intervention of the daimonion, outside Socrates' own conduct, to the proposed actions of his friends. As represented here, Plato obviously conceives Socrates' daimonion as a private little oracle that served as a guide not only for himself but for others. It still occurs spontaneously, without his bidding, and it is still inhibitory; but in nature and effect it goes beyond what is presented in the other Platonic dialogs.

Besides the extension of the daimonion's warnings to Socrates' friends, there is the further novelty that Theages quite clearly regards the daimonion as a god, who may be appeased with sacrifices, and other rites. In 131 a, daimonion and theos are virtual equivalents. While it is true that it

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[1]Greek daimonion: "daimon" (Burges).

[2]Greek theos: "divine power" (Burges).

[3]Lamb (trans.), Vol. VIII, Works of Plato.

is not Socrates who suggests "conciliating" the daimonion, neither does he object to the language. This "argument from silence" convinces many that if Plato did write the Theages, he believed that Socrates regarded his daimonion as a personal god attending him.

Here is a dialog, then, in which for the first time chief emphasis is laid upon the daimonion. Heretofore it has been referred to only incidentally. In addition, the array of examples cited tends not to lead naturally to the dialog's conclusion that the education Socrates can impart is dependent on the cooperation of the daimonion, but rather to the advantages of consulting Socrates before doing anything, in the event that the daimonion might have a warning to give.

Summary

From this consideration of references in eight dialogs attributed to Plato, there emerges a picture of Socrates' daimonion as an "inner voice" which from his childhood spontaneously came to him to warn him against a course of action he was proposing to take. Sometimes the issue was a serious one, though often it was only a trivial matter. Its prompting was frequently inhibitory in the formal sense alone, and in effect decided his action. Socrates often regarded the silence of his daimonion as virtual approval of his conduct. In this respect the daimonion affected his relationship with others, either prohibiting or cooperating in the association. Socrates made no secret of his daimonion, and conceived it to be a

divine revelation from the god, certainly of a rare kind and perhaps unique to himself.

In the two dialogs where Platonic authorship is a question, there are the further suggestions that the daimonion may itself be a god, and that its intervention very definitely extends beyond Socrates' own conduct to that of his friends.

The Effect of Plato's Own Views

It remains now in this chapter to consider how the personal philosophy and biases of Plato may have colored his presentation of the daimonion. To make this assessment, it will be helpful to discuss, in turn, Plato's personal relationship to Socrates, the method of presentation in the dialogs, his philosophy, and his demonology.

Plato's personal relationship to Socrates

The writings of Plato span a period of fifty years, and run to thousands of pages. Yet in all the Platonic corpus, except for a few letters addressed to a small circle of friends for a special purpose, he never speaks in the first person. His name, even, appears only rarely; and when it does, marginally.[1] The silence is surprising, for it was not the custom for a writer, whether poet, philosopher, or historian, so to efface himself in his work. Hesiod, Heraclitus, Herodotus, all the great figures of the classical period down to and including

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[1]Concerning his absence at Socrates' death, he writes in the Phaedo 59 b, "But Plato was ill, I think." (Rouse translation).

Xenophon, make liberal use of the personal "I" and often place themselves at the very center of their works.

Plato's silence about himself seems to be a powerful testimony to the incomparable status of Socrates in his life. Everything else seems to have been of secondary importance to his encounter with Socrates. This man was more than just a hero to Plato. Growing up in the difficult years when the influence of Athens was waning and the quality of life of the city was deteriorating, Plato saw in Socrates the one firm foundation amidst the disintegration of the old order. With the collapse of the political and social structure that had made Athens great in the Age of Pericles, Socrates alone stood for the intelligence, integrity, and virtue that make men and societies worthy to be praised. In the two crucial tests, when first the democracy and then the oligarchy tried to force him to compromise his convictions, he held fast. So, in Plato's eyes, did he live all his life, remaining faithful to the truth he saw.

So powerful was Socrates' influence upon him that he renounced a budding political career to become the constant companion of his elder hero, believing that only in this way would his life find fulfillment. The words of Alcibiades in Plato's dialog, the Symposium, could well have been uttered by Plato himself: "There is nothing more urgent to me than to become as virtuous as possible. And for this, I believe, no one can be of more decisive help to me than yourself."[1]

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[1] 218 d, as translated in Friedlander, I, 12.

Plato, placing Socrates at the center of his life, placed him also at the center of his works, so that only in the Laws, a late work admittedly compromising what Plato saw to be the principles of Socrates, is Socrates not present; and in most of the dialogs he predominates.

All of the foregoing may be true, however, whether Plato is faithfully reporting Socrates, or simply using him as a mouthpiece for his own ideas. A man may have a hero, and yet misrepresent him to others. Usually this is done uncounsciously, without any thought of malice; and if Plato misrepresented Socrates, it was surely in this way. There was no reason why Plato could not or should not have written in his own name, and indeed his philosophy might have received a better reception if he had. The name of Socrates simply did not carry the kind of prestige and authority that would tempt a man to "use" him as a vehicle for his own thoughts.

From a consideration of Plato's personal relationship to Socrates, the judgment must be that any coloring of Socrates' views was without malice, and would have been seen by Plato as a legitimate extension of the thought of Socrates. Thus Plato would have honestly "seen" in Socrates the germs of such philosophical doctrines as he later developed into fuller form: e.g., the Theory of Ideas, and the immortality of the soul.

His method of presentation

Plato's adopting the form of dialog is highly significant,

and further strengthens the case against his having deliberately distorted the views of Socrates. Necessarily, literature is vastly different from conversation, and at best the written Platonic dialogs can stand in relation to the verbal Socratic dialogs only as art stands in relation to nature. It is a measure of Plato's artistic triumph that, as Friedlander says, "we take what he invented as historical reality."[1] Thus, while the gathering together in one house of the eminent sophists in his dialog Protagoras may never have actually occurred and may only be a literary device, the reader believes that surely it did happen, and just that way. Moreover, in the important issues which the dialog treats, he is not thereby misled.

The fact that Plato writes in dialog, and sets Socrates rather than himself at the center of the scene, may well be his acknowledgment that there exists a necessary relationship between what is said and who says it, between discourse and speaker. The dialogical form is not then a literary whim or artistic device, but a recognition that philosophy is a social undertaking, and cannot be separated either from the process of a common conversation or from the personalities of those involved.

There is admirable integrity, as well as considerable excitement, in Plato's use of a Socrates-centered dialog; and it supports the contention that he did not consciously or

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[1] I, 158.

seriously distort Socrates' views. His faithfulness to the method of Socrates weighs heavier in this respect than any consideration of poetic license he may have exercised in constructing the dialogs. Schanz writes, for instance, that "Socrates did not write poetry in prison any more than Chaerophon consulted the Delphic oracle. Plato merely wishes to imply in the Phaedo that poetry is divinely inspired, as in the Apology that Socrates was sent by God."[1] Even if one could agree with these judgments, which is impossible, the coloring they give to Socrates' life and convictions is relatively minor.

His philosophy

If both the personal relationship of Plato and Socrates and Plato's method of presentation encourage the view that he did not seriously distort the style of life or convictions of Socrates, there remain still questions concerning differences in the philosophical positions of the two men. That there are such differences is apparent. As Plato grew older, his dialogs reflect an increasing dogmatism that is lacking in Socrates. For Plato, the Socratic question finally becomes answerable in words. The issue must be whether or not Plato's answers represent a legitimate extension of Socrates' thought in the direction in which, had he lived to do it, Socrates himself

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[1]"Sokrates als vermeintlicher Dichter," Hermes, XXIX (1894), quoted in Barker Newhall, "Reports," American Journal of Philology, XVI (1895), 520.

would have traveled. Did Plato truly perceive, for example, a Theory of Ideas in Socrates and simply "bring it to birth" within himself, with Socrates acting in effect as a "midwife" even after his death?

The case for this being so centers in the claim that Socrates did not seek to articulate answers to the questions he posed, in the belief that no man can answer a question for another. He knew the answers, but determined not to verbalize them. Rather did he live the answers to his questions, and in this way awaken men to the same answers already in them. His understanding of his mission and of the way in which truth "came" to men precluded his articulating a philosophy.

Plato, unlike Socrates, saw the need for conceptualizing the answers, and so took the answers he saw clearly demonstrated in Socrates' life and gradually set them down in increasingly precise doctrines, while never moving beyond the actual convictions of Socrates without explicitly saying so. Thus Burnet, for example, holds that Socrates learned the Theory of Ideas from the Pythagoreans when he was young, that he believed it, and that Plato in the Republic is presenting Socrates' genuine convictions about the Ideas.[1] He makes the further suggestion that Plato himself came to reject the Theory, and that in fact a late dialog, the Parmenides, where Socrates is not the speaker, may "only be understood

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[1]John Burnet, Platonism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1928), p. 34.

as the renunciation of that theory, at least in its original form, by Plato."[1] It is significant that, as the chronology of the dialogs is commonly reconstructed, Plato never again alludes to the Theory of Ideas, apart from a brief reference from a Pythagorean in the Timaeus.[2]

Such considerations as these establish a strong case for Plato's faithfulness not only to the method but also the convictions of Socrates, except where he clearly indicates otherwise. The important differences reduce then essentially to one, namely that Plato thought it important to conceptualize the answers whereas Socrates did not.

It is possible, on the other hand, to build a quite convincing case against the faithfulness of Plato to Socrates' thought. The very doctrinal bent of Plato, at times becoming a strict dogmatism, hardly seems true to the manner and beliefs of Socrates. Cicero writes that after Socrates' death Plato traveled widely, consulting the Pythagoreans "so as to enrich the treasures of the lessons of Socrates with those parts of Pythagoras' doctrine which Socrates had despised."[3] For many scholars, Plato well-nigh rejected the agnosticism that Socrates called wisdom, and moved finally to as dogmatic, unquesting, and unSocratic a philosophy as could be, as systematic as any pre-Socratic philosophy.

The Apology and the Republic, on this view, are quite contradictory documents. Even if, for example, the Republic

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[1] Ibid. [2] 51 c ff. [3] Cicero De Finibus v. 29.

correctly presents a Socratic Theory of Ideas, it is difficult to picture as coming from Socrates the conviction that the ideal state is an enlightened totalitarianism in which philosophy is simply not to be the concern of the large majority of citizens. Whereas the Socrates of the Apology sees a mission to bring as many men as he can to self-awareness and moral autonomy, the Socrates of the Republic discourages the mass of men from too much self-reflection. Cornford observes in reference to this that there are two ways to approach an ideal society: "One is to start with the moral reformation of the individual, and then to imagine a society consisting of perfect individuals. . . . The other is to take human nature as we find it, and to construct a social order that will make the best of it as it is and as it seems likely to remain."[1] Socrates represents the first approach, and Plato the second; and for Plato to put the articulation of the second into the mouth of Socrates can be nothing more than irresponsible, if not deliberate, distortion.

From these brief considerations, it appears evident that a strong case can be made for and also against Plato's representation of Socrates' thought. That Plato wanted fairly to "speak the mind" of Socrates seems a tenable hypothesis. Yet it is certain too that as acute a thinker as he was could not have lived fifty years of his life without having an original thought of his own, so that even the earlier dialogs

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[1]The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays (Cambridge: The University Press, 1950), p. 59.

cannot be assumed to be free from views of his own. Whether he thought them to be legitimate extensions of Socrates' thought is really beside the point. Was he in fact true to the historical Socrates? The question admits of no final answer.

Two observations, however, are significant. The first is that there is an inevitable division in philosophy between what George Bastide calls a "philosophy of vocation" and a "philosophy of tradition."[1] Socrates represents the one, and Plato the other. Perfect correspondence there could not be, and the fact that Plato in his relationship to Socrates and in his manner of presentation seems to want to be faithful to Socrates, encourages the conclusion that the "benefit of the doubt" ought to go on the side of trusting his account of Socrates, except where the contradition is so obvious as to render that impossible.

The second observation is with specific reference to the daimonion. Between the agnostic Socrates of the Apology and the more doctrinal Socrates of the Republic there seems not to be a significant difference in the way the daimonion is conceived and regarded. It is spoken of naturally and with respect throughout the dialogs. Plato seems neither to exaggerate its importance as the dialogs progress, nor to depreciate it. It is fair to say that if Plato has distorted Socrates' view of, say, the state, that he has not done so to

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[1]Cited by Sauvage, p. 162.

anywhere near such an extent with the daimonion. The following discussion of Plato's demonology will be seen to confirm this conclusion.

His demonology

Until rather recently, modern interpreters of Plato have tended to discount any belief he may have had in daimons and the daimonic, and the strength of these beliefs. This is now seen to be unwarranted, and increasing attention is being paid to the demonology that is evident in Plato's dialogs. As Friedlander asks, "How are we justified in regarding as mere play what is said about daimons if we consider the physical and psychological 'doctrines' of the Timaeus, or the 'philosophy of language' of the Cratylus, as integral parts of Plato's system? By the mere fact that we have a contemporary science of nature and language, but none of daimons?"[1] If what Plato says about daimons is in some sense only "play," it is nevertheless--like all "play" in Plato's dialogs--of a deeply serious nature.

As any man in fifth century Greece, Plato, grew up within a culture where there was a traditional belief in daimons. While there was no one consistent understanding of who the daimons were, or how they were linked with men, there was no question but that they did exist and did affect men. Plato inherited a demonology; and, while he modified it as time went on, he never discarded it. The dialogs, from the

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[1] I, 32.

Apology to the Laws, show abundant reference to daimons. It is clear that the Hesiodic account of daimons as the spirits of men of a golden age had an attraction for Plato. The Cratylus reflects this,[1] as does the Republic,[2] where there is the further suggestion that the good rulers upon earth will at death themselves become daimons.[3]

There is however in Plato a second conception of daimons too, not as the spirits of men who have died, but as beings intermediate between the gods and men for all time, who function to bind the two realms together, the divine and the human. The dialogs Phaedo, Symposium, and Timaeus reflect this understanding of the daimons, more akin to the angels of the Hebrews than to spirits of the departed. Though there is not a strict consistency among these dialogs, the daimons function to lead men to, through, and away from life. In the Timaeus, where Plato comes the closest to rationalizing a belief in daimons, every man receives a daimon whose seat is in man's head. The daimon is a divine element to be cultivated, and in effect is reverently related to human reason.[4]

While in this late dialog the daimon becomes philosophically almost respectable, such is not the case through most of the period of Plato's writing. Accordingly, when he wants to talk about the daimons, he retains the Socratic myths. The Myth of Diotima in the Symposium, the Myth of Er

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[1] 397 e.

[2] 468 e.

[3] 540 b.

[4] 90 a.

in the Republic, the Myth of the Soul in the Phaedo, these are Plato's acknowledgment, as well as Socrates', that there are areas of divine and human experience that cannot be reduced to logical concepts, but which nonetheless are important to understand as far as possible.

In keeping with his use of Socratic myth, Plato is nowhere dogmatic in his beliefs about daimons. As much as he mentions them, he does not anywhere give strict definition either as to their nature or their dealings with men. Besides the two different "doctrines" of daimons already cited, he seems in the Statesman virtually to equate the daimons with the gods.[1] In sum, he shared the vague and unsystematic notions of his contemporaries. Doubtless the Timaeus reflects his restlessness with the popular and his own conceptions, and presents his best--late and only--attempt to demythologize the daimons.

Certainly it is fair to conclude that, in the writing of the dialogs generally, Plato was concerned neither to develop a consistent demonology nor to discount altogether the daimonic. This being so, what he says about Socrates' daimonion may be assumed true to what Socrates himself said about it.

Summary

The effect of Plato's personal philosophy and biases upon his presentation of Socrates' life and thought is an

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[1] 271 d.

open question, finally. That he colored at least somewhat the facts about Socrates is inevitable. How much he did so, and whether at any point he deliberately did so, are important but unsolved issues. Shorey concludes that the Platonic Socrates and the historical Socrates "constitute a double star which not even the spectrum analysis of the latest philology can resolve."[1]

Beyond that admission, however, lie certain probabilities that suggest a general attitude of trusting the evidence of Plato. First of all, it is obvious that Socrates exerted a powerful influence upon Plato, and in effect transformed his life. He was the young man's hero and example, attracting him by the force of his magnetic personality and demonstrating the personal integrity and virtue that Plato saw to be the only true fulfillment in human life. Shorey speaks of a "four-fold Platonic gospel of Socrates,"[2] and truly Plato did regard the life and thought of Socrates as "good news" to be shared with others. He would have had no desire deliberately to misrepresent him or distort his views. Rather, the reverse would be true. And certain it is that Plato could no more have invented the Socrates of the dialogs than Luke could have invented the Jesus of his gospel.

Plato's manner of presentation, in the form of the dialog, gives further confirmation to his desire to present an accurate picture of Socrates and his thought. It was not

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[1] p. 11.

[2] p. 15.

a literary choice but a philosophical necessity that led Plato to use the Socrates-centered dialog. The man and his method are indispensable to his thought, and what he said cannot be said apart from the dialectical context. Plato's realization that this is so strengthens the trustworthiness of his account.

With respect to differences in the philosophical views of the two men, it is certain that Plato developed a doctrinal bent and specific doctrines that were absent in Socrates. It may be questioned whether, in later life, Plato would have regarded Socrates as any longer the ideal philosopher. More likely the ideal philosopher by then would have been an Anaxagoras who would give proper place to the nous;[1] e.g., a systematic philosopher who made the human reason central in his system. But while it is almost impossible to reconcile Plato's political philosophy of enlightened totalitarianism with Socrates' mission to bring every man to self-awareness and self-control, the differences at other points are not nearly so great. Further, the fact that Socrates tends to become less predominant in the later dialogs is an indication that Plato was being fairly careful not to attribute his own views to him. This fact counters the recent provocative suggestion of Ludwig Edelstein that many of the views attributed to Socrates were Plato's alone, and that the subterfuge was deliberate, "the 'voluntary lie' that the good man has the

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[1]Greek for "mind" or "reason."

courage to tell to himself as well as to others," reminding him and them of the fact that "what men consider their most personal and precious accomplishment is least theirs."[1] Rather than using the technique of the "voluntary lie," Plato put his own unSocratic views forward through other men in the dialogs.

Finally, relative to views on daimons and the daimonic, there appears to be little difference between Socrates and Plato. Both accept an implicit demonology, while being careful not to dogmatize on it. Men experience the divine in life, and their experience cannot be rationalized into the ordinary categories of the mind and the senses. Myth is used to call attention to the importance and at the same time the incomprehensibility of such experience. There is room within the total experience of man, both for Socrates and Plato, for such a phenomenon as the daimonion.

In sum, the coloring which Plato variously gives to various aspects of the life and thought of Socrates is not such as seriously to challenge the trustworthiness of what he says about Socrates' daimonion.

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[1]"Platonic Anonymity," American Journal of Philology, LXXXIII (1962), 22.

CHAPTER V

THE DAIMONION IN XENOPHON AND OTHER PRIMARY SOURCES

Aside from the numerous references to Socrates' daimonion in the eight dialogs of Plato previously considered, there are relatively few primary sources to give information and insight concerning the daimonion and its effects. Chief among them are three writings attributed to Xenophon, on which major focus will fall within this chapter. In no work of either Aristophanes or Aeschines, who with Plato and Xenophon are regarded as the principal contemporary sources for Socrates, is there even a mention of the daimonion. The only other primary references to the daimonion come from Cicero and Plutarch, who record oral traditions which are at the least 350 years old by the time of their being written. In short, once past Plato and Xenophon, the gleanings from primary sources are few, noncontemporary, and of questionable value.

Precisely for this reason, however, a careful look needs to be directed to each potential further source of information about the daimonion. The pattern of the chapter, accordingly, will be to consider first the evidence from Xenophon and attempt, as for Plato, an assessment of how far

Xenophon's own views and purposes might have colored his presentation. Then attention will shift to Aristophanes and Aeschines, to ascertain the significance of their lack of mention of the daimonion. Finally, the primary material from Cicero and Plutarch will be reviewed and evaluated to see what if any additional insight emerges.

The Daimonion in Xenophon

Three of the writings attributed to Xenophon make specific mention of the daimonion of Socrates. Of eight literal uses of the Greek daimonion, five are in the Memorabilia, one in the Symposium, and two in the Apology. The general procedure for presenting the references will be as for the Platonic dialogs. Following a brief introductory word on the work and a statement as to its authenticity, the relevant passages will be excerpted and set down within the current discussion. Key words will be underlined, and the Greek term and alternate translations noted, so that maximum insight can be gained.

The Memorabilia

Some six or seven years after the death of Socrates, a well-known sophist named Polycrates, provoked at a growing "cult" of Socrates, published an attack upon his memory, casting it into the form of the accusation speech supposedly delivered by Anytus, one of the three prosecutors at the trial. Xenophon, living away from Athens, read the attack and resolved

to counter it with a reply of his own. The first two chapters of the first book of the Memorabilia constitute this reply, and include the major passage citing the daimonion.

Another seven or eight years after that, at about 385 B.C., Xenophon determined to compose a series of memoirs of Socrates that would illustrate the truth of his earlier claims about Socrates' innocence and virtue. He had by then read the dialogs that Plato, Antisthenes, and others had written; and he likewise chose to adopt the dialogic form for portions, but not all, of his work. The Memorabilia was neither conceived nor executed all at once, but is better understood as a series of somewhat separate writings, with the common purpose of portraying Socrates as one who in Xenophon's own words "seemed to deserve honor rather than death at the hands of the State."[1] Its genuineness is undisputed.

The specific references to the daimonion occur in two passages at the beginning and end of the Memorabilia. An additional passage bearing on the divine guidance Socrates was known to receive is also cited. The translation is that of E. C. Marchant:

> i. 1. 2 He offered sacrifices constantly, and made no secret of it, now in his home, now at the altars of the state temples, and he made use of divination with as little secrecy. Indeed it had become notorious that Socrates claimed to be guided by "the deity":[2] it was out of this claim, I think,

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[1] Memorabilia i. 2. 62.

[2] Greek daimonion: "divinity" (Cornford, Watson); "genius" (Ashley).

that the charge of bringing in strange deities
3 arose. He was no more bringing in anything strange than are other believers in divination, who rely on augury, oracles, coincidences and sacrifices. . . . They are the instruments by which the gods make this known; and that was Socrates' belief too. Only, whereas most men
4 say that the birds or the folks they meet dissuade or encourage them, Socrates said what he meant: for he said that the deity[1] gave him a sign. Many of his companions were counseled by him to do this or not to do that in accordance with the warnings of the deity:[2] and those who
5 followed his advice prospered, and those who rejected it had cause for regret.

. . . . . .

iv. 3. 12 "Truly, Socrates, it does appear that the gods[3] devote much care to man. . . . With you, Socrates, they seem to deal even more friendly than with other men, if it is true that, even unasked, they warn you by signs what to do and what not to do."[4]

. . . . . .

iv. 8. 1 As for his claim that he was forewarned by "the deity"[5] what he ought to do and what not to do, some may think that it must have been a delusion because he was condemned to death. But they should remember two facts. First, he had already reached such an age, that had he not died then, death must have come to him soon after. Secondly, he escaped the most irksome stage of life and the inevitable dimunition of mental powers, and instead won glory by the moral strength revealed in the wonderful honesty and frankness and probity of his defense, and in the equanimity and manliness with which he bore the
5 sentence of death. . . . "Don't you see, Socrates, that the juries in our courts are apt to be misled by argument, so that they often put the innocent to death, and acquit the guilty?" "Ah yes,

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[1]Greek daimonion: "divine voice" (Cornford); "divinity" (Watson); "genius" (Ashley).

[2]As at n. 3.

[3]Greek theoi: "gods" (Cornford, Watson, Ashley).

[4]Xenophon is here quoting Euthydemus.

[5]Greek daimonion: "divinity" (Cornford, Watson); "genius" (Ashley).

> Hermogenes, but when I did try to think out my defense to the jury, the deity[1] at once resisted."[2]

The picture of the daimonion that emerges from the Memorabilia is of a private little oracle belonging only to Socrates, and giving to him and to his friends rather random counsel, such as to do one thing and refrain from another. The oracle does not only inhibit, but may also encourage a particular course of action. Socrates' possession of the daimonion is not an especially unusual phenomenon, but seems rather to be but an example of similar oracles given to other men. The difference lies in the way Socrates experiences his oracle; e.g., directly as "the deity" instead of through birds, coincidences, etc.

The daimonion is clearly conceived more as a separate god than as a neuter voice or sign. Referring to the only instance here cited where a definite effect of the daimonion is to be observed, it is "the deity" that prohibits his defense before the jury. Certainly, with respect to the proper Athenian religion, the daimonion is an orthodox medium and means of divine revelation, a special gift granted to Socrates by the same gods whom he regularly worships in all the approved and customary ways as well.

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[1]Greek daimonion: "divinity" (Cornford); "daimon" (Watson); "genius" (Ashley).

[2]E. G. Marchant (trans.), Memorabilia and Oeconomicus (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1923).

The Symposium

Xenophon's translator regards the Symposium as "an attempt to sketch the revered master, Socrates, in one of his times of social relaxation and enjoyment."[1] It is the imaginative account of an actual evening forty years previously, just after the conclusion of the Pan-Athenaic games, an annual festival of athletic and musical competitions and a stately parade. Callias invites Socrates and his friends to a gala holiday banquet, and the mood is relaxed and informal throughout. Xenophon ably reconstructs the spirit of the evening, and probably reasonably well what actually transpired, in the conviction that "to my mind it is worthwhile to relate not only the serious acts of great and good men but also what they do in their lighter moods."[2] By most, the dialog is regarded as genuine. Only an occasional scholar, such as Jowett,[3] has called it into question.

There is but one reference to the daimonion, coming in a conversation between Socrates and Antisthenes, when Antisthenes responds to Socrates' pretended rebuff of his protestation of love. O. J. Todd supplies the translation:

viii. 3 "Are you the only person, Antisthenes, in love with no one?"

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[1]O. J. Todd (trans.), Anabasis VI-VII and Symposium and Apology (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1922), p. 376.

[2]Symposium i. 1.

[3]Cited by H. G. Dakyns (trans.), The Works of Xenophon (4 vols., London: Macmillan Co., 1897), III, lxviii.

> 4 "No, by Heaven!" replied he; "I am madly in love--with you." And Socrates, banteringly, pretending to be coquettish, said: "Don't pester me just now; I am engaged in other business, as you see." "How transparent you are, sir, procurer
> 5 of your own charms," Antisthenes rejoined, "in always doing something like this; at one time you refuse me audience on the pretext of your divine sign,[1] at another time because you have some other purpose in mind."[2]

It appears here that Socrates did not hesitate to mention his daimonion, that in fact he spoke of it quite openly and naturally, even to explain to another why it is that he cannot associate with him.

The Apology

The purpose in the Apology is to reconstruct Socrates' defense at his trial, with particular emphasis on the fact that Socrates believed that it was time for him to die. Xenophon is concerned to establish a common-sense reason for Socrates' conduct of his defense, and he finds this reason in Socrates' decision to die then rather than suffer the disabilities of old age. Platonic scholars, as already noted, regard this as a "ludicrous suggestion,"[3] but it was surely the conviction of Xenophon. There is no mention in the work of any belief that Socrates had in immortality.

In content the Apology is a somewhat expanded version

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[1]Greek daimonion: "familiar oracle" (Dakyns); "daimon" (Watson, Welwood).

[2]Todd (trans.), Anabasis VI-VII and Symposium and Apology.

[3]Taylor, Socrates, p. 116.

of what Xenophon includes in the eighth chapter of the fourth book of the Memorabilia. The likelihood is that, if the Apology is genuine, Xenophon wrote it quite early and then later, when arranging material for the Memorabilia, modified it for inclusion there. One of the chief translators of Xenophon, Dakyns, regards this chapter eight as "a refined excerpt from the Apology."[1] Fifty years ago many scholars saw the Apology as spurious, but the judgment today is that while it is an inferior work, it is genuine; and very possibly it may be the earliest of Xenophon's writings.[2] Certainly it does not represent Xenophon at his best; and it is especially difficult to believe either that Socrates would have prophesied that the son of Anytus would become depraved,[3] or that Xenophon would have included such a note in his work.

In addition to the two references to the daimonion, an intermediate passage is cited, establishing the close link between the daimonion and the gods. Todd is again the translator:

> 5 "I have tried twice already to meditate on my
> 6 defense, but my divine sign[4] interposes. . . .
> Perhaps God in his kindness is taking my part
> and securing me the opportunity of ending my life

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[1]Dakyns (trans.), The Works of Xenophon, III, xlv.

[2]Guy Thompson Griffith, "Xenophon," Encyclopaedia Britannica, XXIII (1966), 839.

[3]Apology 31.

[4]Greek daimonion: "divinity" (Dakyns); "divine admonition" (Watson).

now not only in season but also in the way that is easiest."

. . . . . .

8 "It was with good reason that the gods[1] opposed my studying up my speech at the time when we held that by fair means or foul we must find some plea that would effect my acquittal."

. . . . . .

12 "As for introducing 'new divinities,'[2] how could I be guilty of that merely in asserting that a voice of God is made manifest to me indicating my duty? Surely those who take their omens from the cries of birds and the utterances of men form their judgments on 'voices.' . . .
13 But more than that, in regard to God's foreknowledge of the future and his forewarning thereof to whomsoever he will, these are the same terms, I assert, that all men use, and this is their belief. The only difference between them and me is that whereas they call the sources of their forewarning 'birds,' 'utterances,' 'chance meetings,' 'prophets,' I call mine a 'divine' thing,[3] and I think that in using such a term I am speaking with more truth and deeper religious feeling.
14 . . . I have revealed to many of my friends the counsels which God has given me, and in no instance has the event shown that I was mistaken."[4,5]

The picture of the daimonion here is of an oracle that is infallible, and which is either given by God ("my divine sign") or even the same as God (note the correspondence in 13-14, where Socrates calls the source of his forewarning "a 'divine' thing" and then also "God"). The advice given by the

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[1]Greek theoi: "gods" (Dakyns, Watson).

[2]Greek daimonia.

[3]Greek daimonion: "divinity" (Dakyns); "divine manifestation" (Watson).

[4]Notice the close similarity to the Memorabilia i. 1. 2-5--supra, p. 118.

[5]Todd (trans.), Anabasis VI-VII and Symposium and Apology.

daimonion, besides being infallible, is also--at least for Socrates himself--always in the long run reasonable. The daimonion acts "with good reason." Socrates is not surprised to discover a rational explanation for the prohibition of a formal defense. Similarly, he is ready to assume that the daimonion acts always in his best interests.

Summary

From the foregoing writings of Xenophon, a picture of Socrates' daimonion emerges in which the chief feature is the naturalness and orthodoxy of this source and means of divine revelation. That Socrates should receive special guidance from "the deity" is an indication not of his variance from sound and proper religion, but of his being favored by the gods of Athens. He spoke of his daimonion openly and without hesitation, for "the deity" and the effects differed from more traditional sources and forms of divine revelation only in the internal way he experienced them.

Further, while there is no perfect consistency in this, the daimonion is here conceived more nearly as a separate god or daimon than as a neuter voice or "sign" of a god. Whereas the translators of Plato render the Greek daimonion most often as a neuter noun (e.g., "divine warning"), the translators of Xenophon feel the sense is better obtained by the phrase "the deity."

Xenophon stresses the conviction of Socrates that while in many matters "men are permitted by the gods to decide for

themselves by study,"[1] and that they should do so, there are other issues which human reasoning cannot grasp. On these matters, writes Xenophon, Socrates "despised all human wisdom in comparison with the counsel given by the gods."[2] Here the daimonion was the source of knowledge, for Socrates and also for others, both to encourage or to discourage a proposed relationship or course of action. The counsel given was infallible, and at least for Socrates always reasonable and in his best interests.

The effect of Xenophon's own views

To assess the degree to which Xenophon may have colored his presentation of Socrates' daimonion, it will be helpful to begin with a brief sketch of his life and major interests. He was a contemporary of Plato, born in 430 B.C., and so some forty years younger than Socrates. He was the son of Gryllus, a wealthy and well-born Athenian, and received the education reserved for those who had the opportunity and resource, as well as the inclination, for it. History regards him primarily as a writer and chronicler of the events of his time. To one commentator, "he gives the impression of a man of action and a country gentleman who by some accident wrote books."[3]

Clearly the two major influences on his life were Socrates and war. His early association with Socrates left him with a great admiration for the man, and it was to defend

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[1] Memorabilia i. 1. 9. [2] Ibid. i. 3. 4.

[3] Guy Thompson Griffith, "Xenophon," Encyclopaedia Britannica, XXIII (1966), 838.

his memory that he wrote the Memorabilia and others of his works. His participation in the expedition of Cyrus resulted in the experiences which prompted his historical writings, and also in his living away from Athens for the period 401-365 B.C. It was during this time, while he was in Scillus, that he did his writing. He wrote four major works, including the series of memoirs of Socrates now known as the Memorabilia, and three histories: the Anabasis, the Cyropaedia, and the Hellenica. In himself Xenophon was a pious, orthodox, somewhat old-fashioned individual. He lauded the traditional religion of Athens, and conceived sound citizenship to be equivalent with loyalty to the conventions and customs of the city.

By scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Xenophon is regarded as a more trustworthy source for the historical Socrates than is Plato. Whereas Plato is suspected of using Socrates as a mask for his own philosophy, Xenophon is seen to be non-philosophical in interest or ability; and this naivete is generally thought to qualify him more highly as an accurate biographer. So Grote believes that "it is to him that we owe, in great part, such knowledge as we possess of the real Socrates."[1] Jackson and Zeller, other eminent nineteenth century Socratic scholars, concur in such a judgment.

More recently, however, question has been raised whether a non-philosophic temperament does in fact qualify a

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[1]Grote, III, 562.

man to understand, more adequately than another philosopher, the life and thought of a Socrates. Further, it has been established that Xenophon is far from a trustworthy historian. Often he writes with an apologetic purpose which leads him to color events in keeping with his own biases.

As with his history, so with his memoirs of Socrates. Always it has been recognized that Xenophon wrote of Socrates in an apologetic vein, seeking to justify his early teacher and friend in the eyes of men. What is now admitted is that, to a greater degree than earlier thought, Xenophon may have purposely misrepresented the historical Socrates, so that he is actually a less trustworthy source for Socrates than is Plato. Reference has already been made to his citing as the reason for Socrates' conduct at the trial his belief that it was time for him to die and so avoid the disabilities of old age, a conviction out of harmony with the general tenor of his life and thought. And quite obviously Xenophon's entire defense of Socrates fails by being too successful. Were Socrates the man Xenophon makes him out to be, he need never have drunk the hemlock:

> I have described him as he was: so religious that he did nothing without counsel from the gods; so just that he did no injury, however small, to any man, but conferred the greatest benefits on all who dealt with him; so self-controlled that he never chose the pleasanter rather than the better course; so wise that he was unerring in his judgment of the better and the worse. . . . To me then he seemed to be all that a truly good and happy man must be.[1]

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[1] Memorabilia iv. 8. 11.

Specifically, this apologetic purpose means that Xenophon had to suppress any originality or unique feature in Socrates, and certainly the daimonion would be one such. It would be essential for Xenophon to say about the daimonion precisely what he does say: that this source and means of divine revelation is orthodox and fitting, and that it differs not at all from the usual forms of revelation except in Socrates' experiencing it internally.

It is Xenophon's "whitewash" of Socrates that leads to the conclusion that he cannot be taken as too trustworthy a source, and especially as regards the daimonion. If it were true that the daimonion was a unique, unorthodox manifestation of the god(s) to Socrates alone, different more than in degree from the reading of entrails and the observing of birds, Xenophon could not have said so.

Other Contemporary Sources: Aristophanes and Aeschines

Beyond Plato and Xenophon, the only other two contemporaries of Socrates who can be regarded as important primary sources for a study of his life and thought are Aristophanes and Aeschines.[1] Significantly, in no work of either man is there even a mention of the daimonion. Though both were considerably younger than Socrates, both knew him well and were often in his company. Yet they were silent with respect to the daimonion. To draw out the implications of

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[1]Socrates had been dead for a few more than thirty years when Aristotle first came to Athens.

this silence, the discussion turns briefly to these two men.

Aristophanes

The significance of Aristophanes for Socratic studies lies chiefly in the fact that his comedy, the Clouds, is the only document dealing with Socrates which dates from a time before his trial and death.[1] Aristophanes' comedy was produced in 423 B.C., when he was but twenty-two years of age. Already brilliant as a youth, he shows an irresistible imagination, an amazing way with words, and a rapier wit that combines humorous and fanciful exaggeration with the most virulent abuse. A comic poet, his art was not to tell the truth but to distort it; and his skill has seldom been matched.

In the Clouds, he caricatures Socrates as representative of the worst in the Ionian natural science and sophism of the day. By so doing, he only confirmed the suspicion that Athens already held regarding Socrates. It took more discrimination than most men had to separate Socrates from the general run of sophists. The Socrates of Aristophanes personifies the dangerous alliance of physical science with spiritism which was perverting Athens and causing all its political and economic misfortunes. Accordingly, the Clouds ridicules and vilifies Socrates as the leader of a rationalistic movement filled with the gravest peril to the established morality and religion of Athens. Salvation, for all

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[1]Taylor, Socrates, p. 13.

"loyal" Athenians, lay only in adherence to the traditions of the past. The true Socrates, as has already been noted,[1] did in fact pose a fundamental challenge to the stability and even the existence of the city. Aristophanes, representing Athenian conservatism, attacks him with all the force at his command.

So successful was Aristophanes' caricature of Socrates that many scholars hold that he must bear no small share of the guilt for the verdict of 399 B.C., though it came twenty-four years later. The "older false accusations of my old accusers,"[2] which Socrates claims in Plato's Apology really constitute the charge against him, are precisely those which Aristophanes planted in the minds of two generations of Athenians.[3]

Despite the force and vigor of Aristophanes' attack on Socrates, it is probable that the two men were personal friends and bore each other no ill will, though doubtless they disagreed on major issues. Plato's assumption in the Symposium, which recounts a festive evening in the year 415 B.C., is that the two are on good terms; and there seems no reason to doubt this. Even where Socrates names (by indirection) Aristophanes

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[1] Supra, pp. 71-72.

[2] Plato Apology 18 a. In 18 c Socrates says of his old accusers: "The most preposterous thing of all is that I do not even know their names: I cannot tell you who they are except when one happens to be a comic poet."

[3] Ibid. 18 b, where he names the old charges as being that he is one "who speculates about the heavens, who investigates things that are beneath the earth, and who can make the worse argument appear the stronger."

as one of his old accusers, he appears to separate him from the others who operated "from motives of resentment and prejudice."[1] Evidently the burlesque of Socrates in the Clouds, though its effects were far-reaching, was meant primarily in good fun. Socrates afforded an excellent subject for a topical comedy, and Aristophanes took it up.

This combination of a close personal acquaintance with Aristophanes' obvious purpose of caricaturing Socrates is instructive regarding the daimonion. It is significant that it is not included in the caricature. It may mean that Aristophanes, when at twenty-two he wrote the Clouds, did not yet know of Socrates' daimonion, which indicates that it was not so prominent a personal characteristic or force in Socrates' life as might be thought. It may mean, too, that there was nothing unusual enough about it to prompt its inclusion in the burlesque. Most likely he did know of the daimonion, but felt that it was neither important enough to Socrates' way of life nor notorious enough to warrant his attention.

Clearly, Aristophanes, and presumably Athens along with him, did not regard the daimonion as a new divinity or private god of Socrates alone. One of the charges he levels against Socrates in the Clouds is that he is introducing new divinities;[2] and if it was even suspected that the daimonion was a new god, he would have exploited it for all it was

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[1] Ibid. 18 d.

[2] Clouds 250-270.

worth.[1] Aristophanes' omission of the daimonion is thus extremely significant in assessing its nature, its importance, and its effects.

Aeschines

The fourth contemporary of Socrates who forms a primary source for the study of his life and thought is Aeschines of Sphettus. He was one of the young companions of Socrates, as Plato attests in the Apology,[2] and the only one of the four writers to be present at Socrates' death.[3] Plato has no more to say of him than this, and Xenophon mentions him not at all. Diogenes Laertius records that he was poor, that he later traveled to Syracuse to profit by the temporary interest of Dionysius II in philosophy, that he founded no school of his own, and that he did not have a distinctive personal philosophy of his own.[4]

From the last-mentioned fact, it might be surmised that Aeschines would provide a trustworthy source for Socrates. With no philosophic axe to grind, what he says might reasonably be assumed to be fairly accurate. Portions of seven writings of Aeschines survive in part, and three in substantial part: the Alcibiades, the Aspasia, and the Telauges. It would be these three that could provide a "control" on the primary

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[1]John Burnet, Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato (London: Macmillan Co., 1953), pp. 184-85.

[2]33 e.

[3]Plato, Phaedo 59 b.

[4]Lives . . . i. 2. 60-64.

sources previously considered. They are each of the form that Aeschines customarily adopted, not a dialog but rather a narrated drama, with Socrates as the narrator.

The dramas in general confirm the Platonic portrait of Socrates: a man fond of conversation, of a widespread reputation, familiar with the circle of Pericles, of a passionate nature, exercising a marked influence on the youthful Alcibiades, and both appreciative and critical of Orphic and Pythagorean doctrine and practice.[1]

There is no mention by Aeschines of the daimonion, providing a further argument from silence to the effect that it was not considered an outstanding feature of Socrates' personality, or a prominent force upon his life and the lives of others.

Noncontemporary Sources: Cicero and Plutarch

Additional primary material for a study of Socrates' daimonion is recorded in the writings of Cicero (106-43 B.C.) and Plutarch (46-120 A.D.). Instances of the daimonion's operation and effects are cited which do not appear in any earlier work. This final section of the chapter will simply excerpt the relevant passages from Cicero and Plutarch, with a minimum of attention to the writers themselves, since they will be considered in the next chapter. This will then complete the presentation of all the primary references to the

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[1]A. E. Taylor, Philosophical Studies (London: Macmillan Co., 1934), pp. 1-27.

daimonion of Socrates.

Cicero

It is in Cicero's work On Divination, written at about the year 44 B.C., that two primary references to Socrates' daimonion occur. Both are given as illustrations in a section, to be treated more fully in the following chapter, where Cicero is discussing the nature and effects of the daimonion. Besides the two citations, Cicero's further note about a collection of the divine warnings Socrates received is also excerpted:

> i. 123 It is also related of Socrates that one day he saw his friend Crito with a bandage on his eye. "What's the matter, Crito?" he inquired. "As I was walking in the country the branch of a tree, which had been bent, was released and struck me in the eye." "Of course, said Socrates, "for, after I had had divine warning,[1] as usual, and tried to call you back, you did not heed. It is also related of him that after the unfortunate battle was fought at Delium under the command of Laches, he was fleeing in company with his commander, when they came to a place where three roads met. Upon his refusal to take the road that the others had chosen he was asked the reason and replied: "The god[2] prevents me." Those who fled by the other road fell in with the enemy's cavalry. Antipater has gathered a mass of remarkable premonitions received by Socrates, but I shall pass them by, for you know them and it is
> 124 useless for me to recount them.[3]

The picture of the daimonion that emerges here is similar to that given by Xenophon and the writer of the Theages,

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[1]Latin praesagitione divina. [2]Latin deo.

[3]William Armistead Falconer (trans.), De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1953).

in that it not only warns Socrates but also his friends away from a course of action that would be harmful to them. As reflected here, however, it is only inhibitory in operation. Further, the daimonion here is not itself understood to be a god, but rather it is conceived as the "divine warning" from "the god."

Plutarch

In the dialog commonly called On the Genius of Socrates, Plutarch describes an expedition that took place more than 450 years previously. His reconstruction is obviously only in part historical, though it may fairly be claimed to be close both in fact and spirit to the real event.

Within the dialog, there are several interludes in the action where the discussion turns to the daimonion of Socrates. Examples of its occurrence are cited, and a variety of opinions expressed as to its true nature. Most of these references may be dismissed as not being in fact primary sources. They are better evaluated as Plutarch's own discussion and definition of the daimonion, and as such they will be considered in the following chapter.

Two mentions of the daimonion, however, may be historically factual; for they refer to public occasions when a number of people apparently observed its effects. If Plutarch were inventing the references, it is doubtful that he would have set them in so public a context, virtually inviting the question as to why these incidents had never before been

mentioned. In the likelihood, therefore, that these examples are valid recollections of actual historical events, they are considered here as primary sources for the daimonion.

Further, an additional passage is excerpted, which refers to an oracle given to Socrates' father when Socrates was a boy. Again, it seems unlikely that Plutarch would have wanted to invent such a story. More probably, the reference is based on a persisting oral tradition about Socrates.

Translations of the three passages from Plutarch's dialog, On the Genius of Socrates, follow. The speakers are, respectively, Theocritus, Polymnis, and Capheisias:

580 d "I was myself present . . . when Socrates, as you remember, Simmias, was going up to the Symbolum and the house of Andocides, asking some questions as he walked and playfully cross-examining Euthyphro. Suddenly he stopped and closed his lips tightly and was wrapped in thought for some
e time. Then he turned back and took the way through the Trunkmakers' Street, and tried to recall those of our friends who were already in advance, saying that the Sign[1] was upon him. Most of them turned in a body, among whom was I, keeping close to Euthyphro. But some young members of the party, no doubt to put the Sign of Socrates to the test, held on. . . . Now as they were going through the street of the Statuaries near the Law Courts, they were met by a whole herd of swine loaded with mud and hustling one another by press
f of numbers. There was no getting out of the way; on they charged, upsetting some, bespattering others. At any rate, Charillus came home with his clothes full of mud and his legs too, so that we always laugh when we remember Socrates and his Sign, and wonder that this divine presence of his should never fail him or forget."

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[1]The word "Sign" as it appears five times in these excerpted passages is in each case a translation of the Greek daimonion.

581 d "I hear also that he foretold to some of his friends the disaster which befell the power of Athens in Sicily. At a still earlier time, Pyrilampes, the son of Antiphon, when taken prisoner in the pursuit near Delium, after having received from us a javelin wound, as soon as he had heard from those who had arrived from Athens to arrange the truce that Socrates had returned home in safety by The Gullies with Alcibiades and
e Laches, often called upon him by name, and often on friends and comrades of his own who had fled with him by way of Parnes, and been slain by our cavalry; they had disobeyed the Sign of Socrates, he said, in turning from the battle by a different way instead of following his lead. This, I think, Simmias too must have heard." "Often," said Simmias, "and from many persons. For there was no little noise at Athens about the Sign of Socrates in consequence."

. . . . . .

589 e "They do not see the cause, their own inner tunelessness and discord, from which Socrates our friend had been set free, as the oracle given to his father when he was yet a boy declared. For it bade him allow his son to do whatever came into his mind; not to force nor direct his goings, but to let his impulse have free play, only to pray for him to Zeus Agoraios and to the Muses, but for all else not to meddle with Socrates;
f meaning no doubt that he had within him a guide for his life who was better than ten thousand teachers and directors."[1]

From the first two of the above references, the concept of Socrates' daimonion is, as in Cicero, very similar to that given by Xenophon and the writer of the Theages. The detour through the Trunkmakers' Street and the retreat through The Gullies[2] are occasioned by monitions Socrates receives from his daimonion, a "Sign" that unfailingly and infallibly

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[1]A. O. Prickard (trans.), Selected Essays of Plutarch (2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1918), II.

[2]Note that this is the same incident that Cicero describes.

warns Socrates and his friends against unforseeable danger. The examples show that his reliance on his daimonion was well known, and that it caused "no little noise at Athens." The third reference reinforces the mention by Socrates in the Apology of Plato that the daimonion had been with him from the time he was a child.[1]

With these final citations, the two chapters presenting the primary references to Socrates' daimonion come to a close. Adding to the abundant evidence of the daimonion in the dialogs of Plato, the current chapter has noted further primary sources for the daimonion in the writings of Xenophon, Cicero, and Plutarch. In addition, the silence of Aristophanes and Aeschines, the other major contemporary sources for Socrates, has been assessed to see what significance there is in their lack of any mention of the daimonion.

The discussion now turns to its next major phase, a review of how scholars through the ages have regarded the daimonion, how they have defined it, how they have understood it to contradict or complement Socrates' rational nature. For convenience, the presentation divides into three chapters, considering in succession the development by early philosophers and Platonists, the commentary by modern philosophers, and the interpretation by modern Socratic scholars.

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[1] 31 d.

CHAPTER VI

DEVELOPMENT BY EARLY PHILOSOPHERS AND PLATONISTS

Already in the centuries immediately following the time of Socrates, there began to emerge a profound appreciation for his life and thought. Philosophers and writers came to see in Socrates the beginnings of those new directions in man's thinking about himself, and in man's conduct within society, which subsequent ages have confirmed to have commenced in earnest only with Socrates.

The interest in Socrates centered then, as it has since, on the Platonic Socrates, who in more than thirty dialogs of Plato presents not only certain philosophical convictions and priorities, but in effect a whole philosophic method of mutual search. Doubtless the existence and influence of Plato's Academy across the years was in large part responsible for this preoccupation with Plato's Socrates. Neither Xenophon nor Aeschines had a "school" to spread and sustain interest in their writings. Beyond that, however, Plato was not alone the most prolific writer on the thought of Socrates, but the only one of Socrates' contemporaries who had the inclination and ability to stress the speculative side of his thought. It is this fact, as previously noted, that makes a distinction between the original thought of Socrates and its subsequent

development or possible misrepresentation by Plato so difficult. There are few "controls" against which Plato can be checked.

Alongside the interest in the philosophy presented by the Platonic Socrates, there developed quite an interest in his personal life and conduct as well. Biographers in that day unfortunately had not the standards and integrity that at least the best of them have now, so that the desire to pass on a juicy morsel of gossip--whether it could be substantiated or not--often took precedence over a proper respect for the truth and for the man. Socrates was not exempt from this kind of distortion. On the contrary, his nonconformity in personal habits invited it. Neither he nor his poor wife Xanthippe escaped the deliberate caricature of later writers.

With all of the investigation into the thought and personal life of Socrates, there inevitably arose a considerable interest in the daimonion. Beginning with the first successors to Plato in his Academy, men have probed Socrates' experience of the daimonion and pronounced on its nature and effects. The most concern with the daimonion, naturally enough, was among those writers and thinkers properly called Platonists, men who sought to understand and refine the thought of Plato. An occasional non-Platonist, notably Cicero, also showed an interest in the daimonion.

It is the purpose of this chapter to present the thinking of men concerning Socrates' daimonion, covering the period from after the time of Plato to the time of the last great

Neo-Platonist, Proclus (d. 485 A.D.). In this period of roughly 900 years, there are four men in particular who show a special interest in the daimonion. One is the Roman scholar and statesman, Cicero. The other three are the Platonists Plutarch, Apuleius, and Proclus. Others, including several of the early Church Fathers, commented on the daimonion, though usually just incidentally to another purpose.

Following the four presentations on the daimonion, a summary will be given to indicate the general direction in which men's thinking about the daimonion developed during this early period. The four writers will be considered in a chronological order: Cicero (106-43 B.C.), Plutarch (46-120 A.D.), Apuleius (fl. 150 A.D.), and Proclus (410-485 A.D.)

Cicero

Cicero's high regard for Socrates and his place in the history of human thought is attested by his naming Socrates as "the first who brought down philosophy from the heavens . . . and obliged it to examine into life and morals, and good and evil."[1] Accordingly, when in his dialog On Divination[2] he is attempting through the mouth of his brother Quintus to put forth the best possible case for divination (which he himself will later in the dialog refute), he cites the acceptance of divination by the greatest among the philosophers, including Socrates.

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[1] Tusculan Disputations 5. 4. [2] Latin De Divinatione.

Quintus argues in the dialog that an inability to understand the processes of divination is no adequate grounds for disbelieving in it; for, by the same reasoning, men should disbelieve in the power of a magnet to attract iron or of drugs to cure certain diseases. More positively, he goes on, after the fashion of Posidonius the Stoic, to justify and legitimatize divination by tracing its source to God, to nature, and to fate.

In the course of the argument, there are several passages which refer to Socrates. One, while not specifically mentioning the daimonion, is significant in that it attempts to establish as trustworthy the dreams of men who, like Socrates, have within them a purity of soul. Quintus quotes in obvious agreement the words of Socrates in the Republic, where Socrates says that "when a man, whose habits of living and of eating are wholesome and temperate, surrenders himself to sleep, having the thinking and reasoning portion of his soul eager and erect, . . . then will the thinking and reasoning portion of his soul shine forth and show itself keen and strong for dreaming and then will his dreams be peaceful and worthy of trust."[1]

It is this conviction of the trustworthiness of the dreams of a moderate and sensible man that forms Cicero's estimate of the daimonion of Socrates. The significant passage on the daimonion is this one, in which Quintus speaks:

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[1]Plato Republic 571, Falconer translation in Cicero On Divination i. 29. 61.

"Just as a man has clear and trustworthy dreams, provided he goes to sleep, not only with his mind prepared by noble thoughts, but also with every precaution taken to induce repose; so too he, when awake, is better prepared to interpret truly the messages of entrails, stars, birds, and all other signs, provided the soul is pure and undefiled.

"It is this purity of soul,[1] no doubt, that explains that famous utterance which history attributes to Socrates and which his disciples in their books often represent him as repeating: 'There is some divine influence'[2] --daimonion, he called it--'which I always obey, though it never urges me on, but often holds me back.'"[3]

Later in the same paragraph Quintus cites the two examples of the daimonion's warnings that were excerpted in the previous chapter, the one the warning to Crito not to take the walk that resulted in the injury to his eye, the other the warning that caused Socrates to take a different route from the others in the escape after the battle at Delium.

From the whole of the evidence which Cicero gives through Quintus in the dialog, the picture of Socrates' daimonion is one which combines the neuter form and inhibitory character of the daimonion, as Plato conceives it, with its exercising an influence not only upon Socrates himself but upon his friends as well, as reflected in Xenophon's writings. It is most certainly as a "divine something" that the daimonion appears in Cicero, not as a separate god. Just as certain,

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[1] Hubert M. Poteat translates this phrase as "spiritual integrity" in Cicero, Brutus, On the Nature of the Gods, On Divination, On Duties (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950).

[2] Latin divinum quiddam, most generally translated "divine something."

[3] On Divination i. 54. 122, Falconer translation.

though, is that it operates beyond Socrates' personal life.

By far the most interesting emphasis that Cicero makes in his discussion of the daimonion, however, comes in the passage quoted above, where he acknowledges the trustworthiness of the daimonion on the basis of Socrates' "purity of soul." It is this quality within that, for Cicero, allows a Socrates to be awake to, and aware of, signs that other men would miss. This insight marks Cicero's real contribution to an understanding of Socrates' daimonion.

Plutarch

In his dialog On the Genius of Socrates,[1] Plutarch gives a spirited account of a daring exploit, the recovery from the Spartans of the citadel of Thebes by a party of Theban patriots who had been in Athens. The expedition took place during the winter of 379-378 B.C., about twenty years after Socrates' death. The dialog chronicles the final hours and events of the successful plot to recapture the citadel. The discussions about Socrates' daimonion form two interludes in the action, and serve in effect to fill in the hours of waiting and relieve the tension in the narrative. In addition, the conversation on the daimonion gives evidence of the good character and intellectual interests of the Thebans, who over the years until Plutarch's time had habitually been disparaged by Xenophon and others.

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[1] Latin De Genio Socratis.

Actually, as has been indicated, the dialog is misnamed; for the focus is upon the recovery of the citadel, with Socrates and the daimonion only incidental subjects of discussion. Further, the Latin and English titles commonly given to the dialog misrepresent Plutarch's terminology, seeming to imply that he understood Socrates to be guided by a separate, private god, a genius. In fact, the Greek word in Plutarch's title is not daimon but daimonion, which by his time could have been either a noun form for a little god or (the older meaning) a neuter adjective for the manifestation of one of the recognized gods. The dialog itself suggests the latter as Plutarch's meaning; so that, as in recent translations, the proper title would read On the Daimonic in Socrates, or On the Sign of Socrates. Finally, the dialog is misnamed in that concern with the daimonion seems only instrumental to the presentation by one of the speakers, Simmias, of a doctrine of the soul of man and its destiny. Simmias tells of the trance of Timarchus, a friend of Socrates' son Lamprocles, which revealed to him that every man has a daimon which is a star floating over his head, to which willingly or reluctantly his soul is attached. The daimon is identified with the purest part of man's reason; and a man like Socrates, who all his life obeys and cultivates his daimon, is granted powers of divination.

In respect of Plutarch's developing a theory of the soul, and his use of myth to do it, his dialog is generally assumed to be constructed deliberately on the model of Plato's

Phaedo. Two of the characters in his dialog, Simmias and Cebes, are also present in Plato's dialog of the last hours of Socrates.

The first of the two discussions on the daimonion in the dialog is a conversation primarily between Galaxidorus and Theocritus, with an interjection by Polymnis. To the objection of Galaxidorus that men should be frank and free of religious superstition the way Socrates was, Theocritus responds by citing the daimonion: "As to the Divine Sign of Socrates, good friend, are we to call it a falsity or what? To me, nothing recorded about Pythagoras seems to go so far towards the prophetic and divine."[1]

Theocritus continues, giving a first definition of Socrates' daimonion as "a sort of vision to go before and guide his steps in life . . . in matters of uncertainty, too hard for the wit of man to solve; upon these the spirit used often to converse with him, adding a divine touch to his own resolutions. For more, and more important, instances you must ask Simmias and the other companions of Socrates."[2] It is then that he relates the incident of Socrates' daimonion turning him aside to go through the Trunkmakers' Street, so that he will avoid the onrush of the herd of swine.

Galaxidorus replies with the suggestion that the

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[1] 580 c. All translations from On the Genius of Socrates are by A. O. Prickard (trans.), Selected Essays of Plutarch, II.

[2] 580 c-d.

daimonion is simply a keen sensitivity which helped Socrates decide in situations where there was no evident rational ground for decision. Polymnis interjects with the thought that possibly the daimonion was only a sneeze, and that depending on the kind of sneeze and the direction from which it came Socrates took his course of action. Polymnis himself, however, can hardly credit this, saying: "The wonder to me is that if he made use of a sneeze he did not so call it to his companions, but was in the habit of saying that what checked or commanded him was a Divine Sign. For that would be like vanity and idle boasting, not like truth and simplicity, in which lay, as we suppose, his greatness and superiority to men in general."[1] He continues, praising Socrates' integrity and courage, adding that "all this is not like a man whose judgment might be changed by random voices and sneezing."[2] Following these remarks, he tells the story of the retreat from the battle of Delium, in which the daimonion guided Socrates by a safe route. Galaxidorus defends his "sneeze theory" by claiming that the sneeze is in fact the instrument of a god, and invites Simmias to elaborate on his knowledge of Socrates' daimonion. Then the conversation is interrupted by the arrival of a number of Theban confederates together with a stranger, Theanor.

When the dialog later resumes its discussion of "the problem of the real nature and potency of the Divine Sign of

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[1] 581 b. [2] 581 c.

Socrates, so called,"[1] Simmias is the central figure. In the interim he has apparently refuted Galaxidorus, and now gives his own opinion. It is this that presents Plutarch's mature estimate of the "Divine Sign" of Socrates. The most significant excerpts are these:

> What Simmias said in reply to the argument of Galaxidorus we did not hear; but he went on to say that he had himself once asked Socrates on the subject, and failed to get an answer, and so had never asked again; but that he had often been with him when he gave his opinion that those who claim intercourse with the divine by way of visions are imposters, whereas he attended to those who professed to hear a voice, and put serious questions to them. Hence[2] it began to occur to us, as we were discussing the matter among ourselves, to suspect that the Divine Sign of Socrates might possibly be no vision but a special sense for sounds or words, with which he had contact in some strange manner; just as in sleep there is no voice heard, but fancies and notions as to particular words reach the sleepers, who then think that they hear people talking. Only sleepers receive such conceptions in a real dream because of the tranquillity and calm of the body in sleep, whereas in waking moments the soul can hardly attend to greater powers, being so choked by thronging emotions and distracting needs that they are unable to listen and to give their attention to clear revelations. But the mind of Socrates, pure and passionless, and intermingling itself but little with the body for necessary purposes, was fine and light of touch, and quickly changed under any impression. The impression we may conjecture to have been no voice, but the utterance of a spirit, which without vocal sound reached the perceiving mind by the revelation itself. For voice is like a blow upon the soul, which perforce admits its utterance by way of the ears, whenever we converse with one another. But the mind of a stronger being leads the gifted soul, touching it with the thing thought, and no blow is needed. . . . We

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[1] 588 b.

[2] Here Simmias begins to talk, though the translator omits the quotation marks. Cf. 589 f, also the translation by Phillip H. DeLacy and Benedict Einarson, Plutarch's Moralia (15 vols., London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1959), VII, 588 c.

> need not, I think, find it hard to believe that mind might be led by a stronger mind and a more divine soul external to itself, having contact with it after its kind, as word with word or light with reflection. . . . We need not wonder if, in regard to this special mode of thought also, the air is sensitive to the touch of higher beings, and is so modified as to convey to the mind of godlike and extraordinary men the thought of him who thought it. . . . The words of spirits pass through all Nature, but only sound for those who possess the soul in untroubled calm, holy and spiritual men as we emphatically call them. The view of most people is that spiritual visitations come to men in sleep; that they should be similarly stirred when awake and in their full facilities they think marvellous and beyond belief. As though a musician were thought to use his lyre when the strings are let down, and not to touch or use it when it is strung up and tuned! They do not see the cause, their own inner tunelessness and discord, from which Socrates our friend had been set free, as the oracle given to his father when he was yet a boy declared. . . .
>
> This, Pheidolaus, is what has occurred to me to think about the Divine Sign of Socrates, in his lifetime and since his death, dismissing with contempt those who have suggested voices or sneezings or anything of that sort.[1]

Speaking through Simmias, Plutarch reveals his conception of the daimonion as an inner voice, to be understood without reference either to a physical sound in the environment or a physical organ within the body. Socrates' experience of the daimonion is his perception of an unspoken language coming from the higher powers, the gods and daimons. Their communications are received via an immaterial medium, much as in dreams; but in order to talk of them to other men, physical analogies to ordinary sense experiences must be used. Thus the daimonion is both a voice and yet not really a voice.

Further, Plutarch understands Socrates to have been

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[1] 588 c-589 f.

able to experience this unique kind of communication because of his purity of mind. Other "holy and spiritual men" could likewise, in Plutarch's view, experience the "Divine Sign." The daimonion is thus neither a physical voice nor an interpreted sneeze, but the medium for the spiritually communicated counsel of the higher beings to those like Socrates whose purity of mind enables them to "hear" it.

Apuleius

The Afro-Roman writer Apuleius, like most of the Platonists, wrote primarily not of the impersonal daimonion of Socrates, but rather of an individual, god-like daimon that guided him in life. In speaking this way and making this emphasis, Apuleius was accommodating the experience of Socrates to a demonology that, from the time of Plato and his myths forward, gradually became more and more systematic. He conceived Socrates as possessing a daimon which belonged to the highest order of daimons, and accordingly titled his work On the God of Socrates.[1] Augustine, who was critical of the work, suggests that Apuleius would have called it On the Daimon of Socrates, but dared not to.[2] The distinction would not have been crucial, however, for Apuleius. What did matter was that the daimon was a separate being, and was to be identified with Socrates alone.

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[1]Latin De Deo Socratis.

[2]Prickard (trans.), Selected Essays of Plutarch, II, 4.

Much of the dissertation is a development of a demonology according to which "there are certain divine powers of a middle nature, situate in the interval of the air, between the highest aether and the earth below, through whom our aspirations and our doubts are conveyed to the gods."[1] These intermediate beings, the daimons, work in a variety of ways: "by framing dreams, or causing ominous fissures in entrails, or governing the flights of some birds, or instructing others in song, or inspiring prophets, or by launching thunders, or causing the lightning to flash in the clouds, or other things to take place by means of which we obtain a knowledge of future events."[2]

The specific reference to the daimon of Socrates does not occur until well into the last third of the work. The important excerpts, giving Apuleius' conception of the daimon and also the daimonion of Socrates, are these:

> There is another species of daimons, more exalted and august, not fewer in number, but far superior in dignity, who, forever being liberated from the bonds and conjunction of the body, preside over certain powers. . . . From this more elevated order of daimons, Plato is of opinion that a peculiar daimon is allotted to every man, to be a witness and a guardian of his conduct in life, who, without being visible to anyone, is always present, and is an overseer not only of his actions, but even of his thoughts. . . . The daimon scrupulously takes part in all these matters, sees all things, understands all things, and dwells in the most profound recesses of the mind, in the place of conscience. He of whom I speak is entirely our guardian, our individual keeper, our

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[1]Apuleius, The Works of Apuleius, trans. n.n. (London: Bell & Daldy, 1872), p. 356.

[2]Ibid., p. 357.

watcher at home, our own proper regulator, a searcher into our inmost fibers, our constant observer, our inseparable witness, a reprover of our evil actions, an approver of our good ones; if he is becomingly attended to, sedulously worshiped, in the way in which he was worshiped by Socrates in justice and in innocence; he is our forewarner in uncertainty, our monitor in matters of doubt, our defender in danger, and our assistant in need. He is able also by dreams, and by tokens, and perhaps even openly, when necessity demands it, to avert you from evil, to increase your blessings, to aid you when depressed, to support you when falling, to lighten your darkness, to regulate your prosperity, and modify your adversity.

What wonder, then, if Socrates, who was a man perfect in the highest degree, and wise even by the testimony of Apollo, should know and venerate this his God; and that hence this Lar, his keeper, and nearly, as I may say, his co-mate and his domestic associate, should repel him from everything which ought to be repelled, foresee what ought to be foreseen, and forewarn him of what he ought to be forewarned of, if at any time, the functions of wisdom falling short, he stood in need, not of counsel, but of foreknowledge; in order that when he was vacillating through doubt, he might take a firm stand through being forewarned. . . .

The reason also has been in some measure already stated why the daimon of Socrates was generally in the habit of forbidding him to do certain things, but never exhorted him to the performance of any act. For Socrates, being of himself a man exceedingly perfect, and prompt to the performance of all requisite duties, never stood in need of anyone to exhort him; though sometimes he required one to forbid him, if danger happened to lurk in any of his undertakings; in order that, being admonished, he might use due precaution, and desist for the present from his attempt, either to resume it more safely at a future period, or enter upon it in some other way. On occasions of this kind he used to say, "That he heard a certain voice, which proceeded from the divinity." For so it is asserted by Plato; and let no one suppose that he was in the habit of deriving omens from the ordinary conversation of men. . . .

Socrates did not simply say that he heard a voice, but a "certain voice," transmitted to him: by which addition, you must certainly understand, that neither an ordinary nor a human voice is signified; for had it been so, it would have been no use to say a "certain" voice, but rather "a voice." . . . He who says that he heard a certain voice is either ignorant whence that voice originated, or is in some doubt concerning it, or shows that it had something unusual and mysterious about it,

> as Socrates did of that voice, which he said was transmitted to him opportunely and from a divine source. And, indeed, I think that he used to perceive indications of his daimon, not only with his ears, but even with his eyes; for he very frequently declared that not a voice, but a divine sign, had been presented to him. This sign too might have been the form of his daimon, which Socrates alone beheld, just as in Homer, Achilles beheld Minerva.
>
> I suppose that most of you will with difficulty believe what I have just said.[1]

The passages quoted illustrate something of the tedium and repetition characteristic of Apuleius, but give a good picture too of his conception of the daimonion. For him, it is a "certain voice" that proceeds from Socrates' daimon. It operates only in an inhibitory fashion, because Socrates--a perfect man--never needed to be prompted to action, but only restrained at times from it.

Two of the suggestions of Apuleius concerning the daimonion of Socrates are of special interest. He proposes that the "divine sign" might not in every instance have been a voice, but perhaps also on occasion was a vision presented to Socrates, possibly even a vision of the actual "form of the daimon." The second suggestion, likewise introduced for the first time into discussions of the daimonion, is that the daimon operates in function similar to a man's conscience, "a reprover of our evil actions, an approver of our good ones." In this latter conception he is joined by another Platonist, Olympiodorus, who says with reference to Socrates that "the allotted daimon is conscience."[2] Maximus Tyrius, a Platonist

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[1] Ibid., pp. 364-70.

[2] Ibid., pp. 365-66, in a footnote by Thomas Taylor.

contemporary with Apuleius, likewise equates the daimon of Socrates with his conscience.[1] Heraclitus, it will be remembered, was the first to attempt to rationalize a man's daimon as equivalent to his moral character or conscience.[2]

Proclus

The last of the great Neo-Platonists, Proclus lived some 300 years after the time of Plutarch and Apuleius. He was the head of the Academy in Athens in the fifth century A.D., and was distinguished for his elaborate metaphysical speculations. He was not so much an original thinker as he was a systematizer and expositer. It is in his commentary on Plato's Alcibiades I that he writes of the daimon and daimonion of Socrates, seeing Socrates as the daimon to whose guardianship Alcibiades is assigned.

For Proclus, the daimons form a middle rank to bind together the gods and men, as in Plato.[3] However, they are neither the souls of the men of a former age, as Plato says in the Cratylus,[4] nor is a man's daimon the rational part of his soul, as Plato portrays it in the Timaeus.[5] This latter, says Proclus, is just an analogy. He goes on to say that "in any case, in the Timaeus the rational soul was called the spirit of the living organism; but we are looking for the

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[1] J. A. Stewart, The Myths of Plato (London: Centaur Press Ltd., 1960), p. 399.

[2] Supra, pp. 19-20.

[3] Symposium 202 d.

[4] 398 b.

[5] 90 a.

guardian spirit of man, and not of the living organism."[1] This "guardian spirit" is what Socrates refers to in the Phaedo as leading the soul before the judges.[2] The distinction seems to Proclus to be confirmed in the Alcibiades I, where Socrates says that the reason for his not approaching Alcibiades earlier "has been nothing human, but a certain spiritual opposition."[3]

It is as a "guardian spirit" that Proclus regards Socrates' daimonion. He virtually equates the concepts of daimon and daimonion, regarding the latter as but a diminutive form in the same way as does the Septuagint. His reason for so doing is to make room for the daimonion of Socrates in a consistent demonology. His justification for so doing is Alcibiades I, where what Socrates early calls "a certain spiritual opposition" (Greek daimonion) he later calls "God" (Greek theos).[4] Socrates' daimonion, says Proclus, "has been allotted a god-like pre-eminence within the spirit nature. . . . For as there is spirit on the level of gods, so there is god on the level of spirits. . . . Naturally then Socrates calls his own guardian spirit a god, because it was one of the foremost and highest spirits."[5]

In addition to identifying the daimonion as not only a spirit but also a god, Proclus also describes the way in which

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[1]William O'Neill, Proclus: Alcibiades I (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), p. 49.

[2]107 d.

[3]103 a.

[4]103 a, 124 c.

[5]O'Neill, p. 52.

the daimonion manifested itself to Socrates as a voice. There was, Proclus says of Socrates,

> . . . a spirit-like irradiation passing suddenly through all the levels of his life and even arousing sense-perception. For it is clear that although the activity of the spirit is the same, reason enjoys its gift in one way, imagination in another, sensation in yet another. . . . It was not from without, then, in the manner of an impression, that the voice impinged upon Socrates; but the inspiration from within, ranging through the whole of the soul and penetrating as far as the organs of sense-perception, finally became a voice, recognized by inner awareness rather than perception.[1]

Proclus comments too on the inhibitory character of Socrates' "guardian spirit," marking this as a tribute to Socrates. His unreserved nature had no need of being encouraged, but occasionally had to be restrained, "as if some good charioteer should check, only so far as was necessary, from its onrush, a horse of good natural ability for racing, and give it no further incitement, since it was of itself aroused to movement and required not 'the charioteer's goad,' but his bridle."[2]

So does Proclus draw the daimonion of Socrates into a systematic demonology, identifying it as a god inspiring Socrates to an inner awareness that manifests itself as a voice, and inhibiting him from those expressions of his outgoing nature that would not be expedient for him.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Summary

During the nine hundred years from Plato to Proclus, there was a significant development in men's thinking about Socrates' daimonion. While a relatively early scholar like Cicero continued to regard the daimonion as an independent divinum quiddam (divine something), there was gradually an accommodation of the daimonion to a systematic demonology having its roots in Plato.

By degrees, the focus shifted from a neuter daimonion to a personal daimon, thought to have become attached to Socrates at his birth, to guide him in life and to communicate to him what his reason alone could not fathom. The daimonion could thus be, as in Plutarch and Apuleius, a "certain voice," emanating from a personal daimon; or it could be, as in Proclus, itself a high-ranking daimon, virtually a god. Either way, it was the daimon of Socrates that was the explanation for the guidance he received. No longer did the daimonion stand alone as a "divine something." Now it was "explained" by reference to Socrates' special daimon, his "guardian spirit." More and more did the daimonion come to be regarded as a particular case in the whole order of daimons.

While there is considerable agreement among the four major writers cited, as for example on the inhibitory character of the daimonion, each one presents at least one new suggestion relative to the interpretation of the daimonion and its effects. Cicero grants the trustworthiness of the daimonion's counsel on the basis of Socrates' purity of mind;

i.e., his sensitivity to influences that other men are not alert enough or free enough from their passions to "hear." Plutarch emphasizes the non-physical character of the voice, describing Socrates' experience as his perception of an unspoken language coming through an immaterial medium from the gods and daimons. Apuleius suggests that the "divine sign" might on occasion have been a vision as well as a voice, and --together with other Platonists of his period--names the daimonion's function to be that of a man's conscience. Proclus completes the systmatizing process by equating the daimonion to a personal daimon, bringing it within a consistent demonology.

So did Socrates' daimonion fare at the hands of the first large group of its interpreters, the early philosophers and Platonists. Following after Plato and Xenophon, they gradually developed an understanding of the daimonion which made room for it within the larger systems which they constructed on the broad base of Plato's thought.

From the classical period of ancient Greece and the thousand years following upon it, the discussion now shifts another twelve centuries forward to examine what modern philosophers, from Descartes to Kierkegaard, have said about Socrates' daimonion. It is to their commentary that attention now turns.

CHAPTER VII

COMMENTARY BY MODERN PHILOSOPHERS

For the one thousand years from Proclus to the Italian Renaissance, interest in the life and thought of the early Greeks waned, and there was no appreciable growth in the understanding or interpretation of Socrates' daimonion. During most of this period, the authority of the Church discouraged free intellectual speculation, and "learning" in general fell upon hard times. With the Renaissance of the fifteenth century men again began to experience pleasure in the discovery and examination of new facts, rather than in the tightening of already rigid systems of thought. Too, there came a revival of interest in Plato, as opposed to Aristotle, and a return to the original sources. This opened up once again the vocation of philosophy, although it was not until after the first flush of undisciplined individualism had passed that there was any significant philosophy or philosopher. Gradually, however, modern philosophy developed; and there came to be, beginning with Descartes, a new interest in the life and thought of Socrates--and with it, a new look at the daimonion.

Four philosophers especially--Descartes, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard--have evidenced a considerable interest in Socrates' daimonion; and to these four, in turn, major

attention will be given. In addition, however, other modern philosophers have commented on the daimonion, including Montaigne, Schleiermacher, Schopenhauer, John Stuart Mill, and Bertrand Russell. Their judgments will be collected in a final portion of the chapter, in the attempt further to clarify the nature and effects of Socrates' daimonion.

Descartes

Rene Descartes (1596-1650) is properly regarded as the father of modern philosophy. He was truly an innovator in man's thinking about himself and his world, and it is with him that the subjectivism and idealism of much modern philosophy originates. No philosopher, perhaps, is truly original, but occasionally a philosopher may accurately be termed a pioneer in the new directions of thought. Such a one was Socrates, and another was Descartes.

One scholar, in fact, argues convincingly that Descartes is a "Christian Socrates, . . . the embodiment of that fusion of the Socratic contribution with Christian teaching which constitutes Western thought."[1] Descartes, like Socrates, stressed self-awareness, and went further to claim that self-knowledge is the only sure knowledge. His Cogito seems at first to be infinitely impoverishing, were it not that he extends Socrates' "Know thyself" to the conviction that to know oneself is to know God in oneself. Thus the way is paved for the escape from solipsism to a confidence in one's experience

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[1]Sauvage, p. 157.

of the external world, for the good God known in self-experience would not deceive regarding the external world.

In other respects than the centrality of self-awareness, Descartes and Socrates are similarly alike. Both hold together, in a balanced combination that few men can achieve, the importance of clear thinking along with the importance of what modern philosophy calls intuition. There is no separation, in the thought of either man, between rational investigation and interior "vision." As will be discussed more fully in chapter nine, Descartes too had a trust in the dreams and providential warnings that came to him. Knowledge has two sources: reason and inspiration.

In view of this marked similarity in the outlook of the two men, it is not surprising to learn from an early biographer of Descartes that he devoted a book to Socrates' daimonion.[1] His personal correspondence likewise reflects his ready acceptance of Socrates' experience, even if it cannot be defended rationally against the charge of superstition. The following quotation from a letter he wrote late in life to Princess Elizabeth gives his estimate of what Socrates' daimonion was, and how far its counsel should be respected:

> What is commonly called Socrates' "genius" is of course simply this, that he was accustomed to follow his inward inclinations, and thought that the outcome of his undertakings would be successful if he had a secret feeling of joy, but would be unsuccessful if he felt sad. But it is true that it would be superstitious to trust

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[1]Adrian Baillet, Vie de Monsieur Descartes (Paris: n.p., 1691), II, 408, cited by Sauvage, p. 159.

> in this as much as he is said to have done; for Plato relates that he would even stay at home whenever his genius did not advise him to go out. But as touching the important actions of one's life, when they appear so uncertain that prudence cannot teach us what we should do, I think it is indeed right to follow the advice of one's genius, and that it is a good thing to be firmly persuaded that the tasks we undertake without repugnance, with that freedom which usually goes with joy, will not fail to come to a good issue.[1]

The daimonion, or "genius," of Socrates is seen by Descartes to be simply a predisposition to honor his "inward inclinations," which manifested themselves as feelings of joy or sadness about a proposed course of action. He dismisses the more trivial instances of Socrates' experience of the daimonion, but claims that where in important affairs it is impossible to decide rationally it is "a good thing" to trust in the daimonion's leading. So, in fact, did he himself.

Hegel

George Frederick Hegel (1770-1831) is numbered among the most influential of modern philosophers. His conviction in the reality solely of the Whole, a completely spiritual Absolute, and the corresponding belief in the unreality of separateness, form the basis of his philosophy, and reflect his life-long interest in mysticism. From this same interest springs his frequent reference to Socrates and the daimonion. In several volumes of his collected lectures there is a marked emphasis upon the daimonion and its significance in the development of a subjective consciousness within Greek philosophy.

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[1]"Letter to Princess Elizabeth," November 1646, translated in Sauvage, p. 172.

Socrates was the innovator, and the daimonion the physiological mechanism, for man's deciding in himself the issues of his life.

For Hegel, Socrates marked a crucial shift in human thought and in the locus of authority. Under the impetus of the decay of the Athenian democracy, Socrates dissolved the traditional understandings of truth and authority, and retreated from a crumbling society to seek within himself what was right and good. To Hegel, "Socrates is the hero who established in the place of the Delphic oracle the principle that man must look within himself to know what is Truth. . . . We find in it a complete revolution in the Greek mind, . . . for in place of the oracle the personal self-consciousness of every thinking man has come into play."[1]

In another lecture, Hegel claims that Socrates should be regarded not simply as a teacher of morality but in fact as the inventor of morality. Articulating the principle of subjectivity in the thought of Socrates, he relates it specifically to Socrates' belief in his daimonion:

> It was in Socrates that . . . the principle of subjectivity--of the absolute inherent independence of Thought--attained free expression. . . . Socrates--in assigning to insight, to conviction, the determination of men's actions--posited the Individual as capable of a final moral decision, in contraposition to Country and to Customary Morality, and thus made himself an Oracle, in the Greek sense. He said that he had a daimon within him, which counseled him what to do, and revealed to him what was advantageous to his friends. The rise of the inner world of Subjectivity was the rupture with the

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[1] Lectures on the History of Philosophy, I, 435.

existing Reality.[1]

In still a third major writing, Hegel again returns to the significance of the daimonion, and summarizes as follows: "In the daimon of Socrates we can discern the beginning of a change; we can see that the will, formerly set upon an object wholly outside of itself, has begun to transfer itself into itself, and recognize itself within itself. This is the beginning of self-consciousness and therefore true freedom."[2]

While Hegel speaks of the daimon or "Genius" of Socrates, it is clear that he does not conceive a separate god as ordering Socrates' affairs. He believes rather that the daimonion may be physiologically explained, however Socrates himself may have regarded it. His most explicit definition of the daimonion comes in these paragraphs from his Lectures on the History of Philosophy:

> We are neither to imagine the existence of a protective spirit, angel, or such-like, nor even of conscience. . . . The Genius of Socrates is not Socrates himself, not his opinions and convictions, but an oracle which, however, is not external, but is subjective, his oracle. . . . It certainly receives the stamp of imagination, but there is nothing more of what is visionary or superstitious to be seen in it. . . . Because with Socrates judgment from within first begins to break free from the external oracle, it was requisite that this return into itself should in its first commencement still appear in physiological guise. The Genius of Socrates stands midway between the externality of the oracle and the pure inwardness of the mind; it is inward, but it is

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[1] Lectures on the Philosophy of History, p. 281.

[2] George Frederick Hegel, Hegel's Philosophy of Right, trans. S. W. Dyde (London: George Bell & Sons, 1896), p. 290.

> also presented as a personal genius, separate from human will, and not yet as the wisdom and free will of Socrates himself.[1]

Hegel thus in effect "excuses" Socrates from not representing his daimonion as simply his own free will to make decisions, and justifies the language of a personal genius on the grounds that not even Socrates--much less his contemporaries--could have traversed the whole distance from external oracle to personal freedom all in one step. For Hegel, however, the daimonion is totally internal to Socrates. It is neither an attendant guardian spirit, nor even a more impersonal influence of an external God. Finally, in keeping with his first philosophical principle that only the Whole is real, the daimonion is Socrates. Though Socrates conceived it as separate from himself, it was in fact one aspect of his very individuality.

Nietzsche

Friederich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was one of the most controversial of modern philosophers. His is the complex but surprisingly consistent philosophy of a complex and often inconsistent man. Giving metaphysical and ethical primacy to the individual's will, he presents a vigorous challenge to commonly received doctrines of man and systems of morals.

Socrates looms large in Nietzsche's philosophy, appearing again and again in his discussions of man and morality. Nietzsche's attitude towards Socrates is itself complex and

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[1] I, 422, 425.

ambiguous, a blend of admiration and criticism, the latter amounting often to an outright hatred. It is this that is immediately obvious to the student of Nietzsche, as it appears and re-appears in his writings. Nietzsche scores Socrates for his notion of an absolute morality based on the rationality of man, which is directly opposed to his own aristocratic ideal of instinct and the rule of the stronger, leading to an ethical relativism. He reserves an even stronger condemnation for what he calls an "aesthetic Socratism" which demands that what is beautiful must also be rational.[1] He blames Socrates for the death of Greek tragedy, and for disclaiming poetry and every form of artistic activity which springs from instinct without rational support. In The Birth of Tragedy he writes that "Socrates must be designated the specific non-mystic, in whom the logical has become . . . as overdeveloped as has the instinctive in the mystic."[2] Elsewhere he speaks of Socrates as "absurdly rational."[3]

The problem that Socrates posed for Nietzsche was precisely the problem of reason itself. Socrates personified the very trust in reason which Nietzsche could never grant and which he bitterly criticized. Of all his hatreds, the most constant was for the tradition of European rationalism. Socrates, a great hero in that tradition, was thus for Nietzsche a proper villain. In his view, the Greeks before Socrates had

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[1]W. Hollingdale, Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 103.

[2]Quoted in ibid. [3]Quoted in ibid., p. 95.

been happy men, living on instinct and habit. With Socrates, men began to think, and not only about how to get what their wills prompted them to strive for, but to think also about what they were desiring. It was a deadly rationalism that Socrates spawned, and Nietzsche could only despise him for it.[1] As one of his chief biographers expresses it, "By the voice of Plato, whom he had seduced, Socrates imposed the illusion, unknown to the ancients, of Nature as accessible to the reason of man, altogether penetrated by it, and always harmonious."[2]

Nietzsche attacked not only the convictions of Socrates, but the man himself. He vilified Socrates personally, by innuendo and outright accusation. One such argument ad hominem, bearing specifically on the place Socrates gives to human reason, is in The Twilight of the Gods, where he writes that "when a man finds it necessary, as Socrates did, to create a tyrant out of reason, there is no small danger that something else wishes to play the tyrant."[3]

However much there may seem to be a hatred of Socrates on Nietzsche's part, there is right alongside it an admiration as well, amounting at times to a strong dependence if not an actual hero-worship. Kaufmann, one of the ablest Nietzschean

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[1]Crane Brinton, Nietzsche (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941), p. 83.

[2]Daniel Halevy, The Life of Friederich Nietzsche, trans. J. M. Hone (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911), pp. 85-6.

[3]Friederich Nietzsche, The Twilight of the Idols, Vol. XVI of Complete Works, ed. Oscar Levy, trans. Anthony M. Ludovici (18 vols., Edinburgh: T. N. Foulis, 1911), pp. 14-15.

scholars, suggests that he tries to maintain his independence from Socrates by lashing out at him, much as he did at Richard Wagner and Jesus Christ, two other of his sometime heroes.[1]

Unquestionably, as Nietzsche himself said of Plato, he too "received from the Apology of Socrates the decisive thought of how a philosopher ought to behave toward man."[2] He was a fearless questioner who, rather than deducing systems from traditional premises, pursued independent problems of his own formulation, and helped others to formulate and pursue theirs. He did so, as Kaufmann writes, "not by 'blessing and oppressing' them with his own solutions but by showing them to their astonishment what they had presumed in formulating their problems."[3] Socrates was surely Nietzsche's hero to the extent that he was the "gadfly" of Athens and a veritable "vivisectionist of contemporary conceit and hypocrisy."[4] Further, and perhaps most decisively, a pitifully frightened and timid Nietzsche, a warrior in his daydreams only, hero-worshiped Socrates as the embodiment of the perfection he could never reach: the passionate man who can control his passions.

So it was that Socrates stood before the mind of Nietzsche both as a decadent rationalist and as a true hero. He loved and hated Socrates at the same time. He says as much himself, in a fragment that Kaufmann quotes: "Socrates,

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[1]Walter A. Kaufmann, Nietzsche (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 349.

[2]Quoted in ibid., p. 121. [3]Ibid., pp. 61-2.

[4]Ibid., p. 363.

to confess it frankly, is so close to me that almost always I fight a fight against him."[1]

This same ambiguity is reflected in Nietzsche's specific statements about the daimonion. In The Twilight of the Gods he refers to the verdict of the physiognomist Zopyrus and Socrates' own concurrence with it:[2] "The acknowledged wildness and anarchy of Socrates' instincts [are] indicative of decadence. . . . Neither should we forget the aural delusions which were religiously interpreted as 'the daimon of Socrates.' Everything in him is exaggerated, buffo, caricature, . . . full of concealment, of ulterior motives and of underground currents."[3]

In the same negative vein, he writes of the daimonion in The Birth of Tragedy: "This voice, whenever it comes, always dissuades. In this utterly abnormal nature, instinctive wisdom only appears in order to hinder here and there the progress of conscious perception. Whereas in all productive men it is instinct that is the creatively affirmative force, . . . with Socrates it is instinct that becomes critic--a perfect monstrosity per defectum."[4]

Yet earlier in the same work he can speak of the daimonion in a manner sympathetic both to the phenomenon and to Socrates himself: "To understand the most 'questionable' figure of antiquity, we must remember that a key to the

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[1] Ibid., p. 348.

[2] Supra, pp. 50-51.

[3] XVI, 13.

[4] Quoted in Brinton, p. 84.

character of Socrates is presented to us by the extraordinary phenomenon called the 'daimon' of Socrates. In special circumstances, when his gigantic intellect began to reel, he received a firm support in the utterance of a divine voice, which then spoke to him."[1]

Clearly Nietzsche did not think of what he calls the "daimon" as a separate god or guardian spirit for Socrates; but whether he regarded it as an actual aural delusion, or a deception which Socrates consciously fostered on his contemporaries, or a "divine voice" is impossible to determine. If the latter, it was surely not as issuing from God or a god, but as a special gift bestowed upon an already strong-willed--and therefore favored--individual.

What seems most certain in Nietzsche's estimate of the daimonion is that it is this which represents in Socrates the instinctive, as opposed to the rational, element. He would of course have wished that, rather than being an occasional intruder into Socrates' rational nature and conduct, the daimonion would have been in complete control over Socrates; for to be a man, for Nietzsche, is to live by one's instincts. If he could have seen that the daimonion exerted a more major influence on Socrates than had previously been granted, doubtless he would have proclaimed that larger role for Socrates' instinctive nature, and so discredited him as a man of reason

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[1]Quoted in M. A. Mugge, Friederich Nietzsche (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1914), p. 108. This is a paraphrase, as given by Mugge, rather than a strict quotation.

and at the same time made him more fit to be his hero. That he could not, though he would have wanted to, is surely the most significant insight he affords into the nature and importance of Socrates' daimonion.

Kierkegaard

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) occupies today a far more significant place in contemporary philosophy and theology than he did during his lifetime. He was a philosopher with ideas that were then strange and unpopular, and he had neither the convictions nor the inclination to take any satisfaction in being counted a member of the philosophic fraternity of his day. At a public lecture in 1963, the 150th anniversary of his birth, Jean Paul Sartre called Kierkegaard "a philosopher who hated philosophers."[1]

There was one exception to this, however, and his name is Socrates. Kierkegaard writes in Fear and Trembling that Socrates was "the most interesting man that ever lived, his life the most interesting that has been recorded."[2] In point of fact, no one since Plato has given Socrates his due to a greater extent than has Kierkegaard; nor has there been any philosopher since Socrates himself who has "fought with such gadfly persistence the enemies of man's mind."[3] Not without reason is Kierkegaard often referred to as the Danish Socrates.

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[1]Quoted in Hess, The Christian Century, LXXXII, 736.

[2]Quoted in ibid. [3]Ibid.

It is not surprising then, and especially in view of his own convictions about the way man comes to have religious knowledge, that Kierkegaard gave considerable attention to Socrates' daimonion. He discusses it most fully in The Concept of Irony, where he notes the problem the daimonion poses for philosophy, and how men too easily accept a mere label as the explanation for it. He writes wistfully:

> This Socratic daimon has always been a crux philologorum, a difficulty that has nevertheless operated more enticingly than forbiddingly, and by its mysterious spell even deceptively. . . . Since time immemorial one finds a strong propensity to say something about this thing, but there the matter usually ends. The curiosity which is tickled by whatever is mysterious is satisfied as soon as the thing is given a name, and profundity accepts satisfaction when one says with a thoughtful air: Ah, what is one to say?[1]

However, while Kierkegaard would welcome a satisfactory explanation of the daimonion, he sees none offered, and comes finally to say that there can be none. He shows only impatience with those who in his opinion too readily solve the crux philologorum, who cut it down to size in order to subsume it under their own pet theories. He cites a fellow Dane, Magister Block, who has "been unable to resist the temptation to explain this extraordinary phenomenon,"[2] and who defines the daimonion as "'a presentiment or a kind of enthusiasm which had its cause both in his lively imagination and in his nervous system.'"[3] Similarly, he has little regard for a Paris

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[1]Soren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Irony, with Constant Reference to Socrates, trans. Lee M. Capel (London: Collins, 1946), p. 185.

[2]Ibid., p. 186. [3]Ibid.

psychologist, Claude Lelut, who "has been so self-wise as to claim: 'Socrates was afflicted with that madness which in technical language is called hallucination.'"[1]

From an examination of the original sources, Kierkegaard concludes that Socrates' use of the word daimonion is neither simply adjectival nor only substantive, in the sense of describing a particular being. He notes its use in two quite different modes: sometimes Socrates speaks of the daimonion manifesting itself to him; at other times he speaks of it as occurring. It is thus represented both as the source of a "sign," and also as the "sign" itself. Kierkegaard himself speaks of it interchangeably, under three terms: daimon, daimonion, the daimonic.[2]

His considered evaluation of the daimonion is that it is "an expression for something utterly abstract, . . . something divine, which by its very abstractness is elevated above every determination, unutterable and without predicates."[3]

Respecting its manner of operation, he writes: "We learn it is a voice which makes itself heard, yet not in such a way that one would want to insist upon this, as if it manifested itself through words, for it operates wholly instinctively."[4] He sides with Plato, against Xenophon, in believing it to function in an inhibitory fashion only. He is especially convinced of the historicity of Plato's Apology, and scorns

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[1] Ibid., infra, p. 190. [2] Ibid., pp. 185-193.
[3] Ibid., p. 186. [4] Ibid.

the "Xenophontic thoughtlessness"[1] by which the action of the daimonion "lapses into the category of the trivial and the insipid."[2]

Kierkegaard very ably places the daimonion in the context of the whole of Socrates' life, and in a few words gives a significant insight into how and where the daimonion functioned for Socrates, and how radical a form of guidance it gave:

> In place of the god-consciousness permeating everything, even the most insignificant expression of Greek life, . . . he substituted a silence in which a warning voice was only occasionally audible, a voice which (and this contains virtually the deepest polemic) never concerned itself with the substantial interests of the life of the state, never expressed itself concerning these, but merely occupied itself with Socrates' and at the most his friends' wholly private and particular affairs.[3]

Thus, for Kierkegaard, the daimonion dealt neither with the most trivial nor with the most wide-ranging concerns. The most important decisions that Socrates made, the most important questions he wrestled with, the most significant insights he achieved, all were independent of his daimonion's influence in any literal sense. Only on private matters, beyond the scope of reason to determine and affecting usually just one person at a time, did the daimonion "manifest itself" or "occur." Never did it give guidance respecting the major concerns of the whole community.

The principal contribution, and a critically important one, that Kierkegaard makes to an understanding of Socrates'

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[1] Ibid., p. 187. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 188.

daimonion arises out of his conviction that, rather than treat the problem of the daimonion in isolation, one must see it from the inside, "from within," and try not so much to "explain" it as to "conceive" it.[1] His most significant comment on the daimonion is this:

> So long as the problem of the daimonic in Socrates is treated in isolation, so long as it is regarded externally, it will naturally remain inexplicable though there be a multitude of conjectures both necessary and indispensable. If, on the other hand, one regards the problem from within, then what presented itself as an insurmountable barrier appears as a necessary limit that restrains the eyes', and with this thought's, hasty flight, forces it back from the peripheral towards what is central, and thereby makes it possible to conceive.[2]

It is this conception of the daimonion as a "necessary limit" that keeps it from becoming an "insurmountable barrier." It was as a limit that Socrates conceived the daimonion to operate within him, and so it must likewise be conceived by anyone who would hope to understand it. Kierkegaard cites Hegel as maintaining this same view, and quotes with approval that passage previously given where Hegel claims that, in positing the individual as capable of deciding for himself, free from the authority of the state or traditional morality, Socrates puts it in terms of a daimonion which he experienced within, that counseled and guided him.[3]

Like Hegel, Kierkegaard relates the phenomenon of the daimonion closely to Socrates' crucial decision to bring the issues of his life before the bar of his own reason, there to be ratified. The daimonion comes close to being a symbol for

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 189. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Supra*, p. 164.

his inwardly, freely deciding for himself. It is intimately connected, part and parcel with Socrates' self-knowing and so with his authentic freedom.

For Kierkegaard, the most important result that can come from considering the daimonion is to have "conceived" the daimonion, to be able to see what it stood for in Socrates; i.e., the decisiveness and certainty of subjectivity, as opposed to an automatic and unthinking reliance on the state and custom. It _is_ a _crux philologorum_, but it becomes less so when it is conceived as a "necessary limit" to keep the focus upon how radical was the new freedom that Socrates exercised in making his decisions for himself, in determining himself inwardly, subjectively.

Relating it to the Greeks' dependence upon external oracles, Kierkegaard summarizes the significance of the daimonion: "Instead of the oracle, Socrates had his daimon. This daimonic lies in the transition from the oracle's external relation to the individual to the full inwardness of freedom; and, as still being in this transition, it pertains to representation."[1]

Others

Besides the four to whom attention has been directed in this chapter, other philosophers too have variously commented on Socrates' daimonion. What they have said is indicative of the range of opinion that has existed among thoughtful,

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[1] _The Concept of Irony_, pp. 190-191.

able scholars. Those cited in this final section are Montaigne, Schleiermacher, Schopenhauer, John Stuart Mill and Bertrand Russell.

Montaigne

Among philosophers, few show such an unbridled admiration for Socrates as does Montaigne. While he admits that "Nature did him wrong,"[1] he discounts any suggestion that Socrates had to struggle against sensual passions. In the essay "Of Physiognomy" he claims that "never so excellent a soul made itself,"[2] and in "Of Cruelty" he writes that "I know his reason to be so powerful and sovereign over him that she would never have suffered a vicious appetite so much as to spring in him."[3] He believes that Socrates' accusers were shortly ostracized and finally hanged themselves, and he is glad.[4]

His understanding of the daimonion makes of it an operation of Socrates' own will, rather than a separate guardian spirit external to himself. He does not rule out that it might be "divine inspiration"[5] that Socrates received, but its source is not to be understood as a personal genius. Montaigne's fullest statement on the daimonion not only suggests what it is, but validates the counsel it gives. It is in his essay "Of Prognostication":

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[1] III, 311. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., II, 103.
[4] Ibid., III, 307. [5] Ibid., I, 46.

> Socrates' daimon was perhaps a sort of impulsion of the will, which made itself felt without waiting for the counsel of his reason. In a well-purified soul, prepared by the constant practice of wisdom and virtue, as his was, it is very likely that his inclinations, though rash and unconsidered, were always weighty and worthy to be followed.[1]

Schleiermacher

Of special interest to Schleiermacher is the problem of how to regard Socrates, whether from a Platonic or Xenophontic perspective. He sees the two as mutually exclusive, and writes that "the only rational course then that seems to be left is to give up one or the other of these contradictory assumptions."[2] He cannot bring himself to do this thoroughly, but leans decidedly in the direction of the Platonic Socrates, in opposition to the prevailing mood of his day. He regrets the disrepute into which Socrates had fallen as a philosopher, and asks "whether the judges he has met with among posterity have not been as unjust, in denying his philosophical worth, and his merits in the cause of philosophy, as his contemporaries were in denying his worth as a citizen."[3]

Concerning the daimonion, he discredits Xenophon's picture of it as a separate little oracle, and concludes from a study of Plato's dialogs that Socrates looked upon his daimonion not as any genius attending him but, more vaguely,

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[1] Ibid., I, 45-6, as translated in Sauvage, p. 171.

[2] Friederich Schleiermacher, "The Worth of Socrates as a Philosopher," trans. C. T., The Philological Museum, II (1833), 540.

[3] Ibid., p. 543.

as some heavenly voice or divine revelation.[1] Principally for this reason he regards the Theages, which makes the daimonion into a personal being, as a spurious dialog.[2] He even goes so far as to declare the Apology 40 a an interpolation upon Plato, since it tends to the picture of the daimonion as a separate spiritual being.[3]

Specifically, Schleiermacher says of the daimonion that it "denotes the province of such rapid moral judgments as cannot be referred to distinct grounds, which accordingly Socrates did not attribute to his proper self; for instance, presentiment of the issue of an undertaking, attraction and repulsion in reference to particular individuals."[4] In the word "province" he appears to be anticipating the sort of symbolic interpretation that Hegel and Kierkegaard give to the daimonion. In the word "moral" he links the daimonion with the functions of conscience.

Schopenhauer

Of the modern philosophers, Arthur Schopenhauer reveals the most profound understanding of the intuitive element that is present in the Socratic-Platonic "Idea." Doubtless the

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[1]Zeller, Socrates . . ., p. 85.

[2]Friedlander, II, 153.

[3]John Burnet, Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1924), p. 165.

[4]Quoted in Henry Jackson, "The Daimonion of Socrates," The Journal of Philology, V (1874), 232.

reason for this is that his own predisposition to regard the intuitive as crucial made him extra sensitive to the degree to which an "Idea" is not so much rationally as intuitively grasped. In his principal work, The World as Will and Idea, he writes that "only through pure contemplation . . . which ends entirely in the object can Ideas be comprehended; and the nature of genius consists in pre-eminent capacity for such contemplation."[1]

With this conviction, it would seem that Schopenhauer too, like Schleiermacher, would interpret Socrates' daimonion as related to his natural powers of contemplation or to an inner purity or self-knowledge which produced the intimations he received. Such is not the case, however. Rather than relating the daimonion to an intuitive comprehension by Socrates himself, he assigns it a place with dreams, ghosts, and similar occult phenomena.[2]

John Stuart Mill

Alongside his interest and participation in the philosophical radicalism of the nineteenth century, Mill also maintained an interest in classical philosophy, and was an able interpreter of Plato. He published a translation and commentary for four of the dialogs of Plato, among them the Phaedrus. In discussing the passage in which Socrates refers to his daimonion,

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[1]Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Idea, trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp (3 vols., London: Trubner & Co., 1886), I, 240.

[2]Friedlander, I, 33.

Mill suggests that he is speaking only figuratively: "He affects to perceive what he calls the divine and customary sign which, he says, is continually stopping him when he is about to undertake anything."[1] In his translation of the passage,[2] Mill has Socrates referring to his "soul" and saying that "mine pricked me while I was speaking."[3]

It is thus only as a figure of speech that Mill understands the daimonion; further, he believes that this is how Socrates too regarded it. Socrates' reason for the "affectation" Mill does not explore. Probably he would have thought it to be a simple matter of expediencey, putting his experience in terms that his fellow Athenians would be able to understand.

Bertrand Russell

For a reliable account of Socrates' beliefs and behavior, Russell cites the Apology of Plato, which in his view "gives a clear picture of a man of a certain type: a man very sure of himself, high-minded, indifferent to worldly success, believing that he is guided by a divine voice, and persuaded that clear thinking is the most important requisite for right living."[4] He sees Socrates as "the perfect Orphic saint,"

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[1]John Stuart Mill, Four Dialogs of Plato, ed. Ruth Borchardt (London: Watts & Co., 1946), p. 77.

[2]Plato Phaedrus 242 c. [3]Mill, p. 77.

[4]Bertrand Russell, History of Western Philosophy (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1961), p. 89.

though "not an orthodox Orphic,"[1] and remarks that at every point except for the high priority given to reason he resembles a Christian martyr or a Puritan.[2]

Writing specifically of the daimonion, Russell says: "There hardly seems any doubt that the historical Socrates claimed to be guided by an oracle or daimonion. Whether this was analagous to what a Christian would call the voice of conscience, or whether it appeared to him as an actual voice, it is impossible to know."[3] Thus, while he recognizes that Socrates did experience the daimonion, he does not venture to define it, but--true to his general philosophical stance--regards it as outside the possibility of actual knowledge.

So have been presented in this chapter the views of modern philosophers concerning the daimonion of Socrates. From the four who have given considerable attention to the daimonion, and from others who have discussed it to lesser extent, the direction of modern interpretation becomes clear. It is not as a personal genius or guardian spirit that the daimonion is to be conceived, but as an aspect of Socrates' own personality: an inner predisposition, an inclination of his will, a symbol of his subjectivity, a "necessary limit" for the time of transition from external authority to internal freedom--whatever the phrase, in any case a phenomenon totally internal if not identical to Socrates. This far modern philosophers can agree, save for the agnosticism of a Bertrand

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[1] Ibid., p. 91. [2] Ibid., p. 89. [3] Ibid., p. 90.

Russell and others who will say nothing of it at all.

Alongside the interest that a few philosophers have shown in the daimonion, there has been a continuing interest, as intense as it is broad, among the many who can be classed generally as Socratic scholars, for whom the daimonion is not only an enticing crux philologorum but a necessary problem in Socratic studies. Their number is large, their interpretations varied; and it is to these that the discussion now turns, in a final attempt to discern through the considered thoughts of others what Socrates' daimonion was and did.

CHAPTER VIII

INTERPRETATION BY MODERN SOCRATIC SCHOLARS

In the more than 100 years since Kierkegaard conceived Socrates' daimonion as a "necessary limit," the principal contributions to an understanding of the daimonion have been made not by any major philosopher but rather by a large number of classical scholars whose interest in the ancient Greeks, and in Socrates in particular, has led them to take a fresh look at the daimonion.

As a group, these modern Socratic scholars, beginning with the same evidence from Plato, Xenophon, and other early sources, have interpreted the daimonion in a variety of ways, producing a wide range of answers on just what the daimonion was and how it operated in the life of Socrates. The spectrum of opinion they present confirms the difficulty of accurately defining the daimonion, and suggests further the wisdom of exploring their views prior to attempting a final evaluation of it. Rather, however, than to consider them in a chronological order, from the nineteenth century to the present day, it seems more profitable--especially in view of their number--to group the scholars under several broad classifications, according to the way they "lean" in their conceptions of the

daimonion. This is the pattern adopted in the chapter.

There are, in the light of the assumptions granted within this discussion, three views of Socrates' daimonion which appear credible: the voice of reason, the voice of the sub-conscious, the voice of God. Each of these interpretations has its able exponents, and for each view two scholars in particular will be cited, in order that the case may be put forward with strength. Additional scholars will be consulted to complement the view being presented, where this will extend or clarify the argument. While those scholars who give special emphasis to the daimonion will naturally be prominent in the discussion, virtually every eminent Socratic scholar of the last 100 years will be cited, so that his opinion of the daimonion might at least be suggested.

Classifications, no matter how carefully made, inevitably result in some "forcing" of the material; and doubtless this occurs to a degree in the pages that follow. Wherever this seems to be a possibility, however, care has been taken to note that fact, and to suggest that this or that interpretation is more a "leaning" of a scholar than it is his firm conviction. Often this turns out to be the case. While some say definitely what the daimonion is, others move only a little ways beyond a cautious agnosticism, joining those whom Kierkegaard pictures as saying with a thoughtful air, "Ah, what is one to say?"

Before moving into a presentation of the three credible views of the daimonion, it will be necessary first to discuss

briefly and to dismiss the two naive interpretations that have found some support among Socratic scholars. One of these is an understanding of the daimonion as the voice of conscience, and the other as a mark of insanity. Then will follow a discussion of Socrates' daimonion as (1) the voice of reason, citing especially the scholars Riddell and Jackson; (2) the voice of the sub-conscious, citing among others Zeller and Myers; and (3) the voice of God, citing particularly Forbes and Guardini.

To conclude the chapter there will be a brief section devoted to a consideration of the interest--and more recently the lack of interest--that psychiatry and psychology have so far shown in Socrates' daimonion, and the probable reasons for this.

Naive Interpretations

The first reaction to the evidence that Socrates, preeminently the man of reason, appeared to obey unquestioningly the inner promptings of what he called his daimonion is likely to be one of surprise. For one whose knowledge of Socrates is slight, and who does not pursue to any depth a consideration of the daimonion, there is the further likelihood that the daimonion will be summarily dismissed either as simply Socrates' conscience, which told him right from wrong, or as an indication of partial insanity. "It must be his conscience," or "He must be nuts!"--these are the naive interpretations that are apt to be given to the daimonion, where there is only a

limited attention to it.

While there are certainly no major Socratic scholars who adopt either of these views, there is surprisingly some support for them among lesser scholars who, though able enough in other respects, have a "blind spot" when it comes to an understanding of the daimonion. These are cited below, not to discredit otherwise competent and in some cases creative thinkers, but in order to make clear what it means to call Socrates' daimonion the voice of conscience, or a mark of insanity, and why it is that such a conception is untenable.

Voice of Conscience

To equate the promptings of the daimonion with the operation of conscience is a natural enough assumption to make, upon first encountering Socrates and his daimonion. E. B. Osborn, who begins by aptly describing the daimonion as a "spiritual agent,"[1] goes on to suggest and then further to develop the conception of the daimonion as in fact the voice of conscience. He compares its relation to Socrates with Socrates' function as the "incarnate conscience"[2] of fifth century Greece. While he allows that the daimonion may have a divine source and may be in effect God speaking within Socrates, he writes:

It is sufficient, however, to regard the "sign" or

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[1] E. B. Osborn, Socrates and His Friends (London: English Universities Press, 1939), p. 159.

[2] Ibid., p. 13.

> "inner oracle" of Socrates as what we call the voice of conscience. With most men, whose thoughts are governed by considerations of self-interest, . . . this voice is seldom overheard; it is a case of low audibility. Yet even the most careless person, when contemplating some base action, is apt to be suddenly arrested and dissuaded by a warning from within, imperative if inarticulate. The process of unconscious cerebration, the secret argument between Just Reason and Unjust Reason, has suddenly reached the right conclusion; the powers that make for righteousness have at last prevailed. . . . With men of a "tender conscience," in the habit of considering each intention in its moral aspect, the voice of conscience is heard rather than overheard, renders its decisive verdicts without delay, and in the end becomes a perpetual inspiration to right conduct. . . . If the voice of conscience was not Socrates' discovery, he was the first of the Hellenes to discover the spiritual advantages of revering it as divine and oracular (as indeed it is) and of making it the guide and guard of daily conduct.[1]

In the same vein, Freeman and Appel write of Socrates' daimonion as "the voice of his religious conscience,"[2] and add that "he worshiped this voice as the voice of God."[3]

This understanding of the daimonion as an inner private oracle, a virtual deification of conscience, is not however the only way in which the daimonion has been seen to relate to conscience. George Boas, who likewise equates the promptings of the daimonion with the promptings of conscience, writes in a more rationalistic context: "It is quite possible that the daimon of Socrates was simply the accumulated habits

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[1] Ibid., pp. 164-65.

[2] Eugene Freeman and David Appel, The Wisdom and Ideas of Plato (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, 1942), p. 23.

[3] Ibid.

[4] George Boas, Rationalism in Greek Philosophy (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), p. 118.

of moral judgment which he had absorbed from his total education, at home, on the battlefield, in the agora. The compulsive force of the habitual is not something superficial but becomes an integral part of our character."[1]

The difficulty with any conception of Socrates' daimonion which relates it to conscience is apparent when the scope of the daimonion's warnings is considered. In actual fact the daimonion seldom if ever prompted Socrates in matters of ethical judgment. Its warnings concerned not moral issues but rather matters of expediency, and specifically those apparently beyond the power of reason to anticipate, e.g., his manner of defense at his trial, his remaining in the gymnasium to meet the two sophists. These were not ethical decisions, in the respect of one course of action being "right" and another "wrong." Rather they were options open to Socrates, the consequences of which he could not have foreseen. Whatever the daimonion was, it was certainly not a way around or a divine assist concerning the personal moral responsibility Socrates saw and accepted for his own life.

Mark of insanity

No Socratic scholar of the last 100 years, major or minor, has maintained on the basis of the daimonion that Socrates was insane. Prior to that, however, there was a physician-psychologist of the first half of the nineteenth century who seriously proposed that Socrates was insane, on

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

the grounds of the daimonion. He is Claude Lelut, whose book Du Demon de Socrate was published in Paris in 1836.

In the widely read and controversial book, Lelut claims to be giving "a specimen of the application of the science of psychology to the science of history."[1] He argues from the evidence of Plato and Xenophon that Socrates believed he actually and audibly heard a voice, and so was insane, subject to hallucinations and delusions. He boldly asserts, "que Socrate etait un fou,"[2] a madman who

> . . . believed himself to be attended by a personal genius perceived certainly by the sense of hearing, perhaps also by that of sight, and that these false perceptions or hallucinations grew with his years and with his conviction of their divine origin, until he persuaded himself that he was able by a sort of moral magnetism to exercise a beneficial influence upon his associates, and that at last the hallucination became so strong that it determined him at the trial to throw away his chance of acquittal by a willful defiance of his judges.[3]

He goes on to cite other cases, similar to that of Socrates, where hallucinations led to a like pattern of beliefs and action.

In the years just before 1900, a group of psychologists, who were attempting to verify the hypothesis that insanity is one element in genius, accepted Lelut's conclusion about Socrates, though basing it not alone in the daimonion but in the

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[1]F. W. H. Myers, Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death (2 vols., New York: Longman, Greens & Co., 1954), II, 95.

[2]Quoted in Zeller, Socrates . . ., p. 85.

[3]Quoted in Jackson, The Journal of Philology, V, 239.

combination of observed eccentricities in Socrates' person and behavior. Chief among them was the Italian Cesare Lombroso, whose psychological researches were designed to show a connection between genius and mental disease.

Lombroso draws support for his theories from classical and modern writers who likewise infer such a connection. He cites a passage where Aristotle remarks that "famous poets, artists and statesmen frequently suffer from melancholia or madness, as did Ajax. In recent times such a disposition occurred in Socrates, Empedocles, Plato and many others."[1] To Aristotle's specific mention of Socrates he adds Diderot's more general observation that men of genius often "themselves fancy that some godlike being rises up within them, seeks them out and uses them. How near is genius to madness! Yet one is locked up and bound with chains while to the other we raise monuments."[2]

In his major work The Man of Genius, published in 1891, Lombroso attempts to document Socrates' insanity with a flood of illustrations of his eccentricities, ranging from a "cretin-like physiognomy" to a "photoparasthesia which enabled him to gaze at the sun for a considerable time without experiencing any discomfort."[3] The daimonion for Lombroso thus becomes one among a number of factors which taken together

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[1]Quoted from an unnamed work of Lombroso in Ernst Kretschmer, The Psychology of Men of Genius, trans. R. B. Cattell (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1931), p. 3.

[2]Quoted from an unnamed work of Lombroso in Kretschmer, p. 4.

[3]Quoted in J. T. Forbes, Socrates (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913), p. 223.

establish that Socrates was both a genius and insane.

Subsequent scholarship has largely disregarded Lombroso's claim, not even bothering to dispute it. Seldom is it mentioned by Socratic scholars, and then only to deny it, as does J. T. Forbes: "The uncritical heaping together of illustrations, of which Lombroso's book is full, does not prepossess the mind in favor of the theory."[1] More significantly, later psychologists interested in the relationship between genius and insanity disallow such circumstantial evidence as adequate grounds for claiming that such a genius as Socrates was also insane. Even Ernst Kretschmer, who in the 1920's attempted to revive interest in Lombroso's researches, and who shows himself sympathetic to the direction of Lombroso's thought, cannot concur in the judgment that because a man is a genius he is thereby insane. "Only this much can one say: that mental disease, and more especially those ill-defined conditions on the boundary of mental disease, are decidedly more frequent among men of genius, at least in certain groups, than they are among the general population."[2] Doubtless Schopenhauer is right in saying that "genius is nearer to madness than to the average intellect."[3] But that is far from saying that Socrates was a madman.

A number of Socratic scholars, while denying their subject's insanity, are quite prepared to note his

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[1]P. 224. [2]Kretschmer, p. 6.

[3]Quoted in <u>ibid</u>., p. 4.

eccentricities. Perhaps the strongest statement of these from a twentieth century scholar comes from J. A. Stewart, who in 1904 noted that Socrates "held his hearers spellbound by the magnetism of his face and speech,"[1] and concluded that he possessed a "mesmeric influence"[2] over others: "The comparison of his influence with that of the electric fish (Meno 80 a) may be thought to imply as much; while his familiar spirit must be taken as evidence of 'abnormality.'"[3] The able classical scholar and editor, Henry Jackson, wrote a significant article in 1874 in which he held that the explanation for the daimonion is that Socrates was subject to hallucinations of the sense of hearing.[4] For Jackson, however, this is by no means to say that Socrates was insane. Indeed, he is shortly to be cited in this discussion as one of the two scholars who most ably present the case for the daimonion as the voice of Socrates' reason.

Against the view that Socrates was insane, the most telling argument centers around his well-deserved reputation as pre-eminently a man of reason. Obstinately rational he may have been, but certainly rational. As Forbes suggests, following his citations from Lombroso: "If there is one thing prominent in Socrates, it is reason. He might be accused of being prosaic, of showing little sympathy with any but the rational side of things, but he is eminently sane."[5]

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[1] P. 26. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

[4] The Journal of Philology, V, 232 ff. [5] P. 224.

To the argument that Socrates heard voices, the reply must be that this is of itself no proof of his insanity, unless by definition hearing voices is to be a sufficient condition of insanity. Further, the promptings which Socrates claimed to receive from the daimonion were of themselves anything but irrational, and could better be said to bear the marks of reason rather than delusion. Only the manner of occurrence of the daimonion, not its counsels, was strange. Finally, it would seem far wiser, in light of the total person of Socrates and his considerable mental and moral achievements, to look upon the daimonion--in Myers' terms--not as something abnormal but as something supernormal.[1]

No more need be said concerning the claims that Socrates was insane, except to note that, with one exception, nowhere in the psychological literature of the twentieth century is there an argument to support his insanity;[2] and then to agree with Zeller that "those who rightly understand Plato, and can distinguish what is genuine from what is false, will not need a refutation of these untruths."[3]

Following this consideration of the naive interpretations of Socrates' daimonion as the voice of conscience or a mark of insanity, the discussion may now turn to the first of three credible views of the daimonion: the voice of reason.

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[1] II, 95.

[2] <u>Infra</u>, pp. 231-32.

[3] <u>Socrates . . .</u>, p. 85.

The Voice of Reason

For the view that Socrates' daimonion may best be understood as the voice of his reason, the nineteenth century scholars Riddell and Jackson present the evidence most ably. Accordingly, the discussion here centers in their writings. Further support comes, though more incidentally, from Ashley, Jowett, Shorey, and Cooper.

Riddell

In an appendix to his 1877 translation of Plato's Apology, James Riddell takes a close look at Socrates' daimonion and concludes, after a comprehensive examination of the references to it in Plato and Xenophon, that it was really Socrates' reason at work, though Socrates did not recognize it as such. He grants that Socrates conceived the daimonion to be a divine sign or agency (though not a divine being), but denies that it must be so regarded now:

> We are not bound to accept Socrates' account of the cause of this sudden feeling; first, because he was no psychologist, and while in his own belief he was merely describing his own consciousness . . . he was really importing into his description an inference of his own; secondly, because he rather diminishes the weight of his own testimony for us, not merely by his attention to dreams but more by his absolute faith in mantike[1] . . .; and thirdly, because while he believed himself to have detected divine agency here, he was perfectly unconscious of it in its more ordinary province, as the author of "all holy desires, good counsels, and all just works."[2]

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[1]Greek for "divination."

[2]James Riddell, The Apology of Plato (Oxford: The University Press, 1877), p. 113.

Riddell places great importance on the quite different meanings in fifth century Greece of daimon (a separate spiritual being) and daimonion (a divine sign or agency). Whether rightly or wrongly, he assumes a sharp difference in usage, and claims that not until the time of Plutarch did daimonion begin to appear as a diminutive of daimon. On this assumption, it follows that neither Plato nor Xenophon, nor of course Socrates himself, regarded the daimonion as a private god. Riddell sees Xenophon using daimonion always as a noun, referring to the sign of a divine being, and Plato's use of the term as "sometimes adjectival and sometimes elliptically substantival."[1]

Like other nineteenth century Socratic scholars, Riddell shows a marked preference for Xenophon over Plato, as being the more trustworthy of the two. He takes great pains to differentiate the ways in which the daimonion is seen to function by the two men. For Xenophon, Socrates' daimonion is neither his conscience nor an oracle to prophesy the future. It functions rather in a very practical manner, to pronounce upon a proposed course of action, and not upon the morality but the expediency of the action; i.e., "in the Socratic sense of what was really for the best."[2] This is not to say that the daimonion would be excluded from solving moral problems, but that it would function only "where the [moral] obligation either was obscure or mainly depended on the consequences."[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 110. [2] Ibid., p. 112. [3] Ibid.

Riddell's main concern, however, in examining the evidence from Xenophon, is to establish that the daimonion "was not a mere presentiment, a foreboding of chance misfortune or chance success, the mere reflection of a man's own feelings of happiness or gloom."[1] In other words, it did not function in any way that reason could not.

For Plato, Riddell sees that Socrates' daimonion functions over a broader spectrum than reason can cover. In some of the instances Plato cites, the daimonion--whether warning Socrates against some course or reminding him of a duty he has neglected--operates so as to lead him to an action for which there simply are no rational grounds. The evidence from Plato indicates that, operating sometimes without any connection to his reason, the daimonion supplied Socrates with "a sudden sense, immediately before carrying a purpose into effect, of the expediency of abandoning it."[2]

The difference in the ways Xenophon and Plato conceive the daimonion to function is of course crucial to Riddell's argument that the daimonion is the voice of reason. The argument finally stands or falls with the judgment that Xenophon may be trusted and Plato may not. As Riddell says, "All Xenophon's notices of it encourage the view that it was a quick exercise of a judgment informed by knowledge of the subject, trained by experience, and inferring from cause to effect without consciousness of the process."[3] Thus, while the

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 113. [3] Ibid., p. 114.

reasoning was going on in Socrates' sub-conscious mind, it was nevertheless a reasoning process.

Riddell readily grants that the broader evidence from Plato proves "a little embarrassing to this view,"[1] especially of course the note that Socrates experienced the guidance of his daimonion from childhood. In addition, the instances specifically cited in the Phaedrus and the Euthydemus do not harmonize with Riddell's view, since it is not a matter of reasoned judgment which recalls Socrates from crossing the stream or forbids him from leaving his seat in the undressing room. If these accounts be historical, Riddell admits that the daimonion cannot be rationalized, and certainly not equated to the operation of Socrates' reason, even unrecognized.

However, Riddell continues, there are good reasons for doubting these two events as Plato records them. To Riddell, they seem too obviously a "part of the machinery of the dialogs in which they stand."[2] Further, only Plato extends the operation of the daimonion into the realm of chance; and, as he is less faithful than Xenophon in other respects re: Socrates, so here he has again likely exercised a poetic license.

So arguing, Riddell concludes that the daimonion is best understood as the voice of Socrates' reason, functioning unbeknowns in his sub-conscious mind and seeming to him to be a divine sign. "The fact which the daimonion represented was

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 115.

an unanalyzed act of judgment--not on a principle, but on a particular course of action already projected; not on the morality of this, but on its expedience in the Socratic sense of the term."[1]

Jackson

In 1874, Henry Jackson published in the highly respected Journal of Philology an important article which he titled "The Daimonion of Socrates," in which he claims that Socrates' experiences of his daimonion were in fact, as Lelut had hinted, hallucinations of the sense of hearing. Far from seeing in this evidence of insanity, however, Jackson concludes that the daimonion signified a peculiar manifestation to Socrates of the results of his own rapidly functioning mind; i.e., that the daimonion was the voice of his reason.

With other nineteenth century scholars, Jackson accepts Cicero's description of the daimonion as a "divine or supernatural somewhat" (divinum quiddam) as evidence that Socrates did not himself attempt to define it, nor did he ever attribute direct personality to it, nor did he ever name a particular deity as its source. Taking the vagueness of Socrates' references as sufficient warrant to question even the divine nature that Socrates believed his daimonion to have, Jackson summarizes the material from Plato and Xenophon and reviews the various theories of his contemporaries. He discards, one by one, the claims that Socrates was guilty of a pious fraud,

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[1]Ibid., p. 116.

that he was indulging his accustomed irony, that the daimonion was the voice of his conscience, that it related to his belief in his divine mission, and that it was simply a highly-developed self-knowledge.

Having disposed of every credible alternative, he argues that the only course left open is to "regard the sign as a psychological hallucination, illusion, or delusion to which Socrates was subject."[1] Turning then to Lelut's conclusions he rejects any suggestion that the daimonion is proof of illusion or delusion, and criticizes Lelut for his "reckless acceptance of all testimony,"[2] especially the spurious material from the Theages and Apuleius' On the God of Socrates. To Jackson, the acceptable evidence shows that the sign was audible only, not visible, and that there was nothing irrational in what the voice said. "The sole peculiarity of the warning," he writes "was the manner of its occurrence."[3]

The end of his argument, in which it becomes clear that he regards the daimonion as the voice of reason, is that "Socrates was subject, not to delusions of the mind, but only to hallucinations of the sense of hearing, so that the rational suggestions of his own brain appeared to him to be projected without him, and to be returned to him through the outward ear."[4] The content of the daimonion's warnings he believes to have come from Socrates' reason. By separating

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[1] The Journal of Philology, V, 239.

[2] Ibid., V, 240. [3] Ibid., V, 241. [4] Ibid.

the content from the manner of occurrence, Jackson feels he is "able to unite the theory of a specially developed tact[1] with the theory that Socrates was liable to hallucinations of the sense of hearing. . . . The voice was heard by Socrates to deliver a warning which in its matter resulted from the healthy exercise of his reasoning powers."[2]

For the view to hold, it must be that hallucination does not necessarily imply mental disease. This Jackson attempts to establish, quoting sources which point to the presence of hallucination in very gifted men, often very intellectual men. Subsequent psychological researches, in reaction to Lombroso's claim that genius and insanity are necessarily connected, would support Jackson's position, and lend credence to his conclusion.

He summarizes as follows: "Socrates was subject to hallucinations of the sense of hearing which, so far from implying any aberration of his reasoning faculties, were the momentary expressions of the results of rapid deliberation, and derived an extraordinary value from the accuracy and delicacy of his highly cultivated tact."[3] The daimonion was the voice of Socrates' reason.

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[1]This is the theory advocated by Jackson's respected contemporary, Eduard Zeller.

[2]Journal of Philology, V, 242.

[3]Ibid., V, 247.

Other scholars

A number of scholars across recent centuries have likewise concluded that the daimonion is best understood as the voice of reason. Included among them is a team of translators of Xenophon, headed by Ashley, who in 1847 published through Henry G. Bohn an important edition of all Xenophon's works. In footnotes to the Memorabilia, the translator holds that Socrates spoke lightly of his daimonion, as a man today might speak of his "good fairy," but that a superstitious Greek people took him literally and made something supernatural out of it, and that he let them do it. However, in a comment on a specific reference to the daimonion, the translator writes: "Neither does this, or any of the like instances, oppose the opinion of those who say Socrates' genius was nothing more than sound judgment or reason, free from all the warpings and mists of passion, improved by experience and a careful observation of nature and things."[1] To the suggestion that the daimonion might have been more than the operation of Socrates' reason, he opposes the very statement of Socrates himself, when in speaking to Xenophon he says "I have given you the advice of a mere mortal; in matters which involve uncertainty and doubt it is my reasoned judgment that the oracle of Apollo should be consulted."[2] In his most comprehensive statement on

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[1]Ashley, Spelman, Smith, Fielding, and Others (trans.), The Whole Works of Xenophon (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1847), p. 520.

[2]Xenophon Anabasis iii. 1. 3-7.

the daimonion, the translator writes:

> The Genius of Socrates, so differently spoken of, was nothing more than an uncommon strength of judgment and justness of thinking; which measuring events by the rules of prudence . . . rendered Socrates capable of looking as it were into futurity and foretelling what would be the success of those affairs about which he had been consulted by others or was deliberating on for himself.[1]

Benjamin Jowett, the renowned translator of Plato, is another who understands the daimonion to be the voice of Socrates' reason. Collaborating with Lewis Campbell, he published in 1894 a series of notes on Plato's Republic. The note on 496 c stresses that Socrates always (in Plato) refers to the daimonion in the neuter gender, and includes this comment: "There is nothing wonderful or mysterious beyond the fact itself: no intimations are given by the daimonion of future events or divine truths. Nor can we easily set bounds to the latent forms of instinct which reason may assume, or deny the possibility of mental phenomena which are without parallel in ordinary experience."[2]

Paul Shorey, whose definitive work What Plato Said appeared in 1933, also leans very strongly toward a conception of the daimonion as the voice of reason. In his brief introduction to Socrates, Shorey describes him as a man who "had taught himself to obey one law only, the oracle of the higher

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[1]Ashley, Spelman, Smith, Fielding, and Others (trans.), The Whole Works of Xenophon, p. 511.

[2]Benjamin Jowett and Lewis Campbell, Plato's Republic, Vol. III, Notes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), pp. 285-86.

reason in his breast."[1] He cites Socrates' reply to Crito in the Crito 46 b as evidence for this: " I am still what I always have been--a man who will accept no argument but that which on reflection I find to be truest."[2] In a specific reference to the daimonion, Shorey writes in a footnote to his translation of the Republic 496 c that "the enormous fanciful literature on the daimonion does not concern the interpretation of Plato, who consistently treats it as a kind of spiritual tact checking Socrates from any act opposed to his true moral and intellectual interests."[3] While not committing himself fully, Shorey would be most at home with the daimonion as the voice of reason.

A final scholar, John Gilbert Cooper, is included among these who see Socrates' daimonion as the voice of his reason, as much for the charm of his extravagant language as for any new insight or support he might offer. Cooper was an eighteenth century scholar who in 1771 authored The Life of Socrates. He writes dogmatically concerning the daimonion, scoring those many who have "regarded it as a real Spirit, through the gloomy Twilight of a dull Understanding."[4] His own words say best how he regarded the daimonion, and are here quoted at some length. For Cooper, the daimonion is to be seen not

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[1]P. 14. [2]Cited in ibid., p. 36.

[3]Paul Shorey (trans.), Plato's Republic (2 vols., London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1935), II, 52.

[4]John Gilbert Cooper, The Life of Socrates (London: J. Dodsley, 1771), p. 89.

> . . . in a superstitious Light, but as the Acquisition of a superior Understanding by Observation of the Causes of human Events. . . . [It is] nothing more than that inward Feeling inseparable from the Hearts of all good and wise Men, which (excited at first by probably Conjectures of future Event, collected from a retrospective View of the past and a Consideration of the invariable Connection of human Contingencies) works itself by degrees even into our Constitution, and gives the Breast an almost prophetic Sensation of what ought to be done, before the flower Faculties of the Mind can prove the moral Rectitude of the Conduct. . . . This much-talked-of Prescience was the Effect of a more refined Virtue and Prudence, which inspired his Heart with a more ardent Fire than those of others that were clogged with the foul Dregs of earthly Concupiscence. . . .
>
> So much I thought necessary to explain concerning the Daimon of our Philosopher, in order to confute those many absurdities entertained about it, which were first spawned from the muddy Head of Heathen Sophists, and since fondly fostered by the Ignorance-nursing Care of some of the Fathers. Now to proceed.[1]

The Voice of the Sub-conscious

Not all Socratic scholars of the last century or so concur in the judgment that the daimonion is best seen--in Cooper's words--as related to a "superior understanding" that functions prior to the "flower Faculties of the Mind." To some the daimonion is better described, not as the voice of reason, but as the voice of the sub-conscious. Deep within the being of Socrates, operating on non-rational planes, were forces that he in no way "understood," which guided him in matters of expediency and which manifested themselves to him under the form of an "inner voice." Zeller and Myers are two scholars who see the daimonion as the voice of Socrates' sub-conscious. So also, though with lesser emphasis, do Gomperz

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 92, 94, 96.

and Joel.

Zeller

One of the most respected of the classical scholars in the final decades of the nineteenth century was the German, Eduard Zeller. In his Socrates and the Socratic Schools, he gives a close and comprehensive look at the daimonion, and concludes that it is (in twentieth century language) the voice of Socrates' sub-conscious.

He notes the familiarity and almost flippancy with which Socrates and his friends speak about the daimonion, and in addition a certain vagueness in the manner of their speaking. Concerning the obvious difference in the way Plato and Xenophon use the word, he remarks that "it is much the same thing whether ti daimonion be taken for a substantive or an adjective. . . . The very difference between Xenophon and Plato proves how loosely Socrates spoke of the daimonion."[1]

In one respect, however, Socrates was not vague in his references to the daimonion. He never, says Zeller, regards it as a separate or distinct personality. "No passage in Plato or Xenophon speaks of Socrates holding intercourse with a genius . . .; [even] the Theages, with all its romance respecting the prophecies of the daimonion, expresses itself throughout indefinitely."[2]

Further, Socrates quite consistently sees his daimonion

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[1]Socrates . . ., pp. 86-87. [2]Ibid., pp. 85-86.

as an "internal oracle,"[1] the divine revelation to him from the gods or a god whom he does not name. That he interpreted the inner voice as a heavenly voice suggests to Zeller the strength of the hold that current beliefs had upon Socrates, as upon every man. Yet he was careful not to put it in the place of the traditional gods nor to equate it to a general oracle. "It was a private oracle in addition to those publicly recognized.[2]

Many of Zeller's contemporaries, with their own tradition of nineteenth century rationalism, were embarrassed by Socrates' self-acknowledged oracle. Zeller, less entrenched in the tradition, remarks that "somewhat humiliating it no doubt was in the eyes of rationalizing admirers, that a man otherwise so sensible as Socrates should have allowed himself to be ensnared by such a superstitious delusion."[3] He cites some of these scholars as claiming that the so-called supernatural revelations were really Socrates' shrewd inventions, or at the least products of his celebrated irony. Socrates had the intelligence to make right guesses concerning the future, and that explains the daimonion.

Zeller rejects such a rationalization of the daimonion, feeling it far better to regard the phenomenon the way Socrates did, as an instance of divine revelation. Better yet, however, is to look at the daimonion--as Socrates, a man of his time, was unable to do--through the eyes of modern man's

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[1] Ibid., p. 90. [2] Ibid., p. 221. [3] Ibid., p. 82.

understanding of himself. Zeller comes finally to a position regarding the daimonion that in twentieth century terms can be called the voice of the sub-conscious.

In this connection, he writes of Socrates: "Sometimes the soul of the philosopher, diving in to its own recesses, so far lost itself in this labor as to be insensible to external impressions. . . . In doing this, he discovered a residuum of feelings and impulses, which he watched with conscientious attention without being able to explain them from what he knew of his inner life."[1] Hence came his belief in the daimonion as of divine origin, a conviction arrived at almost as by a process of elimination.

Actually, as Zeller conceives the daimonion, it is "the general form which a vivid but unexplored sense of the propriety of a particular action assumed for the personal consciousness of Socrates."[2] Elsewhere he describes it simply as "the sense of what is suited to his individuality."[3] In his most complete statement on the daimonion, which deserves full quotation, Zeller writes of what in his judgment lies behind the operation of the daimonion:

> It might be some conscientious scruple overpowering the philosopher's feelings without his being fully conscious thereof. It might be some apprehension of the consequences of a step, such as sometimes instantaneously flashes on the expedient observer of men and of circumstances, before he can account to himself for the reasons of his misgiving. It might be that an action in itself neither immoral nor inappropriate, jarred on his feelings, as being out of harmony with his special mode of being

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[1] Ibid., p. 82. [2] Ibid., p. 95. [3] Ibid., p. 67.

> and conduct. It might be that on unimportant occasions all those unaccountable influences and impulses came into play, which contribute all the more to our mental attitude and decision in proportion as the object itself affords less definite grounds for decision. In this respect the daimonion has been rightly called "the inner voice of individual tact," understanding by tact a general sense of propriety in word and action as exemplified in the most varied relations of life in small things as well as in great. This Socrates early noticed in himself as unusually strong, and subsequently by his peculiarly keen and unwearied observation of himself and other men he developed it to such a pitch of accuracy, that it was seldom or as he believed never at fault. Its psychological origin was, however, concealed from his own consciousness. It assumed for him from the beginning the appearance of a foreign influence, a higher revelation, an oracle.[1]

Myers

In 1903 the English classical scholar F. W. H. Myers, who also founded the Society for Psychological Research, authored a two-volume work entitled Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death. In his chapter on motor automatism, he cites Socrates as a historic example of monitory inhibition. It is a case, he writes, "which can never lose its interest, a case which has been vouched for by the most practical, and discussed by the loftiest intellect of Greece--both of them intimate friends of the illustrious subject."[2]

He treats Socrates as an instance of wise automatism, believing that messages were conveyed to Socrates from his non-rational self, yet at a level deeper than the level of dream and confusion, "from some self whose monitions convey to us a wisdom profounder than we know."[3] So does he reveal

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[1] Ibid., pp. 95-96. [2] II, 95. [3] Ibid., II, 100.

his understanding of the daimonion as the voice of Socrates' sub-conscious.

While Myers speaks of the daimonion as a "monitory voice"[1] on occasion, he concludes that it was "not so much a definite voice as a sense of inhibition."[2] He sees that the instances of its occurrence fall into three categories, with some overlap from one to the other. Most instances are where the warning voice or its absence imparts to Socrates wise counsel, on both major and trivial matters. A second category covers those occasions where the warning voice gives knowledge not attainable by ordinary means, as of potential rapport. He conceives of "some inward and perhaps telepathic instinct expressed by the monitory voice"[3] which told Socrates without his consciously considering it whether or not a would-be companion could profit from the association. A third category includes a very few instances where something like clairvoyance might have been present. Here Myers admits the evidence to be very slender, such that he cannot be sure that the daimonion warned Socrates of anything beyond the ability of human wisdom to discover. Myers suggests that some rational guess is likely to have been made, though--to Socrates--all unconsciously.

From his study of the citations in Plato and Xenophon, Myers recognizes that the story of Socrates and his daimonion

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[1] Ibid., II, 98.

[2] Ibid., II, 103.

[3] Ibid., II, 98.

is "rich in unworked psychological suggestion."[1] While he indulges in it himself, and encourages others to do so, he can give no credence to Lelut's theory that--on the basis of the evidence--Socrates was insane. He calls attention to Lelut in order then to disagree with him. In his counter-argument he gives his most complete statement on the nature of the daimonion as the voice neither of conscious reason nor divine agency, but of the sub-conscious, subliminal self:

> The messages which Socrates received were only advanced examples of a process which, if supernormal, is not abnormal, and which characterizes that form of intelligence which we describe as genius . . ., best defined not as "an unlimited capacity of taking pains," but rather as a mental constitution which allows a man to draw readily into supraliminal life the products of subliminal thought. . . . Beneath the superficially conscious stratum of our being there is not only a stratum of dream and confusion, but a still subjacent stratum of coherent meditation as well. . . . The monitions which Socrates thus received were for the most part such as his own wiser self might well have given; and that where the limits of knowledge attainable by his own inmost reflection may possibly have been transcended, they seem to have been transcended in such a direction as a clairvoyant development of his own faculties might allow, rather than in such a way as to suggest the intervention of any external power.[2]

Other scholars

Among other prominent Socratic scholars, Theodor Gomperz is the one most convinced that the daimonion is the voice of Socrates' sub-conscious. While acknowledging Socrates to be "a man who was common-sense personified,"[3] and even charging him with showing an "exaggerated reverence for what is

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[1] *Ibid.*, II, 100. [2] *Ibid.*, II, 95-96. [3] II, 89.

founded on reflection,"[1] Gomperz recognizes that he also received unquestioningly the guidance of what he himself called "a voice" or "the accustomed sign." Gomperz notes too that Socrates attributed his daimonion to a god or spirit, and suggests that this was "as much because of his inability to explain it as because of the benefits he derived from obeying it."[2] To Socrates' credit, that is, he had both a logical ground (he could not accout for it otherwise) and a pragmatic ground (it benefited him) for regarding the daimonion as a divine sign.

For Gomperz, however, Socrates was mistaken in his estimate of the daimonion. It represented not the influence of an external spirit but rather the stirring of his own sub-conscious self. He writes that Socrates "was here guided by a species of instinct, a dim but truthful estimate of his own capabilities emerging from the sub-conscious undercurrents of psychic life."[3] Further than this very general statement on the daimonion, however, Gomperz is unwilling to go:

> Whether the warnings that arose from the depths of the unconscious took the form of actual hallucinations of the sense of hearing; or whether insignificant feelings of inhibition, such as we all have experienced, were also regarded by Socrates as instances of divine intervention, so that the daimonion became a common name for physical processes of more than one kind--on such questions as these we are thrown back on conjecture, and are hardly in a position to formulate even a conjecture with any show of probability.[4]

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[1] Ibid., I, 390.

[2] Ibid., II, 87.

[3] Ibid., II, 88.

[4] Ibid.

Karl Joel, a comtemporary of Gomperz just before the turn of the century, likewise looks upon the daimonion as related to forces at a non-rational level beneath the surface of Socrates' consciousness. In his 1893 work Der Echte und der Xenophontische Sokrates he suggests that the daimonion signified a reaction within Socrates' total self to his consciously restricting himself to rational modes of response, and that in fact his ruthless quest for intellectual clarity aroused in him sub-conscious forces which were all the more powerful for being suppressed. He writes of the daimonion that "it was the revenge of the alogon meros psyches[1] which driven back by this rationalist into the darkest corners of the soul thence exercised its sway all the more imposingly."[2]

The Voice of God

The third of the three credible views of Socrates' daimonion is that it was in fact what he believed it to be, a divine sign granted him by "the god." While he neither names nor describes the god, it is clear both that he truly believes in the god[3] and that he means no one of the traditional gods of Mount Olympus, but rather a god who is of purer spirit than to be conceived anthropomorphically. Even when Socrates uses the plural term "the gods" rather than the singular, there is

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[1]Greek for "irrational part of the soul."

[2]Quoted in H. G. Dakyns, "The Socrates of Xenophon--Studies by Joel and Richter," The Classical Review, VII (1893), 260.

[3]Plato Apology 35 e ; supra, p. 67.

implied a unity of being and purpose and a moral perfection that are absent from the popular conceptions. It seems not unwarranted to make a qualified equation of Socrates' "the god" with the Judaeo-Christian "God" as alike referring to an overarching Supreme Being, and so in fact many scholars have done.

Among this number there are those, especially within the twentieth century, who suggest that Socrates' experience of the daimonion is best described--albeit in figurative language--as his hearing the voice of God. The daimonion is in fact God's revealing his will to Socrates, what theology calls "special revelation." It is to be understood, though at best incompletely, by using that same metaphor that Socrates himself used: he heard the voice of God.

Forbes and Guardini are the two scholars who most ably present this view, and it is therefore upon them that the discussion centers. Further support for the view comes from Sauvage. In addition, there is a quintet of distinguished Socratic scholars who, while true to the tradition of pure scholarship are not anxious to involve themselves in claims concerning God and the supernatural, at least give evidence of an honest agnosticism, even a positive openness, regarding the possibility that Socrates' daimonion was in fact a "divine sign." They are the scholars Grote, Burnet, Taylor, Cornford, and Friedlander; and to each of them brief attention will be given.

Forbes

In 1913 there was published for a series of biographical studies a volume entitled Socrates, written by the British clergyman J. T. Forbes. In discussing Socrates' religious beliefs and practices, Forbes acknowledges with most scholars that Socrates very definitely held to a belief in a Supreme Being he called "the god," and goes further than most in conceiving the daimonion to be the voice of the god, or as he believes God.

Citing the evidence from Plato and Xenophon, he documents Socrates' firm belief in God, at the same time marking how far distant Socrates' religious beliefs were from those of his contemporaries. While he conformed in some measure to conventional piety, Socrates retained what Protestants call "the right of private judgment," and in fact regarded a subjective interpretation as both his right and his responsibility. He sustained his belief in God by reasoning about the being of God and his relations to men. All of this adds up, as Forbes remarks, to "a process which made Socrates a dangerous friend to orthodox Greek religion."[1] He virtually ignored tradition and external authority as grounds for belief, and found that belief rising instead out of his own experience of God.

One of the ways in which Socrates openly acknowledged the activity of God in his life was through the daimonion. He speaks of it as a "divine something" which surely expresses

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[1]P. 215.

the mind of God. But while Socrates believed God to be both the source and the guarantor of the daimonion, he held no such notion concerning his own human reason. He sensed God at work in the daimonion but not in the ordinary operations of his intellect.

This, for Forbes, is the defect in Socrates' own understanding of his daimonion. In singling out the daimonion as the "sign of the god," Socrates fails to see the activity of God in the more normal processes of reasoning, feeling moral obligation, etc. The suddenness and authoritative character of the special experiences led him to attribute them to exceptional divine intervention, but to that extent may also have prevented him from ascribing the whole of his mental life to God. Forbes writes that "all mental life is a participation in the reason of God; it is divine inspiration that gives us understanding."[1] It is precisely this that Socrates could not see. "Instead of saying simply that the 'sign' was a message from the divinity, if Socrates had generalized his explanation he would have said that all legitimate exercises of his inner life were no less and no more 'wrought in God' than his obedience to the restraints of the daimonion. The mistake was to identify inexplicability with divinity."[2]

Rather than following most other scholars in rationalizing the daimonion as a product of Socrates' reason or subconscious, Forbes accepts it as truly a sign from God,and

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[1] Ibid., p. 227. [2] Ibid., p. 228.

extends God's activity to account for all mental life. Beyond that, he notes the reverence with which Socrates regarded the daimonion as further indication that it was indeed a divine sign. No mere hunch or urging from his sub-conscious could have so gripped Socrates. In his most complete statement on the daimonion as the voice of God, Forbes writes:

> What the usual explanations do is to complete the rationalizing process by extending it to what was to him the voice or sign of the divinity. These theories cannot explain how his own intuitions or presentiments or momentary reasonings that acted like instinct could yet so appeal to his absolute reverence and obedience, and wear a character so remarkable. They did not do so by a process of mistake or illusion, but because at these points in experience there was an intensifying of the union which was ordinarily unmarked, a rising into consciousness of feelings simultaneously with premonitions or forecasts which like every part of his mental processes depended on God, and whose dependence was made strikingly obvious at the time. . . . It would require one to disbelieve the great challenge, "Is He not the God of the Gentiles also?" or to rest in that parochial philosophy which turns away from experiences essentially religious as not only intractable but repellent, not to see in this manifestation or attenuated but real indication of the contact of the human spirit with the spirit of Him who besets us behind and before.[1]

Guardini

Another scholar who holds to the view that the daimonion is best conceived as the voice of God is Romano Guardini, whose book The Death of Socrates appeared in English translation in 1948. For Guardini, the daimonion is "that striking phenomenon which marks the religious figure of Socrates."[2]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 230-31.

[2] Romano Guardini, The Death of Socrates, trans. Basil Wrighton (London: Sheed and Ward, 1948), p. 3.

He regards the daimonion as being what Socrates said it was, the sign of the god, and accepts Socrates' experience of it as "a primarily religious experience."[1]

Guardini dismisses any notion that the daimonion was a personal genius or guardian spirit, one of those hybrid divinities whom Socrates describes in his defense as "illegitimate children of the gods, either by nymphs or other mothers."[2] On the other hand, he writes, "it certainly does not stand for the voice of reason or conscience, as a rationalistic interpretation would have it. Rather it is quite plainly a question of some warning coming from without and bearing a numinous character."[3] Guardini stresses the numinous character of the daimonion, and believes that while Socrates experienced it as coming from outside himself, he also felt it "as a power intimately related to the core of his own existence."[4]

Both the manner of occurrence and the mode of operation of the daimonion support, for Guardini, the view that it was a divine voice. He writes:

> The "voice" has the character of something instantaneous and coming from elsewhere, which places it rather in the vicinity of prophecy. . . . That this guidance never commands, but only forbids, increases the credibility of the account. A certain arbitrariness attaches to it on this score, which harmonizes with the irrationality of the religious element as well as with the man's personality.[5]

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[1] Ibid., p. 49. [2] Plato Apology 27 d.

[3] P. 3. [4] Ibid., p. 43. [5] Ibid., p. 50.

For Guardini, as previously noted, the daimonion is but the most striking indication of Socrates' very strong religious nature, which in its fullness provides the only adequate explanation of a central problem in understanding Socrates. He poses the problem, and it is a crucial one, thus:

> When we consider, on the one hand, how reverent his nature is, and on the other hand, how relentlessly he puts people into a position of new and dangerous responsibility, we have to ask ourselves whence he gets the authority and power to do this. Socrates is no absolutist; rather he is suspicious of any over-positive assertion, sceptical towards himself, and deeply conscious of his responsibility towards men, over whom he has such power. What makes him, as a living and feeling man, equal to his own task?[1]

Guardini believes that only the consciousness of an authority outside himself could have inspired and justified for Socrates his mission to awaken men to themselves and to the shallowness of their traditions. Socrates found that authority, which he felt as a religious authority "bearing a numinous character," both in the oracle of Delphi and in the daimonion. Replying to his own question concerning Socrates' motivation, Guardini writes:

> In the last resort the only possible answer seems to be that it is something religious. Even if he did not really make the three speeches of the Apology before the court, at any rate they represent the justification of his master's activity given by Plato. Even if the oracle story should not be taken as simple fact, it would still express some ultimate reality which the great disciple perceived behind the figure of his master. The existence and activity of Socrates are rooted in the consciousness of a divine mission. This is expressed in a certain belief or trust, but stands also in relation with an original religious experience which accompanies his whole

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[1] Ibid.

activity, namely "the familiar soothsaying of the Daimonion."[1]

Other scholars

One of the most recent books written about Socrates is the 1959 study by the French scholar Micheline Sauvage, Socrates and the Human Conscience. In this stimulating contemporary look at the philosopher, Sauvage sees the daimonion as giving an important insight into Socrates: "The man is seen more clearly in the light of this inspiration, which internalizes the influences external to the spirit and objectifies its inner demands, so keeping an equal balance between man and the god. Note well this equilibrium; this is the first time it occurs in the history of the Western soul."[2]

Sauvage notes that the daimonion would never have posed any problem for his fellow Athenians if it could have been seen wholly as a command laid upon him by some existing, external god, a power already recognized in Greek religious tradition. Yet to conclude from this that the daimonion was simply the product of Socrates' own consciousness is mistaken. In a passage significant for its evaluation of other theories of the daimonion, Sauvage writes:

> To make this interior voice wholly subjective is to destroy its religious character and falsify Socrates' position. . . . Modern rationalism is in the stream of that tradition when it denies Socrates' daimonion all transcendence; another step and it becomes a pathological oddity, a hallucination or a hysterical symptom: why not? But even stopping short of such absurdities, one

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[1] Ibid., pp. 50-51.

[2] P. 92.

> may make it just a metaphor for a common psychological process, inspiration in its least spiritual sense, or even an effect of "interior speech." In this view it is no longer the instrument of a communication, but leaves Socrates enclosed in himself, in a sort of autarchy.[1]

This autarchy, for Sauvage, "is not at all what our sources suggest. The daimonion's admonition . . . always comes as a surprise, and begins by being marked with a certain note of incomprehensibility. It is received first, explained later."[2] Citing Socrates' refusal to prepare a defense to the assembly, Sauvage maintains that "before he understood that his condemnation was not an evil, he had submitted to an inner, superrational injunction."[3]

This combination, appearing for the first time in Socrates' daimonion, of a felt inner reference with a felt superrational reference seems in conventional terms a contradiction, or at least a paradox. It is as the latter that Sauvage would regard it, saying of the daimonion that "it is at once internal and external to the soul, which it enlightens in order to govern; it is not an intermediary <u>being</u> but a mediating <u>utterance</u>."[4] And for Sauvage, that utterance cannot adequately be conceived apart from the god, or God, whose voice it was.

Turning now to a group of five eminent Socratic scholars whose views on the daimonion have not yet been discussed, it appears that none of them takes a position that is clear and

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 93.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>.

[3] <u>Ibid</u>.

[4] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 94.

definite in terms of one or another of the categories developed in this chapter. These scholars, if they have opinions or theories concerning the daimonion, prefer not to articulate them, but rather to reflect an honest agnosticism. All agree that to Socrates the daimonion was unmistakably the voice of the god; i.e., his so representing it was no pious hoax or fraud. But beyond that they hazard little in the way of a personal estimate of what the daimonion was.

Granting an understandable hesitancy on the part of professional scholars to become involved in questions of the supernatural, and an even stronger reluctance to commit themselves to answers involving the supernatural, there might be said to be an "argument from silence" to support their tendency, or at least openness, to accept Socrates' account of the daimonion as a divine voice. Such at any rate is the reason for reviewing the opinions of these men at this point in the discussion. That their openness to the daimonion being the voice of God is at least a fair suggestion will become evident as the discussion continues, touching briefly on each of the five distinguished men.

George Grote, an eminent classical scholar of the nineteenth century, lived in a day when even to acknowledge the possibility of explanations beyond the natural was to court ridicule and risk professional reputation. Yet in his 1875 three-volume work, Plato and the Other Companions of Socrates, he insists that if Socrates is to be understood at all, it must be recognized that "Socrates was a very religious

man, much influenced by prophecies, oracles, dreams, and special revelations."[1] Grote neither accepts these divine revelations at their face value, nor does he attempt--as do some of his contemporaries--to rationalize them. He simply calls attention to them, and to Socrates' own reliance on them. Grote accepts as quite literal Socrates' last request that a cock be sacrificed to Asclepius. It was not an instance of his accustomed irony, but an observance of his accustomed religion.

Socrates accepted his daimonion in the context of his conviction that while the gods govern the world and administer the affairs of men primarily upon discoverable principles of regular sequence, there are also by the gods' design events and irregularities that cannot be fathomed apart from their special revelations. Grote sees that Socrates regarded his daimonion as a "divine auxiliary,"[2] a "divine ally."[3] His careful translation of the Theages 128 d refers to the daimonion as that "peculiar superhuman something attached to me by divine appointment."[4]

For Grote, it is important to understand the complete sincerity with which Socrates says, in effect: "'I am the instrument of a divine ally, without whose active working I can accomplish nothing. . . . The assistance of the divine ally is given or withheld according to motives of his own,

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[1] II, 95.

[2] Ibid., I, 436.

[3] Ibid., I, 438.

[4] Ibid., I, 433.

which I cannot even foretell, much less influence.'"[1] In the strongest statement which could support Grote's regarding the daimonion as the voice of God, he writes that "Socrates himself had perhaps a greater number of special communications from the Gods than any man of his age."[2]

John Burnet, a respected classical scholar writing in the first three decades of the twentieth century, likewise recognizes Socrates' belief in the possibility of divine revelations. Of Socrates, he says: "He clearly believed it quite possible that a higher power might make use of oracles, dreams, and the like to communicate with human beings. He was the least dogmatic of men on such subjects, and his own 'voice' and his visions seemed a case in point."[3]

Speaking with special reference to the daimonion, Burnet insists that Socrates could not have conceived of his daimonion as a personal genius, but only as a "sign" of a god. His linguistic study convinces him that daimonion was never used as a noun-substantive in classical Greek, that not until its first appearance in the Septuagint did it begin to function as a diminutive for daimon. Thus, for Socrates, the daimonion "comes from God, but it is not a 'divinity' of any kind."[4] In his most comprehensive statement on the daimonion, Burnet writes:

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[1] Ibid., I, 438-39. [2] Ibid., I, 461.

[3] Greek Philosophy: Thales to Plato, p. 136.

[4] Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito, p. 16.

> It belonged to the irrational part of his soul, even more than dreams. . . . That being so, it is obviously futile to rationalize it. We must simply accept the fact that it was a perfectly real experience to Socrates, though not apparently of paramount importance. . . . It served to justify certain instinctive reluctances of which he was unable to give a clear account to himself. But he believed in it all the same, and actually heard the "voice."[1]

A certain ambiguity in this estimate by Burnet is paralleled also in his article for the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, where he remarks that "Socrates naturally spoke of it as something superhuman (daimonion) . . . . On the other hand, the attitude of Socrates to it, as to most things of the kind, is one of humorous half-belief. He is made to say that the 'voice' was always right, and it is possible that he had a genuine belief in revelations of this kind. That only illustrates his temperament, however."[2] Burnet's estimate of the daimonion, if not humorous, seems likewise to be of half-belief. His refusal to rationalize it, however, signifies a break with the views of many of his mentors and an openness to its being a superrational phenomenon.

A. E. Taylor, a scholar contemporary with Burnet and a specialist in Socratic studies, regards Socrates' daimonion as "his most striking singularity."[3] It is the most obvious evidence for what Taylor sees as a strong vein of mysticism

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[1]Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[2]John Burnet, "Socrates," Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, XI, 670.

[3]Socrates, p. 44.

in Socrates. The daimonion, he writes, "is one indication among others that Socrates really possessed the temperament of the 'visionary,' though unlike most seers of visions he kept that side of his nature well in check, as St. Paul did his gift for 'speaking with tongues.'"[1]

In an Encyclopaedia Britannica article, Taylor rejects views of the daimonion as intuitive conscience or as a symptom of mental disorder, and refers to it as "interior audition, . . . a psychic phenomenon of a kind not specially uncommon."[2] While this might seem to justify Taylor as one who believes the daimonion to be the voice of Socrates' sub-conscious, it is significant that in his voluminous writings on Socrates, this is the sole instance of his attempting to explain it. Rather than forcing Taylor on the strength of this one reference to a definite position, it seems more feasible to include him with those whose basic stance is an agnostic one.

F. M. Cornford, another eminent scholar of the first half of the twentieth century, joins his contemporaries in rejecting any thought that Socrates conceived his daimonion as a personal genius. This was a later development within Platonism, and wrongly ascribed to Socrates. The concept that each man has a guardian spirit Cornford traces back to a near-primitive category expressed by the Finnish word haltia. He quotes a 1903 work by Tylor, who writes that "'every object in nature has a haltia, a guardian deity or genius, a being

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[1] Ibid., p. 45. [2] XX, 918.

which was its creator and thenceforth became attached to it.'"[1] Cornford adds, "These haltiat are obviously group-souls or daimons arrested in an earlier stage than Plato's Ideas, retaining more soul-properties."[2] This he sees to be the background out of which Platonism came to its doctrines concerning personal daimons.

Beyond disassociating Socrates from these Platonic doctrines, Cornford is willing to say very little about the daimonion. That he has a more open mind on the daimonion than many earlier scholars is apparent from his rather strong statement that Socrates himself "was not prepared, like some nineteenth century agnostics, to dismiss as superstitious nonsense anything he could not understand and account for 'scientifically.'"[3] His statement may indeed imply agreement with Socrates' own estimate of the daimonion as a divine sign, but he nowhere says so explicitly. The closest he comes is to cite with seeming approval the view of Coleman Phillipson, a lawyer who in 1928 authored the book, The Trial of Socrates. There Phillipson writes: "'The premonitory sign was of momentary duration. It emanated from a divine original, but was not ascribed to any particular deity. It was not a divine being itself. . . . It came to him unsolicitedly, and Socrates'

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[1]Quoted from Primitive Culture, II, 243, in From Religion to Philosophy, p. 253.

[2]From Religion to Philosophy, p. 253.

[3]Principium Sapientiae, p. 140.

belief in it was serious and sincere.'"[1]

Paul Friedlander, the final one of a group of five eminent Socratic scholars whose views on the daimonion tend toward an open agnosticism, readily acknowledges what he terms "the demonic dimension"[2] in Socrates. Writing of the daimonion in his two-volume work Plato, the first volume of which appeared in 1928, he both grants its reality and at the same time rejects every nineteenth century attempt to rationalize it:

> This man, who more than any other proposed to clarify by the power of his intellect what was unclear and ambiguous, recognized mysterious forces, which he obeyed without examining their claim. He liked to talk--and often did--about his "daimonion". . . . We shall not turn to psychopathology to inquire into the nature of this daimonion, nor join Schopenhauer in his attempt to assign it a place among dreams, seeing ghosts, and other occult phenomena. It would be still more inappropriate to try to explain this extraordinary phenomenon rationally by calling it to the "inner voice of individual tact," an "expression of spiritual freedom," or a "sure measure of one's own subjectivity," thus confining it to our rational and social world of experience. Indeed, we are already closing off a possible approach by calling it "the daimonion," as if it were an object, instead of using the neutral Greek expression "the demonic," which on the one hand expresses an element of uncertainty--"but you do not know whence it comes and whither it goes"--and on the other indicates that this force is not within and at the disposal of a person, but is received from a larger sphere external to him, and acknowledged with reverence and awe.[3]

Besides conceiving the daimonion as on a "demonic" level, Friedlander also grants that it may be seen on a "divine" level. He cites from Plato's Apology 31 d that there Socrates refers to the daimonion as "a divine and demonic element."[4]

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[1]Quoted in ibid.

[2]I, 32.

[3]I, 32-33.

[4]Quoted in ibid., I, 33.

Turning to the Alcibiades I 103-106, he notes the virtual equation that is made between daimonion and theos, and adds: "It would be pedantic to ask whether the daimonion and God are one and the same in this context. They are--and they are not. We are dealing with active powers, not with names."[1]

While Friedlander does not articulate a definite view concerning the daimonion, his above statements give evidence of a considerable openness. He goes further than the vast majority of modern Socratic scholars towards accepting as a real possibility that the daimonion was what Socrates said it was, the voice of God.

The Daimonion in Psychology

Socrates, the philosopher of the fifth century B.C., provides a fascinating subject for one of the newest and most modern branches of human thought, the discipline of psychology. Many of the personal characteristics of Socrates, taken alone or in combination, seem virtually to demand consideration by psychologists and psychiatrists, as well as by Socratic scholars. The daimonion is his most striking singularity, but is by no means his only one. There are the trances, the facial appearance, the marked influence which he exerted on others not only through what he said, but through his very voice and physical presence.

Not surprisingly have certain psychologists pronounced Socrates insane, subject to acute hallucinations and delusions,

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[1] I, 35.

prone to photoparasthesia and melancholia. Predictably they have called attention to his "cretin-like physiognomy"[1] and to his mesmeric influence on his companions.

It was during the so-called formative years of psychology, while it was gradually becoming the quasi-scientific discipline it is now, that psychologists showed most interest in Socrates. This was the nineteenth century, when psychology was more a deductive than an inductive study, and when men like Lelut and Lombroso could build their theories free of the requirement that they be confirmed by controlled experiment. In the period from 1780-1900 there were no less than ten books or major articles specifically on Socrates' daimonion.[2] More than half of these first appeared in the years from 1860-1900, and had a distinct psychological flavor. The authors were not for the most part themselves psychologists, but were influenced by the contemporary psychology.

The broad consensus among nineteenth century psychologists was that Socrates' daimonion was a subjective phenomenon arising out of his subliminal self; i.e., the voice of his sub-conscious. If Socrates actually heard a voice at all, it was a sudden and dramatic projection into external experience of decisive thoughts coming from his sub-conscious.

In the twentieth century there has been a marked trend

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[1]Cesare Lombroso, quoted in Forbes, p. 223.

[2]Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology, ed. James Mark Baldwin (3 vols., Glouchester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1960), III, 479-82.

toward a more experimental psychology, and a corresponding movement away from attempts to psychoanalyze figures of the far-distant past, no matter how fascinating. Psychologists today simply grant that the evidence is too slight for sound theorizing; and while they continue to be concerned with the singular characteristics of Socrates' personality and behavior, that concern manifests itself in a study not now of Socrates but of persons who today show those same traits.

It is not within the scope or intent of this discussion to attempt an adequate psychological explanation, or even description, of the type of phenomenon of which Socrates' daimonion is but one instance. The focus here is upon the one man, Socrates, and his experience. Some psychological data have already been presented, and in Part Three a limited psychological evaluation will be necessary, even as here in Part Two. But a full treatment of the daimonion from the standpoint of the discipline of psychology is not contemplated. It would be beyond the writer's capacity to do so, even if it were not in the first place true that the evidence is too slender to justify the attempt.

In this latter respect, it is significant that in a standard nine-volume index of psychoanalytic writings up to the year 1960, there are only four entries referring to Socrates, none of them dealing specifically with the daimonion.[1]

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[1] Index of Psychoanalytic Writings, ed. Alexander Grinstein (9 vols., New York: International Universities Press, 1956-1966), V, 2669; IX, 4723.

Similarly, the Psychological Abstracts for the years 1927-1960 show only one entry for Socrates, a 1948 study by Nils Almberg which compares Socrates' behavior with that of a mentally ill person.[1] The comment on the study indicates that "the analysis deals with constellations of closely related traits rather than the isolation and comparison of single traits."[2]

Despite Myers' claim that the story of Socrates is "rich in unworked psychological suggestion,"[3] it is clear that modern psychologists have been hesitant to apply themselves to a study of Socrates and his daimonion. This relative silence of twentieth century psychology and psychiatry is a quite proper recognition of the sketchiness of the historical evidence, and constitutes a proper warning against becoming too sure concerning the true nature of the daimonion.

Nevertheless, it is one purpose of this discussion to attempt the closest possible definition of Socrates' daimonion, granting the lack of either historical or psychological certainty. To that end, this and the previous chapters have been pointing. To that task the discussion now turns.

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[1] Cumulated Subject Index to Psychological Abstracts 1927-1960, ed. G. K. Hall and Co. (2 vols., Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1966), II, 385.

[2] Psychological Abstracts, XXIII (1949), 373, ref. Nils Almberg, Kring Sokrates' Personlighet: en Psykologisk Studie (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1948), 178 pp.

[3] II, 100.

CHAPTER IX

THE DEFINITION OF SOCRATES' DAIMONION

How shall the daimonion of Socrates be understood? With what degree of precision can it be defined? What in fact was this daimonion that the man of reason obeyed so unquestioningly? How can his reliance on its counsels be reconciled with his full commitment to the use of reason?

These are the questions that bring to focus the first of the two problems which the daimonion poses. The second problem, concerning the epistemological validity of Socrates' experience of the daimonion and of the counsel it presented, is the burden of Part Three of this discussion. The first problem seeks its solution here, building on the assumptions granted for this study and on the insights so far suggested. It is the task of this chapter to reach a definite conclusion, as far as that is possible, regarding this trait that was just as characteristic of Socrates as his turned-up nose and protruding eyes. The daimonion: what was it?

Limitations of Socrates' Own Definition

Without question, the best source for defining the daimonion would be Socrates himself. It was his experience, and it was a quite private experience. If it was a voice,

only he heard it. Yet an attempt to learn from Socrates himself what the daimonion was is complicated by a number of factors. It is essential to take a hard look at these.

To begin with, Socrates apparently never suggested a definition of his daimonion, either to say what it was or why he so highly regarded it. He did not define it; he assumed it. He did not discuss it; he obeyed it. He often said <u>that</u> he was guided by the daimonion, but never <u>what</u> it was that guided him. He frequently referred to it as a divine sign or voice, but whether these are to be taken literally or metaphorically is unclear, for nowhere does he give the elaboration necessary to be certain about this.

A second complication in taking Socrates' statements about his daimonion at face value is simply that no one can be sure exactly what the word <u>daimonion</u> meant to Socrates. In fifth century Greece there was considerable confusion over its meaning, such that many classical scholars would follow Grote in regarding the term undefined and undefinable. It seems to have been a neuter noun, signifiying a thing of divine or demonic origin rather than an object of worship itself. Yet Plato and Xenophon, in reporting Socrates, are inconsistent in their usage, which may indicate that Socrates himself showed a lack of consistency.

A third barrier to learning about the daimonion from Socrates is raised by the disagreement between the two primary sources in reporting him. Plato pictures the daimonion, in general, as a private inhibitory voice; whereas Xenophon

represents it as a private little oracle, giving both negative and positive counsel, and not only to Socrates but to his friends.

A fourth difficulty in consulting Socrates himself for a definition of his daimonion is that, while he was a man far in advance of his time, he was also a man of his own time. Specifically, he held those beliefs concerning gods, daimons, and special revelations that were common to the fifth century. His religious inheritance predisposed him to consider as of divine origin any guidance or warning that could not otherwise be accounted for. Granted an ambiguity in the concepts of god and daimon, he could possibly have related his daimonion to a personal daimon rather than to a god, and then like Heraclitus have denied the daimonion all transcendence, but this is unlikely. More certain is it that he could not have conceived that in himself he had either the personal freedom or the nonrational resources to come to decisions independently of an external oracle. To move from fifth century Greece's total reliance on objective revelation to accepting the authority of his own subjectivity was too big a step even for Socrates to take.

Finally, and as a corollary to what has just been said, Socrates had no opportunity to avail himself of the insights afforded through the discipline of psychology. Although it is clear that he had a wide-ranging working knowledge of what today would be termed psychological principles, he had not the formal framework of psychology within which to reflect upon

his daimonion, and by which to communicate his reflections to others.

For all these reasons, Socrates cannot himself supply an adequate definition of his daimonion. It is of course because this is so that the previous chapters have sought to elaborate what others have seen the daimonion to be. It will be well, at this point in the search for a final definition, to bring a brief review of their conclusions, and to evaluate them in turn. From this will emerge the best possible understanding of Socrates' daimonion.

Review and Evaluation of Others' Definitions

In bringing this brief review of what others have said about the daimonion, the same roughly chronological order will be followed as in the previous five chapters. There will be virtually no footnoting of the views presented, since in every instance this has already been done. The purpose here is simply to summarize in order then to evaluate, stressing especially those insights that make a positive contribution to what will emerge as a final definition of the daimonion. For clarity, and to emphasize the changing interpretations of the daimonion, the review and evaluation will be set out under four heads: primary sources, early philosophers and Platonists, modern philosophers, and modern Socratic scholars.

Primary sources

Among the four contemporary primary sources for the study of Socrates, Plato's dialogs are the most extensive both

with regard to the man and his thought in general, and in specific references to the daimonion. In eight of the dialogs there is a total of thirteen uses of the Greek daimonion. The resultant picture of the daimonion is of an "inner voice" of or from the god, which from his childhood spontaneously came to Socrates to warn him against a particular course of action he was contemplating. Sometimes the issue at stake was serious, sometimes trivial. While it always spoke to inhibit, its silence might be assumed to have communicated approval. It operated especially with regard to matters that Socrates could not have foreseen by use of his reason, such as the value of his associating with certain young men. Socrates spoke freely of his daimonion, though not to define it, and conceived it as a divine revelation of a rare kind, perhaps even unique to himself. In two of the eight dialogs, where Platonic authorship is doubtful, there are the suggestions that the daimonion might itself be a god, and that its warnings were not only to Socrates but also to his friends.

In evaluating Plato's picture of the daimonion, the central question is how far Plato at this particular point colored his Socrates to conform to his own ideal of philosophy and a philosopher. However, while it is doubtless true that the Platonic Socrates and the historical Socrates "constitute a double star which not even the spectrum analysis of the latest philology can resolve,"[1] the problem is not as serious

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[1]Shorey, p. 11.

for the daimonion as in many other areas. Both Socrates and Plato appear to accept an implicit demonology while at the same time refusing to dogmatize on it. It seems fairly certain that both men recognized that there are dimensions of human experience that cannot be measured by the rational or sensory faculties. Plato's frequent resort to myth in the dialogs can fairly be traced to a similar disposition in Socrates. Both men would have room in human experience for such a phenomenon as the daimonion. For this reason, there would seem to be no good reason why Plato would wish to distort Socrates' experience of the daimonion, either to underplay it or overplay it. What he says about the daimonion may be assumed worthy of trust. Plato gives not only the most but also the best evidence on which to base an understanding of Socrates' daimonion.

The writings of Xenophon constitute the other major contemporary primary source for the study of Socrates. Xenophon records eight uses of the Greek <u>daimonion</u> in three works. That which emerges is a somewhat inconsistent picture of the daimonion as being by nature at least as much a separate god or daimon as a neuter voice or sign of a god. The emphasis is upon the naturalness and orthodoxy of Socrates' experience. It is because Socrates is such an upright man and of such deep piety that the gods of Athens favor him with privileged communications which differ from their other revelations to men only in the manner of their occurrence; i.e., it is an internal rather than an external oracle. The daimonion operates to give

rather random counsel, both negative and positive, to Socrates himself and also to his friends. He speaks of it openly, and accepts its counsels as infallible.

To evaluate Xenophon's estimate of the daimonion, it is again necessary as with Plato to recognize that he shaded his presentation of Socrates' thought and personality to conform it to his particular purpose for writing. Xenophon was Socrates' apologist, seeking to justify his teacher and friend in men's eyes. Because of this, his estimate of the daimonion must be held suspect. In his attempt to "whitewash" Socrates, Xenophon would have suppressed any singularity in his personality or thought which might be interpreted as making him different from other men. It would be necessary for Xenophon to say of the daimonion precisely what he does say: it is a quite orthodox and proper means of divine revelation, differing from other forms only in that Socrates experienced it as an internal oracle. If in fact it were other than this, Xenophon could not have said so. What he says about the daimonion must be judged of little value in determining its true definition.

The other two contemporary primary sources for Socrates are the writings of Aristophanes and Aeschines. Neither of the two men so much as mention the daimonion, but it is precisely the fact that may be seen to have significance. It is particularly significant that Aristophanes makes no reference to the daimonion in his biting caricature of Socrates in the Clouds, written in 423 B.C. Clearly no apologist for Socrates, Aristophanes distorts every exploitable feature of Socrates'

thought and personality to discredit Socrates and to warn the Athenians against this dangerous sophist-scientist. A champion of conservatism in Greek morality and religion, Aristophanes would surely have turned virulent abuse loose upon the daimonion if he had seen anything unusual or unorthodox in it. He in fact charges Socrates with the introduction of new divinities, but never mentions the daimonion as a case in point. It could be that he did not know of it; but far more likely is it that he accepted that Socrates was occasionally guided by his daimonion, that he recognized that it was not some new god, and that he saw it as neither prominent enough nor unusual enough to warrant his lampooning it. Aristophanes' silence lends valuable and necessary perspective to a study of the daimonion, and establishes that it was not as outstanding and obvious a feature of Socrates as might be thought. From this distance in history, it is surely his most striking singularity. To his contemporaries it was far less prominent, and hardly notorious.

Aeschines, in whose dramas Socrates is the narrator, likewise is silent about the daimonion. He founded no school of his own, nor did he seemingly have any philosophic axe to grind, so that he had no reason to play down the daimonion. His writings all date from after Socrates' death, and suggest by their silence that the daimonion was no more prominent in the latter years of Socrates' life than when Aristophanes wrote his brilliant comedy. Among the four contemporaries who provide primary sources for the study of Socrates, clearly

Aeschines is the one with the least bias. It is this fact which strengthens the argument from silence, both by Aristophanes and Aeschines, that Socrates' daimonion attracted little notice among his fellow Athenians, and certainly was far from creating a public scandal. It formed no part of the charge against Socrates, for the simple reason that it was not all that important a feature of his personality or that formative an influence on his thought.

There are two other primary sources for the study of Socrates' daimonion in the writings of Cicero and Plutarch. Neither man was a contemporary of Socrates, and in none of their references to the daimonion is there anything that adds to the picture of the daimonion which emerges from the writings of Xenophon and the author of the Theages. Accordingly, a consideration of their particular contributions to an understanding of the daimonion is best set within the context of the following section.

Early philosophers and Platonists

During the nine hundred years from Plato to the last of the great Neo-Platonists, Proclus, there emerges a clear direction in which men came to think of Socrates' daimonion. Gradually the focus shifts from a neuter daimonion to a personal daimon, which then assumes its place within a systematic demonology built on Plato's thought. In point of time, the philosopher Cicero is the first to give major attention to the daimonion. Subsequently, the Platonists Plutarch,

Apuleius, and Proclus give their accounts of it; and the daimonion comes more and more to be regarded as a particular case in the whole order of daimons.

For Cicero, the daimonion of Socrates is best conceived as a divinum quiddam, a divine something, which is neuter in form, inhibitory in manner, and which operates both for Socrates and through him for his friends. The daimonion is not itself a god, but rather a warning from a god. Its counsels are trustworthy for the same reason that the dreams of a moderate and sensible man may be trusted; i.e., a purity of mind, which allows Socrates to respond to influences that other men are not alert enough or free enough from their passions to receive.

In evaluation, it is this final insight which constitutes Cicero's most important contribution to an understanding of the daimonion. The validity of the claims to knowledge which it presents is strengthened by the purity and integrity of the one, Socrates, to whom they are given. The analogy that suggests itself is of the good tree producing good fruit. Further, in the very apt Latin phrase divinum quiddam, Cicero has given necessary recognition to the fact that the true nature of the daimonion always remains, at least in part, a mystery.

Plutarch's estimate of the daimonion follows closely that of Cicero, including the endorsement of the daimonion's counsels on the basis of Socrates' purity and sensitivity. The further suggestion that Plutarch brings concerns the nature

of the "voice" Socrates hears. It is to be understood without reference either to a physical sound in the environment or a physical organ in the body. Socrates receives communications from the gods and daimons via an immaterial medium. The physical analogy to the hearing of a voice is the best, perhaps the only, and thus a necessary analogy to use in describing the daimonion. But it remains an analogy, and is no definition.

It is this emphasis on the immateriality of the daimonion, operating apart from a physical source or receptor, that marks Plutarch's contribution toward understanding the daimonion. It may be helpful and indeed necessary, in speaking of the daimonion, to use the physical analogy to a voice, but nothing in the evidence warrants the conclusion that it was in fact a physical voice. Though occasionally it "spoke" to Socrates when he was in the presence of others, only he heard it.

In Apuleius, the focus shifts almost totally away from an impersonal daimonion which was the "certain voice" Socrates heard, to a personal daimon which Apuleius sees as the source of the voice. Socrates' daimon is a separate, god-like being which acts as his guardian, and which manifests itself to him not only to his ears but perhaps to his eyes as well, in visions. Apuleius is one of the first to suggest that it functions as Socrates' conscience. In evaluation, Apuleius contributes nothing to an understanding of the daimonion in his accommodating it to a Platonic demonology.

Proclus completes the process of transition in virtually equating the daimonion with a personal, god-like daimon. He calls it a guardian spirit, and allots it a pre-eminence in the order of daimons, which in turn he conceives as a middle rank of beings binding together the gods and men. The basic notions are in Plato, but it is with Proclus that a consistent, systematic demonology is developed. In fitting Socrates daimonion to it, Proclus offers no positive contribution to the search for the definition of the daimonion.

Modern philosophers

From the time of Proclus forward to the Italian Renaissance, there was little encouragement given to intellectual speculation on the life and thought of the early Greeks. With a revival of interest in Plato, however, and a general re-opening of the vocation of philosophy, attention again turned to the study of Socrates, and to consideration by some of his daimonion. Four philosophers especially have written concerning the daimonion: Descartes, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard. The direction of their interpretation is clearly away from conceiving the daimonion as a personal genius or god-like guardian spirit, and toward regarding it as a wholly internal phenomenon, an aspect of Socrates' own personality.

Descartes is the first of the modern philosophers to discuss the daimonion, which he understands as the predisposition Socrates had to honor his inward inclinations. When Socrates felt an inner joy over some projected course, he

knew it would turn out well. When he felt sadness, he knew the outcome would be unsuccessful. His previous experience had taught him to rely on these inner feelings, which he conceived as the manifestations of a private daimonion granted him by the gods, but which really were nothing more than his own subjective feelings.

In evaluation, Descartes' denial of all transcendence to the daimonion makes possible a more rational approach and thus a more rational definition of the daimonion, but at the price of ignoring the reverential regard Socrates had for it. As will be developed in this chapter's final section, it simply will not do to assume an internal, psychological solution to the problem of the daimonion.

Hegel presents a most impressive argument for conceiving the daimonion as a physiological mechanism that allows Socrates to dare to make certain decisions for himself. He sees Socrates as standing at the very point of transition from man's dependence on external oracles to his relying on his own subjective consciousness. For Hegel, Socrates could not have possibly taken upon himself wholly to make his own decisions. His subjectivity had to be cloaked in a physiological guise, which Hegel sees to be the daimonion. It was in fact an oracle, but totally internal to Socrates and--though unrecognized--an aspect of his own individuality.

The major contribution Hegel makes to understanding the daimonion is to see it neither as an external oracle nor as simply the exercise of Socrates' personal freedom. It stands

at neither of these extremes, but somewhere inbetween. It operates as a physiological mechanism, and so has a certain "other-ness" about it. Yet it is wholly within Socrates. The daimonion testifies to what, in the language of mysticism, is called "the beyond that is within."

Nietzsche, to whom Socrates was both hero and villain, reflects no consistent understanding of the daimonion. He relates it in one reference to aural delusions, but elsewhere writes of it as if it were a special gift bestowed upon a strong-willed, and therefore favored, individual. It clearly represents, for Nietzsche, the instinctive as opposed to the rational side of Socrates' nature.

The most significant insight Nietzsche gives into the daimonion comes, as with Aristophanes, through an argument from silence, and moves to the same conclusion; i.e., that the daimonion did not exert a major influence upon Socrates. Nietzsche would have wished that the daimonion, indicative of Socrates' instincts, would have controlled his behavior; for thus Socrates would have been more truly a man, and more fit to be his hero. His failure to proclaim that the daimonion strongly influenced Socrates is an admission that it did not.

Kierkegaard focuses considerable attention on Socrates' daimonion, and stresses that an accurate definition for it is impossible. He cites that Socrates referred to it both as manifesting itself to him, and so the source of the sign; and also as occurring, and so the sign itself. He concludes that the daimonion is an expression for something utterly abstract

and without any other predicate than divine. The effects of the daimonion he places within the context of the whole of Socrates' life, recognizing that it operated only with respect to private decisions and never to concerns of the whole community, and that it neither influenced Socrates' most important decisions nor produced his most significant insights. Rather than attempting to explain the daimonion from without, Kierkegaard tries to conceive it from within; and so he arrives at his conception of the daimonion as a "necessary limit," inhibiting Socrates from feeling that he was wholly self-determining, and inhibiting others from drawing the same conclusion. Socrates definitely had his daimonion. While it may be a symbol by which Socrates himself understood the process of his freely and subjectively making his own decisions, it must at the same time be seen as a "necessary limit" to emphasize how radical an exercise of freedom it was for Socrates to decide on this basis. The daimonion cannot be explained away, any more than it can be neatly defined.

The insight that Socrates' daimonion has both a symbolic and a real existence is one of two major contributions Kierkegaard makes toward attempting a final definition of the daimonion. He refuses either to rationalize the daimonion or to leave it as an influence wholly separate from Socrates' own personality. In so doing, and by conceiving the daimonion as a "necessary limit," he furthers the argument that in somewhat different form Hegel states. There is both other-ness and subjectivity in the daimonion, and no view of it is

adequate if either is left out. Kierkegaard's other contribution to a definition of the daimonion is his insistence that no final definition is possible. There is an abstractness about the daimonion which will forever leave it partly in the realm of the mysterious.

Modern Socratic scholars

Among modern Socratic scholars, for whom the daimonion of Socrates is not just an optional philosophic excursion but a necessary problem demanding solution, there are generally speaking five answers given. Of the five broad definitions of the daimonion under which the large number of modern scholars can variously be grouped, two are hardly credible on the assumptions that are here and generally granted, and so receive very little support: the voice of conscience and the mark of insanity. The other three are not only credible, but each of the three is ably explicated by leading scholars of the last one hundred years. These are the views of the daimonion as the voice of reason, the voice of the sub-conscious, and the voice of God.

To consider the five broad classifications in turn, the interpretation of the daimonion as the voice of conscience builds upon either one of two foundations. On the one hand, the daimonion may be regarded as a veritable deification of Socrates' conscience, such that when the daimonion warns him against a proposed action, it is really his own sense of right and wrong operating, though perceived as possessing divine

authority. On the other hand, the daimonion can be seen as simply the way Socrates took to describe to himself and others the operation within him of his accumulated habits of moral judgment, which functioned so rapidly that there seemed to be no process of conscious decision involved.

In evaluation, the view that the daimonion was the voice of Socrates' conscience founders on the fact that very seldom if ever did the daimonion prompt Socrates on a matter of right and wrong. Its warnings were not concerning moral issues, but matters of expediency, and specifically matters beyond the scope of reason to anticipate. Neither as a divine assist nor as an automatic response did the daimonion allow Socrates to avoid the personal moral responsibility which he saw and accepted for himself.

The definition of the daimonion as a mark of Socrates' insanity is based upon the judgment that he was subject to auditory hallucinations or delusions which, along with other eccentricities in his appearance and behavior, indicate severe mental illness and imbalance.

That this view of the daimonion need not be taken seriously is well established by the fact that, whatever his eccentricities, Socrates can hardly be said to have been insane. His mental and moral achievements, his lucidity, his consistency in thought and action, the lack of any suggestion that any contemporary of his seriously charged him with insanity, all these and more tend toward the conclusion that if the daimonion rendered Socrates other than normal, it was to

make him not abnormal but supernormal.

To turn to the first of three credible views, the daimonion has widely been regarded as the voice of Socrates' reason. From the evidence in Xenophon, it is possible to conclude that the daimonion never functioned in a way that Socrates' reason could not have functioned. It is possible that he could have "reasoned out" every prompting of the daimonion that Xenophon records. On this view the daimonion, which appeared to Socrates to be a divine voice, was really a rapid process of reasoning which took place in his subconscious mind. What seemed to Socrates to be an unanalyzed act of judgment had actually involved his rational faculties. That the promptings of this voice of his reason may have come to him as auditory hallucinations does not affect the soundness of this view; for the counsels that came from the daimonion were never, in any of the evidence, irrational. If there were actual auditory hallucinations, what happened was simply that the rational suggestions of his own mind were projected outside of himself and then "heard" by the outward ear.

While it is both tempting and satisfying to suggest that the man of reason's daimonion was none other than the voice of his reason, the case for this being so suffers two serious weaknesses, one historical and one psychological. To hold that the daimonion never gave Socrates any counsel he could not have received by use of his own reason is to ignore the evidence from Plato. Only one who is willing to accept Xenophon's account of the daimonion, and to discredit Plato's

claim that Socrates experienced it from childhood, as well as to discount as unhistorical two citations of the daimonion in dialogs otherwise granted to be authentic, can support the view that the daimonion is the voice of reason. Further, to claim that a process which takes place, unanalyzed, in the sub-conscious mind is a process in which human reason figures, is probably to overextend the proper scope of the rational faculty. Given the five broad definitions of the daimonion here considered, it will be far better to regard it as the voice of the sub-conscious if the process just described is in fact what happened.

Another credible view of the daimonion holds that it was the voice of the sub-conscious in Socrates. As he thought deeply about the issues of life, or sometimes simply as he was experiencing life, monitions came to him from deep within his own personality, at a non-rational level. A residuum of feelings and impulses, which he could not account for but which contributed to making him the person he was, frequently warned him against some course of action which in itself or in its outcome would simply not be suitable to his being Socrates. Thus the daimonion can be called the "inner voice of individual tact," and functioned to bring to Socrates' attention warnings arising out of his sub-conscious.

In evaluation, this view contributes to the definition of the daimonion the very necessary psychological insight that there is more to the total personality of Socrates than merely

his rational self. The daimonion must be seen neither as an external oracle nor as a rational faculty. It was rather an expression of forces which, while germaine to Socrates, were buried below the level of his understanding. This being so, however, to regard the daimonion solely as a product of his sub-conscious is again to disregard the reverential regard Socrates had for it. He needed to conceive it as something beyond himself; so it may still need to be conceived.

A final view of the daimonion to which scholars give their support is that it was the voice of a god, or God. By what theology calls special revelation, the god gave Socrates those promptings which he experienced as the warnings of an inner voice. These religious experiences bore for Socrates a numinous character, such that he could not fully understand them, but they occurred in such a manner and with such authority that he could not doubt their divine source. No mere hunch or rapid bit of unconscious "reasoning" can explain the absolute obedience and reverence which Socrates, a man who despised the inspiration of the poets, had for the daimonion. While he felt the daimonion as intimately related to himself, and so only <u>his</u> daimonion, he also experienced it as coming from outside himself, from the god.

To conceive the daimonion as the voice of God is to take note of the quite singular way in which Socrates experienced it. It is true that, for a man so undogmatic in his convictions, the unhesitating acceptance of the daimonion's counsel can only be explained by assuming the overwhelming

authority with which it presented itself to him. Furthermore, that it functioned only occasionally and not constantly is sufficient ground for differentiating the daimonion from other intuitions and presentiments that doubtless occurred right along to Socrates, as to everyone, and that did not so grip him. He did not relate every hunch to his daimonion. When he did experience the voice, there was in the voice an authority that demands a reference beyond Socrates himself.

So, in review, have been presented the various definitions and interpretations men have given to Socrates' daimonion, together with a brief evaluation of each. In the course of the review and evaluation, certain clear insights have emerged. These may now be combined into a final definition, as far as that is possible, of the daimonion. Just prior to that, however, attention is directed to the Appendix. There in tabular form are listed brief phrases defining or describing the daimonion, with an indication of the source for each and where each receives expanded treatment in this discussion. While not exhaustive, this listing is suggestive of the wide variety of opinion that has emerged from studies of the daimonion.

A Definition of the Daimonion

"Ah, what is one to say?" Kierkegaard laments that with some such comment all discussion of Socrates' daimonion tends to come to an end. Finally he too has to admit that the daimonion is beyond definition, utterly abstract, inexplicable.

What can one say? For if any one certain insight emerges from all the foregoing, it is that a precise definition of the daimonion is impossible. Like the whipporwill, the daimonion can only be glimpsed, though its presence is undoubted; and never can it be caught in any net of exact definition.

Why not? Ultimately, because experience of the daimonion was Socrates' experience, and a quite private experience. While he spoke of it as if it were an inner divine voice, it is not clear that this can be accepted at face value. Socrates may to some degree have been speaking metaphorically; and even if he were not, it would still be necessary to challenge his own conception of the daimonion and be willing to move beyond it. For he had not the framework or the insights of today's psychology within which to reflect. He could not have conceived what it means to call his daimonion, for example, the voice of his sub-conscious; nor could he have conceived that within himself he had the personal freedom and the non-rational resources with which to reach valid decisions on questions beyond the power of his reason alone to answer. There is simply no sufficient basis in Socrates and his experience for defining the daimonion, and therefore no sufficient basis at all.

The daimonion remains partly hidden in a realm of mystery, beyond the understanding of Socrates and his interpreter alike. Charge it not to the dullness of either, however, for the truth is that neither Socrates nor any man could be clear as to the true nature of the daimonion. With no

amount of psychological erudition can the daimonion be rationalized, for it appears to partake of a reality beyond the grasp of reason. Finally it can only be acknowledged, as Cicero phrases it, to be a divinum quiddam, a divine something, with a question mark permitted on the "divine." The daimonion cannot be cut and shaped to fit a pet theory, however frustrating it may be for those who must have a label for everyone and everything.

This is far from saying, however, that all attempts toward understanding the daimonion are futile. On the contrary, a careful sifting of the abundance of evidence and opinion on Socrates' daimonion produces no little insight into its nature. In light of the assumptions that are here granted concerning the reality of his experience and his veracity in reporting it, significant statements concerning the daimonion can fairly be made, and there can emerge a fairly complete and reasonably valid definition. Granted that the daimonion remains in part in the realm of mystery, its definition may nevertheless be attempted, and the attempt counted both worthwhile and successful.

The definition of Socrates' daimonion here set forth builds, as it were, upon three pillars: historical evidence, psychological understanding, and religious insight. Let each in turn lend its support, summarizing all the conclusions that have come before, and so establishing the final definition.

Historical evidence

In defining Socrates' daimonion, that which historically is worthy of the most trust is the evidence of Plato and the silence of Aristophanes. From these two sources there emerges a fairly clear picture not only of how Socrates experienced the daimonion, but also what in fact it was--and was not. Here is that picture:

The daimonion was a kind of voice. It appeared to Socrates under a neuter form, was impersonal in character, and not itself a personal genius or divinity. That it was literally a physical voice is doubtful. More likely it "spoke" through an immaterial medium. However, for Socrates to describe it as a voice was to employ the most fitting analogy, conveying the sense he had that the communication was from a source which he felt to be outside himself.

The voice was from the god. He experienced the daimonion to be a divine revelation, and attended to it with a reverential regard. True to his time, he identified inexplicability and divinity. He heard his divine voice not only during his mature years, but from the time of his childhood. It was not, therefore, simply the rapid functioning of accumulated habits of judgment which as he grew older began to operate automatically, apart from his reason.

The daimonion was not a prominent feature in Socrates. If it had been, Aristophanes would surely have exploited it, and Aeschines would have at least mentioned it. It in fact occurred but seldom, and attracted relatively little notice.

When it did occur, it came as an inhibitory voice, warning Socrates against carrying through some proposed action. However, its silence in a situation was interpreted by Socrates to be a sign of approval, so that it could function also as a means of positive encouragement, as in his refusal to prepare a written defense. In indicating not what should be done but what should not be done, the daimonion is analagous to the maieutic method Socrates employs in Plato's dialogs, and so is in character with the "whole" Socrates.

The daimonion occurred on both serious and trivial occasions. It gave rather random counsel, but always only upon personal matters, never on matters affecting the whole community. It spoke only to Socrates, and usually concerning his own actions. Occasionally, so it appears, it spoke to Socrates concerning the actions of his friends. Almost always the daimonion operated with respect to matters beyond the scope of rational or moral judgment, where human reason was powerless to foresee with any certainty the consequences of one or another choice. The daimonion guided Socrates in matters of expediency, and in no way compromised the responsibility he felt and exercised to make full use of his own reason and to make his own ethical decisions. Nor did the daimonion figure directly in either his most important decisions or his most profound insights; e.g., his mission to his fellow citizens.

Socrates recognized that the daimonion was a very special case of divine revelation, and that it was perhaps

unique to himself. He regarded it as an infallible voice, for the reason that it proved itself so in his experience. He obeyed it without question, whether it occurred in relation to a snap decision he had to make or a commitment to a long-time association with one of the youths who came to him.

The daimonion was both orthodox and unorthodox in character. In the fact of its occurring, there was nothing overly unusual, certainly nothing scandalous about it. Revelations from the gods were granted to occur. Socrates' daimonion was not seen as any new or imported divinity. He spoke of it openly, made no attempt to hide it, and was never advised by his friends to keep silent about it. It formed no part of the charge against him. It was unorthodox solely in the manner of its occurring, as an internal oracle rather than as an external oracle operating through the reading of entrails, the flight of birds, chance meetings, etc.

Similarly, the daimonion was at the same time both rational and mystical in character. It functioned rationally in respect to the content of its counsels. The guidance it gave to Socrates always proved, in light of later developments, to "make sense." It showed itself to be mystical in the way it affected Socrates, impressing itself upon him with a spontaneity and an authority that are the marks of "otherworldly" experience. When the voice spoke, it was as if an invisible wall was built around him, closing him off from the counsels of his friends or even his own inclinations.

This, granting the reliability of the best evidence of

history, is what the daimonion of Socrates was and did. In light of this, certain opinions concerning the daimonion can summarily be discounted, and need be considered no further. The daimonion is not, for instance, a mark of Socrates' insanity. Nor was Socrates guilty of perpetrating a pious fraud on his fellow Athenians, by only pretending to be guided by his daimonion. Nor are his references to the daimonion instances of his accustomed irony; rather is he sincere in what he says of it. Because the daimonion did not guide Socrates in matters of right and wrong, but in matters of expediency, it cannot be conceived as the voice of his conscience; nor can it be equated to his general belief in a divine mission to which the god commissioned him.

The daimonion stands, on the pillar of the historical evidence, as a recurring inhibitory voice guiding Socrates on matters beyond the scope of his reason, a voice which from childhood and on serious and trivial occasions alike he heard, respected, and obeyed as the voice of the god. It was an inner voice, both orthodox and unorthodox in respect of the contemporary religion, both rational and mystical in respect of its effects upon his life.

Psychological understanding

To the evidence from history there is added the understanding of psychology, in establishing a final definition for Socrates' daimonion. The primary insight psychology affords is that in every man there is a non-rational component, a level

of feeling below that of reason and inaccessible to it, out of which flows a veritable stream of desires and inhibitions, and from which spring many of the major and minor decisions of a man's life. There were, in other words, within Socrates himself certain non-rational resources that he marshalled to make many of his own decisions freely and subjectively, though it did not appear to him that they were his own decisions. He conceived the guidance of the daimonion as outside himself because he could not conceive the powers of his non-rational self.

In defining the daimonion, it is necessary to recognize that it was both an aspect of his own personality and that it presented itself to him with a marked other-ness. The daimonion both was and was not Socrates. In terms of the psychological understanding of Socrates himself, the daimonion was certainly adjudged to be real, and served to justify for Socrates the occasional instinctive reluctances which came to him with such a sense of authority. It may have been that the daimonion was unreal, and only a symbol which he needed to invent to veil the truth that he was actually making his own decisions rather than relying on oracles. More likely, however, the daimonion had a real as well as a symbolic existence. There was within it an other-ness, an objectivity, as well as an obvious subjectivity. Neither can be left out of a complete definition.

In positing the daimonion as a "physiological mechanism," Hegel does justice to the demand for both objectivity and

subjectivity in its nature. So likewise does Kierkegaard in his conception of the daimonion as a "necessary limit" which prevents Socrates from feeling that he is totally self-determining, and which warns against reducing the daimonion simply to Socrates himself.

With respect to the trustworthiness of the daimonion's counsels, the judgments of scholars both classical and modern are psychologically sound. A purity of mind, an integrity of character, a disciplined life do combine to render a man sensitive to influences which most men are not free enough from their passions to receive. Further, the counsels so received may be granted a certain validity, as will be developed in a subsequent chapter.

Concerning the classification of the views of modern scholars under the headings of voice of reason, voice of the sub-conscious, and voice of God, it needs to be said again that any such classification runs the risk of being arbitrary, and is to that extent unwarranted and unhelpful. Thus, while such a classification was helpful in presenting the variety of opinion on the daimonion, it must now be challenged and virtually discarded. The line between voice of reason and voice of the sub-conscious did not prove to be fixed and firm, nor can there be any arbitrary distinction between either one and the voice of God. Indeed the voice of God, which of the three may be the most satisfactory concept (because it can include the other two), obviously can and does speak through the reason and the sub-conscious, as well as possibly in a

more immediate sense. Psychological understanding of the daimonion will not be fostered in an atmosphere of competition between reason, the sub-conscious, and God.

In a similar vein, psychological understanding of the daimonion can be undercut by too exclusively rational a psychological orientation. In dealing with the daimonion it is necessary, if also frustrating, to recognize that it is abstract, and beyond the scope of laboratory or logic to define. It can only, in Kierkegaard's word, be conceived, never explained.

Specifically, to deny all transcendence to the daimonion, as most modern philosophers and scholars do, is certainly to make it more possible to rationalize the daimonion and fit it into modern psychological categories. It does not, however, take sufficient notice of the near-reverence with which the man of reason regarded the promptings of his daimonion. Socrates showed a consistent reticence to be sure of anything which he saw to originate in himself. It was for this reason that he had to assign the daimonion, which had proved itself infallible, to a divine source. It will not do to ignore this fact in an eagerness to explain the daimonion. To accommodate Socrates' daimonion to a system of psychology is no more warranted or acceptable than to accommodate it to a system of demonology.

Religious insight

It is abundantly clear that Socrates regarded his daimonion as a divine revelation, and that he obeyed it

unquestioningly as the voice of the god. It is similarly evident that the manner of its occurrence, with spontaneity and with commanding authority, is in keeping with the way in which divine revelations generally are observed to occur. A combination of these two observations renders plausible, or at least tenable, the suggestion that Socrates' experience of the daimonion was in fact a religious experience. Such an understanding of the daimonion is further strengthened by the evidence that Socrates felt his daimonion to be both within him and yet separate from him. It had, that is to say, both an objective and a subjective reference. In the language of mysticism, Socrates experienced "the Beyond that is within."

Given this feeling of reverential regard that Socrates had for his daimonion, and granted that men do have religious experiences and that they bear the very same marks that his experience of the daimonion bore, it becomes less tenable to accept an internal, psychological solution to the daimonion which leaves Socrates enclosed in himself, in a virtual autarchy. Respect for the facts, historical and psychological, gives credence to the conclusion that his experience of the daimonion was a religious experience, and to the argument that the daimonion was, as Socrates called it, the voice of god.

The contribution that religion can make, as the third pillar supporting a final definition of the daimonion, comes through a type of Christian philosophy of religion, which ~~man~~ assumes not only that God is man's creator, but that God may also be man's companion. The presence and activity of God in

a human life is no abnormality, but in fact the intended relationship between creator and creature. There is, or may be, in every man "the Beyond that is within."

On this view, Socrates could have been receiving the guidance of God by virtue of the fact that he was living in right relationship with God and so able to be aware of the divine leading. He conceived God's guidance under the form of the daimonion, and described it using the analogy of the divine voice.

So the daimonion of Socrates stands in not unreasonable explanation. While no full and comprehensive definition is possible, nevertheless a fair estimate of its nature has been reached. Historical evidence, psychological understanding, and religious insight combine to render the daimonion possible of conception, if not explanation.

The daimonion was, as Plato reports Socrates to say, "a kind of voice." It was, with Cicero, "a divine something;" with Grote, "a divine ally." It functioned internally, with Kierkegaard, as "a necessary limit." It may be conceived, in sum, as an inner and possibly divine voice. It coupled objective and subjective characteristics so as to suggest "the Beyond that is within," and on occasion prompted Socrates where his reason alone could not give sure guidance.

PART III

AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

CHAPTER X

SOCRATES' EXPERIENCE OF THE DAIMONION

With the daimonion defined, the thesis moves to its second focus, an epistemological assessment of Socrates' experience of the daimonion and of the counsel it gave. Here the procedure will be different from that employed in the inquiry into the daimonion. Rather than attempting a comparative study of various epistemologies in their relations to and judgments upon the daimonion, the thesis will examine Socrates' experience of the daimonion primarily (though not exclusively) from the standpoint of a single epistemology, that offered by the philosophy known as Personalism.

It is one of the major assumptions of this study that Personalism's epistemology is adequate to make this assessment, and the conclusions reached in this section of the discussion depend heavily upon it. An introductory word concerning this philosophy, and its epistemology, is accordingly in order.

Personalism, writes one of its leading exponents, is "that form of idealism which gives equal recognition to both the pluralistic and monistic aspects of experience and which finds in the conscious unity, identity, and free activity of personality the key to the nature of reality and the solution

of the ultimate problems of philosophy."[1] Personalists affirm this conception of reality and, grounding it in a Kantian epistemology, make it the basis of a complete metaphysics. In the concept of personality, Personalists claim to have the key to an age-old problem of metaphysics; i.e., how to conceive of reality so as to provide for both identity and change, both unity and plurality.

In respect of a theory of knowledge, Personalism affirms a necessary distinction and separation between thought and reality, between my concept of "apple" and an actual "apple," be that apple material or mental. This frank epistemological dualism is opposed both to Hegelian idealism (things are thoughts) and to a neo-realism (thoughts are "things"). Recognizing the reality of error in perception, it stands in contrast to various epistemological monisms which claim that immediate experience (sensory, moral, religious, etc.) is infallible.

Epistemological dualism denies such infallibility in any form of human knowledge. While in part knowledge rests on given objective data lying outside the mind, at the same time it is conditioned by the subjective interpretation of the mind. Since this is so, no knowledge has absolute certainty, but is instead grounded in some form of faith; e.g., faith in the senses' ability to apprehend the real world, faith in revelations as having their source in God, etc.

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[1]Albert C. Knudson, The Philosophy of Personalism (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1927), p. 87.

Such an epistemological dualism, while it provides an explanation of the possibility of error, poses the problem of what if any correspondence there is between thought and reality. Admitting that perfect correspondence cannot be proved, Personalism nevertheless affirms a close parallelism between thought and reality, grounding the parallelism in a theistic monism. Bowne, the founder of Personalism as a separate philosophy writes that "the [epistemological] dualism of the finite must be both founded and transcended in a [metaphysical] monism of the infinite."[1]

It will be from this epistemological stance that, in the next chapter, Socrates' experience of the daimonion and its monitions will be evaluated. In that chapter, by a translating of the monitions and silences of the daimonion into propositional statements, they will be given the character of truth claims, and assessed as such.

In this chapter, the concern will be to consider the character and validity of the kind of experience of which the daimonion is one instance. The approach will be, first, to see Socrates' experience of his daimonion as being capable of classification both as parapsychological and religious experience. Secondly, similar experiences of others will be cited. This will make possible, in successive sections, a pragmatic and then a theoretical evaluation of this kind of experience

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[1]Borden Parker Bowne, The Theory of Thought and Knowledge (New York: The American Book Co., 1897), p. 311.

as a source of truth. Specifically, the question is to what extent the daimonion may be judged a valid source of truth. In treating of this question, however, it will be helpful to cite similar experiences of others, and to evaluate in light of this larger context.

Experience of the Daimonion: Parapsychological and Religious

In modern psychology, Socrates' experience of the daimonion would fit into the rather broad classification termed parapsychological experience. Parapsychology is a derivate field of psychology which has special reference to apparently supranormal phenomena, such as telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, the hearing of voices, the seeing of visions, apparitions, etc.

In general, parapsychology has only the begrudging respect of most contemporary psychologists. It is a quite specialized field, which many would prefer to place wholly within the realm of abnormal psychology. The data it considers quite obviously generate major difficulties for any psychology that is based in a physiological reductionism as a complete view of the human organism. In one way or another, parapsychology poses a threat to most psychological "systems." It is unfortunate that over the last seventy years psychology has shown more interest in becoming a "science" comparable to the older physical sciences than it has in taking full account of human experience. Most psychologists have preferred to deal with data that could be observed "scientifically" (i.e.,

publicly and repeatedly), and so have limited themselves to studying only what most people do or seem capable of doing.[1]

With the amount of carefully compiled data now available, however, it would be unrealistic to deny the fact of parapsychological experience. When Socrates hears a voice, or William Blake sees a vision, or a spiritualist makes a "contact," it cannot be reasonably denied that these are their experiences. Whether they be signs of supranormal powers or insanity or fraud, whether they give statements that are true or false, the experiences themselves are facts. Socrates heard the inner voice; his hearing it was a part of his total experience; his hearing it was a fact of his experience. Socrates' experience of the daimonion may have been an instance of parapsychological experience, but that does not make it any less a fact of his experience than his walking about Athens barefoot.

Besides fitting into the category of parapsychological experience, Socrates' experience of his daimonion may also fall under another classification of experience that is equally suspect in many circles; i.e., religious experience. Consistent with the philosophy of Personalism, however, this study grants that there is religious experience; that this experience involves a God; that men variously conceive of God; and that God's existence and the varying conceptions of God affect the

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[1]Peter A. Bertocci, Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1951), p. 86.

interpretation men give to their experiences.

On these assumptions, it becomes possible to speak of religious experience. This is not to imply that, because it may be seen as a separate classification of experience, religious experience is necessarily different in content and manner of reception from other experience, necessarily. Brightman, a Personalist, writes: "Religious experience is any experience of any person taken in its relation to his God. Religious experience is not a unique kind or quality of experience; it is rather a unique way of apprehending experience."[1] Elsewhere he says that "it is experience which has some supposed relation to God as its final cause. The presence of erroneous beliefs does not affect the reality of such an experience. No one can doubt that a religious datum is to be found in human consciousness."[2] The validity of these statements is assumed within this discussion, and from them there comes the working definition of religious experience: any experience taken by a man in its relation to his God.

That such a religious datum was present in Socrates' consciousness is apparent from the review of his life presented in Chapter III. He was a man aware of the gods, a man who worshipped the gods, a man who felt his daimonion to be a special revelation or gift from the gods. Clearly, his

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[1]Edgar S. Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940), p. 415.

[2]Edgar S. Brightman, "The Dialectic of Religious Experience," The Philosophical Review XXXVIII (1929), 557.

experience of the daimonion can be said to be a religious experience.

If the sum of parapsychological experience can be represented by a circle, and the sum of religious experience by another circle, the overlap of the two circles is the area in which Socrates' experience of the daimonion can be said to fall. When the daimonion occurred or manifested itself to Socrates, it may be seen, on the grounds being established here, as a fact of his experience which can be classified both as parapsychological and religious.

With this double classification so established, it will be the practice henceforth in the discussion to refer to Socrates' experience of the daimonion simply as a religious experience, understanding the term "religious experience" to be here limited to that portion of all religious experience which is also parapsychological; i.e., experience in the overlap of the two circles. This is done only for convenience, as the compound adjective "parapsychological-religious," while accurate, is also awkward and--with this explanation--now unnecessary. Both terms have their drawbacks; both can be called rather vague, as perhaps any general classification must be. Of the two, however, "religious" is preferable to "parapsychological" in that it emphasizes the reverence with which Socrates apparently regarded the daimonion, the way in which he related it to the god, and the unquestioning obedience he gave to its counsels.

One other semantic matter deserves brief consideration.

It might at first seem feasible to term Socrates' experience of the daimonion a mystical experience, and so simplify the problem of how to refer to it. In fact, however, this would be inaccurate. While the adjective "mystical" is often used loosely to apply to such experiences as the apparent hearing of a voice, mystical experience is by proper definition non-sensual, even nonconceptual, hence truly ineffable.

Stace ably and helpfully develops a tight definition of mysticism, which on the authority of those acknowledged as the greatest mystics the world has produced rules out of account voices, visions, clairvoyance, etc.[1] "What mystics say is that a genuine mystical experience is nonsensuous. It is formless, shapeless, colorless, odorless, soundless."[2] He notes further that while mystics may also have parapsychological experiences, these are separate from mystical experiences. Often "the sort of persons who are mystics also tend to be the sort of persons who have parapsychological powers,"[3] but this gives no warrant for confusing the two types of experience.

Socrates' hearing the voice does not then constitute a mystical experience. He may, on other grounds (e.g., the trances), have been a mystic, but not because of his daimonion. Of the four traits of mystical experience in William James'

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[1]Walter T. Stace, The Teachings of the Mystics (New York: Mentor Books, 1960), pp. 1-14.

[2]Ibid., p. 12. [3]Ibid., p. 11.

famous formulation (ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, passivity),[1] Socrates' experience of the daimonion can be seen to exhibit the last three. It was not, however, ineffable. For this reason, his experience of the daimonion cannot correctly be termed mystical experience.

In sum, Socrates' experience of the daimonion may be seen to lie in the overlap between two circles which might be drawn to represent in the one case parapsychological experience, and in the other case religious experience. Henceforth, for convenience, it will be characterized simply as religious experience, with that term now restricted to only that portion of religious experience which is also parapsychological.

Similar Experiences of Others

Before attempting to evaluate the daimonion as a source of wise monitions and even truth statements, it will be useful to add to the experience of Socrates the experiences of others who, like himself, have heard or felt in themselves something approximating his inner divine voice. The citing of these similar experiences will broaden the base of data on which then an evaluation can be more adequately made.

The common core of all such experiences can be expressed in the phrase, "Something tells me," which is qualitatively different from "I think" or even "It seems to me." There is more in the experience than can be accounted for by

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[1]William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902), pp. 379-82.

describing it as a subjective mood. There is an objective reference; i.e., the experience brings with it an awareness that its source is seemingly outside and separate from the self. Further, this source is very often acknowledged, as it was by Socrates, to be divine.

Among those whose experiences parallel Socrates' experience of the daimonion, there are of course many who are primarily identified with specifically religious traditions. Within the Judaeo-Christian tradition alone, the instances of persons who have heard an inner divine voice are beyond numbering. Here, after brief mention of a few among many examples from scripture and church history, special note will be taken of four contemporary Christians: Thomas Kelly, E. Stanley Jones, Peter Marshall, and Howard Thurman.

In addition, however, there are those who are more readily related to a philosophic or literary context than to a religious one, who have likewise experienced an inner voice in a manner similar to Socrates. Five will be cited here: Goethe, Descartes, Montaigne, Lord Bolingbroke, and William Hale White (Mark Rutherford). The experiences of this latter group will be the first noted, concentrating upon Goethe.

Time and again in his conversations with Eckermann, Goethe speaks of "the daimonic," acknowledging it to be a force which is beyond his understanding but which "manifests itself in the most varied manner throughout all nature--in

the invisible as in the visible."[1] Especially does he recognize it as operative in the lives of the great men of every age. He cites Napoleon as one "of the daimonic sort . . . and in the highest degree, so that scarce anyone is to be compared with him. Daimonic beings of such sort the Greeks reckoned among their demigods."[2]

In the same vein he comments that "the daimonic loves to throw itself into significant individuals, especially when they are in high places, like Frederic and Peter the Great."[3] He notes his own implicit trust in the late Grand-Duke, but acknowledges that "when the daimonic spirit forsook him, and only the human was left, he knew not how to set to work."[4]

Goethe also acknowledges the daimonic to be operative in his own life: "The daimonic is that which cannot be explained by Reason or Understanding; it lies not in my nature, but I am subject to it."[5] As an instance of it, he refers to a new edition he is preparing of his Metamorphosis of Plants, saying that "the book gives me more trouble than I thought, and I was at first led into the undertaking almost against myself, but something daimonic prevailed, which was not to be resisted."[6] Noting this latter point of not resisting the daimonic, Friedlander compares Goethe's experience to that of

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[1] John Oxenford, Conversations of Goethe (2 vols., London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1850), II, 359.

[2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., II, 363. [4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., II, 359. [6] Ibid., II, 374.

Socrates, observing that Goethe too was inclined "to respect forces of resistance turning to one's advantage as daimonic elements, which one worships without presuming to explain them."[1]

While Goethe never characterizes the daimonic explicitly as a voice or as divine, it is clear that he would acknowledge that it could so manifest itself. He himself felt "subject" to it and obeyed its command as a man would obey a voice of authority. As to its source, he gives more than a hint in his response to Eckermann's suggestion that the active power they are calling the daimonic does not enter into the idea of the Divine: "My good friend, what do we know of the idea of the Divine? and what can our narrow ideas tell of the Highest Being? Should I, like a Turk, name it with a hundred names, I should still fall short, and in comparison with such boundless attributes, have said nothing."[2]

So does Goethe reflect a healthy agnosticism with respect to the daimonic, both as to its nature and its source. He recognizes it as being present in human experience, and attributes at least a measure of the greatness of great men to it. He does not claim to be able to explain it, but neither does he wish to explain it away. It operated in the lives of others, and in his own life as well. Karl Jaspers writes that "Goethe did not seek the daimonic. He merely

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[1] I, 33-34.

[2] Oxenford, II, 363.

experienced and respected it as the limit of his experience."[1] In this conception of Goethe's experience of the daimonic there is a striking parallel to the way in which Kierkegaard sees Socrates' daimonion to have acted for him; i.e., as a "necessary limit."[2] The two men, both of them giving high regard to human reason, were alike "subject" to what one called the daimonion, the other the daimonic, a force or presence which functioned as a limit on their subjective experience.

While Goethe speaks more openly and more frequently than others of his experience of the daimonic, he is not alone among philosophers in acknowledging it. Descartes is another who recognized in himself experiences similar to those of Socrates. His philosophical career had a daimonic origin, when on the night of November 10, 1619, the Spirit of Truth spoke to him in an oracle.[3] He devoted a book to Socrates' daimonion, so his seventeenth century biographer Adrian Baillet reports.[4] Sauvage relates the two in his comment that "no more than Socrates does Descartes dream of contrasting interior monition with ordered research. . . . He too has his dreams and providential warnings, his trust in something which is not, like good sense or phronesis, 'the most widely shared

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[1]Quoted in Friedlander, I, 345.

[2]Supra, pp. 171-76.

[3]Cited by Sauvage, p. 91.

[4]Cited by Sauvage, p. 159.

thing in the world,' but a special gift to those in whom the Spirit breathes."[1] For both men, reason and divine guidance worked hand in hand to give wisdom.

Another who acknowledges in his own experience a force which he likens to the daimonion of Socrates is the French essayist, Montaigne. In the essay entitled "Of Prognostication," he gives his estimate of Socrates' daimonion and also notes his own experience, which parallels that of Socrates both in its form and in the fortuitous results of following its counsels. The passage, in which there is the further suggestion of a divine source for the experience, deserves full quotation:

> Socrates' daimonion might perhaps be no other but a certain impulsion of the will, which obtruded itself upon him without the advice or consent of his judgment; and in a soul so enlightened as his was, and so prepared by a continual exercise of wisdom and virtue, 'tis to be supposed, those inclinations of his, though sudden and undigested, were very important and worthy to be followed.
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> Everyone finds in himself some image of such agitations, of a prompt, vehement and fortuitous opinion; and I may well allow them some authority, who attribute so little to our prudence, and who also myself have had some, weak in reason but violent in persuasion and dissuasion, which were most frequent with Socrates, by which I have suffered myself to be carried away so fortunately, and so much to my own advantage, that they might have been judged to have had something in them of a divine inspiration.[2]

The eighteenth century English statesman Lord Bolingbroke also compared his experience to that of Socrates, seeing himself to be influenced by what he termed his "genius," which however spoke--or so he believed!--in quieter accents:

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[1] Ibid. [2] I, 45-46.

"My genius, unlike the daimonion of Socrates, whispered so softly that very often I heard him not, in the hurry of those passions by which I was transported."[1]

The English novelist of the late nineteenth century, William Hale White, who wrote under the pen name of Mark Rutherford, is yet another whose experience of an inner inhibitory voice bears a very close resemblance to Socrates' experience of the daimonion. Woodhead cites this passage from White's Autobiography (1881), and indeed the similarities are striking:

> I had a mind to write her; but I felt as I have often felt before in great crises, a restraint which was gentle and incomprehensible, but nonetheless unmistakable. I suppose it is not what would be called conscience, as conscience is supposed to decide solely between right and wrong; but it was nonetheless peremptory, although its voice was so soft and low it might easily have been overlooked. Over and over again, when I have proposed doing a thing, have I been impeded or arrested by this same silent monitor, and never have I known its warnings to be the mere false alarms of fancy.[2]

To turn from the philosophic-literary context to a more specifically religious one, there are found in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, as in others, countless examples of men and women who claim to have heard the voice of God. Numerous instances are reported in the Old and New Testaments. Sometimes the voice is heard as a loud call; at other times it is a soft whisper. Sometimes it accompanies a vision, as

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[1]Quoted in Paul Elmer More, Platonism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1917), p. 148.

[2]Cited by W. D. Woodhead, "The Daimonion of Socrates," Classical Philology, XXXV (1940), 426.

of an angel; or it may be directly an inner voice. Amos writes, "The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?"[1] But for Elijah it was at the cave at Mount Horeb "a still small voice."[2] The Old Testament prophets, almost to a man, say with Ezekiel, "The word of the Lord came to me . . . ."[3] If this is a mere literary device, it was surely not so understood by the hearers then, nor by most since then. It was through an angel that the voice came to Zechariah: "I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God; and I was sent to speak to you."[4] So likewise was the voice manifested to Mary and Joseph, to Philip the Ethiopian, and others.[5] But at other times it had no visible source. It could be on occasion heard by others, as by Peter and James and John when it came to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.[6] Or it could be truly an inner voice, which others standing by could not hear, as when it spoke to Jesus after his baptism and to Paul on the road to Damascus.[7]

Through all of church history there has been a steady witness to this same experience of hearing the voice of God. It spoke to Augustine in the garden, to Joan of Arc in the fields, to John Bunyan as he was playing a game of tip-cat on

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[1]Amos 3.8. [2]I Kings 19.12. [3]Ezekiel 6.1.
[4]Luke 1.19. [5]Luke 1.26, Matthew 1.20, Acts 8.26.
[6]Mark 9.2-8. [7]Matthew 3.16-17, Acts 22.9.

a Sunday.[1] In most cases the testimony implies an inner voice, which others would not have heard were they present.

In the present century there are many respected Christians who continue to give evidence of this truly inner voice which comes from God. Often it bears the inhibitory character of Socrates' daimonion, though it is by no means limited to this kind of guidance.

The late Thomas Kelly, Quaker philosopher and devotional writer, reflects his belief that within every man there is "an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul, a holy place, a Divine Center, a speaking Voice, to which we may continuously return."[2] He affirms the practice of inward listening to be the very heart of religion.[3] He speaks of yielding to "the monitions of the Inner Instructor,"[4] of following "God's faintest whisper,"[5] of living "a life of such humble obedience to the Inner Voice as we have scarcely dared to dream."[6] Believing that the experience of hearing the inner voice is not his alone, but that many others share it too, he writes: "We have all heard this holy Whisper at times. At times we have followed the Whisper, and amazing equilibrium of life, amazing effectiveness of living set in. But too many of us

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[1]Osborn, p. 161.

[2]Thomas R. Kelly, A Testament of Devotion (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941), p. 29.

[3]Ibid., p. 32.

[4]Ibid., p. 49.

[5]Ibid., p. 52.

[6]Ibid., p. 75.

have heeded the Voice only at times. Only at times have we submitted to His holy guidance. We have not counted this Holy Thing within us to be the most precious thing in the world."[1] So does Kelly testify to the inner voice, and to the results of following its counsels.

The Methodist missionary to India, E. Stanley Jones, affirms that throughout his long ministry he has been guided by the inner voice of God. In one of his meditations he defines what he means by the inner voice, revealing its similarity to Socrates' daimonion:

> By the Inner Voice I do not mean the voice of conscience, for the Inner Voice gives guidance not merely where a matter of right and wrong is involved as in conscience, but where one is taking life-directions, deciding perplexities, and where one is bidden to take up tasks and assume responsibilities. The Inner Voice is not contradictory to an enlightened conscience, but is in addition to it and beyond it. It is the Spirit of God speaking to one directly and authentically.[2]

Like Socrates, Jones experienced the inner voice on occasions both crucial and also seemingly trivial. An early instance of its occurring was in a moment of utter humiliation during his first sermon, when the voice restrained him from sitting down in shame and bid him abandon his manuscript and speak very simply to the congregation.[3] Another and even more crucial occasion was when, more than fifty years ago, he

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[1] Ibid., p. 116.

[2] E. Stanley Jones, Victorious Living (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1943), p. 260.

[3] E. Stanley Jones, The Christ of the Indian Road (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1929), p. 171.

was despairing of the shattered state of his health and about ready to give up the new missionary task which awaited him in India. The voice came without his bidding, while he was in prayer, and assured him of a divine strength which would always sustain him.[1] But on trivial occasions too he received its guidance. In the book of meditations already cited (a book which, by the way, the voice had told him to write![2]), he mentions an instance where the voice assured him that he would find his lost glasses.[3]

One of the most recent instances of his hearing the voice dates to June, 1967. Jones had planned to go to Israel to negotiate the purchase of some land in Galilee for an international retreat center. Just a few days before war broke out between Israel and Egypt, the voice warned him against going. In personal correspondence he writes: "Have had six blessed months in Hawaii, Japan, Korea, Philippines, India, Finland, Scotland, Denmark and Wales. Four days before the outbreak of war in Israel I awoke with the Inner Voice saying 'Cancel.' I cabled, 'Cancelling visit.' So I did not go to Galilee about the Ashram."[4] On this occasion, as at other times, there is a parallel to Socrates' experience of his daimonion, in the inhibitory manner of its operating.

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[1] Ibid., p. 30.

[2] E. Stanley Jones, Victorious Living, p. 5.

[3] Ibid., p. 264.

[4] Personal letter to Mrs. E. C. Pope, June 25, 1967.

Another prominent and popular American churchman of this century, the late Peter Marshall, also testifies to the guidance of an inner voice from God. On one occasion it quite literally saved his life. One summer, while a young man, he worked in the small English village of Bamburgh, close to the Scottish border in the region of numerous limestone quarries. Walking home one very dark night from a neighboring village, he took a short-cut across the lonely moors. In her biography, his wife describes his hearing the voice that night:

> Suddenly he heard someone call, "Peter! . . ." There was great urgency in the voice. He stopped. "Yes, who is it? What do you want?" . . . . Then he heard it again, even more urgently: "Peter! . . ." He stopped dead still, trying to peer into that impenetrable darkness, but suddenly stumbled and fell to his knees. Putting out his hand to catch himself, he found nothing there. As he cautiously investigated, feeling around in a semicircle, he found himself to be on the very brink of an abandoned stone quarry. Just one more step would have sent him plummeting into space to certain death.
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> This incident made an unforgettable impression on Peter. There was never any doubt in his mind about the source of that Voice.[1]

His confidence in the available guidance of God was a hallmark of his ministry, and was frequently reflected in his prayers as Chaplain of the United States Senate. One day a senator came to him and said, "You seem to think a man can get specific guidance from the Lord about his work. Tell me now, do you really think God could tell me how to vote on the Sugar Bill?" Marshall's reply was prompt: "I certainly do.

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[1]Catherine Marshall, A Man Called Peter (London: Peter Davies, 1955), p. 16.

within its own personal pattern.[1]

Even the very language of Thurman is reminiscent of Socrates, as in the instances Plutarch describes of Socrates' detour through the Trunkmakers' Street and the retreat through The Gullies.[2] Socrates himself could well have said, at least for himself, that "the individual life . . . seems constantly to be the recipient of something that does not arise within its own personal pattern." This is what he experienced in the daimonion.

So, in a fashion similar to the way Socrates received the guidance of his daimonion, do men today continue to be guided by what many of them refer to, in the manner of Socrates, as an inner voice.

Pragmatic Evaluation

All through history, from the Hebrew patriarch Abraham[3] to Socrates to Paul to Joan of Arc to Goethe to E. Stanley Jones to the young New York City Pentecostal minister David Wilkerson,[4] countless men and women have claimed to hear an inner voice. The question arises as to what validity their experiences possess. Specifically, are they a valid source of information, on the basis of which a person can hope to know and act? To this question the discussion

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[1]Howard Thurman, The Growing Edge (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956), p. 75.

[2]Supra, pp. 136-37. [3]Genesis 12.1-3.

[4]David Wilkerson, The Cross and the Switchblade (Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1964), pp. 7, 25, 52.

turns, beginning with a pragmatic evaluation and then a theoretical one.

Does it "work" to regard experiences such as Socrates' experience of the daimonion as a valid source of truth? Pragmatically, the answer is a severely qualified yes. The evidence may be said to be strong, but hardly conclusive.

Socrates' own experience of the daimonion on the assumptions here granted, appears to validate in pragmatic terms that experience; for in fact it did "work." If, as is assumed, the primary sources may be trusted, his following the guidance of his daimonion always had beneficial results. When the daimonion warned against a prospective young companion, Socrates knew from experience that the association could not be fruitful. The daimonion's resisting his entering upon a career in politics, its holding him back from leaving the gymnasium, its insisting that he atone for the impiety in his mocking but eloquent discourse against love, its preventing him from preparing a formal defense, even its seeming to approve his virtually inviting the death sentence--all this he judged to be in his own best interests; and so it appears to have been.

By his own profession, as recorded by Xenophon and Plato, his experience of the daimonion was a valid source of good and true advice, for in every instance the warnings proved to be true: " I have revealed to many of my friends the counsels which God has given me, and in no instance has

Of course, God may not send you a telegram. My own experience backs up what Abe Lincoln said once: 'When God wants me to do or not to do anything, He can always find a way of letting me know!'"[1]

A final example of those whose experience resembles Socrates' experience of the daimonion is the Baptist author and university chaplain, Howard Thurman. In one of his more recent books he reports a personal experience of God's warning to which there are numerous parallels in the life, not just of Socrates, but of many a man and woman. It emphasizes both the inhibitory character of the inner voice, and also the fact that its source is acknowledged to be outside the self. Thurman writes:

> Some years ago I was crossing the United States by the southern route. I had been advised to stop at San Antonio to see the Alamo. So, when the train stopped at noon for a half hour, I got off to look around. If I found myself interested, I could stay until the next train. At first, I thought I would not stay, but just as the conductor announced that the train was ready to go, in a split second I changed my mind. I ran into the car, took my topcoat and bag, and jumped off the slowly moving train, much to the consternation of the conductor. I caught the midnight train. The next day when the train to which I had transferred approached Yuma, Arizona, it slowed. Just off the track ahead were to huge engines like two monsters that had been in a life-and-death struggle, and some fifteen or twenty steel cars twisted and turned over. Their sides had been cut open by acetylene torches so that the dead could be removed. That was the train that I had suddenly jumped off, several hours before.
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> This may be a poor example of what I mean, but certainly the grace of God operates in such a way that the individual life--your life and mine--seems constantly to be the recipient of something that does not arise

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[1]Quoted in ibid., pp. 254-55.

the event shown that I was mistaken.[1]. . . This thing that has come upon me must be a good. . . . I have a clear proof that this is so; for my accustomed guide would certainly have opposed me if I had not been going to meet with something good."[2] Xenophon notes too the pragmatic value that following the daimonion's guidance had for Socrates' friends: "Many of his companions were counseled by him to do this or not to do that in accordance with the warnings of the deity: and those who followed his advice prospered, and those who rejected it had cause for regret."[3]

As for Socrates, so for others has it "worked" to regard experiences similar to Socrates' as a valid source of truth. Many of those who cite such experiences, whether their own personal experience or that of another, also give evidence of the value of such experience for giving wise counsel. Thus Goethe, acknowledging the influence of "the daimonic spirit"[4] in the Grand-Duke, makes this pragmatic evaluation: "In cases where my own understanding and reason were insufficient, I needed only to ask him what was to be done. . . . and I could always be sure of happy results."[5]

Montaigne is another who affirms the pragmatic value of such experience, which on occasion was his personal experience, saying that when he has let himself be guided by

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[1]Xenophon Apology 14. [2]Plato Apology 40 c.

[3]Xenophon Memorabilia i. 1. 5.

[4]Oxenford, II, 363. [5]Ibid.

it the end result has turned out "so fortunately, and so much to my own advantage."[1] Descartes reflects a similar confidence in the pragmatic value of experiences which, like Socrates, he too has had. Commenting on Socrates' daimonion in the "Letter to Princess Elizabeth" in November, 1646, he generalizes:

> But as touching the important actions of one's life, when they appear so uncertain that prudence cannot teach us what we should do, I think it is indeed right to follow the advice of one's genius, and that it is a good thing to be firmly persuaded that the tasks we undertake without repugnance, with that freedom which usually goes with joy, will not fail to come to a good issue.[2]

The philosopher Schopenhauer, in a chapter he titles "On Instinct and Mechanical Tendency," cites a young spider spinning its web "although it neither knows nor understands the aim of it."[3] He compares this to Socrates' obeying his daimonion without being able rationally to justify it, and affirms that it was right for Socrates--and hence for others as well--so to respond. He notes from his own day three "quite well-authenticated cases."[4] experiences of inhibition comparable to Socrates' experience of the daimonion. In one instance a man who had booked passage on a ship refused to board it, unable to give a reason; the ship went down. In another a man went with friends to a powder magazine, but when he arrived he was seized with an unexplainable anxiety and would not go in; the magazine blew up. In the third a

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[1] I, 46.

[2] Quoted in Sauvage, p. 172.

[3] III, 99.

[4] Ibid.

man aboard ship went to bed fully clothed without knowing why; the ship sank and he was one of few to be saved.[1] In each case, so Schopenhauer implies, it was right for the one involved to obey the impulse. So does he give to such experiences a pragmatic value.

William Hale White, whose experience of inhibitory warnings closely parallels that of Socrates, has previously been quoted as saying that "over and over again, when I have proposed doing a thing, have I been impeded or arrested by this same silent monitor, and never have I known its warnings to be the mere false alarms of fancy."[2] Thomas Kelly adds his testimony that "at times we have followed the Whisper, and amazing equilibrium of life, amazing effectiveness of living set in."[3] E. Stanley Jones writes that: "As I look back across the years I am impressed that whenever I have sincerely listened to and followed that Voice it has never let me down. It has always proved right."[4]

So the evidence accumulates, from Socrates himself and from others, to suggest that there are reasonable grounds for regarding experiences such as his of the daimonion as a proper source of valuable advice. A man, that is to say, can have some confidence in the guidance that so comes to him,

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[1] Ibid., III, 99-100.

[2] Woodhead, Classical Philology, XXXV, 426; supra, p. 280.

[3] Kelly, p. 116; supra, p. 282-83.

[4] E. Stanley Jones, Victorious Living, p. 264.

because in fact "it works" to trust it. For many, including Socrates, the experience was a responsible source of truth. As Jones says, "It has never let me down. It has always proved right."

And yet the further facts of history, the full testimony of men, is that while such experiences sometimes and for some persons have an undoubted pragmatic value as a source of good counsel, there is as impressive a body of evidence to say that experiences like those of Socrates are by no means worthy of trust, or even deserving of consideration. On the contrary, they are false, deceptive, misleading, often tragic or at least tragicomic.

It is not just the mentally ill, in and out of psychiatric hospitals, who "hear voices" that are irrational, impractical, and in no sense helpful. In these cases the experience is the manifestation of a psychic sickness. But sincere men, whose integrity and sanity are beyond question, have likewise been mistaken in assuming as true the guidance of an inner voice which they clearly heard. Following that guidance has led to their hurt or humiliation. It has not, in other words, proved for them to be good and wise counsel.

In order that a place might be saved for special revelation from God, the problem this poses has usually been "solved" in one of two ways. Either the person led astray by his experience has been on that account labeled a "nut," or the voice has been attributed to the self or the Devil, or--if granted to be from God--assumed to have been misinterpreted.

Neither of these two "solutions" in fact solves anything. The first of them is merely name-calling, and is no explanation at all. The second amounts to nothing more than reasoning in a circle; i.e., including the conclusion in the premise. If it is granted that a genuine experience of God is valid and worthy of trust, then it is already established that an experience unworthy of trust is not from God. There is no logical fallacy in connecting the two statements: "Because an experience comes from God, it is trustworthy," and "Because an experience is not trustworthy, it does not come from God." ("Because A, then B" implies "Because not B, then not A.") But neither is there any logical movement; it amounts to a tautology. There is, however, a logical fallacy in connecting "Because an experience comes from God, it is trustworthy" with "Because an experience is trustworthy, it comes from God." ("Because A, then B" does not connect with "Because B, then A.")

The problem remains as to whether experience similar to Socrates' experience of the daimonion is a valid source of truth. To answer in terms of whether or not the inner voice is the genuine voice of God is simply to ask the same question in another way, and thus only to restate the problem. The facts are that the testimony of history is mixed, and there is no certain way of guaranteeing the validity of a given experience. Just because a man hears what he calls the inner voice of God is no sign that he is justified in trusting its guidance. All such experiences, whether bearing true or

false knowledge-claims, are in the terms of this discussion properly termed religious experiences, for whether they actually come from God or not they are taken by the subject in relation to God.

Pragmatically, then, the answer to whether experiences like that of the daimonion are a valid source of truth is both yes and no. For one experience, where the results of following the guidance it brings are beneficial, the pragmatic evaluation is positive: yes, trust the experience. For another experience, where the results are not beneficial, the pragmatic evaluation is negative: no, do not trust it. The yes answers, from men of the stature of Socrates and Descartes and E. Stanley Jones, prevent a summary dismissal of all such experience as unworthy of trust or consideration. The no answers, while they do not disprove the yes answers, prevent too ready and too great a degree of confidence in accepting every murmur of an inner voice as the word of truth.

An unequivocal, conclusive pragmatic evaluation for experience similar to Socrates' experience of the daimonion is thus not possible "across the board." Further, for a particular experience a pragmatic evaluation cannot be made until after the results are known, by which time it can be of no value in that specific situation.

For such reasons, it seems advisable to look beyond a pragmatic reference to evaluate experience, such as of the daimonion, for its suitability as a source of truth. The discussion turns to a theoretical evaluation of experience

similar to that of Socrates.

Theoretical Evaluation

Are there prior, theoretical grounds for feeling any confidence that experience such as Socrates' experience of his daimonion is a valid source of knowledge? Socrates himself apparently assumed his experience to be valid, and trusted both the experience itself and the guidance that came through it. As he is reported, he never justified the experience rationally, seeking to give an intellectually respectable account of it. Rather, he regarded it as divine revelation, the interior speaking of the voice of his god.

In his case, personal experience seems to have given him good "reason" to heed the daimonion's warnings, but this strictly speaking was only a pragmatic-empirical, not a rational, ground for so doing. With his mind, he apparently could not explain how such experience could come to be; and as far as is known he did not try to wrestle with the question. He spoke of his mental and psychological processes as human up to the limit of his being able to understand them; beyond that, he spoke of them as divine. And there he seems to have left the matter. That it was divine revelation was only an assumption, not a rational conclusion, but it evidently satisfied Socrates. He did not question the daimonion. He listened for it, and to it.

In the attempt to present a theoretical evaluation of his experience, it will be helpful to begin by examining

Socrates' own conviction that human reason is limited, and so cannot serve as an adequate arbiter of all human experience. Not only Socrates but many others as well, some of whom will be cited, share this conviction of reason's limitations. Following this, the discussion will turn to a consideration of intuition, as Bergson conceives it, and the value of such a concept in assessing human experience. A third step in the evaluation will be to develop carefully the relationship between reason and intuition. Finally, drawing on assumptions taken from the philosophy of Personalism, the validity of experience such as that of the daimonion will be judged in relation to the whole of human experience, and the claim presented that there are reasonable grounds--in theory as in practice--for regarding it as a valid source of counsel and guidance.

The limitations of reason

While Socrates apparently did not articulate a closely reasoned defense of his reliance upon the daimonion, it is likely that, had he done so, one step in the argument would have been to show that human reason alone cannot give an adequate account of all experience, nor can it serve as an adequate guide to all conduct. For while he championed the full use of reason, for himself and others, he was not so obsessed with it that he was blind to its limitations.

Socrates in fact steered clear of an uncritical rationalism, which he saw to be just as impoverishing as an uncritical acceptance of the traditions and institutions of

the present society. Rather did he keep himself open to life on all its levels, and refuse to dismiss as superstitious nonsense what he could not rationally explain. No thoughtful man, he believed, would want to be exclusively rational, and shut out all experience that would not fit in the frame of human reason.

His conviction of reason's limitations stands behind his profound equation of wisdom with ignorance, and marks him as the thoroughly undogmatic man. He showed a healthy reluctance, unusual in a man who prizes the rational faculty, to be too sure about either his most cherished beliefs or his most serious doubts. In respect to the latter, More comments that Socrates was "too sincerely sceptical to set up the dictates of private doubts versus the intuition that might lie half-concealed in the popular myths."[1] Occasionally he himself chose to use myth, when he recognized that no logical concept could serve as the vehicle of communication.

Believing in the full use of reason, yet tempering his respect for reason with an awareness of its limitations in some ranges of human experience, Socrates reached a position which safeguards both reason and the reasoner. On the one hand, reason is protected from being overextended beyond its proper bounds. At the same time, man is protected against an overzealous and exclusive reliance on reason. This is perhaps most markedly illustrated in Socrates' convictions

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[1]P. 143.

about the relationship between reason and divine revelation. Neither one is the whole answer to man's quest for knowledge; both together, each in its proper place, are necessary. As Xenophon expresses it, citing Socrates' opinions on revelation:

> If any man thinks these matters are wholly within the grasp of the human mind and nothing in them is beyond our reason, that man, he said, is irrational. But it is no less irrational to seek the guidance of heaven in matters which men are permitted by the gods to decide for themselves by study. . . . In short, what the gods have granted us to do by the help of learning, we must learn; what is hidden from mortals we should try to find out from the gods by divination: for to him that is in their grace the gods grant a sign.[1]

Not only Socrates, but many of the world's great philosophers have acknowledged reason's limitations, and argued for the acceptance of claims to truth coming from other forms of human experience. Cicero is one, who with special reference to divine revelation sets the case very ably, from an empirical point of view, in a passage which merits full quotation:

> You demand a full explanation of everything--and you have, of course, a complete right to do so. But we are not dealing at the moment with that phase of the subject. We are asking whether a given phenomenon actually occurs or does not occur. To illustrate: if I aver that a magnet attracts and draws iron to itself but am unable to tell you why, then you will refuse to admit the existence of magnetic force--will you not? That is certainly the attitude you are assuming toward the matter of the reality of divination, in spite of the fact that we ourselves have observed it, heard about it, read accounts of it, and received it like a legacy from our ancestors. The man in the street was thoroughly convinced of the power of clairvoyance long before philosophy, which is not so very ancient, ever saw the light of day; and since its birth not one respectable

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[1] Memorabilia i. 1. 9.

> philosopher has arisen in opposition to the general opinion. Pythagoras, Democritus, and Socrates I have already quoted.[1]

The British Empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, and Hume) sharply contradict Spinoza's sublime trust in reason, which begot a magnificent structure of logic and metaphysics, by affirming that all knowledge comes through experience through the senses. Locke's famous statement is to the effect that nothing can be in the mind except what was first in the senses. The mind at birth is a tabula rasa, a clean sheet on which only sense experience can make a mark. In Hume's thoroughgoing scepticism, empiricism undercut the very foundation of human reason. He said of mind what Berkeley had said of matter. If matter does not exist except as a bundle of perceptions in the mind, then neither does mind exist other than as a different bundle of perceptions. The mind is no substance, no real entity, but only a series of separate perceptions. The inferences on which reason operates and depends (e.g., causality, necessity) are unverifiable.

Immanuel Kant, in his Critique of Pure Reason, protests against reason's funeral, which Hume had apparently proven. But in order to revive reason he has to limit strictly its applications. For Kant, the mind is a director, not merely a collector, of perceptions. There is a pure reason, with a priori principles independent of experience. The mind is "an active organ which molds and coordinates

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[1] On Divination i. 39.

sensations into ideas, an organ which transforms the chaotic multiplicity of experience into the ordered unity of thought."[1]

In functioning as an agent of selection and coordination, however, reason can deal only with perceptions, and never with a "thing-in-itself." Kant has to draw a tight circle around the pure (theoretical) reason which he has worked so hard to establish and justify. There can be no leap from personal experience to ultimate reality. No inferences about ultimate reality can legitimately be made. Any attempt of the reason to do so amounts to nothing more than a hypothesis.

Reason cannot then consider the most profound questions man raises. While Kant is unwilling to accept his own conclusion, and so goes on to posit a "practical reason" as a guide to belief and conduct, he admits that it has validity only for making moral decisions and can never be said to yield knowledge in the theoretical sense. So, for Kant also, does reason emerge as an insufficient opening into the full range of human experience.

Henri Bergson sets the limitations of reason in a somewhat different philosophical context. In a chapter on "The Method of Philosophy," he argues the absolute necessity of risking to go beyond reason in the search for knowledge. Using an analogy in which he compares swimming to walking, he writes:

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[1]Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1926), p. 202.

> Reason, reasoning on its own powers, will never succeed in extending them, though the extension would not appear at all unreasonable once it were accomplished. Thousands and thousands of variations on the theme of walking will never yield a rule for swimming. Come, enter the water, and when you know how to swim, you will understand how the mechanism of swimming is connected with that of walking. Swimming is an extension of walking, but walking would never have pushed you on to swimming. . . . Reasoning, in fact, always nails us down to the solid ground. . . . In theory there is a kind of absurdity in trying to know otherwise than by intelligence; but if the risk be frankly accepted, action will perhaps cut the knot that reasoning has tied and will not unloose.[1]

As will become evident, Bergson's insight that reason cannot extend its own powers even though the extension once accomplished would not seem unreasonable is of crucial importance in granting a validity to non-rational forms of experience as a source of truth.

Kierkegaard too sees the limitations of human reason and argues with an almost logical precision that, even as the like cannot grasp the unlike, neither can the rational nature of man grasp the divine nature of God. Speaking with specific reference to Socrates, he writes:

> The connoisseur in self-knowledge was perplexed over himself to the point of bewilderment when he came to grapple in thought with the unlike. . . . If man is to receive any true knowledge about the Unknown (God) he must be made to know that it is unlike him, absolutely unlike him. This knowledge the Reason cannot possibly obtain of itself. . . . For how should the Reason be able to understand what is absolutely different from itself? . . . Merely to obtain the knowledge that God is unlike him, man needs the help of God.[2]

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[1]Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, trans. Arthur Mitchell (London: Macmillan & Co., 1928), pp. 204,203.

[2]Philosophical Fragments, pp. 37, 36.

Divine revelation, that is to say, is necessary if a man is to know anything at all of God. His own reason cannot be a valid source of knowledge concerning God.

In sum, there is a strong intellectual tradition asserting the limitations of reason. In line with this, Socrates was right in his willingness to be open to life on all its levels, and to accept the daimonion as a potential source of valid advice, and even truth-claims. "Reason as consistency has great value in testing the connections between the ideas we already have, and exposing errors; but we cannot rely upon it as the sole guide to the nature of the world as it is and may be."[1]

The realm of intuition

There is evident, running right through the life and thought of Socrates, a creative tension between reason and intuition. His experience of the daimonion and the trances are but the most striking examples of his openness to intuition. His very understanding of education rests on the operation of intuition. He cannot "teach" a companion, but can only lead him by a path of dialectic to that moment when an inner spark may be struck, bringing light to the understanding. Socrates believes he cannot be a "teacher," but only a "midwife," because learning depends on intuition as well as upon the exercise of reason. Reason can clear away the underbrush to make ready for the intuition. Reason can and must function

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[1]Bertocci, p. 55.

following the intuition. But reason cannot substitute for intuition in the search for knowledge. The two are linked together in a creative tension which is also a creative partnership.

Bergson gives to this realm of intuition, which in Socrates is seen to complement the realm of reason, considerable philosophical support. He scores "the exaggerated confidence of philosophy in the powers of the individual mind,"[1] and argues that the origin of every creative philosophy is an intuition: "Whether it is dogmatic or critical, whether it admits the relativity of our knowledge or claims to be established within the absolute, a philosophy is generally the work of a philosopher, and a single and unitary vision of the whole. It is to be taken or left."[2]

Philosophy, for Bergson, thus proceeds by intuition, which he defines as "the kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible."[3] Philosophy, then, "consists in placing oneself within the object itself by an effort of intuition. . . . To philosophize, therefore, is to invert the habitual direction of the work of thought."[4]

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[1] Creative Evolution, p. 201. [2] Ibid.

[3] Henri Bergson, An Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. T. E. Hulme (London: Macmillan & Co., 1913), p. 6.

[4] Ibid., pp. 37, 59.

Even the certainties of science, Bergson believes, begin with an intuition, which reason subsequently works through to exactitude and logical precision. Because the intuition is momentary, and the rational unfolding of it sometimes a matter of years, "we often take the logical equipment of science for science itself, forgetting the metaphysical intuition from which all the rest has sprung."[1]

Bergson's claim receives support from the example of the scientist who "sees" a truth in a flash of intuitive insight and then verifies it scientifically. Archimedes, Galvani, and Einstein are three among many who arrived at a scientific truth in such a fashion.

The argument that Bergson advances, that there is a realm of intuition separate from reason, is a strong one, both for philosophy and for science. In sum, it is that "the simple act which starts the [rational] analysis, and which conceals itself behind the analysis, proceeds from a faculty quite different from the analytical. This is, by its very definition, intuition."[2] As he then continues in the same passage to describe intuition, he could well be speaking directly of Socrates' daimonion: "There is nothing mysterious in this faculty. Everyone of us has had occasion to exercise it to a certain degree. . . . It is not a thing, but the direction of a movement, and though indefinitely extensible,

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[1] Ibid., p. 62.

[2] Ibid., p. 76.

it is infinitely simple."[1]

The relationship of intuition and reason

To attempt to relate the two realms of reason and intuition is to look not away from Socrates but toward him, for clearly he assumed such a relationship to exist. An oversimplified contrast between the two would be quite strange to Socrates, the man with the daimonion. He was neither a cold rationalist who summarily rejected all other forms of experience, nor was he an Eastern mystic who denied all validity to reason in the search for truth. The creative tension between the two he saw to be a creative partnership. Reason and intuition do not pull against each other but in the same direction, toward truth.

Others, including Descartes and Kant, likewise conceive the relationship between reason and intuition to be complementary, and so would not dream of contrasting inner monition with ordered research. Reason is important but not all-important, for intuition enriches and enlarges knowledge beyond what the purely rational can achieve. Sauvage summarizes Descartes' view of the place of intuition: "We must beware lest we blind the eye of the spirit and obscure the natural light by ill-conceived study."[2]

An openness to intuition need not, then, be equated to a rejection of reason. Nothing more is involved than the simple recognition, made clear in Bergson, that while reason

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[1] Ibid., pp. 76-77.

[2] P. 159.

has a unique function to perform in testing the connections between ideas already present to the mind, it cannot transcend itself, even when the results of so doing would not appear as unreasonable.

Thus, on the grounds developed in the preceding discussion, reason cannot serve as the sole guide and interpreter of human experience. Intuition is its partner, leading out in new directions and to new insights that reason can then examine and correct and correlate with truth-claims arising from other experiences of man's total life. As Bertocci writes: "Reason does not put the brakes on life; it does not destroy life. It rather follows life as a father may follow his child down the street to curb costly and unnecessary, though easily understandable, recklessness."[1]

Reason, in sum, in accepting a partnership with intuition, is humble enough "to content itself with establishing the reasonableness of believing, not the reasonableness of what is believed."[2] Intuition, in turn, is humble enough to receive the guidance and correction of reason. As an Indian philosopher writes: "Intuition, though it includes the testimony of will and feeling, is never fully attained without strenuous intellectual effort. It cannot dispense with the

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[1]P. 67.

[2]Henry Sidgwick, Outlines of the History of Ethics (London: Macmillan & Co., 1886), p. 147.

discipline of reason and the technique of proof."[1]

Reason and intuition need not then be hostile to one another, but may in fact interact toward the goal of a more complete and more certain knowledge.

The validity of religious experience

If reason and intuition may be said to be yoked in a creative partnership, each complementing the other in the search for knowledge, then it follows that reason and religious experience, such as Socrates' experience of the daimonion, may also be similarly yoked. Religious experience is one among several forms of human experience that fall within the realm of intuition as here described. As such, it often claims truth beyond the reach of reason.

Some argue that religious experience possesses a uniqueness that prevents its being finally reduced to any other form of human experience. Albert C. Knudson, a Personalist, expresses this uniqueness by extending Kant's argument for a moral a priori. Knudson sees that there are four basic endowments of the mind, conforming to four basic types of human experience: sensory, moral, aesthetic, and religious. The mind uses these immanent mental principles, "categories" in Kant's term, to order experience. He speaks of them as the four a prioris, each of which is self-verifying while at

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[1]Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Radhakrishnan: An Anthology, ed. A. N. Marlow (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1952), p. 118.

the same time grounded in a common human reason.[1]

The religious a priori, which enables the mind to receive knowledge from religious experience, is for Knudson absolutely underived. His argument for the religious a priori is essentially an empirical one: "It is the universality and inevitability of religion that leads us to believe that it is structural in human nature or the human reason."[2] It is a great "racial fact."[3] The nature of the religious a priori can be learned from history and a study of the great world religions, the "concrete products of the religious a priori."[4] In sum: "The religious a priori is not dependent on anything outside itself for its validity. It has an autonomous validity; it is a self-verifying aspect of our mental life."[5]

A later Personalist, Peter Bertocci, grounds the validity of religious experience as a source of knowledge in his concept of the "datum self." He sees man to be aware of his self as a unitas multiplex, a multiple unity, or better a unity encompassing diversity. This "datum self" may be likened to a hand with seven fingers, with which man reaches out to experience his world; e.g., everything from his own body to the multiplication tables to a physical object to God.

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[1]Albert C. Knudson, The Validity of Religious Experience (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1937), pp. 159-65.

[2]Ibid., p. 170.

[3]Ibid., p. 171.

[4]Ibid., p. 180.

[5]Ibid., p. 175.

These seven fingers of the self correspond to the seven mental activities of thinking, feeling, willing, wanting, experiencing moral obligation, experiencing the beautiful, and experiencing the holy. They are ultimately irreducible one to the other; yet neither are they wholly separate, but connected as the fingers in a hand. There is truly a unity which encompasses diversity.[1]

Psychology, while not pronouncing on the validity of religious experience, acknowledges the reality of such non-rational experience, relating it to a level of the self below that of conscious reason. Speaking of this subliminal self, William James wrote more than fifty years ago that "our intuitions, hypotheses, fancies, superstitions, persuasions, convictions, and in general all our non-rational operations come from it. . . . It is also the fountainhead of much that feeds our religion. In persons deep in the religious life . . . the door into this region seems unusually wide open."[2] Subsequent explorations in psychology lend support to the assumption of a sub-conscious self.

It is to this self that psychologists have related the daimonion of Socrates. Myers cites Socrates' experience of the daimonion in support of his thesis that "beneath the superficially conscious stratum of our being there is not

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[1]Bertocci lectured on his concept of the "datum self" in this author's hearing, during a semester course, "Metaphysics," in the College of Liberal Arts, Boston University, in the spring of 1956.

[2]Pp. 483-84.

only a stratum of dream and confusion, but a still subjacent stratum of coherent meditation as well."[1] In the Freudian division of self into id, ego, and superego, the daimonion relates most closely to the superego, which Freud claims first begins to function (as did the daimonion) as a warning voice to inhibit action. Further, it is well-attested that the possibility of rapport, which for Socrates came through the daimonion, is very often given not on the level of conscious reason but through the sub-conscious.

So there are seen to be a number of reasonable arguments for the conclusion that religious experience, such as Socrates' experience of the daimonion, is not only real, but also a source of counsel and guidance. It can be viewed as one among a number of forms of human experience which are irreducible one to the other, and which the human mind can use in the quest for truth.

In this first of two chapters with an epistemological focus, there has been the attempt to evaluate Socrates' daimonion as a valid source of good counsel. His experience has been seen to be one instance in the larger realms of both parapsychological and religious experience, and in fact to lie in the overlap of the two.

To assist in the evaluation, the similar experiences of others, from both philosophical and religious traditions, were cited. On this broadened base of experience, a pragmatic

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[1]II, 96.

evaluation revealed that to many men, and very often consistently to the same man, experiences such as Socrates' experience of the daimonion have proved valid sources of advice. However, an abundance of evidence in the other direction forbids too uncritical a reliance upon such experience. Further, a pragmatic evaluation was revealed to be limited in that it offers no help for a specific instance, since it cannot be made until the "results" are known.

To determine if there are any prior grounds for trusting experiences such as those given by the daimonion, a theoretical evaluation was made. The limitations of human reason were noted, and the conclusion was drawn that reason cannot serve as the sole guide and arbiter for human experience. The realm of intuition was explored, and the proper relationship of intuition and reason declared not to be that of opposition but of a creative partnership. Finally, the validity of religious experience as a source of knowledge was grounded in the Personalist position that religious experience is a basic and irreducible form of human experience, which the mind through its inherent structure can receive and use in the search for truth.

If, then, the daimonion of Socrates is a specific instance of religious experience, it may be judged, pragmatically and theoretically, to have value for knowledge. The general principle may have its specific application. Not to grant it would be to deny the principle. As Hegel writes, speaking of Socrates and coupling the willingness of men to admit of

divine revelation in general with their reluctance to admit of it in any one instance: "This unbelief, which thus does not deny the general fact and general possibility, but believes it in no particular case, really does not believe in the actuality and truth of the thing."[1]

There remain now the questions of whether the daimonion, through its monitions and silences, went beyond the mere giving of advice and presented or implied statements of fact; and if so, whether those statements were true. Did the daimonion make truth-claims? If so, what epistemological status have they? To these questions the discussion now turns.

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[1] Lectures on the History of Philosophy, I, 433.

CHAPTER XI

THE DAIMONION AS A "VOICE OF TRUTH"

In this second of two chapters with an epistemological focus the task is to examine not the religious experience out of which statements of purported truth arise, but the validity of such claims themselves. Beyond the question of the validity of experiences such as Socrates' experience of the daimonion, there is the further question of the cognitive value of what such experiences present. Granted that religious experience issues in truth-claims, what may be said of the truth of such claims? Specifically, was the daimonion a "voice of truth"?

Before assessing the cognitive value of such truth-claims, and therefore of the daimonion itself, there is a prior question to consider, the question of truth itself. What is truth? What does it mean to say of a proposition that it is true? It is with an assumption as to the criterion of truth that the discussion must begin. Then, in light of it, the cognitive value of truth-claims such as presented by Socrates' daimonion may be judged.

In the process of making this evaluation, three twentieth century views will be cited. Each grows out of a

philosophy which accepts the general position of epistemological dualism; yet each differs from the other two, particularly as regards religious experience. The three will be the Personalist position of Knudson, Brightman, and Bertocci; the Quaker consensus of Rufus Jones and Elton Trueblood; and an empiricist critique by Bertrand Russell. From these will emerge some reasonable grounds on which to base an evaluation of the daimonion.

The Criterion of Truth: Comprehensive Coherence

What makes a proposition true? What is the criterion of truth? It is one of the first and most fundamental questions in philosophy, yet one to which many conflicting answers are given. Crucial differences exist in regard to what constitutes the test for truth.

The variety of answers is explained by the differences among men on a yet more fundamental issue; i.e., where to look for truth. What are the data to be considered in judging the truth of a particular proposition? What data are to be included in a general quest for the whole body of truth? To refer again, as in the preceding chapter, to reason and intuition will be to illustrate the conflicts that arise from looking for truth in one place as opposed to another. If truth be sought just in the realm of reason, then the criterion of truth becomes logical certainty. If truth be sought only in the realm of intuition, the criterion of truth becomes psychological certitude. A wide chasm separates the

two.

The issue of where truth is to be found is not only crucial, but also more difficult to resolve than first appears. A person's temperament, his unconscious prejudices, all his previous experiences conspire to incline him one way or another, so that it becomes hard to consider impartially the question of where truth lies. The dilemma, and the danger, are well summarized in a passage noting the necessity of choice and urging that it be thought through carefully:

> We can choose, singly or together, to pay serious attention only to those ideas and responses that commend themselves to our present states, excluding as incompetent, irrelevant and immaterial all testimonies--joyous or anguished--that conflict with what we already take into account. We can decry the witness of the mystics because we have never had a mystical experience. We can belittle rational argument because we have not disciplined ourselves to follow a chain of reasoning. We can despise the insights of yesterday's prophets because they speak their own dialect and not ours. Or worse, we can unthinkingly and unimaginatively take for granted that everybody else is really just like our private selves, so that sometimes extreme statements of mystics, scholars and prophets need not be taken any more seriously than we take our own extreme statements made in fear or anger or fun. We can cut them down to size. The alternative is to give as much weight to others' experiences and interpretations as we give to our own, no less and no more.[1]

One of the grounds for this discussion, as developed in the preceding chapter, is the wisdom of regarding all forms of human experience as potential sources of knowledge. Reason can be seen to have its limitations: it can test connections between ideas for logical consistency, but it cannot transcend

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[1]Mary McDermott Shideler, "Is Metaphysics Necessary," The Christian Century, LXXIX (March 21, 1962), 354.

a purely rational reference and so cannot be the sole guide to human experience, which includes more than the rational experience. Other forms of experience, of moral obligation and of beauty and of the divine, are likewise limited.

If this be so, it follows that the search for truth knows no arbitrary boundaries. Truth may be found anywhere among the forms of human experience, and is neither proved nor disproved by its source alone. In this light, naturalists and positivists and mystics who would exclude whole areas of human experience from consideration are not empirical enough. In unduly restricting their data, they fail to do justice to the total experience of man.

The clear implication of the foregoing, namely that truth may be found in many forms of human experience, is that the terms "knowledge" and "truth" must be given a meaning beyond that of logical certainty. It is possible and proper, that is to say, to use the terms in such statements as "That is right (or beautiful, or holy) . . . I love my wife. . . . It is true that the sun will rise tomorrow." None of these statements could be said to be true if logical certainty were the criterion; yet not to speak of knowledge in these areas of experience is to impoverish the meaning that men find in life.

This in turn suggests a broadening of the very term "reason" beyond its strict definition, so that it has application not only within the narrow context of logical consistency but in the wider context of the correlating of all

experience. Such a broadening already exists in the use of the adjective "reasonable" with connotations beyond the purely rational. Writing of this fuller scope for reason, Bertocci suggests that "living and observing will have to come to the aid of logic, and this very appeal to the whole of the available evidence in support of some option or other is the life of reason."[1]

One outcome of this attention to the whole of human experience, with its consequent broadening of the concepts of truth and reason, is the choice of coherence as the criterion of truth. The Personalists have developed this, though it by no means originates with them. One of them writes, referring to the correlating of experience: "It is this shuttling back and forth of ideas and experiences, with each being allowed to guide the other, that we have in mind when we use the words growing, empirical coherence."[2]

It is as empirical coherence that the criterion has usually been presented by Personalists. The adjective was chosen to emphasize the important difference between a strictly logical coherence, referring to a system of logical "musts," and the broader understanding of coherence that the criterion is meant to convey; i.e., a coherence which couples to logical "musts" the connections between events in experience.

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[1] Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion, p. 77.

[2] Ibid., p. 58.

abbreviate it further into a single phrase, "coherence means inclusive systematic consistency."[1]

As here understood, coherence differs markedly from consistency. Whereas consistency requires only the absence of contradiction, coherence in addition requires attention to the facts of experience, and the relating of propositions about these facts in an orderly and systematic way, leaving no facts out.

One important implication of the coherence criterion deserves special mention. Since a reference to the whole of experience is required, and since experience is constantly expanding, the application of this criterion can never justify a claim that any single truth is fixed and static. There is a provisional nature to all truth; there is no closed system of true propositions. But to admit this, according to the Personalists, is not to throw truth into disrepute. It is rather to recognize that an openness to correction and revision in the light of new experience is one of the surest guarantees that today's truth can serve for tomorrow as well.

To refer again to the realms of reason and intuition, the coherence criterion can be said to give in comparison a more comprehensive test for truth than either logical certainty or psychological certitude. It considers both rational and intuitive experience, and in fact all experience, in its search for truth. Of the truth or falsehood of any

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[1] Ibid., p. 68.

While "empirical" is a proper adjective to express this broader reference, it creates confusion among those who immediately refer the term to its particular meaning and connotations within the philosophical school of empiricism. To avoid this confusion, Personalists in recent years (e.g., L. Harold De Wolf)[1] have begun to refer to the criterion as comprehensive coherence. It is in this form that the criterion will be identified here.

Formally, the coherence criterion is set out in this complete definition offered by Brightman:

> According to the criterion of coherence, a proposition is to be treated as true if (1) it is self-consistent, (2) it is consistent with all of the known facts of experience, (3) it is consistent with all other propositions held as true by the mind that is applying this criterion, (4) it establishes explanatory and interpretative relations between various parts of experience, (5) these relations include all known aspects of experience and all known problems about experience in its details and as a whole.[2]

In an abbreviated definition of coherence as the criterion of truth, Brightman writes that "any proposition is true, if it is both self-consistent and coherently connected with our system of propositions as a whole."[3] He notes: "By coherence is meant, literally, 'sticking together.' The coherence criterion looks beyond the mere self-consistency of propositions to a comprehensive, synoptic view of all experience."[4] To

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[1]In lectures at Boston University, spring, 1956.

[2]A Philosophy of Religion, p. 128.

[3]Edgar S. Brightman, An Introduction to Philosophy (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1951), p. 69.

[4]Ibid.

proposition, the coherence criterion asks: Which hypothesis is more consistent with all known propositions and with other data, and enables the best organization of the data, with a minimum of mystery?

As already suggested, this criterion has been used, consciously or unconsciously, by many of the world's greatest thinkers. Hegel gave it classical form, and founded his system of absolute idealism upon it.[1] It figures in the developed thought of Plato. In his Academy, the technical name for a theory accounting for all the relevant observed facts was a "hypothesis," which was said to "save appearances;" i.e., it accounted for facts in a coherent way.[2] In the Socratic method itself there is the assumption that truth is a coherent system.

Since this is so, it may seem to be unnecessarily laboring the point to be developing the coherence criterion so fully. Something which is apparently so elementary and so generally accepted may seem so obvious as to bear only a brief mention. Yet Brightman sounds a proper caution: "Fundamental thinking will never be done if you are to accept as true whatever appears to be obvious; it is obvious that the earth stands still while the sun goes around it--obvious, but not true."[3]

In addition, comprehensive coherence has been

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[1] Ibid., p. 70. [2] Taylor, Socrates, p. 159.

[3] An Introduction to Philosophy, p. 70.

repeatedly and severely challenged as the criterion of truth. One charge is that the acceptance of this criterion makes all truth merely relative, and ultimately leads to scepticism. No truth is really final; therefore, no truth is trustworthy. Another charge is that the inclusion of all forms of human experience destroys objective truth, and leaves only a shifting and undependable relativism on which to found truth. Thinking of the many kinds of intuitive experience, Stace objects that "to place the truth in any sort of perception is in principle to do as Protagoras did, to yield oneself up a helpless prey to the subjective impressions of the individual."[1] Perhaps the most critical objection comes from the neorealists, who charge that the coherence criterion makes all truth interdependent, whereas in fact many truths are true independently and do not depend on whether anything else is true or not. The neorealists would hold, to use an example Brightman cites in discussing their objection, that "a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, whether grass is green or not."[2]

To each of these challenges, answers may be given. Briefly, the response to the charge that coherence makes all truth relative is this: to say that man can know only in part is simply to recognize that his apprehension of truth is ever growing; it is not to say that the present state of knowledge

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[1]Walter T. Stace, A Critical History of Greek Philosophy (London: Macmillan & Co., 1920), p. 154.

[2]An Introduction to Philosophy, p. 72.

is unworthy of trust or of the term truth. To the charge that the inclusion of all experience destroys objective truth, the response is that not to do so is to fail to do justice to the variety of the very experience of man to which the truth tries to give meaning and order. Finally, to the charge that all truth is not interdependent, it may be replied that such an assertion can be made only after the coherence criterion has itself been applied.[1]

To turn from the objections to coherence as the criterion of truth to positive reasons for accepting it, two of the Personalists' arguments in particular may be noted. The first is that in comparison to all other criteria of truth, coherence is the most satisfactory. Every other suggested criterion suffers from the defect of incompleteness.[2] The social criteria (custom, tradition, consensus gentium) may be useful as guidelines to truth, but cannot be said to be reliable, nor are they responsive to new experience. Criteria based on immediate perception (instinct, feeling, sense perception, intuition) provide a certitude which turns out, however, to be deceptive, concealing the lack of interpretation and correlation which the data immediately perceived require. Other rational criteria besides coherence (correspondence, practical consequences, consistency) likewise show the defect of incompleteness. Correspondence fails in that ideas

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[1] Ibid.

[2] The following discussion is based upon ibid., pp. 47-68.

cannot be compared to reality directly, but only to other ideas. The criterion of practical consequences is unclear, and suffers from the variety of presuppositions which may be hidden in the term "practical." Consistency is necessary but not sufficient as a criterion of truth. It is logically possible that a five-legged philosopher exists in the fourth dimension, for there is no inconsistency in such an assertion. It is not, however, therefore true. Consistency is regulative, not constitutive, of truth.

A second argument which Personalists offer for accepting comprehensive coherence as the criterion of truth may be very briefly stated, for it is simply that the coherence criterion cannot be denied without being affirmed. As Brightman ably summarizes:

> If I say coherence is not the test of truth, I must appeal either to contradiction and incoherence or to some form of coherence. And even if I appeal to the realm of contradiction and incoherence, if I mean what I say and stick to it, I am again appealing to coherence. If I do not mean what I say, it is time to stop talking.[1]

So comprehensive coherence seems strongly enough supported to be used as a criterion of truth. Accordingly, in this argument, a proposition will be judged to be true if it meets the twin tests of internal consistency and interrelatedness with all other knowledge-claims judged to be true.

It remains now to assess the cognitive value of the

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

specific truth-claims presented by Socrates' daimonion. In making this evaluation, by the criterion of comprehensive coherence, it will be helpful first to narrow the focus from the broad range of human experience to solely religious experience, and to examine the right to truth which claims arising from such experience possess. Then, finally, the particular truth-claims of the daimonion will be evaluated.

The Truth-Claims of Religious Experience

In determining the cognitive value of the truth-claims which are given in religious experience, there is the special difficulty that they present themselves with a commanding authority, so much so that even to question their truth seems both presumptuous and impious. Nevertheless, the contention here is that there can be no retreat, even in the possible presence of the divine, from the coherence criterion of truth. The claims of religious experience are granted a full hearing within the criterion of comprehensive coherence; and while they are entitled to that, they deserve no more than that. On the assumptions here granted, knowledge is not imparted im-mediately from any source. The mind is active in the interpretation of all experience, and may distort whatever it receives.

As philosophers who accept this stance of epistemological dualism have come to assess the truth-claims of religious experience, they have had to balance the authority of such claims with their general epistemological theory. From this

have emerged a variety of perspectives and conclusions. Three fairly contemporary views, all from the twentieth century, will be cited here to indicate the range of opinion that is possible within roughly the same epistemological framework. They will be the Personalist position, the Quaker consensus, and an Empiricist critique.

The Personalist Position

For philosophers of the school of Personalism, the truth-claims arising from religious experience deserve equal consideration with similar claims coming from other forms of human experience. After rejecting the argument of immediacy and the pragmatic argument as sufficient to establish the truth of such claims, Knudson develops his theory of the four basic types of human experience: sensory, religious, moral, and aesthetic. Each, he argues, is within the capacity of every man. Corresponding to each there is, in man's mind, a basic mental principle, an a priori similar in function to a Kantian "category."

It is the religious a priori which makes religious experience possible for man, and which gives to that form of experience and its truth-claims a certain validity. The argument previously presented for the validity of religious experience as a source of truth-claims is essentially the same as Knudson develops for the validity of the truth-claims themselves.[1] A religious a priori is the ground for

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[1]The Validity of Religious Experience, pp. 159-80; supra, p. 307.

confidence. The position is not that truth-claims arising from religious experience are <u>therefore</u> true; it is, however, that they are valid along with other claims to truth.

A later Personalist, Brightman, balances the emphasis Knudson makes with a marked stress on the need for coherence in assessing truth-claims. He rejects as too extreme Knudson's religious a priori. Granting its sturdy simplicity and rational vigor, he nevertheless argues that it de-emphasizes too much the coalescence which the total of all experience and claims to truth must exhibit. He recognizes that "there is implicit, in the apparent absurdity of the frequent appeal for a separate criterion for religious truth, one factor of real importance; namely, the justified demand on the part of religion that its claims shall be judged on the basis neither of abstract a priori considerations alone nor of non-religious experiences alone."[1] But at the same time he insists that "the validity of religious experience, like the validity of reason, is to be found in its appeal to the largest and most inclusive view of experience."[2]

A third Personalist, Bertocci, names the two dogmatisms that can most seriously prejudice the cognitive value assigned to the truth-claims of religious experience. Not only a religious authoritarianism but also a psychological reductionism can cause distortion and deception in the search for

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[1] <u>A Philosophy of Religion</u>, p. 123.

[2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 437.

truth.[1] Rejecting both, he holds as does Brightman that "religious insights are not independently valid but are subject to test by coherence with the rest of human experience."[2] It is necessary, that is, to check the cognitive value of the claims of religious experience, as of every other form of experience. The conviction of immediate contact does not insure immediate knowledge; what is "read off" may have been "read in." "Knowledge about God cannot be firmly rooted in religious experience alone."[3]

To support his contention, Bertocci cites the amazing variety of claims made by mystics, many of which are self-contradictory.[4] The only common core such mystical experiences seem to exhibit is a sense of the divine beyond one's self. But there is no clear light even upon the nature of the divine, much less upon anything else. Rather is there widespread confusion and disagreement. He is suspicious of the truth-claims of certain mystics, moreover, because they tend to do no more than confirm what the mystics already believe to be true. "One speaks to a God whom he expects to listen; and listens to a God whom he expects to speak; and hears him say what, one is convinced, needs to be said."[5]

The Personalist position is thus seen to be one in which the truth-claims of religious experience are considered

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[1] Pp. 85-90.

[2] Ibid., p. 106.

[3] Ibid., p. 93.

[4] Ibid., pp. 97-106.

[5] Ibid., p. 106.

on an equal footing with similar claims arising from other aspects of human experience. Their cognitive value is not assured by the immediacy and authority which characterize them, nor even by the religious a priori. Rather is it established by application of comprehensive coherence as the criterion of truth. As Brightman says: "No single experience, religious or non-religious, carries its truth with it. Every experience or intuition must be tested by its relation to the claims of other experiences and our synoptic insight into experience as a whole."[1] So also Bertocci:

> It seems best, accordingly, to evaluate the claims made about religious experience in the spirit of fair inquiry, considering them neither as necessary aberrations nor as indubitable evidence which must be taken at face value. The same criterion of truth must hold here as is required for sensory, moral, and aesthetic experience; we must scrutinize religious "revelation" in the light of all we know about it and the rest of human experience.[2]

A Quaker consensus

Philosophers in the tradition of the Society of Friends approach the question of the cognitive value of the truth-claims of religious experience with metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions which are similar to those of the Personalists. The universe is not "a dull, dead, mechanical thing,"[3] but is ultimately spiritual in nature. Man, too, is basically a spiritual being. There is great emphasis upon what Quakers call the Inner Light in man, "the doctrine that

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[1] A Philosophy of Religion, p. 436. [2] P. 90.

[3] Rufus M. Jones, The New Quest (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928), p. 179.

there is something Divine in the human soul."[1] The Inner Light is man's source of spiritual guidance and the ground of his spiritual certitude. If properly cultivated, it may become "the truest guide of life"[2] man has. Prayer and meditation are the means of cultivating the Inner Light, for they constitute "a method of empirical discovery, a technique for contacting and learning to know Reality . . ., the exploration of Reality by entering the Beyond that is within."[3]

Unlike many other schools of mysticism which champion an epistemological monism, the Quaker school--with some exceptions--accepts the position of epistemological dualism. Most Quakers follow Kant in affirming the existence of a personal self which binds together and interprets human experiences. The mind, that is to say, operates throughout the range of experience, and itself contributes to it. "The mind is not a spectator of events but a creative and constructive factor of events."[4]

Fundamental within the structure of the mind are certain totalities, or "ideals of reason" in Rufus Jones' phrase, which men are bound to employ in thinking and acting rationally, even though they extend beyond the mind's strictly rational

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[1]Rufus M. Jones, The Social Law in the Spiritual World (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1904), p. 149.

[2]Kelly, p. 32.

[3]Gerald Heard, A Preface to Prayer (New York: Harper & Bros., 1944), pp. 51, 54.

[4]Rufus M. Jones, The New Quest, p. 207.

capacities.[1] Among these "ideals of reason" is the religious a priori, God. Man can have religious experiences because his mind is constituted in part by the religious a priori. However, religious experience is like other experience in that the mind is active in its reception; so that it too is in part subjective and in need of examination.

Such an examination cannot be purely rational, however. Some matters, and indeed for the Quakers the most vital ones, "lie too deeply imbedded in the sub-soil of life to be settled by debate. . . . From first to last our life values, our sense of worth, are formed and shaped in this deeper region below the level of conscious reflection and reasoning."[2] The great sentiments which in fact rule the life of man are realities to reckon with, despite their being only slightly touched by logic.

Quakers join the Personalists in seeing that the primary value of religious experience is not so much that it leads to new facts and discoveries as that it imparts a new power to discriminate and to interpret reality with clearer insight. Rufus Jones, for one, doubts that knowledge comes through ready-made oracular communications. Men do not receive "secret messages from sociable angels."[3] He writes

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Rufus M. Jones, The World Within (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1918), pp. 75, 78.

[3] Rufus M. Jones, Pathways to the Reality of God (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1931), p. 43.

elsewhere: "The new acquisition is not an accumulated stock of ideas, not a logical proof which can be transmitted in words."[1]

At the same time, however, the truth-claims of religious experience do have a cognitive value. Jones rejects George Fox's claim that the psychological immediacy of a revelation is the criterion of its truth, and argues that any revelation "must undergo critical examination and verification before it can be forthwith treated as authentic. . . . Not everyone who claims to have seen has thereby actually seen."[2]

In this process of verification, the most important single test for Jones is a pragmatic one. "That which is 'of God' in our lives and that which is revealed of Him in our word and deed must fit into the spiritual order of our common humanity and prove its value by promoting and advancing this order."[3] Jones speaks of "affirmation mystics," who accept the world as worthful and life as good, as superior to "negation mystics" who deny the world and are trying always to transcend the finite.[4] The best evidence for the truth of any revelation is if it results in a strengthened social conscience and social concern for mankind.

Elton Trueblood, another Quaker philosopher, likewise

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[1]Rufus M. Jones, The New Quest, p. 184.

[2]Ibid., p. 159.

[3]The Social Law in the Spiritual World, p. 181.

[4]Ibid., pp. 131-38.

challenges an epistemological monism in respect to religious experience, arguing that since it is similar to all experience in being in part subjective, so also are its truth-claims subject to distortion and misinterpretation. Instances of false claims, however, do not warrant a rejection of all such claims to revelation: "It is indeed a curious leap to conclude, from the fact that men make mistakes, that there is no reality which they are making mistakes about."[1] While not infallible, revelation may be cognitive.

For Trueblood, the best test of the truth of a claim arising from religious experience is by comparison with more experience of the same kind.[2] In this respect there are, he sees, four specific criteria that can be employed to advantage.[3] One is the number of reporters making the claim. A second is the quality of the reporters; i.e., the effectiveness of religion in their own personal lives as regards their honesty, sincerity, and integrity. A third criterion is the agreement of the reports. The fourth, similar to that of Rufus Jones, is a pragmatic test, relative to the difference that accepting the revelation as true makes in the life of the one regarding it as true. If the result is a sensitized conscience and a zeal in reforming social ills, then the

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[1]Elton Trueblood, The Logic of Belief (New York: Harper & Bros., 1943), p. 198.

[2]Elton Trueblood, The Knowledge of God (New York: Harper & Bros., 1939), p. 72.

[3]The Logic of Belief, pp. 206-12.

revelation is likely to be true.

In fairness, it must be said that not all Quaker philosophers agree with the epistemological dualism of Jones and Trueblood. Thomas Kelly, for example, feels that in the deep and intimate matters of life there can be no external authority such as reason. Nothing can take the place of inward conviction. Rather than encouraging a process of examination and verification for revelations, he reflects almost a distrust of reason in saying that "straddle arrangements and compromises between our allegiances to the surface level and the divine Center cannot endure."[1] Gerald Heard, himself not a Quaker but closely identified with the tradition, speaks of how the media of reason and experience necessarily distort knowledge which is beyond the reach of ordinary intelligence. That knowledge, for Heard, comes most directly--and most truly--through prayer and meditation. It is better to trust it as it comes than to subject it to the tests of reason and experience.[2]

The majority opinion among Quaker philosophers and thinkers, however, is to reject an epistemological monism and to grant the necessity of testing claims to revelation. Douglas Steere speaks for most when he acknowledges that "our truth-seeking minds demand insistently that in matters which are to affect our whole style of life, the wall of separation must go down and we must interpret what we love in the light

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[1]P. 49. [2]P. 46.

of the rest of our experience."[1]

The Quaker consensus, then, is that religious experience can be a valid source for both inspiration and knowledge. While its claim to knowledge must be examined, religious experience can give truth. "We may discover a deep-lying, often unrecognized divine order and, I dare say, divine purpose that is at work through men and through the processes of History, working not by miracle or by apocalyptic acts of intervention, but by inner guidance and direction."[2] The test for truth involves comparison with other religious experiences of similar kind, and also a pragmatic reference to what results in the way of an increased social awareness and sense of responsibility. The best evidence that someone has received a true revelation is "the emergence in the person of the spirit of love."[3]

An Empiricist critique

One among a number of ways in which philosophies may be classified is according to their method. On this classification philosophies are said to be either a priori or empirical. In actual fact, the method of most philosophies turns out to be a blend of the two. Nevertheless, one or the other approach is the more characteristic. In the two positions

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[1]Douglas V. Steere, On Beginning From Within (New York: Harper & Bros., 1943), p. 92.

[2]Rufus M. Jones, The New Quest, p. 85.

[3]Ibid., p. 174.

thus far presented in this evaluation of the truth-claims of religious experience, the a priori method predominates. Neither Personalists nor Quakers deny the necessity for experience, but the ordering of that experience is affirmed to be by certain innate a priori principles within the mind, of which the religious a priori is one.

To balance the discussion, a third position will be presented, from a philosophy employing a method that is almost entirely empirical.[1] It is from the philosophical position of Bertrand Russell that an empiricist critique of the truth-claims of religious experience can be given.

A prior word is in order, however, concerning the British Empiricists, upon whose thought Russell builds. John Locke may be regarded as the founder of empiricism, "which is the doctrine that all our knowledge (with the possible exception of logic and mathematics) is derived from experience."[2] On this view, there are no innate ideas or a priori principles present in the mind by which it orders experience. Rather is the mind a tabula rasa which builds its ideas solely from sensations and from perceptions of its own operations.[3] Even the correlating of ideas, and such criteria as consistency

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[1]Russell rejects the thorough-going empiricism of Hume, which virtually destroys knowledge, and grants--non-empirically --the principle of induction. Cf. Russell, History of Western Philosophy, pp. 699-700.

[2]Russell, History of Western Philosophy, p. 633.

[3]Ibid., p. 634.

and coherence, are derived from experience, not given to it. Berkeley and Hume, following Locke, modify only slightly this empiricist theory of knowledge.

Russell identifies himself as a "member"[1] of the philosophical school of logical analysis, which he says "sets to work to eliminate Pythagoreanism [i.e., mystical elements] from the principles of mathematics, and to combine empiricism with an interest in the deductive parts of human knowledge."[2] His brand of empiricism, which he calls "modern analytical empiricism,"[3] differs from British empiricism in "its incorporation of mathematics and its development of a powerful logical technique."[4] Russell claims that this expanded empiricism can achieve real answers to certain philosophical problems that have long defied solution. Its methods closely resemble the methods of science, and by its strict avoidance of all ethical and political concerns it corrects what Russell regards as the unfortunate alienation which since Plato has separated philosophy and science.[5]

It is with this philosophical stance, quite different from that of the Personalists and the Quakers, that Russell comes to evaluate the truth-claims of religious experience. He rejects the statement of Royce, frequently quoted by Rufus Jones, to the effect that mystics are the real empiricists

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[1] Ibid., p. 864.

[2] Ibid., p. 857.

[3] Ibid., p. 862.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Bertrand Russell, Mysticism and Logic (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1949), p. 7.

after all, for they receive what experience gives them and do not question it. Rather than, with the mystics, regarding the body as a distracting and distorting encumbrance, Russell grounds his empiricism in sensory experience: "To the empiricist, the body is what brings us into touch with the world of external reality."[1]

Even so, however, he does not wish summarily to disallow claims to truth that come through religious experience. He grants that men may receive valid intuitions, and that "there is an element of wisdom to be learned from the mystical way of feeling which does not seem to be attainable in any other way."[2] He is quick to argue, though, that "insight, untested and unsupported, is an insufficient guarantee of truth, in spite of the fact that much of the most important truth is first suggested by its means. . . . Insight is what first leads to the beliefs which subsequent reason confirms or confutes. . . . Reason is a harmonizing, controlling force rather than a creative one."[3]

Russell then sees no intrinsic opposition between reason and insight. Whereas Bergson champions intuition over against intellect, Russell is not concerned to do the opposite. He rather regards the two as working together, and that in fact it is this combination that makes a man a great

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[1] History of Western Philosophy, p. 158.

[2] Mysticism and Logic, p. 11.

[3] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

philosopher. He writes of Heraclitus: "The facts of science, as they appeared to him, fed the flame in his soul, and in its light he saw into the depths of the world. . . . In such a nature we see the true union of the mystic and the man of science--the highest eminence, as I think, that it is possible to achieve in the world of thought."[1]

The most developed form of instinct is what Russell calls intuition, and to the truth-claims of intuition he grants a special regard, especially in practical matters of expediency beyond the scope of reason. He mentions that intuitions are least liable to error in sensing friendship or hostility in others. These are "often felt with extraordinary discrimination through very careful disguises."[2] He cites too that intuition is "at its best in such matters as self-preservation and love, [where] intuition will act sometimes (though not always) with a swiftness and precision which are astonishing to the critical intellect."[3] Yet for more theoretical matters, indeed for the general scope of philosophy, intuition is a poor guide. "It is here, more almost than anywhere else, that intellect proves superior to intuition, and that quick unanalyzed convictions are least deserving of uncritical acceptance."[4]

In summary of the three positions here set forth, it appears that there are significant areas of agreement among

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[1] Ibid., pp. 3-4.

[2] Ibid., p. 13.

[3] Ibid., p. 17.

[4] Ibid., p. 18.

Personalists, Quakers, and an Empiricist such as Russell, concerning the cognitive value of truth-claims arising out of religious experience. All would agree, for instance, that claims to revelation, although not independently valid, can in Brightman's words "make specific contributions to the systematic whole of objective knowledge."[1] Religious experience is one valid source of truth. There is agreement too in conceiving that reason and intuition, rather than having to oppose each other, may complement one another in a creative partnership, each contributing in the quest for knowledge.

The disagreements exist, not over the question of whether there may be truth in the claims of religious experience, but on how that truth shall be measured. Personalists hold to the comprehensive coherence criterion of truth, which while generally acceptable to the others is severely qualified in one direction or another. Quakers, rather than relating the truth-claim to all other human experience, prefer to relate it simply to other claims of the same kind to test its truth. In addition, they give it a pragmatic test, believing that if it is true it will result in a greater sense of responsibility for the welfare of mankind and in a greater love for neighbor. Russell would of course reject this latter test as irrelevant to the truth of any claim, because of its ethical reference, and evaluate an intuition more rationally, giving it special regard only if it concerns a practical

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[1]The Philosophical Review, XXXVIII, 558.

matter of expediency where reason can be no guide.

From the sum of these considerations, it follows that there are some reasonable grounds for granting a possible cognitive value to the truth-claims presented in religious experience. Within the assumed framework of epistemological dualism, such claims have no unique right to be regarded as true; however, they may be coherently related to the claims arising from other forms of experience and in this context contribute to the body of truth.

With the completing of this general evaluation of the truth-claims of religious experience, the discussion can now move to its final focus, on the specific truth-claims of the daimonion itself.

The Truth-Claims of the Daimonion

Was Socrates' daimonion a "voice of truth"? Granting that his experience of the daimonion may be placed in the overlap of the two circles of parapsychological and religious experience, and using the criterion of comprehensive coherence just described, the answer is yes. It shall here be shown that the truth-claims presented by the daimonion satisfy the comprehensive coherence criterion of truth. The daimonion's claims to truth meet the twin tests of the criterion: internal consistency and interrelatedness with all other claims judged to be true.

To support this conclusion will require first a careful examination of the specific truth-claims which the

daimonion presented to Socrates. Then, measuring by the comprehensive coherence criterion, it must be shown that they meet the tests of truth set by this criterion. Further, it will be demonstrated that they receive further support from the slightly modified criteria of both the Quakers and an Empiricist such as Russell.

Finally, in light of the related fact that while Socrates' daimonion may have been a voice of truth it was neither his only voice of truth nor one to be accepted uncritically, the question will again be opened as to why Socrates himself apparently never evaluated his voice of truth, and the hypothesis suggested that actually he did make such an evaluation, though confirmation of that fact is nowhere recorded.

The specific Truth-Claims of the daimonion

In the primary sources from Plato, Xenophon, Cicero and Plutarch, there are no less than thirty-three references to specific truth-claims presented by the daimonion. Eleven are from Plato, another twelve possibly from Plato (in dialogs of questionable authenticity),[1] five from Xenophon, two from Cicero, and three from Plutarch. Of these, twenty-nine are directly attributed to Socrates himself, while the other four are citations of specific truth-claims by particular individuals named by the author.

Eliminating from consideration all but the instances

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[1] *Alcibiades I*, *Theages*.

where the reference is by Socrates himself,[1] and then accounting for duplication of the identical truth-claim in the writings of the same author, there are seen to be twenty-two separate truth-claims of the daimonion. Plato records nineteen of these (including eight from dialogs possibly spurious), Xenophon one, and Cicero two.

The first surprise in this listing is the single reference from Xenophon. Yet it is the case that while Xenophon writes often of the daimonion, he cites only five specific truth-claims, and four of these are identical. Of further interest, though not of any special significance, is that literally speaking no claim of the daimonion is exactly duplicated in any two of the primary sources, although the types of situations are often quite similar. However, it is significant--and this is the other surprise to appear from the listing--that while Xenophon writes of the daimonion giving both positive and negative counsel to Socrates and his friends, not one of the twenty-two separate truth-claims supports the view that the daimonion directly encouraged a particular course of action. Fifteen are instances of inhibitory warnings; while the other seven, all of which are cited by Plato, are examples of the approval which Socrates inferred from the silence of the daimonion.

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[1]Of the four thus eliminated, two (Plutarch <u>On the Genius of Socrates</u> 581 d and 581 e) are identical with instances which Socrates himself cites, while the other two (<u>ibid</u>., 580 e, and Xenophon <u>Symposium</u> viii. 5) closely resemble specific citations by Socrates. No significant evidence is being rejected.

To assess the truth of the claims of the daimonion, it will be helpful not only to restate them from the primary sources, but at the same time to recast them into a form which will allow the simple judgment of true or false to be given. Care has been taken to accomplish this recasting without distorting what the daimonion's monition or silence implied. The daimonion is here "quoted" as if it were speaking to Socrates in the second person singular, on the twenty-two separate specific occasions which the primary sources record. The terminal words "right" and "wrong" refer simply to the good or bad consequences of the proposed action, for Socrates and/or for others, as the case may be.

For convenience, the truth-claims are grouped under four classifications: Personal Conduct, Personal Associations, Advice to Others, and Trial and Death.

Personal Conduct

For you to take part in politics is wrong.[1]
For you to leave the dressing room in the gymnasium now is wrong.[2]
For you to cross the stream now is wrong.[3]
For you to leave before atoning for your impiety is wrong.[4]
For you to take the road from Delium the others are taking is wrong.[5]

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[1]Plato Apology 31 d; supra, p. 85.

[2]Plato Euthydemus 272 e; supra, p. 88.

[3]Plato Phaedrus 242 e; supra, p. 89.

[4]Ibid.; supra, p. 89.

[5]Cicero On Divination i. 54. 123; supra, p. 134.

Personal Associations

For you to renew your companionship with this young man is wrong.[1]
For you to renew your companionship with this young man is right.[2]
For you to approach Alcibiades now is wrong.[3]
For you to approach Alcibiades now is right.[4]
For you to associate with this young man is wrong.[5]

Advice to Others

For Charmides to train for the Nemean races is wrong.[6]
For Timarchus to leave the wine-party to kill Nicias is wrong.[7]
Again, for Timarchus to leave the wine-party to kill Nicias is wrong.[8]
For the Athenian fleet to go to Sicily is wrong.[9]
For Sannio to go on this military campaign is wrong.[10]
For Crito to take this walk in the country is wrong.[11]

Trial and Death

For you to leave your house this morning is right.[12]
For you to continue on your way to court is right.[13]

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[1]Plato Theaetetus 151 a; supra, p. 91.

[2]Ibid.; supra, p. 91.

[3]Plato Alcibiades I 103 a; supra, p. 93.

[4]Ibid.; supra, p. 93.

[5]Plato Theages 129 d; supra, p. 97.

[6]Ibid., 128 e; supra, pp. 96-97.

[7]Ibid., 129 b; supra, p. 97.

[8]Ibid., 129 c; supra, p. 97.

[9]Ibid., 129 d; supra, p. 97.

[10]Ibid.; supra, p. 97.

[11]Cicero On Divination i. 54. 123; supra, p. 134.

[12]Plato Apology 40 b; supra, p. 85.

[13]Ibid.; supra, p. 85.

For you to be making your defense as you are doing is right.[1]
The outcome of your trial will be to your benefit.[2]
It is better for you to die now and be released from trouble.[3]
For you to reason out your defense to the jury in advance is wrong.[4]

In addition to the "surprises" already mentioned to which the list draws attention, there is a further insight that comes from setting side-by-side the truth-claims of the daimonion. It is that the daimonion's guidance acted for Socrates as the confirmation of what could have been in most cases a semi-rational "hunch." In twenty of the twenty-two instances, Socrates could well have been led by his reason to form the rather vague and unsupportable opinion which the daimonion convinced him was a certain truth.

Only his refraining from leaving the dressing room in the gymnasium and his warning Crito against the walk in the country seem to go beyond what could have begun as a semi-rational "hunch." Conceivably, even these could have first been a "hunch" (e.g., that the two sophists might soon arrive, for they often come to the dressing room at about this time of day), but this is perhaps to strain at making the evidence fit the theory. For the others, however, there is little

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[1] Ibid.; supra, p. 85.

[2] Ibid., 40 c; supra, pp. 85-86.

[3] Ibid., 41 d; supra, p. 86.

[4] Xenophon Memorabilia iv. 8. 5; supra, pp. 118-19.

difficulty in believing that the guidance of the daimonion, far from opposing the pull of Socrates' reason, went further than his reason could go, but in the same direction.

The truth of the daimonion's claims

When the specific truth-claims of the daimonion are measured by the criterion of comprehensive coherence, there is no reason to reject them; it coheres to regard the daimonion as a "voice of truth." With reference to the first of the two tests which the criterion imposes, none of the daimonion's truth-claims (as translated into propositions) is internally inconsistent. All are logically acceptable propositions. In the second and more crucial test, that of interrelatedness to the system of propositions as a whole, the truth-claims which the daimonion presented to Socrates may be seen to be coherently related with all that is held to be true of Socrates.

Taking the twenty-two truth-claims one by one, it becomes increasingly apparent that they cohere with all that is known of Socrates: his life, his mission, his values, his character.

To refer first to his personal conduct, for him to refrain from an active political involvement in the life of Athens is in keeping with the role in which he sees himself, that of "gadfly"[1] to the state. He can fulfill his function much better outside the structure than in, for the machinery

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[1]Plato Apology 30 e.

of government cannot tolerate on the inside one so firmly opposed to its foundation principles as Socrates was. He was right in holding that "if I had attempted to take part in politics, I should have perished at once and long ago without doing any good either to you or to myself."[1]

Again, for Socrates to pass up an opportunity for fruitful discussion by which others may be enlightened would be opposite to his sense of mission. Thus it was right for him to stay behind in the dressing room where he could encounter the two sophists. It is in harmony with his heightened sense of personal integrity, moreover, for him to have refused to leave Phaedrus without first setting right his false, mocking discourse against love. And to pause and consider before following on after his companions in the retreat from Delium is coherent with his constant habit of working things through for himself, following his own course rather than accepting uncritically the decisions and actions of the crowd.

In the daimonion's guidance concerning his <u>personal associations</u>, there is further evidence of a coherence with the total person of Socrates. Socrates learned in his experience that with some men it is possible to be in rapport, with others it is not. He knew, again empirically, that there is no profit in beginning or continuing a companionship where the sense of rapport is clearly lacking. By heeding the daimonion's counsel to avoid a particular relationship, he

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[1] <u>Ibid</u>., 31 d.

showed himself--as at other points in his life--to be open to the realm of intuition, to forces which operate in life and which are to be respected, even when they cannot be rationally comprehended. Socrates discovered in his experience that often life is deeper than logic. He acknowledged in some areas the limitation of his reason, and was ready to say that all his knowledge was but ignorance indeed. Wisdom, he claimed, was to know that this is so. Life gives other signs, in other ways, for what is right to do or not do. The daimonion was one such sign, and it is in keeping with the total Socrates that he let himself be guided by it.

At the same time, however, he was conscious of the possibility of change, in himself and in others, so that a lack of rapport today need not mean the same for tomorrow. He was open to the new circumstances that a new day can bring forth, and to the crucial importance of timing in human relationships. Thus it was consistent for him not only to allow a non-rational intuition to govern his personal associations, as with Alcibiades, but also to let a new intuition reverse a former pattern. Experience in general, and Socrates' experience in particular, suggest the wisdom of respecting intuition, and even anticipating its changing counsels, within the difficult area of personal relationships. It coheres for Socrates to have done so.

Of the six specific instances where the daimonion gives <u>advice to others</u>, all but one are from the possibly spurious <u>Theages</u>, and that one is from a much later writing of Cicero

in which he reports what he had heard or perhaps read in a source which no longer survives. Thus the evidence that the daimonion actually gave this kind of guidance for others is of a dubious quality. There seems little pattern, moreover, to the kind of situation in which the daimonion gives counsel. In one case it is a political context, in all the others a very personal circumstance, usually but not always of critical import. It is difficult, in short, to attest the genuineness of the references which suggest that the daimonion gave counsel through Socrates to his friends.

However, if this be so--and granting for the moment that these are real events correctly reported--it is not difficult to see the daimonion's giving advice for others as coherent with all that is known of Socrates. He thought deeply, and could well have anticipated, at least to the point of "hunch," the consequences of not only his own but others' actions. All of the individuals cited were his friends, and it is well established that he enjoyed his friends and so would care about their personal safety and well-being. He was far from being a man alone and apart, and doubtless he did concern himself with the fortunes of his friends, even to the point of worry when there was good cause. For him to have received the guidance of the daimonion and passed it on would thus be in keeping with his own character and sense of values. As for the actual advice itself, it is coherent with the whole body of knowledge, since it in fact proved itself true in at least five of the six experiences cited. Of the fate

of "the handsome Sannio" nothing is known.

With reference finally to the daimonion's guidance at the time of Socrates' trial and death, there is further evidence to suggest that by the criterion of comprehensive coherence the truth-claims which were implied by the daimonion's silence were true. In the circumstances of the trial there was much that was problematical, beyond the power of Socrates' reason to anticipate. There was the question of the mood of the jury, which could shift with the wind. There was the question of whether to prepare a formal defense or to depend, as was his custom, on an extempore presentation. Above all, there was the whole question of death itself, whether it would be for him at this time a good or an evil.

In this situation especially, where reason was so limited, it is coherent that the daimonion should have guided Socrates by an approving silence. Where a man can rationally decide, as often he said,[1] that man has no business seeking or depending upon revelations from the gods. Where reason cannot guide, such revelations are to be received gratefully and obediently. This was such an instance, and the daimonion supplied the guidance that reason could not. By its silence the daimonion approved Socrates' conduct just before and at the trial, and approved also its outcome. By its actual warning against the preparation of a formal defense beforehand, it respected the Socratic principle that the circumstances of

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[1]Xenophon Memorabilia i. 1. 9, i. 3. 4; Anabasis iii. 1. 3-7.

any meeting must determine the form and content of what is said.

In both the fact and manner of its operation, the daimonion can be seen to be interrelated with the total Socrates. Moreover, to take the judgment of history that Socrates was right in his actions at the trial and in accepting death as he did, the assumptions he made from the silence of the daimonion proved wise, good, and true. It coheres for Socrates to have conducted himself as he did in the final episode of his life.

The specific truth-claims of Socrates' daimonion, as they have here been recast into propositional form, are therefore seen to fit the comprehensive coherence criterion of truth. They meet the two tests of internal consistency and interrelatedness with all other propositions judged to be true.

Beyond this, too, there are additional grounds supporting the truth of the daimonion's monitions, or propositions. These grounds are in the reports that all of the daimonion's claims proved themselves true in experience. It did "work" for Socrates to refrain from politics, stay in the dressing room, take the other road from Delium, finally approach Alcibiades, warn Crito, reject a prepared defense, etc. These simple pragmatic grounds support the conclusion that the daimonion was a "voice of truth."

Further, the truth-claims of the daimonion are strengthened by the modified coherence criteria which the

Quakers and the Empiricist, Bertrand Russell, introduce in the particular area of religious experience.

Whereas the Personalists apply their one criterion comprehensively across all areas of human experience, Quakers prefer to evaluate the truth-claims of religious experience by restricting the reference to more experiences of the same kind, and to stress a pragmatic test in which truth is attested by its producing a social concern and a spirit of love among men. In this respect, the daimonion gains credibility, for the guidance Socrates received does reflect a sense of social responsibility and a concern for the welfare of others. His political life is again a case in point, for by refraining from a head-on collision with the state he was able to influence the life of Athens more effectively. The instances of his advice to others, if they be authentic, are a further indication that he was concerned for others. So also is the whole episode of the trial, where with the daimonion's approving silence he tailored his defense so as to reaffirm, for the good of the community, the principles which had shaped his life.

For the Empiricist, Bertrand Russell, the truth-claims of religious experience are worthy of consideration especially if they concern matters of expediency which lie beyond the comprehension of reason. He mentions specifically the sensing of friendship or hostility in others, and self-preservation. It was of course precisely in these two areas that the daimonion often guided Socrates. His personal associations with

others the daimonion both discouraged and, by its silence, approved. At the time of the trial, when self-preservation was an issue, Socrates again relied upon the monition or silence of the daimonion.

Thus it seems reasonable to conclude, by the criterion of comprehensive coherence and with secondary support from a strictly pragmatic test and the special tests of the Quakers and Russell, that the propositions implicit in the daimonion's monitions and silences were true. The daimonion was to this extent a voice of truth. This is not to say that it was the only voice of truth that Socrates heard, nor that it was the most authoritative. It is to say that, as it presented him with specific counsel, it was not only a trusted but a trustworthy guide to truth.

Socrates' own evaluation: a hypothesis

Throughout the whole of this entire discussion, the assumption has been that Socrates uncritically accepted his daimonion as a voice of truth, and that he obeyed its counsels without ever calling them into question. To have suggested that the daimonion was a voice of truth is not to answer the difficulty, first posed in the Introduction, that for Socrates to have unquestioningly obeyed the daimonion is inconsistent with his firm commitment to human reason. It would surely seem that the man who said "an unexamined life is not worth living"[1] would also have wanted to say "an

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[1]Plato Apology 38 a.

unexamined truth-claim is not worth trusting."

While the preceding discussion has given some reason to believe that it was well for Socrates to have accepted the guidance of his daimonion, there remains the puzzling question as to why Socrates himself apparently did not challenge his voice of truth. It has been suggested that his religious inheritance predisposed him to receive the daimonion as divine revelation, and that he therefore saw no need to subject its guidance to cross-examination by his reason. Yet this is not a very satisfactory or happy explanation, for he did not accept uncritically other insights and institutions which were regarded as divinely ordained.

This final section in the body of the thesis, virtually a postscript, will re-open the question of how Socrates himself evaluated the truth which the daimonion presented. Was he content to regard the daimonion as the voice of the god, and so not question its counsels? Or did he at some stage or other evaluate the experience and its truth-claims, as he did all others, by the light of his reason? Is it absolutely necessary, that is, to accept the inconsistency that the daimonion has been assumed to introduce, or is another explanation possible?

Let the hypothesis be advanced that Socrates actually did evaluate the daimonion's claims to truth. What evidence can be cited to support such a hypothesis? In fact, the evidence is considerable, though by no means conclusive. If it goes beyond the primary sources, it stays well within the

bounds of probability.

Socrates first began to experience his daimonion in the days of his childhood. Probably at first he readily accepted the warning voice without feeling any desire or need to justify it. As he grew older he came to have a high degree of confidence in the monitions of the daimonion, for in his actual experience they had proved themselves true time after time. Pragmatically, he discovered that the counsels of the daimonion were always right and always in his best interests.

Later, as his commitment to reason formed and matured, he came to a stage when he vigorously challenged the daimonion's trustworthiness. It was then not enough for him to accept uncritically whatever the daimonion counseled. On the whole question of the daimonion itself, and on its specific guidance, Socrates entered into a probing inner dialog with himself, seeking rationally to understand what was happening in his experience. The outcome of this inner dialog was that he recognized that in certain areas of human experience reason is limited, and that it was precisely at these points where the daimonion was giving counsel. Along with this, he acknowledged the existence of the supernatural and granted that it was "reasonable" for the gods to want to communicate directly with men, through such means as the daimonion.

Socrates thus concluded both that it was appropriate for the daimonion to guide him where his reason could not, and that it was reasonable to expect that the gods could and would give guidance in this way. Meanwhile, the counsels of

the daimonion continued to prove true by the pragmatic test. Beyond that, they were revealed, after the fact, always to be in harmony with what his reason, had it been able at the time, would have itself directed.

Socrates finally had no other choice, rationally, than to accept the guidance presented by his daimonion as being true. It cohered for him to regard it as a voice of truth. He came to look upon it as virtually infallible: "I have revealed to many of my friends the counsels which God has given me, and in no instance has the event shown that I was mistaken."[1] Speaking of the rightness of his actions at the trial, he says: "I have a clear proof that that is so; for my accustomed guide would certainly have opposed me if I had not been going to meet with something good."[2]

Having thus justified to himself his reliance on the daimonion, Socrates did not find it necessary in subsequent periods of his life to be preoccupied with the questions he had already answered to his own satisfaction. Nor did he feel compelled to speak of it often. There was not much he could say in any case. He could not prove the daimonion true on a strictly rational basis. So he was content to let his experience speak for itself.

Furthermore, there was not much concerning the daimonion that he was called upon to say. If at one stage he had to question this experience, his friends never did have to.

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[1]Xenophon Apology 14. [2]Plato Apology 40 c.

They accepted readily enough both his daimonion and its warnings, and saw nothing particularly startling or unusual in it. When Aristophanes, who doubtless had at least heard of the daimonion, penned his vigorous attack on Socrates, he never even mentioned it.

So it was that Socrates, having justified the daimonion and its claims to himself, found no reason to have to justify it to others, nor even to reveal the inner dialog that he had carried on with himself. He had thought it through; it cohered for him to regard the daimonion as a voice of truth; and as no one was questioning it, he kept silent except to voice the specific truths it communicated.

This is the hypothesis which, if true, rescues Socrates from the inconsistency of obeying the daimonion without examining its claims. The immediate and weighty objection to the hypothesis is of course that little to substantiate it appears in the primary sources. The crucial step in the above reconstruction is the positing of a stage fairly early in Socrates' life where he wrestled with a rational explanation for the daimonion. Yet there is nothing in the writings of either Plato or Xenophon to suggest that this was so.

With reference to this objection, however, it must be remembered that neither Plato nor Xenophon was writing a biography of Socrates in the modern sense. They did not set out to trace the development of his life and thought, but rather reflected the experiences and convictions of the older

Socrates. As previously noted,[1] neither could have had any reliable personal recollections of Socrates before he was fifty-five. The Socrates about whom they write, and whom they quote, had already worked the problem of the daimonion through for himself. It no longer puzzled him. And since it did not worry his friends, but rather only intrigued them, he had no cause to reveal that earlier inner dialog in which he summoned the daimonion before the bar of his reason and there justified it.

So the hypothesis stands, probable if not proveable. Socrates, the man of reason, believed also that his reason had its limitations, and that the gods--through such means as the daimonion--would want to communicate to men their counsel on matters beyond the comprehension of unaided reason. His examination of his own experience convinced him that the gods did so communicate to him, and that his daimonion was a "voice of truth."

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[1] Supra, pp. 28-29.

PART IV

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

The daimonion of Socrates has always been a source of both fascination and frustration among men. Its occurrence within the life of one who was wholly committed to a full and disciplined use of his reason is itself striking. Even more intriguing is what the primary sources report to be his instant obedience to its counsels. Yet, fascinating as the daimonion is, it is at the same time a crux philologorum which, far from yielding to reasoned inquiry, stubbornly resists all attempts at rational explanation. It remains always in part within the realm of mystery.

Significant judgments can, however, be made concerning the daimonion and its monitions, and even (by interpretation) its claims to truth; and to do so has here been the aim. It has been one purpose of this thesis to search for a definition of the daimonion. Starting with the assumptions that Socrates actually experienced a form of inner communication, that he spoke truthfully of it, and that Plato and Xenophon have reported him with reasonable accuracy, the search has revealed that, although the daimonion is finally inexplicable, it is nevertheless capable of conception and a fair degree of

understanding. The second purpose, with an epistemological focus, has been to assess Socrates' experience of the daimonion as a source of good counsel, and even as a source of propositions, and to evaluate those propositions on the basis of a coherence theory of truth as exemplified in the philosophical school of Personalism. Both purposes have been fulfilled, and the conclusions which have been reached may now be summarized.

The search for a definition of the daimonion has been based in a thorough exploration of the thirteen literal references to the daimonion in eight dialogs attributed to Plato and the eight references in three writings of Xenophon. The surprising silence of both Aristophanes and Aeschines has been studied for its significance. Considerable effort has been pressed to examine what leading Platonists, and other philosophers, and Socratic scholars have reported concerning the daimonion and its claims. From the sum of this study, in which a wide range of opinion and evaluation became evident, there has emerged a fair definition of the daimonion.

Granted that the daimonion does not yield a closely reasoned explanation, and that therefore a precise definition is beyond reach, it is still possible--on the assumptions here granted--to "conceive" the daimonion. When this is done, there are seen to be reasonable grounds for the hypothesis that the daimonion could be an inner urging (subjective) or divine voice (objective), inhibitory in the manner of its operation, which guided Socrates from the days of his childhood

on usually personal matters of expediency, both crucial and trivial. It exhibits a number of pairs of seemingly opposite qualities, evidence of its mysterious and almost paradoxical character. Considered as divine revelation, for example, it seems both orthodox in the fact of its occurrence and unorthodox in the manner of its occurrence. It joins together, moreover, both rational and mystical elements. Its counsels appear always, in due course, amenable to reason; yet it impressed itself on Socrates with the spontaneity and authority that suggest the "otherworldly."

Most significantly, the daimonion seems to have combined both subjective and objective elements in its nature. There is reason to suggest, that is, that it had a real existence, both within Socrates himself and also apart from Socrates. The daimonion was one important aspect of his own personality, though without the insights of modern psychology he himself could not realize this. As a man of his time he could not make in one leap the transition from external authority to personal freedom in thought and action. To bridge the gap, the daimonion functioned as a "necessary limit" on his subjectivity, helping him to accept his own intellectual and moral autonomy against the traditional reliance on custom and outside authority. Yet, granted this, there appears to be an objectivity in the nature of the daimonion which warns against hastily reducing it simply to Socrates himself. It is difficult to believe that he would have responded with such reverence and obedience to monitions arising solely from within

himself, even if from a sub-conscious self he could barely conceive. On the assumptions of this study, there are grounds for the hypothesis that the daimonion was from an objective, possibly divine source, as well as within Socrates.

Finally, his obedience to its counsels did not appear to compromise his commitment to reason. The daimonion gave guidance only in those situations and relative to those decisions where his reason could not give a sure direction. It functioned within his life in a manner consistent with his reliance on the fullest possible use of his reason. For while Socrates championed the disciplined use of reason, he steered clear of an uncritical rationalism. He believed there was much only the gods knew, and so looked beyond reason to divine revelation for what lay outside the power of the mind to discover. It is not impossible that in the daimonion, his inner divine voice, he experienced such revelation; and he obeyed it.

With respect to the second purpose of the thesis, an epistemological assessment of the daimonion and its claims has shown, first of all, that there is some support for the hypothesis that Socrates' experience of the daimonion presented him with good and wise counsel which he did well to regard. A strong intellectual tradition, complemented by pragmatic considerations, supports the contention that not all the truth accessible to man is accessible directly to his reason. Intuition, including what is here called religious experience, can be yoked in a creative partnership with reason

in the search for truth.

Further, there are reasonable grounds for believing that the specific monitions and silences of Socrates' daimonion contained true propositions. By restating the monitions and silences in propositional form, then assessing these propositions in terms of comprehensive coherence, and finally citing the reported subsequent pragmatic verifications, the conclusion has been drawn that the truth-claims of the daimonion were in fact true.

The primary sources record no fewer than twenty-two separate occasions on which the daimonion gave Socrates specific counsel. The range of concerns over which it operated was broad, including his personal conduct, personal associations, advice to others, and his trial and death. Yet in no one of the twenty-two claims is there any internal inconsistency. Each is a logically possible proposition. In addition, the daimonion's specific claims have individually been seen to be coherently related to all other propositions, and especially those concerning Socrates, which are held to be true. The actual counsel of the daimonion, as well as his obedience to it, coheres with the total person of Socrates: his life, his sense of mission, his system of values, his character. And it has been seen that invariably, as things are reported to have turned out, the daimonion's counsel proved to be good advice.

So the discussion ends. While the daimonion remains still partly in the realm of mystery, a search for definition

and an epistemological assessment reveal the grounds for regarding it as an inner and possibly divine voice, a voice which to Socrates was a "voice of truth," one that he trusted and that proved trustworthy.

To be sure, there are those who, with Macaulay, count the stories of the daimonion as absurd, and who pronounce Socrates to have been "a strange, fanciful, superstitious old fellow."[1] But more there may be, and more correct, who hold that truly great men commonly unite within their nature elements of the most varied kind and admit of no final conflict between, e.g., a commitment to reason and spiritual intuition. Indeed, it may be in the union of such apparent opposites that their greatness consists.

To have been open to life and to truth on all its levels and in all its forms, to have refused to dismiss as superstitious nonsense what he could not rationally explain, and to have been as humble in the region of mystery as he was keen in the region of knowledge--accounts for much of the greatness of the man with the daimonion.

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[1]Quoted from Macaulay's diary, June, 1855, in Osborn, pp. 156-57.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

DESCRIPTIVE PHRASES FOR THE DAIMONION

Source	Status	Description	Supra, pp.
Apuleius	Platonist	the certain voice of his domestic associate	150-54
Ashley	Socratic Scholar	uncommon strength of judgment and justness of thinking	202-03
Boas	Socratic Scholar	accumulated habits of moral judgment	188-89
Cicero	Philosopher	divine something divine warning	141-44
Descartes	Philosopher	predisposition to honor his inward inclinations	160-62
Forbes	Socratic Scholar	voice or sign of the divinity	215-17
Friedlander	Socratic Scholar	the demonic dimension quotes others (unnamed): expression of spiritual freedom sure measure of his own subjectivity	228-29
Gomperz	Socratic Scholar	a species of instinct	211-12
Grote	Socratic Scholar	divine auxiliary divine ally	223-24
Guardini	Socratic Scholar	a warning from without, bearing a numinous character	217-20

Source	Status	Description	Supra, pp.
Hegel	Philosopher	his subjective oracle a physiological mechanism one aspect of his individuality	162-65
Jackson	Socratic Scholar	hallucinations of the sense of hearing, having an extraordinary value	199-201
Joel	Socratic Scholar	a reaction against his rationalism	213
Kierkegaard	Philosopher	a necessary limit expression for something utterly abstract symbol for his freely deciding within himself	171-76
Lelut	Socratic Scholar	auditory hallucination	190
J. S. Mill	Philosopher	a figure of speech	180-81
Montaigne	Philosopher	impulsion of his will, acting before the counsels of his reason	177-78
Myers	Socratic Scholar	sense of inhibition monitory voice	209-11
Nietzsche	Philosopher	aural delusion divine voice	165-71
Osborn	Socratic Scholar	spiritual agent voice of conscience	187-88
Plato			84-100
trans. Church	-	divine guide prophetic guide kind of voice	
trans. Jowett	-	usual sign internal sign	

Source	Status	Description	Supra, pp.
trans. Lamb	-	certain spiritual opposition spirit-voice divine agency	
trans. Warrington	-	spiritual sign divine spirit	
Plutarch	Platonist	divine sign inner voice familiar spirit	144-50
Proclus	Platonist	guardian spirit god	154-56
Riddell	Socratic Scholar	voice of reason unanalyzed act of judgment	195-99
Sauvage	Socratic Scholar	an inspiration which internalizes the influences external to the spirit and objectifies its inner demands an inner super-rational injunction	
Schleiermacher	Philosopher	province of such rapid moral judgments as cannot be referred to distinct grounds	178-79
Shorey	Socratic Scholar	spiritual tact	203-04
Taylor	Socratic Scholar	warning voice interior audition	225-26
Xenophon			116-23
trans. Merchant	-	the deity	
trans. Todd	-	divine sign divine thing	
Zeller	Socratic Scholar	inner voice of individual tact sense of what is suited to his individuality	206-09

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THE DAIMONION OF SOCRATES: A SEARCH FOR DEFINITION AND AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

by

ALTON R. POPE

B.M.E., Cornell University, 1951
S.T.B., Boston University, 1957

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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Department of Philosophy

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Socrates, who was committed to the fullest possible use of his reason, at the same time appeared to obey unquestioningly the counsels of his daimonion. His experience of the daimonion, and his obedience to it, raise important questions in the areas of Socratic studies and epistemology. What was the daimonion, and how and why did it influence Socrates? What is the validity of this kind of experience, and were the specific claims contained in the monitions and silences of the daimonion true?

To these questions the thesis is addressed. As necessary background, the religious inheritance which Socrates received as a fifth century Greek is explored, revealing that it was an easy and almost inevitable assumption for him to make that the gods often gave special revelations to certain men, and that in fact any knowledge not coming through the conscious reason was an instance of divine revelation. Further, an examination of the total person of Socrates, including his personal characteristics and beliefs and behavior, indicates that he recognized the limitations of human reason and that he was open to life and to truth on all levels.

The search for a definition of the daimonion begins with a thorough study of the primary sources, principally the thirteen references in dialogs attributed to Plato and eight references in the writings of Xenophon. It proceeds in an ordered investigation of what others through the ages have reported concerning the daimonion. The evaluations both of

early Platonists and philosophers, and of modern philosophers and Socratic scholars, assist in the forming of a final estimate. Cicero, Hegel, and Kierkegaard are among those who offer significant insight into the daimonion.

Finally the daimonion is beyond any precise definition, for it lies in part within the realm of mystery. It is possible, however, on the assumptions that Socrates actually experienced his daimonion and that he spoke truthfully of it, to arrive at a viable hypothesis as to its nature and effects. According to this hypothesis, the daimonion may have been an inner, inhibitory, divine voice, a voice which while it possibly had a divine source yet blended inextricably with Socrates' own personality, and which guided him on personal matters of expediency. Further, on the basis of the primary sources, it seems fair to conclude that his obedience to its counsels did not compromise his commitment to reason, for the daimonion appeared to give guidance only where his reason could not be certain.

Several conclusions emerge from an epistemological assessment of the daimonion. The experience of the daimonion may be said to lie in the overlap of two circles representing parapsychological and religious experience. When Socrates' experience and the similar experiences of others are given both a pragmatic and theoretical evaluation, there are seen to be reasonable grounds to warrant the hypothesis that such experiences may have a validity in the search for truth. Further, by using a comprehensive coherence criterion of

truth, as exemplified in the philosophical school of Personalism, it is possible to conceive that the twenty-two specific claims interpreted from the monitions and silences of the daimonion were true. Each is internally consistent, and each is coherently related to all other propositions, especially those concerning Socrates, which are held to be true. Moreover, by special tests developed for just such experience, the probable truth of the daimonion's claims receives added support.

Building on the assumptions adopted, it is reasonable to conclude that the daimonion of Socrates may have been an inner, possibly divine voice which he obeyed without offense to his reason, a voice which provided him with good counsel, and which was for him a "voice of truth."