

# THE BLOOMSBURY COMPANION TO SOCRATES

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## SOCRATES' RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

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### INTRODUCTION

Socrates' *atopia*, his 'strangeness', confronts modern readers most acutely in the religious attitudes and experiences we encounter in Plato's dialogues, where Socrates is subject to influences and forces less familiar to us than they were to his contemporaries. All we have in the case of Socrates, whatever his private experiences may have been, are representations by writers, mainly Plato and Xenophon, who shared his religious discourse but who also were motivated by their own agendas. Indeed, one critic is sceptical that it is possible to speak confidently about Socratic religion at all, if the developmentalist view of the Platonic dialogues is false, not to mention the difficulties of inquiring into private religion in classical antiquity generally (Gocer 2000: 120–3). However, it is valuable to ascertain, as far as possible, how his experiences influenced his beliefs and arguments despite the fact that 'religious experience' is a modern concept fraught with epistemic ambiguity and indeterminacy (see Sharf 1998).

I begin with two Greek attempts to distinguish experience from understanding. Aristotle says that 'those who are being initiated are not to learn (*mathein*) anything but to experience (*pathein*) something and

be put into a certain condition' (fr. 3 Rose). This visceral contrast between thought and feeling (literally, 'what happens to someone'), is familiar enough. But consider the *Phaedo*: Plato has Socrates say that insofar as the soul remains in the same state when it touches the forms, its experience (*pathēma*) is called wisdom (*phronēsis*) (79d). The different slants in these two passages depend in part on the fact that Aristotle is speaking about initiation into the mysteries, whereas Plato identifies an experiential facet of understanding truth. Modern philosophers of religion approach such statements, equipped with an extensive conceptual toolkit. Schleiermacher in the early nineteenth century conceived of religion as an internal, affective, intuitive experience to be distinguished from religion as a rational system of doctrines and beliefs or a moral code (Proudfoot 1985: 1–40). Twentieth-century religious theorists such as Rudolf Otto, G. van der Leeuw, Mircea Eliade and Ninian Smart define the essence of religion as unique forms of religious experience of the sacred, of divine power or of the numinous. The idea of religious experience as *sui generis* and as self-authenticating and as inaccessible to psychological, sociological, naturalistic and rationalistic explanation continues to be influential, though it has been

challenged on many fronts by philosophers of religion (Taves 2009). Many begin with the holistic approach that all experience – including religious experience – is mediated by the nature of the mind, concepts, language and cultural factors etc. From this perspective, there are no unmediated and uninterpreted experiences (Katz 1978).

Plato's and Xenophon's reports contain far less phenomenological detail than modern first-person accounts of religious experiences. Perhaps Plato and Xenophon were baffled, as one critic suggests (Nehamas 1998: 158). In any case, the accuracy of their third-person representations of the raw data of first-person experience is almost impossible to gauge. Thus, the interpretations to be surveyed here are inevitably caught in the tension between naturalistic and reductionist approaches, on the one hand, and phenomenological and culturally contextualizing approaches on the other.<sup>1</sup> An example of a theorist who tried to steer a middle course between these two poles, while acknowledging the constructive role of the experiential subject, is William James, who defines religion as 'the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine' (James 1985: 34). Since experience has a non-objective character, a completely unbiased inquiry is impossible, but we can strive to be open-minded, self-critical and historically well-informed about the concepts we apply to unfamiliar phenomena like divination and possession.

## VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

In order to limit the distorting effect of modern categories, I shall begin with Plato's

taxonomy of the four types of madness in the *Phaedrus*. While not exhaustive – and without presuming that Socrates' experiences are 'forms of madness' – his words and images can help to organize most of the experiences considered here. Asserting that 'the best things we have come from madness (*mania*), when it is given as a gift from god' (*Phdr.* 244a), Socrates distinguishes four types of manic experience: (1) prophetic madness inspired by Apollo (244b–d); (2) telastic or ritual madness induced by Dionysus (244d–245a); (3) poetic madness inspired by the Muses (245a); and (4) erotic madness aroused by Eros and Aphrodite, which is declared to be the best (249d–e, 265b). Each of these extraordinary psychic states is a type of possession caused by divinities that were considered external to the subject by Plato and Greeks generally. As Socrates puts it, these states comprise 'a divinely inspired release from normally accepted behavior' (265a). Remarkably, 'madness from a god is finer than self-control of human origin' (244d) and produces 'fine achievements' and 'good fortune' (245b). Still, the erotic philosopher is rated best of all, higher than prophets and mystery-priests (fifth) and poets (sixth), below kings (second), statesmen or merchants (third) and athletes or trainers (fourth) (248d–e).

This four-fold scheme enables us to compare Greek religious experiences with examples cited in various dialogues. (1) Prophetic (*mantikē*) ecstasy is associated first with the priestesses at the oracles of Delphi and Dodona under the patronage of Apollo and Zeus, respectively, but mediumistic trance is also experienced by other oracular personnel, like the Sibyl, and freelance diviners like Cassandra and Teiresias through the agency of a god (usually Apollo), who provides knowledge of the future or of present

secrets (*Phdr.* 244b). Socrates contrasts such inspired divination with 'technical' or 'artificial' divination, based on the observation of birds and other signs by practitioners of non-ecstatic divination who are 'in their right minds' (*Phdr.* 244d).<sup>2</sup> Many Socratic religious experiences are either caused by or involve Apollo in some way: (a) the Delphic oracle's pronouncement that no man was wiser than Socrates (*Ap.* 21a); (b) the divine sign (*daimonion*) that spoke to him privately; and (c) some of his dreams and prayers. Scholars differ on whether these experiences are ecstatic or non-ecstatic.

(2) Dionysian or teletic madness removes mental and emotional disturbances through purificatory rituals, and can impart prophetic vision (244d–245a). The teletic madness associated with Dionysus also includes the Corybantic rites referred to in *Crito*, *Ion*, *Charmides* and *Euthydemus*. In *Symposium*, Socrates seems to wield a Dionysiac power to intoxicate and disorient. There is an additional, esoteric facet of Dionysian experience found among Orphic-Pythagoreans that must be explored.<sup>3</sup> (3) The poetic madness inspired by the Muses is distinguished from the uninspired state of poets who possess only technical skill. Socrates criticizes both types of poetry in *Apology* (22b–c) and *Ion*, despite waxing poetic himself on a few occasions.<sup>4</sup> Yet the criticism of Muse-inspiration in the *Ion* offers vital information on the phenomenology of possession. The philosopher's life, the highest of all, is imbued with an artistic flow (*mousikē*) and eros (*Phdr.* 248d). Socrates himself is semi-possessed by the nymphs (*Phdr.* 238c, 241e) and offers a prayer to Pan (*Phdr.* 279b–c; cf. Connor 1988: 158–60.) While he waits in prison for his execution Socrates writes verse, prompted by a recurring dream (*Phd.* 60d–61b). (4) The erotic madness of the philosopher celebrated

as the highest type will be examined in the discussion of the Dionysian aspects of Socrates' experience.

## SOCRATES, GREEK RELIGION AND APOLLO

In ancient Greece, religion permeated all spheres of life, without distinction of sacred from profane. More public and communal than private and individual, 'correct practice' (orthopraxy) of cult, sacrifice and festival came before maintaining 'correct beliefs' (orthodoxy) (Bremmer 1994: 1–2; Connor 1988: 182–4). Religion's location at the centre of *polis* life meant that its institutions mediated relations between divinities and humans (Sourvinou-Inwood 2000), the potentially volatile context that precipitated the confrontation between Athens and Socrates. Both Xenophon (*Ap.* 11–12) and Plato (*Phd.* 61b, 118a, *Smp.* 176a, *Euth.* 302b–d) attest that Socrates dutifully performed public and private rituals, prayers and hymns in accord with Athenian norms (Brickhouse and Smith, henceforth B-S, 2000b: 75–6; Reeve 2000: 27).<sup>5</sup> But his stance towards the mythic theology employed by poets, which informed popular belief, was unorthodox. He famously moralized the gods, thinking them wise, good (*R.* I 377e ff.) and in agreement with one another (*Euthphr.* 6bc), but he also uncritically accepted many myths (*Phdr.* 229e–230a, *Ti.* 40d–e; cf. B-S 1994: 188–9).

Most Greeks did not consider the gods transcendent (Bremmer 1994: 5). Representations of the gods differed considerably: poets and artists pictured them as personal agents, philosophers refigured the divine in terms of impersonal attributes, for example, divine power and wisdom; and tensions between

belief in gods as persons as opposed to powers continued to shape popular thinking (Bremmer 1994: 223; Burkert 1985: 305–11). Which conception dominated Greek religious culture is disputed: some maintain it was more common to see the gods as persons (Burkert 1985: 182–9), others give the nod to powers and functions (Vernant 2006: 359–96). Splitting the difference between person and function are the epithets characterizing how the gods informed festival and cult: '[E]pithets show a spectrum of attributes or linkages so wide and heterogeneous as to illustrate by themselves the permeability of the boundaries between individual "gods" and thereby the difficulty of creating a logical articulation for any one deity within a polytheistic system' (Davies 2009: 5). Keeping in mind the fluidity of divine identity and the ambiguous distribution of powers is essential when we search for the sources of Socrates' experiences, especially the *daimonion*. It is doubtful that his reticence to name gods or to personalize divine activities amounts to scepticism about their existence. Rather, he appears to speak from epistemic modesty, as in the *Cratylus* when Socrates insists that 'we know nothing about the gods themselves or about the names they call themselves' (400d7–9). Sourvinou-Inwood attributes to Greeks 'the awareness of the severe limitations of human access to the divine, and of the ultimate unknowability of the divine world, and the uncertain nature of human relationships to it' (2000: 20). In contrast, Mikalson (2010: 210) emphasizes the knowability of the gods: Xenophon and Plato (in *Laws*) believe that the gods are invisible, but claim that we know them through their deeds and in their statues.

If Apollo, in some sense, plays a central role in Socratic religion and philosophy,<sup>6</sup> which of the god's traditional features and

powers does Socrates appeal to? Perhaps his Apollo is radically different from the traditional Apollo (Reeve 2000: 26). It should be recalled, however, that this god, like the major Greek divinities, appears 'as an untidy bundle of epithets, locations, and functions, with difficulty given a veneer of unity by iconography and myth' (Davies 2009: 58). From his bow and arrows flowed the power of spreading disease and of healing. With his lyre he was the divine musician, leader of the Muses, of song, and of dance, which from archaic times determined central social and political activities, for example, supervising adolescent initiation rites and certifying laws. This power to renew manifested in ritual purification, which 'also explains his "divinatory" function as god of seers and "owner" of the Delphic oracle. For just as he separated the pure from the impure, so he separated the certain from the uncertain in the present, past, and future' (Bremmer 1994: 17).<sup>7</sup> These ordering activities<sup>8</sup> were conducted, publicly, through ecstatic divination in oracles and, privately, through shamanism and 'freelance divination' (Graf 2009a: 45–51; Johnston 2008: 119–25).<sup>9</sup> Socrates' Apollo shares many if not all of these traditional functions, albeit with certain modifications.

## SOCRATES' TRIAL AND THE DELPHIC ORACLE

Aspects of the traditional Apollo, with Socratic refinements, figure in Plato's *Apology* and in Socratic dialogues like the *Charmides*. The many references to 'the god at Delphi' (*Ap.* 20e) leave little doubt that it is Apollo whom Socrates claims to serve (*Ap.* 20e–23c) and that the *daimonion*, the voice that speaks to him (*Ap.* 31c–d, 40a–b),

is somehow connected with Apollo.<sup>10</sup> His condemnation hinges in part on the jurors' uncertainty whether 'the rigorously moral divinity to which Plato's Socrates keeps referring is the old Apollo he has known since childhood or a newly made god of Socrates' own' (Burnyeat 1988: 18). In *Charmides* (164d–165a) Critias asserts that the Delphic maxims 'Know oneself' and 'nothing too much', inscribed on the temple of Delphi, allude to moderation (*sōphrosunē*), an essential virtue for Socrates and Greeks generally. Scholars disagree on how much substance Delphic morality possessed: 'Through the cultic prescriptions emanating from Delphi, the outlines of a universal morality overriding tradition and group interests may be discerned for the first time among the Greeks' (Burkert 1985: 148). Others are more cautious (Davies 2009: 54–8; Parker 1983: 138–43).<sup>11</sup> Socrates does make a connection when he construes the Delphic oracle's response that 'no man is wiser' to mean 'it is really the god who is wise, and in his oracle he is saying that human wisdom is worth little or nothing' (*Ap.* 23a). He strives to remove blameworthy, prideful ignorance (*Ap.* 25d–26a, 29b) from himself and from his interlocutors via the elenchus as service to the god of purity.<sup>12</sup>

Both the originality of Socrates' moralization of the gods and whether it provoked the charges against him and his ultimate condemnation are disputed. Especially influential has been Vlastos's view that Socratic theological ethics constitute a radical departure from traditional religion by rejecting the *lex talionis* (the doctrine of retaliation, returning wrong for wrong), ascribing only goodness to the gods but never wrongdoing, and in rejecting the *do ut des* (offering goods to the gods for goods in return) foundation of ritual sacrifice.<sup>13</sup> These moralizing innovations are

distinct from the Delphic theology according to which the gods are distant and powerful, men frail and endangered and a great gulf separates the divine and human realms. Some think Socrates assimilates this divide between gods and humans – exemplified in Herodotus, Xenophon and the tragedians – to his conception of divinity as wise, good and as unanimously promoting human morality.<sup>14</sup> An alternative view claims that Socrates' intimacy with the gods involved the practice of a salvation-oriented piety that shared the mystery religions' goal of divinizing the immortal soul as far as possible, while substituting ethical reflection and dialectical activity for ritual practice (Morgan 1990: 15–19).

Interpretations of the accounts of the Delphic oracle and of Socrates' reactions to it in Plato's and Xenophon's *Apologies* vary greatly. Among those who accept the historicity of the oracle story, some argue that it inspired Socrates' mission to philosophize, but others raise doubts that he could derive such an imperative from the Pythia's bare statement (in Plato's version) that 'no man is wiser'.<sup>15</sup> According to Xenophon, Socrates' philosophical activity began long before the oracle (*Ap.* 14–17). Some interpreters believe Plato fabricated the oracle story – which in turn influenced Xenophon's later account – in order to construct a divine justification for Socrates' public philosophical activity (Stokes 1997: 55–67, 115–16; Waterfield 2009: 11; Hackforth 1933: 101–4; Montuori 1981a: 57–146). Historicity aside, the Pythia's utterance was considered true because she was possessed by the god. Socrates' response to the oracle is an indirect type of religious experience that should be examined in relation to the role of the Delphic oracle in Greek society. It provides the context necessary for understanding Socrates' own



divinatory experiences, particularly the *daimonion*. For example, Xenophon's Socrates likens himself to the Pythia when he asks 'what about the priestess herself who sits on the tripod at Pytho? Doesn't she too use a voice to relay the messages from god?' (*Ap.* 12, trans. MacCleod, adapted). Moreover, modern scholars' approaches to the Pythia's state of mind parallel in many respects the various explanations of Socrates' religious experiences.

As a Panhellenic sanctuary of great antiquity, the oracle at Delphi had wide influence and great religious authority.<sup>16</sup> Plato too had great respect for its authority in establishing and guiding religious institutions.<sup>17</sup> Scholars disagree about the oracular procedure, the form of the Pythia's utterances, the nature and causes of her psychological state, her external behaviour and how Delphic oracles were received. Until recently, many marginalized the Pythian priestess' role in the ritual procedure, assuming that because of her peasant origins, illiteracy and altered mental state she must have been incapable of uttering coherent statements, let alone producing oracles in verse.<sup>18</sup> This distorted representation of the Pythia depends in part on a misapplication of Plato's distinction between seer (*mantis*) and proclaimer or interpreter (*prophētē*): 'it is customary to appoint interpreters (*prophētai*) as judges of inspired divinations (*entheos manteia*). Some persons call them seers (*manteis*), being entirely ignorant of the fact that they [i.e. *prophētai*] are expositors of utterances or visions expressed in riddles (*ainigmata*), and are not to be called seers at all, but most precisely declarers (*prophētai*) of what the seers say' (*Ti.* 72a–b; cf. Nagy 1990: 62). However, the distinction between the seer's altered psychological state and the interpreter's 'normal' or 'rational' state can be applied to Socrates' response to the

Pythia's statement about him. As the interpreter of what the oracle means *for him*, he configures his religious experience in relation to the practice of the elenchus. And in the case of the *daimonion* he may be in a sense both seer and interpreter.

The debate about the inspired Pythia's demeanour is instructive. In the first half of the twentieth century many scholars imagined that ecstatic seers appeared frenzied and disturbed, exhibiting uncontrolled movements and emotional agitation. This image depends largely on Plutarch's (1993: 55–6) one report of disturbed behaviour in the case of a failed divination, and also on comparative data concerning states of spirit possession.<sup>19</sup> Earlier historians of Greek religion also muddled the waters. The nineteenth-century classicist Erwin Rohde, relying on his friend Nietzsche's opposition between rational Apollonian religion and irrational Dionysian ecstasy, claimed that Dionysus must have brought ecstatic possession to Delphi and thus that the Pythia behaved like the raving Maenads, the female devotees of Dionysus. Dodds refuted this tendentious reconstruction and thereby proved that Plato's distinction between prophetic and telestic ecstasy corresponded to classical Greek realities (1951: 68–72). He also advanced the idea that possession by Apollo was ecstatic too, though it produced calmness (cf. Kingsley 1999: 74–108, 133–4, 157; Latte 1940). Images on Greek painted pottery support the distinction, with the Bacchantes depicted as whirling and dancing wildly, while the Pythia appears calm as she sits atop the tripod in the fifth-century Vulci cup (Ustinova 2009: 126).

Of course, a calm demeanour can be construed in different ways. In his minimalist, rationalizing interpretation of the Pythia's psychological state, Fontenrose argues that

'the speaking of oracles was above all a dramatic ritual . . . The Pythia experienced enthusiasm, but not an uncontrolled and irrational frenzy. Confusion arises from translating *mania* as "madness" or "insanity" . . . [y]et *mania*, especially as Plato and Plutarch use the word, means a high state of emotion and comprehends all kinds of transport, enthusiasm, and inspiration' (1978: 211–12).<sup>20</sup> Though he wrote centuries after Socrates, Plutarch's informed reports depict the Pythia as unfrenzied and fluent when possessed. Acknowledging a passage that imputes mental volatility to Pythian priestesses (Plutarch 1993: 74), Graf thinks that the Pythia's demeanour nevertheless remained serene and composed (2009a: 592–5).<sup>21</sup> Graf and Maurizio make a convincing case for approaching possession as part of a cultural system that represented contact with the divine in multifarious ways, in contrast to Fontenrose, who psychologizes the Pythia, attributing her altered states not to the presence of the god within her, the meaning of *enthousiasmos*, but to autosuggestion through the performance of ritual. These latter factors are certainly important, but they may underdetermine the phenomenon.

There is the additional issue that the concept of possession is itself ambiguous. Graf distinguishes two types of Greek spirit possession: (1) the Control Template, in which the person is 'held' (*katochos*) by a divinity or divine force, but whose normal appearance has not altered, for example, when Socrates ironically says he's almost 'seized by the nymphs' (*nympholēptos* *Phdr.* 238d). (2) The Body Snatcher Template, that is, 'having a god inside' (*entheos*), the state in which a superhuman entity (a god or *daimōn*) has entered mind and body. Plutarch employs both the former model<sup>22</sup> and at other times the latter.<sup>23</sup> For Graf, 'Apollo's control is not

exercised from outside, it becomes part of the Pythia's inside but is influenced by her own inertia. We deal, so to speak, with a sophisticated Platonic transformation of the Body Snatcher template' (2009: 595; for a similar view see Dodds 1951: 71). Yet, in *Ion* (533e) Socrates uses *entheos* and *katochos* as equivalents to describe the inspired state of epic poets. Moreover, the precise meaning of 'within' and 'externally' in the case of both prophetic and poetic possession is difficult to determine. We do know that ancient commentators, including Plato, assumed that a god had penetrated the seer's psyche. It is reasonable to assume that the self of a diviner is highly permeable.

Unwilling to accept a divine source for the Pythia's inspiration, some scholars prefer naturalistic explanations, as did one of Plutarch's characters, who wonders whether the Pythia's inspiration was the result of breathing the exhalations and vapours from the chasm below the sanctuary (Plutarch 1993: 51). In the early twentieth century some were convinced that the temple was situated at an opening in the earth from which gases rose, but geological surveys at the time found no local faults. However, recent surveys have confirmed the sanctuary's location directly over the intersection of several faults, increasing the likelihood of periodic seismic activity, which would produce gas emissions. The ancient accounts of intoxicated goats and of visitors to Delphi, the scent of the gas present there and the recent geological surveys are discussed by Graf (2009a) and Green (2009). One ancient source, nicely blurring the distinction between physical substance and spiritual force, reported that from a fissure in the rock arose 'inspirational *pneuma* (wind or spirit)'. Green supports the recent hypothesis of geologists that the gas may be ethylene (2009: 36–41), noting

that its sweet odour and symptoms of mild euphoria, reduced inhibition, hallucinations and quick recovery roughly match ancient reports.<sup>24</sup> Even if a psychotropic gas like ethylene made the Pythia susceptible to altered states – and it should be recalled that most ancient oracles are *not* associated with gaseous emissions – the priestess' ascetic regimen, virginity, isolation, ritual purity and mediumistic receptivity were probably more significant factors (Green 2009: 43–6).<sup>25</sup> Moreover, one wonders whether the emissions would have been regular enough to sustain the Pythia's ecstasies. Finally, that the Pythia and many freelance diviners were female may be important.<sup>26</sup> Is it coincidental that Plato's Socrates receives guidance from the Pythia and from the priestess Diotima of Mantinea (a likely pun on *manteia*, divination)?<sup>27</sup>

What does Plato's Socrates think of Apollonian ecstasy in the early dialogues? And can what he says guide our approach to his own religious experiences? In Plato's *Apology* he lumps together poets with seers and prophets: 'I soon realized that poets do not compose their poems with knowledge (*sophia*), but by some inborn talent and by inspiration, like seers and prophets who also say many fine things without any understanding of what they say' (22b–c).<sup>28</sup> The *Ion*'s commentary on inspired states provides more detail. Epic poets produce beautiful poems, Socrates insists, not from skill (*technē*), rather 'they are inspired (*entheoi*) and possessed (*katechomenoi*)' (533e). So too are the lyric poets when they compose beautiful songs – like the Corybantes who are 'not in their right minds when they dance' – and 'possessed by Bacchic frenzy' (533e–534a). Thus, 'as long as a human being has his intellect in his possession he will always lack the power to make poetry or sing prophecy' (534b). The source of beautiful poetry and

accurate divinations is, then, a 'divine gift' (*theia moira*, c1) and 'divine power' (*theia dunamis*, c6): 'that's why the god takes their intellect away from them when he uses them as his servants, as he does prophets and godly diviners . . . the god himself is the one who speaks, and he gives voice through them to us' (c7–d4). Socrates specifies further (c1–5) that the products of inspired states will vary depending on the Muse or divinity who possesses the poet or prophet. Socrates expands on this point in the *Phaedrus* (244a–c), discussed above. In cases of possession, he praises the benefits that come from 'being out of one's mind' (*ekphrōn*), but he criticizes the resulting inability to explain the meaning of inspired utterances. His grounds are the 'traditional, sober Apollonian virtue of "knowing that we are all worth nothing with respect to wisdom" (*Ap.* 23b)' (McPherran 1996: 118). But if the Pythia 'says many fine things' while she is possessed by Apollo but she has no knowledge, where do Socrates' own divinations, that is, his Apollonian ecstasies, stand in relation to Apollonian sobriety?

## INTERPRETING THE ORACLE

Critical opinion varies on the reasons why the oracle declared that no one was wiser than Socrates.<sup>29</sup> Some argue that the oracle, aware of Socrates' philosophical activity, intended to endorse his deflationary view of human wisdom (B-S 1989: 94–5; McPherran 1996: 214–20; Reeve 1989: 28–32).<sup>30</sup> Others see the oracle more cynically as telling questioners what they wanted to hear (Fontenrose 1978: 7–8, 11–57) or that the Pythia's priestly interpreters shaped her utterances in order to promote their own interests (Parke and Wormell

1956: I.30–41). Still others believe that the entire oracle story is a Platonic fiction (see above at note 16). If the oracle story is historically accurate, it is reasonable to suppose that reports about Socrates reached even remote Delphi. His reaction and response to the oracle are fascinating and, of course, controversial. Literally 'puzzled' by the Pythia's declaration, which he takes to be a riddle (*ainigma*), Socrates questions others in order to prove that someone is wiser than he (*Ap.* 21b–c). Some maintain that Socrates tries to expose the god or its oracle as liars (Burnet 1924: 92, 172; Hackforth 1933: 88–104; West 1979: 106; see B-S 1989: 88–9). More common is the opinion that Socrates does not doubt the god's veracity (Guthrie 1969: 407; Stokes 1997: 34–7, 117). Convinced that the god cannot lie (*Ap.* 21b), Socrates aims to refute the *apparent meaning* of the oracle in order to grasp its underlying meaning (B-S 1989: 96; McPherran 1996: 223–5).<sup>31</sup> However, there is nothing extraordinary or impious in Socrates' effort to ascertain the oracle's meaning through reasoning since oracles were considered riddles that required interpretation (Burkert 2005; Nock 1972: 536–40).<sup>32</sup>

Is Socrates' effort to decipher the oracle the origin of his mission to philosophize? After all, it is likely that he had practised the elenchus long before he heard the oracle (McPherran 1996: 215). As the *Apology* does not address the question directly, some argue that his public philosophical activity after the oracle harks back to earlier testing of interlocutors' beliefs, which depend on his beliefs about piety in the second half of the *Euthyphro* (11e–14c). On this account Socrates holds that piety involves service to the gods, which assists them in their work of producing morally beneficial effects (B-S 1989: 92–5; McPherran 1996: 47–59, 218,

223; Reeve 1989: 62–6). In response to the oracle Socrates may have felt a greater obligation to serve the god because he then more clearly recognized the moral ignorance of his fellow Athenians and that the god approved his efforts to make each one of them aware of their ignorance (B-S 1989: 97–9, 2000a: 242–4; McPherran 1996: 227). The value of his elenctic service to the god is confirmed retrospectively in the words: 'To do this has, as I say, been enjoined on me by the god, by means of oracles and dreams, and in every other way that a divine manifestation (*theia moira*) has ordered a man to do anything' (*Ap.* 33c, cf. 28e–29a). In *Ion* (534c) *theia moira* 'divine gift' explains how poets become possessed. Whether or not the plural 'oracles' also includes the *daemonion*, this passage exposes Socrates' permeable self as open to a broad spectrum of divine interventions.

## THE DAIMONION

Without doubt the most enigmatic of Socrates' religious experiences is the *daimonion*, which Vlastos described as 'that unpredictable little beast' (1995: 29). It appears in both authentic and spurious Platonic dialogues and in Xenophon. Difficulties in comprehending this phenomenon are exacerbated by the semantic ambiguity of the words and phrases that refer to it, by how it appears to Socrates, and by questions about its sources. Socrates introduces it in these words: 'a thing divine or spiritual (*theion ti kai daimonion*) happens to me, which Meletus has ridiculed in his deposition. This began when I was a child. It is a voice, and whenever it speaks it turns me away from something I am about to do, but it never encourages me to do anything' (*Ap.* 31d, Grube trans., adapted).

First, the semantic ambiguity of *daimonion*, an adjective that assumes substantive meaning. In addition to being 'something divine or spiritual', it is often a 'sign (*sēmeion*): 'the sign of the god' (40b), 'the customary sign' (40c) or simply 'the sign' (41d), 'the spiritual sign' (*daimonion sēmeion*, *R.* I 496c) and 'both the *daimonion* and its customary sign' (*Phdr.* 242b). How the sign appears is indicated by the verb 'it happens or occurs' (*gignesthai*) or 'being about to do' (*mellein*), which fits well the fact that it intervenes when Socrates is deliberating about or is about to initiate an action. When Xenophon refers to the *daimonion* (*Mem.* 1.1.2, 4, *Ap.* 4, 13) he employs the verb 'to indicate' (*sēmainein*) instead of the noun 'sign' (*sēmeion*) with a verb. With the same verb Apollo 'gives a sign' in Heraclitus (fr. 93). Sometimes the *daimonion* presents itself as a voice (*Ap.* 31d, *Phdr.* 242c, *Xen. Ap.* 12).<sup>33</sup>

How the *daimonion* intervenes differs between Plato and Xenophon according to most scholars. Appearing to Socrates frequently (*Euth.* 272e, *Phdr.* 242b), the sign was familiar to his fellow Athenians (*Ap.* 31c, *Euthphr.* 3b), which led his accusers to charge him with introducing new gods (*Mem.* 1.1.2).<sup>34</sup> In Plato it warns Socrates not to do an act that would be either imprudent or unethical (*Ap.* 40a–b, *Phdr.* 242b, *Hp. Ma.* 304b–c, *Alc. I* 103a, *Thg.* 128a–131a), but in Xenophon it gives both negative and positive advice to Socrates and to others (*Mem.* 1.1.4; 4.3.12–13; 4.8.1, 5; *Ap.* 4, 12–13).<sup>35</sup> In the most informative passage about the divine sign he asserts:

[M]y customary prophetic power (*mantikē*) from the *daimonion* frequently opposed me even in small matters, when I was about to do something wrong, but now that, as you can see for yourselves, I

was faced with what one might think . . . the worst of evils, my divine sign has not opposed me, either when I left home at dawn, or when I came into court, or at any time that I was about to say something during my speech. Yet in other talks it often held me back in the middle of my speaking, but now it has opposed no word or deed of mine. What do I think is the reason for this? I will tell you. What has happened to me may well be a good thing, and those of us who believe death to be an evil are certainly mistaken. I have convincing proof of this, for it is impossible that my familiar sign did not oppose me if I was not about to do what was right. (40a–c)

Before treating how Socrates rationally assessed these interventions and silences, for the moment observe how insistently he seems to feel its presence from moment to moment, throughout his life, from the time he was a child! Such attentiveness helps to explain why, when the sign remains silent in the face of an impending death-sentence, Socrates deems that proof of a good outcome, a judgment he reaffirms shortly thereafter (41d).<sup>36</sup>

The *daimonion*'s gatekeeper function for students is represented variously in the *Theaetetus*, in the disputed *Alcibiades I* and in the probably spurious *Theages*. The midwife passage in *Theaetetus* provides the most detailed account of this activity in the undisputed dialogues. On the other hand, it features the notion of 'association' or 'being with' (*sunousia* and variants) that is prevalent elsewhere only in the two disputed dialogues. However, the notion is prominent in the famous passage in the *Seventh Letter*: having insisted that the highest knowledge cannot be put into words, the text says that it is born in the soul 'after long-continued intercourse (*sunousia*) between teacher and

pupil, in joint pursuit of the subject' (341c–d).<sup>37</sup> At the beginning of the midwife passage, Socrates observes that because of his ignorance and inability to create wisdom in others 'god (*theos*) compels me to attend the travail of others . . . At first some of them may give the impression of being ignorant and stupid; but as time goes on and our association continues, all whom god permits are seen to make progress . . . it is I, with God's help, who deliver them of this offspring' (150c–e, adapted; see *Thg.* 130a). He then recounts how sometimes a pupil leaves before he should, mixes with bad company but then wishes to return: 'in some cases, the divine sign that visits me forbids me to associate with them; in others, it permits me and they begin again to make progress' (*Tht.* 151a; see *Thg.* 129e). In *Alcibiades I* a prohibition in similar circumstances is issued first by the *daimonion* (103a) and later by the god (*theos*) (105d–106a). Only in *Theages* does the *daimonion* determine a student's progress. Should we distinguish between *theos* and the *daimonion* in these passages? Friedländer argues that no sharp distinction should be made because 'we are dealing with active powers, not names' (1958: 35). Joyal's contention that the two divine activities should be kept distinct is supported by their respective involvement in what he discerns as two successive stages of Socratic education (2000: 84). In the first, the god initiates contact and determines whether success will be achieved; only in the second phase, when the association has failed and the student wishes to resume contact does the *daimonion* intervene negatively as in other genuine dialogues.<sup>38</sup>

The *Theaetetus*, therefore, makes some sort of distinction between *theos* and *daimonion*, while *Alcibiades I* assimilates them. Simply distinguishing the terms, however, cannot

disguise the remarkable protreptic function of *theos* suggested in *Theaetetus* (150c–e, quoted above). Struck by the uniqueness of this divine intervention in undisputed dialogues and by its similarity to the extraordinary activity of the *daimonion* in *Theages*, H. Tarrant thinks this section of the text is an interpolation (2005: 148). In yet another twist, in *Theages* 'by divine dispensation' (*theia moira*, see *Ap.* 33c) the *daimonion* only turns away and never prescribes, but, unlike the *Apology*, it also instructs Socrates' friends (128d), resulting in the admission that 'this spiritual thing has absolute power in my dealings with those who associate with me' (129e).

In Xenophon both the *daimonion* and *theos* offer positive advice. His Socrates 'often warned his associates to do this or not to do that, at the prompting of the divine (*daimonion*), and those who took his advice benefited from it, while those who did not were sorry for it afterwards' (*Mem.* 1.2.4, trans. Macleod). Likewise, 'I have often told friends what God (*theos*) has advised and I have never been found to be wrong' (*Ap.* 13). This picture of the divine sign offering positive and negative advice both to Socrates and to his companions has convinced most scholars that Xenophon is unreliable and that both *Alcibiades I* and *Theages* are not by Plato. Although *Theages* is probably spurious, its author was clearly familiar with Plato's writings, as verbal and thematic borrowings from the *Apology* and *Theaetetus* attest. Also valuable is its independent corroboration of the nature of Socratic pedagogy, much of which coheres with Plato's erotic Socrates (see Guthrie 1969: 399). And because it probably was written in the mid-fourth century (see Joyal 2000: 135–55),<sup>39</sup> its more active *daimonion* enhances our understanding of the religious

milieu within which variant traditions about a daimonic Socrates circulated.<sup>40</sup>

The prevailing attitude towards the *daimonion* in *Theages* and Xenophon, especially among Anglo-American scholars, is best captured by Vlastos who sees it 'as an occult prognosticator, never encountered in Plato' (1991: 281). He thinks the conclusion of *Theages* reveals its magical character as a divinity in its own right. If the *daimonion* does not allow Socrates and himself to associate, *Theages* urges that they propitiate 'the divine thing that comes to you with prayers and sacrifices and any other way the diviners might suggest' (131a). This attitude Vlastos deplores as credulity on the part of 'Socrates' superstitious admirers' (1991: 282).<sup>41</sup> What has also troubled commentators is that in this short dialogue the learning on the part of Socrates' interlocutor Aristides is not said to occur through dialectical examination by Socrates, but rather through physical proximity and spending time together (*sunousia*) with him, even more when the student gazes at the master and most of all through physical touching (130c–e).<sup>42</sup> It is to be noted first that philosophical progress is measured in terms of argumentative skill (130c) and moral improvement (128c). H. Tarrant and Joyal emphasize the absence of dialectical learning in *Theages*, but fail to explain Socrates' remark in *Theaetetus* (150d) that associates make progress if the god permits but that 'this is not due to anything they have learned from me'. McPherran argues that the gods provide 'less-than-clear proreptic messages for pedagogical considerations', because frequent advice would violate an individual's autonomy and discourage self-examination (2005: 29–30). This cogent insight prompts the question: How important is individual autonomy for a philosopher who regularly receives divine guidance

through dreams, divinations and the *daimonion*? Unlike the modern, unitary, individual self, which is the metaphysical basis for the principle of autonomy,<sup>43</sup> Socrates' permeable self is constituted through interactions with divine forces and through regular dialectical activity.<sup>44</sup> One might also consider the possibility that Plato had good reasons to leave the details of divine guidance unclear.

Aristides' remarkable claim that he derived the most benefit when he touched Socrates (*Thg.* 130e) is often contrasted with the playful interchange between Socrates and Agathon in *Symposium* (175c–d): 'Socrates, come lie down next to me. Who knows, if I touch you, I may catch a bit of the wisdom (*sophon*) that came to you under my neighbor's porch. It's clear you've seen the light. If you hadn't, you'd still be standing there.' (The episode on the porch will be addressed below.) Socrates says how wonderful it would be if wisdom could flow from the wise to the foolish, as water 'flows from a full cup into an empty one when we connect them with a piece of yarn' (175d). More in the spirit of the *Theages* passage is Alcibiades' speech later in *Symposium*, when he testifies to Socrates' electric charisma, his 'amazing power' (*dunamis*, 216c), confessing that when he's absent from Socrates he returns to his evil ways (*Smp.* 216b). Alcibiades' attempt to seduce Socrates (217a–219d), throwing 'his arms around this truly superhuman (*daimonios*) and amazing man' (219c, trans. Rowe), implies that Socrates' body exerted a magnetic force, even though he doesn't claim that he hoped to acquire wisdom simply by touching Socrates as did Aristides.

Intimate associations with young men are cultivated by daimonic Socrates through the erotic skill he learned from Diotima. Erotics (*erōtika*) is the only thing he says he understands (Pl. *Smp.* 177e; cf. *Phdr.* 257a, *technē*

*erōtike*, *Ly.* 204c, *Thg.* 128b; *Xen. Mem.* 4.1.2). Just as Socrates' erotic knowledge was given to him by the priestess and diviner Diotima (*Smp.* 201d, 207a), so too is the success of the maieutic art he practises dependent on the god (*Tht.* 149a, 150b, 150c, 184b, 210c). The intertwining of daimonic activity and educative eros goes deep.<sup>45</sup>

The interchangeability of *theos* and *daimonion* in both Xenophon and in *Alc. I*,<sup>46</sup> the *daimonion*'s intervention in the affairs of Socrates' companions in Xenophon and *Theages* – and the god's in *Theaetetus* – has stimulated much debate on the *daimonion*'s role in Plato.<sup>47</sup> Recently, Droge has suggested that Plato's 'insistence that it serves Socrates alone and then only as a deterrent, and often in quite trivial contexts, all imply a concern to treat the *daimonion* with considerable circumspection', unlike Xenophon's Socrates, who dispenses oracular pronouncements among a wide circle of friends, prophecies that are received directly from his personal divinity without the need for interpretation (2007: 65, author's emphasis; cf. McPherran 2005: 29 n. 42).<sup>48</sup> The behaviour of Xenophon's Socrates, he argues, better explains the lethal antipathy he aroused. This offers an interesting challenge to orthodox opinion that Xenophon, motivated by his pedestrian piety and aiming to disarm criticisms of his hero, presents Socrates with a conventional religious persona that could not have aroused popular enmity had it been true (Joyal 2000: 70 ff.; Vlastos 1971: 3, 1991: 161, 290). Xenophon's apologetic aims and commonplace moralizing notwithstanding, 'it was revolutionary to claim that the gods spoke directly to him and told him what was right', as this 'implies that Socrates has a closer relationship to god than anyone' (Lefkowitz 1989: 239, 245). In some respects, Xenophon's Socrates is stranger

than Plato's, or at least more hubristic, without being the brilliant philosopher we meet in the dialogues.

## THE IDENTITY OF THE *DAIMONION*

The third type of ambiguity concerns the nature of the *daimonion*, which is a derivative of the common word *daimōn*. '*Daimonia* meant supernatural powers generally. It was not in itself an unambiguously negative term, though the diminutive *-ion* termination was probably meant to imply a lower grade of divinity than *daimōn*, while *daimōn* was itself of a lower status than *theos*' (Cartledge 2009: 87). The term designates anonymous divine agents or forces that can have positive or negative effects, as when even the rationalist Pericles referred to the Athenian plague of 429 as *daimonion*, that is, sent by the divine (Thucydides 2.64.3). Burkert states that *daimōn* 'does not designate a specific class of divine beings, but a peculiar mode of activity . . . *Daimōn* is occult power, a force that drives man forward where no agent can be named . . . Every god can act as *daimōn*; not every act of his reveals the god. *Daimōn* is the veiled countenance of divine activity. There is no image of a *daimōn*, and there is no cult' (1985: 180).<sup>49</sup> Though scholars give good reasons for not identifying the *daimonion* as a *daimōn*, as we shall see shortly, Socrates' divine sign evidently shares many features of *daimones* (cf. *Ap.* 27d). Generally, then, the impersonality of daimonic activity supports the idea that his 'deliberate vagueness about the source and nature of the *daimonion* suggests that Socrates did not suppose he knew anything very clearly about the *daimonion*, other than that it had some divine source' (B-S 2000: 262 n. 5).



By the second century CE later Platonists, beginning with Plutarch, identified Socrates' *daimonion* as a *daimōn*.<sup>50</sup> This is not surprising since later Platonic demonology is rooted in the famous passage where, having identified eros as a 'great spirit (*daimōn*)' that operates in the space between god and man (*Smp.* 202d), Diotima teaches that they 'are messengers who shuttle back and forth between the two, conveying prayer and sacrifice from men to gods, while to men they bring commands from the gods and gifts in return sacrifices. Being in the middle of the two, they round out the whole and bind fast the all to all. Through them all divination (*mantikē*) passes, through them the art of priests in sacrifice and ritual, in enchantment, prophecy (*manteia*) and sorcery (*goēteia*). Gods do not mix with men; they mingle and converse with us through spirits instead, whether we are awake or asleep. He who is wise in any of these ways is a man of the spirit (*daimonios anēr*)' (*Smp.* 202e–203a). Socrates' daimonic experiences are shaped by this realm, even if the *daimonion* is not a *daimōn* (the view of Joyal 2001b: 351).<sup>51</sup> Hence, Plato possibly maintained a distinction between *daimones* and the *daimonion*, since Socrates says it is a very rare phenomenon or unique to him (*R.* I 496c), whereas each soul has an indwelling personal *daimōn* (*Ti.* 90a ff.) that also guides it through the afterlife (*R.* I 620d ff., *Phd.* 107d).<sup>52</sup> The conception of the *daimōn* as the highest part of the soul identifies it with reason and understanding, whose attributes are goodness and wisdom. Since the *daimonion* is a 'sign from the god' (*Ap.* 40b), the god is good and wise, and the best part of a human being, reason, is daimonic, the emphasis on a precise distinction between *daimōn* and the *daimonion* by scholars may have gone further than Plato intended.<sup>53</sup>

Socrates' vagueness about the nature and sources of the *daimonion* has prompted widely divergent explanations of the significance the phenomenon had for Socrates. Some interpreters nervously begin their inquiries with the worry that because he heard voices Socrates – supposedly the epitome of rationality – might have been superstitious (B-S 1994: 190; McPherran 2005: 14 and 2011: 115) or that the *daimonion* 'contributed to the general sense of his being weird' (Long 2006: 63). Each student of Socrates must decide for herself whether invoking highly charged, condescending terms like these advances inquiry into phenomena like Socrates' *daimonion*, his dreams and altered states of consciousness. The historical genesis of terms and concepts has a bearing on their hermeneutic value and the etiology of 'superstitious' is epistemically suspect. In antiquity *deisidaimonia*, which is usually rendered in English as 'superstition', signified a negative, excessive piety in the form of inordinate fear of being harmed by gods or *daimones* (Martin 2004: 18–19, 92–5). Applying such a dubious adjective to Socrates' religious sensibility may be confusing since it has become a term of reproach through its use in the history of Christianity. Obviously, Socrates did not think the gods were harmful, on the contrary. Beginning in classical antiquity and continuing through the Christian critique of paganism in late antiquity, superstition acquired the meaning roughly similar to that of 'cult' nowadays, that is to say, a bad form of religion. In the medieval West, the critique of demons and witchcraft continued the trend, culminating in the rationalist Enlightenment reduction of any form of religion to superstition.

Scholarly opinion on the nature of the *daimonion* divides on the question whether or not the sign comes from a supernatural

source distinct from Socrates.<sup>54</sup> The first and larger group begins with the idea that 'the *daimonion* is an internal, private admonitory sign and voice caused to appear within the horizon of consciousness by a god or a divine *daimōn*' (McPherran 1996: 185). Still, some critics who hold this view are uncertain whether the sign spoke in an audible voice (B-S 2005: 61; Joyal 2005: 106–7). Long recommends that we 'credit Socrates with experiences that were not dream-like but palpable, vivid, and endowed with sufficient semantic content to be understood . . . in ordinary language' (2006: 65). Many take Socrates' statements in Plato and Xenophon literally and conclude that Socrates did hear a voice (see McPherran 1996: 203–4; Rist 1963: 21; Vlastos 1991: 281, 2000: 185). His claim that the voice began when he was a child (*Ap.* 31d, *Thg.* 128d) supports this view. Opinion in this group also varies as to whether the *daimonion* is a sign from Apollo (Joyal 2005: 109; McPherran 1996: 137, 2005: 16, 2011: 125; Reeve 2000: 25–6) or from the divine in an unspecified sense (B-S 2004: 142; Burnyeat 2002: 136).<sup>55</sup> As discussed above, Socrates' moralized theology, with all the gods in agreement, seems to tend towards an impersonal concept of divinity or even henotheism, according to which all gods and spirits are manifestations of a singular principle (Guthrie 1969: 455–60).

Those who deny the supernatural origin of the *daimonion* propose various rationalizing and psychologizing explanations. Van Riel sees it as a purely human phenomenon that arises within the personality (2005: 34–5).<sup>56</sup> Nussbaum holds that 'the *daimonion* is called *daimonion*, a divine thing, because human reason is a divine thing'. It is 'an ironic way of alluding to the supreme authority of dissuasive reason and elenctic argument' (1985: 234–5).<sup>57</sup> On the same line, Weiss believes

that the god is 'superfluous' because it is a voice inspired by Socrates' thinking and intuition (2005: 84–5, 89).<sup>58</sup> Vlastos also sometimes construes its alarms in *Theaetetus* (151a), *Euthydemus* (272e) and *Phaedrus* (242b–c) as 'hunches' or forms of rational intuition (1991: 282–3, cf. the critique in B-S 2005: 44–9), a characterization that would seem to eliminate any divine component. It is important to emphasize that these rationalizing interpretations – unlike the accounts of the epistemic status of the *daimonion*'s alarms that I shall address shortly – rather straightforwardly relabel as intra-psychic phenomena that the ancient texts specify as extra-psychic divine entities or phenomena. Others reject such reductionism by stressing the divine source of human rationality, but also insist that the *daimonion* has an identity separate from Socrates himself rather than being located within him (Long 2003: 126, 136, 2006: 67; Reeve 2000: 32–5). Differences between these rationalizing interpretations are motivated by different conceptions of Socratic rationality.

## SOCRATES AND PROPHECY

That the *daimonion*'s interventions are limited to prohibitions (in Plato) may explain why Socrates speaks of it modestly: 'I am a seer (*mantis*), and though I am not particularly good at it, still . . . I am good enough for my own purposes' (*Phdr.* 242c).<sup>59</sup> Yet sometimes Socrates issues bold prophetic statements that reflect the presence of a power more nuanced than the sign's simple 'no'.<sup>60</sup> *Apology* (33c) cites dreams and divinations – not including the *daimonion* – that order him to philosophize, and Xenophon represents its regular intervention in Socrates' life as a mark

of divine friendship (*philia*, *Mem.* 4.3.12) and the Delphic oracle as honouring him (*Ap.* 14). His Socrates boasts that his divinations possess 'greater truth and piety' than those who divine through birds (*Ap.* 13). He also speaks with a forceful prophetic voice both in the *Apology* and in the *Phaedo*. He says to the jurors who voted against him 'I am at the point when men prophesy most, when they are about to die', predicting that others younger and more insistent than himself will test and trouble them after he is dead (*Ap.* 39c–d). The Apollonian source of this power is revealed in the *Phaedo*, when Socrates likens himself to swans, who sing most beautifully when facing death: 'as they belong to Apollo, they are prophetic (*mantikoi*), have knowledge of the future and sing of the blessings of the underworld . . . As I believe myself to be a fellow servant with the swans and dedicated to the same god, and have received from my master a gift of prophecy not inferior to theirs, I am no more despondent than they on leaving life' (*Phd.* 85b). Prophetic singing is an extension of Socrates writing hymns to Apollo, which he was instructed to do in the dream mentioned earlier (60c–61b). Evident here is a deep continuity of experience in the form of dreams and divinations conveyed by Asclepius and Apollo, from the *Apology* and into the *Phaedo*, both of which depict Socrates as optimistic and confident as he prepares to enter the afterlife (see McPherran 2003a: 78–80).

### THE DAIMONION AND REASON

Vlastos's explorations of the philosophy of Socrates in the 1980s and 1990s inspired many scholars to scrutinize the epistemic status of the *daimonion*. Two recent collections

of essays are excellent guides to the ongoing debates (Destrée and Smith 2005; Smith and Woodruff 2000). The former contains a selection from the lively correspondence among Vlastos, B-S and McPherran in the 1980s on the source and nature of the *daimonion* and its relation to rationality.

Vlastos stipulates that all manifestations of the divine sign require 'unlimited scope for the deployment of critical reason' (1991: 170). The critical point of dispute between Vlastos and his critics concerns whether or not the divine sign challenges or constrains Socrates' rational thought. B-S and McPherran maintain that the *daimonion*'s alarms are not fallible though they are uninformative in the sense that it offers no general explanations (B-S 1994: 39, 194; McPherran 2011: 125). Socrates accepts without deliberation the sign's prohibitions of actions he has reasons to pursue. Thus, given the wisdom of the gods (B-S 2000a: 252) it is reasonable for Socrates to think that the divine sign would oppose him if he was about to do something wrong (B-S 2004: 142). Vlastos takes exactly the opposite tack: 'if Socrates *knew* that X is a command from the infinitely wise god this would trump any rational scruples he might have had about it. But that is precisely what he does *not* know. All he has is subjective states of mind, putatively caused by the god, whose import remains to be determined by himself' (1991: 285, author's emphasis). When Socrates abstains from politics owing to the sign's opposition (*Ap.* 31c–d), Vlastos contends that the sign and reason are in complete accord: 'there is no trumping' (1991: 286), whereas B-S argue that Socrates had reasons for engaging in political activity *before* the *daimonion* intervened and hence it *does* trump his reasoning (2005: 52–3, 1994: 192). Similarly, when Socrates points to the silence of the divine voice as

his speech nears its end (*Ap.* 40a–c) as proof that his impending death will be a good thing, Vlastos argues that Socrates' belief is rationally grounded prior to and independent of the divine sign (1991: 284, also Weiss 2005: 91–3). B-S respond that Socrates gives no argument for this belief anywhere in the *Apology*, but trusts the benefits listening to the *daimonion* has brought him (2005: 53–4; see McPherran 1996: 189).

Vlastos argues that there is no conflict between reason and the *daimonion* (and other extra-rational experiences) because it is subordinate to reason. His conception of Socratic reason is based on this brief passage in the *Crito*: 'Not now for the first time, but always, I am the sort of man who is persuaded by nothing except the argument (*logos*) that seems best to me when I reason (*logizomenos*) about the matter' (46b; Vlastos 1991: 157). McPherran formulates this passage as the 'Rationality Principle', which constrains Socrates' thoughts and feelings (2011: 114; cf. Reeve 1989: 71–3). Burnet contends that *logos* does not – and *cannot* – mean reason here but instead indicates a practical 'rule of conduct' that results from reasoning (1924: 268). B-S reject Grube's translation of *logos* as 'argument' and Vlastos's as 'proposition' and substitute 'reason' (B-S 2000a: 263 n. 16) on the grounds that these renderings beg the question as to what comprises a reason. They respond to Vlastos that *logos* is not opposed to Socrates' divinatory experiences, but rather to the opinions of the many, which are subjected to elenctic examination in the first part of the dialogue (B-S 2000a: 247). For them the sign is a 'reason', but it is not critically analysed each time it appears. Much depends on what one takes Socratic reasoning to be: one or more types of elenctic reasoning, practical reasoning or reflection. It should be noted that *logos* can refer

to a belief, attitude and even to a myth.<sup>61</sup> Socrates' acceptance of the *Gorgias* myth as a true *logos* constitutes a 'reason' for him to believe certain things about the afterlife, but the content of a myth is not empirically verifiable nor testable by the elenchus.

Another example of the rationalizing approach is Reeve's. Stating as a general principle that '[t]he primary source of knowledge about the gods for Socrates . . . is elenctic argument', he contends that Socrates obeys divine commands 'simply on the basis of the elenctically established goodness of the gods. He does not need to justify each particular command and prohibition independently of the fact that he believes it to have a divine source' (1989: 63, 70).<sup>62</sup> This reading faces the difficulty that Socrates experienced the *daimonion* from his childhood (*Ap.* 31d), presumably before he became an elenctic expert (B-S 2005: 57). In the face of this impasse an alternative thesis has been formulated on which 'Socrates' experience of repeated episodes of the phenomenon proved to be reliable' (B-S 2005: 57; cf. McPherran 1996: 75–6, 208; 2005: 17–18). B-S defend this reliabilist form of justification (in 2005: 58–61), concluding that Socrates need not 'understand fully the entire process by which he experiences his *daimonion* in order for his reliance on it to be reasonable' (60).<sup>63</sup>

If in fact Socrates secured inductive support for accepting the sign's interventions, what can be said about his epistemic state? Vlastos suggests that what Socrates possesses when pursuing actions enjoined by the *daimonion* is practical certainty not epistemic certainty (Vlastos in Woodruff and Smith 2000: 184, 190; Vlastos 1991: 269–71). The distinction has been questioned as more sophisticated than anything found in the texts (Smith in Woodruff and Smith 2000: 189). Vlastos also remarks that the

*daimonion* gives Socrates 'subjective reassurance: it makes him feel good about' not performing an action (Vlastos in Woodruff and Smith 2000: 196). On a more plausible version of this idea, Socrates lacks theoretical and explanatory knowledge, but is provided by the *daimonion* with instances of non-expert moral knowledge (McPherran 1996: 186–91, 2011: 126) or with what Vlastos termed elenctically justifiable true belief or elenctic knowledge (1994: 46–58).<sup>64</sup>

### OTHER APOLLONIAN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES

In justifying his divine mission Socrates invokes oracles and dreams and other divine manifestations (*theia moira*) that order him to philosophize (*Ap.* 33c). Scholars disagree whether or not this passage includes the *daimonion*, but it hardly matters. What deserve further scrutiny are other types of religious experience alluded to in this passage. I shall first examine what scholars have said about Socrates' dreams. In *Timaeus* (71d–72a) Plato likens dreams to inspired states that require interpretation: a person must be in his right mind to construe what is stated by those who are awake or asleep, whether they are in states of divination or possession. Information obtained in dreams is usually ranked low in epistemic value (*Ly.* 218c, *R.* I 476c, 520c, *Ti.* 52bc, *Tht.* 158b, 190b). On the other hand, dreams sent by the gods are reliable (*R.* I 383a, *Smp.* 203a). Besides *Apology* (33c) Socrates' own dreams confirm the judgement that Plato's 'deliberate introduction of material as being the content of a dream is invariably significant . . . a dream represents a kind of divine or oracular statement which . . . is the vehicle of important,

if riddling, truth' (Desjardins 1981: 110). As the *Crito* begins (44a–b), Socrates, awaiting the return of the Athenian ship that has been gone for a month on an Apolline religious mission to the island of Delos, awakens from a prophetic dream: 'I thought that a beautiful and comely woman dressed in white approached me. She called me and said: "Socrates, may you arrive at fertile Phthia on the third day"' (*Il.* 9.363). *Crito* remarks that the dream is 'strange' (*atopon*), but Socrates says: 'It seems clear enough to me.'<sup>65</sup> Clarity was often ascribed to dreams in order to convey their vividness (Dodds 1951: 109; van Lieshout 1980: 18–19); and the epiphanic type of dream often features quotation of an authoritative text and a beautiful dream-figure (van Lieshout 1980: 18–19, 106). McPherran (2003a: 82–3) interprets this as a prescriptive dream that reaffirms Socrates' conviction at the end of *Apology* that he should stay in Athens and die.

But who is the mysterious lady in white? McPherran's intriguing proposal is that she is Persephone, the queen of the underworld, whose divinities are contacted in dream incubation through the auspices of Asclepius, the son of Apollo (2003: 82 n. 33).<sup>66</sup> Ahbel-Rappe thinks it more likely that she is 'the spiritual consort who appears occasionally when Socrates is being summoned for a heroic task and must bring the aid of the divine to his community'.<sup>67</sup>

This dream episode is a framing device along with the conclusion of the dialogue where Socrates follows 'the way the god is leading' (54e, similarly *Phd.* 80d). The god may be Asclepius, who also sends him the recurring, prescriptive dream in *Phaedo* 60e–61b to 'cultivate the arts' and to whom Socrates with his last words asks *Crito* to sacrifice a cock in repayment for the gift of didactic dreams (118a; McPherran 2003a:

82–3). In *Crito* the god's way leads Socrates to the 'laws of Hades' (54c), whose pronouncements drown out Crito's arguments in the way the Bacchic Corybantes become absorbed in deafening flute and drum music that removes fear and anxiety (54d). Weiss (1998: 136) believes that the laws are responding to Crito's arguments and that their statements calm *his* anxieties about Socrates' impending death and thus are not directed to Socrates, who is calm in the face of death. In contrast, Adam contends that 'the pleading of the Laws coincided with the voice of the divine sign' (1927: 80). Weiss interprets the final words 'the god leads the way' as a reference to philosophical reasoning (144–5) not to any divinity, just as she reduces the *daimonion* to rational intuition in her 2005.

It is striking that the *Crito* begins with this epiphanic dream and ends with Socrates in an altered state of mind, listening to divine messages from another world.<sup>68</sup> In his analysis of the *Crito* and *Phaedo* dreams, Vlastos highlights the texts' use of the verbs of 'seeming' and 'supposing' to support the claim that Socrates does not make knowledge-claims and that their interpretation depends on his reasoning (1991: 167–8; similarly McPherran 1996: 194–5). However, Socrates does not deliberate at all after the *Crito* dream and only minimally after the *Phaedo* dream, which he takes as instructing him to compose a prayer and poetry to Apollo and Asclepius, respectively (*Phd.* 61a–b). Though it appears in the later *Republic*, an account of cognitive activity during states of sleep and dreaming should prompt reflection on the significance of Socrates' dreams. Socrates says that while a person sleeps, if the two lower parts of the soul are calm, the rational part sees true visions of past, present and future (*R.* I 572a). Here reason seems to represent a kind

of rational intuition that does not depend on deliberation or justification.

In the *Crito* what do the opening dream and the concluding sound of the laws of Hades tell us about Socrates' attitude towards immortality and the afterlife? That these heavenly laws will not receive kindly those who have returned wrongs for wrongs implies the existence of moralized afterlife punishments. Long ago Burnet traced these intimations of immortality to Orphic-Pythagoreans (1924: 258, 291; cf. Taylor 1911b: 31). As Phthia is literally Achilles' home, so Socrates' journey to Hades is envisioned as a homecoming.<sup>69</sup> While Socrates does not claim to know whether the soul survives death and what its experiences in the afterlife might be, some claim that he had religious beliefs about these matters. The ending of the *Crito* and the *Gorgias* myth (523a–527e) express Socrates' belief in an afterlife with rewards and punishments, though he provides no arguments to support it (B-S 1994: 201–12; Vlastos 1991: 55). Relying on the authority of the *Apology*, McPherran argues that Socrates was not committed to the soul's immortality (1996: 252–71). Although Socrates is agnostic whether death amounts to unending sleep or everlasting dialogues with the illustrious dead (*Ap.* 40c–41b), he also expresses 'good hope (*elpis*) that death is a blessing' (40c) and he tells the jurors 'you too must be of good hope (*euepidas*) as regards death . . . and keep this one truth in mind, that a good man cannot be harmed either in life or in death, and that his affairs are not neglected by the gods' (41c–d).

It has been argued that Socrates accepts traditional accounts of the afterlife transmitted by the poets even though he provides no good reasons for his beliefs (B-S 2000a: 252–9). This proposal faces two difficulties. First, Socratic eschatology (in *Crito* and

*Gorgias*) differs sharply from conventional Greek belief both in being thoroughly moralized and by its esoteric content. The *Gorgias* myth, which Socrates calls a 'true account', does not reflect popular eschatology but rather Orphic-Pythagorean ideas. In the soul-as-sieve preamble to the myth (*Grg.* 493a–c), the sources of what Socrates 'has heard' are Orphic-Pythagoreans not popular poets.<sup>70</sup> Second, Socrates' profession of 'good hope' (*Ap.* 40c) has been characterized as 'hopeful understanding' (B-S 2000a: 259) and 'rational expectation' (McPherran 2005: 20) that death is a good thing for a good man. Certainly, Socrates can be said to give rational assent in some sense to beliefs in an afterlife, but he has experienced also divine guidance directly through dreams and divination. The term *elpis* expresses eschatological hope in Greek mystery religions (Kerenyi 1967: 15, 95, 123), which is echoed in the first section of the *Phaedo* where the noun and its verbal form appear seven times in the context of his elucidation of mystery doctrines about immortality and divinization (*Phd.* 63c, 64a, 67b, 67c, 68a; cf. *Phd.* 114c, R. I 496e, 517b, *Lg.* 732c–d). Also widely used in mystery traditions and by Plato (*Grg.* 493c–d) are the related terms 'persuasion' (*peithō*) and 'faith' or 'conviction' (*pistis*). The verb *peithein* is used four times to refer to Socrates' conviction about the details of the true earth in the *Phaedo* myth (108c, 108d, 109a, 109e). He also embraces the Orphic-Pythagorean doctrine of immortality, recollection and rebirth with the words: 'I trust that this is true' (*Men.* 81e). On the use of *pistis* and *peithein* in the mysteries and in Plato see Detienne (1996: 75–8), Vernant (2006: 147–8) and Kingsley (2003: 507–9). Of course, the *Phaedo* is not a 'Socratic dialogue', but the term seems to be used here and in the *Apology* to express faith in indemonstrable 'religious truths'

(Dodds 1959: 376, 1973: 121; Gocer 1995: 7–10).<sup>71</sup> It is beyond the scope of this essay to debate the question whether Socrates was committed to such indemonstrable truths and whether they would be consistent with his disavowal of knowledge and admission of ignorance. A goad to further reflection on this issue is Kahn's statement: 'Socrates betrays no need for the wisdom he does not possess' (1996: 97).

### DIONYSIAN EXPERIENCES

The second type of madness in the *Phaedrus* taxonomy is Dionysian or teletic madness, which removes mental and emotional disturbances through purificatory rituals (244d–245a). Though Socrates' religious experiences seem affiliated more with Apollo than with Dionysus and other ecstatic cults, some dialogues depict Socrates as being endowed with the powers of an ecstatic divine man or sorcerer (*goēs*). Sorcery (*goēteia*), we recall, is said to be transmitted to humans through *daimones* along with divination (*mantikē*), charms (*epoidē*) and prophecy (*manteia*) (*Smp.* 202e–203a). Yet, Plato condemns magicians and certain magical practices in the *Republic* (364b) and *Laws* (909b). He attacks, through the counter-magic of philosophy, the magical enchantment – in the metaphorical sense – produced by the sophists' (*Sph.* 234c, 235a, 241b) and the poets' (R. I 598d, 602d, 607c) deceptive language and by the magical seductions of physical pleasure (*Phd.* 81b, R. I 584a, *Phlb.* 44c; see Belfiore 1980: 128–31 and Graf 1997: 24–6.). What are we to make, then, of episodes in the *Euthyphro* and *Meno*, where Socrates is accused of magical deception and coercion for reducing his interlocutors

to perplexity (*aporia*)? Meno complains that Socrates has bewitched (*goēteueis*) and drugged him and put him under a spell (*Men.* 80a, see *Euthphr.* 11b–c).<sup>72</sup> Is Meno's perplexity induced solely by elenctic examination? It is reasonable to think so, but Socrates immediately confronts him with the mystery doctrines of immortality and rebirth imported from the Orphic-Pythagoreans, masters of extra-rational practices for transforming the self and attaining wisdom (Morgan 1990: 37–43). Vlastos assigns these doctrines, along with the *Gorgias* myth, to Plato's middle period, in an effort to build a firewall between them and the historical Socrates (Vlastos 1991: 53–5).

In *Charmides* and *Euthydemus*, Socrates is portrayed as familiar with the ritual practices and ecstatic states of shamans and he seems to share their charismatic, healing powers. In *Charmides*, Socrates has just returned to Athens from military duty at Potidaea in 432–430 (*Chrm.* 153a, *Ap.* 28e, *Smp.* 219e–220e), close to Thrace, the home of Dionysus and Zalmoxis, whose doctors instructed him in the use of charms (*epoidē*) for healing. Whether Zalmoxis was god, *daimōn* or shaman is difficult to determine, but he was worshipped by the Thracian Getae, who believed in the soul's immortality (Dodds 1951: 140 ff., 165–6; Morgan 1990: 23–6). Zalmoxis was also linked with Pythagoras and northern shamanic healers and miracle workers such as Abaris (*Chrm.* 158b), Aristaeas and Epimenides (Burkert 1972: 147–59). Socrates offers to cure Charmides' headache, but informs him that the body cannot be cured apart from the soul: herbs must be accompanied by incantations (*epōdai*) that heal the soul, that is, make it temperate, by means of 'beautiful words' (*Chrm.* 157a). McPherran argues that these *kaloi logoi* or

charms are not Socrates' elenctic arguments, which can only work as purgatives to remove false beliefs and instil awareness of one's ignorance, as in the *Sophist* (229b–230e; McPherran 2004: 23–6).<sup>73</sup> After elenctic examination Charmides is found to lack temperance, so Socrates never sings his charms, though he characterizes extra-rational truths as charms in later dialogues like the *Phaedo* and *Laws*.<sup>74</sup> Thus, the *Charmides* – and perhaps the *Meno* also – allude to an emotional means of persuasion with distinct emotional effects. The curative rites of the Corybantes, which were similar to the Dionysiac, aimed to cure fears and anxiety through music and dance (*Lg.* 790e). Dodds thinks the *Euthydemus* (277d) is evidence that Socrates was an initiate (1951: 79; also Morgan 1990: 26–7).

Does Socratic contact with shamans and seers (*iatromanteis*) contribute to understanding his religious experiences? Shamans such as Zalmoxis, Abaris, Hermotimus, Epimenides and Pythagoras could access altered states of consciousness in which the soul, freed from the physical body, journeyed to other worlds, acquired divine healing-powers and experienced ecstatic union with a divinity.<sup>75</sup> Through contact with such figures Socrates may have learned about the ideas of the soul as an entity capable of acting separately from the body and as immortal and also about techniques of detaching consciousness from the physical world (Morgan 1990: 28–31). In this vein it has been suggested that Socrates was 'the last shaman and the first philosopher' (Joly 1974: 69).<sup>76</sup> Some have also seen Socrates as an adherent of Pythagorean doctrines, like the immortality and rebirth of the soul, and as an initiate of the Pythagorean way of life with its ascetic regimen and meditative practices.<sup>77</sup> Features



of the sorcerer (*goēs*) are ascribed to Socrates in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (Bowie 1996: 112–24; Festugière 1975: 70–1). But, as a philosopher, Socrates must be distinguished in essential respects from shamans and seers because he criticizes inspired poets and possessed diviners, as we have seen, and applies the elenchus to himself and others publicly. Perhaps his private practice owed something to these divine men from a different milieu. Detienne and Vernant highlight what they see as evidence for breathing exercises, meditative withdrawal and self-concentration, particularly in the *Phaedo* (64e, 65c, 66a, 66e, 67d, 79d, 81b–c), which are indebted to Empedocles and other Orphic-Pythagoreans (Detienne 1963: 71–81; Vernant 2006: 126–9, 144–8). Whether such practices can be attributed to the Socrates of the early dialogues is, of course, speculative, but it will be difficult to settle the issue simply by relying on the putative chronology of the dialogues.

It is in Alcibiades' gripping account in the *Symposium* of his relationship with Socrates that the effect of his cathartic spells is most powerfully expressed. Here I shall summarize only the main points of this much-discussed passage. Socrates is depicted as an incarnation of the *daimōn* eros (*daimonios anēr*) and as a charismatic, Dionysiac intoxicator of his devotee Alcibiades. Before he arrives at the banquet, Socrates stands alone, apparently in a trance on a neighbour's porch (*Smp.* 175d–e), which anticipates Alcibiades' mention of a similar episode when they were on campaign in Potidaea (220c–d). Comparing Socrates to the satyr Marsyas, a companion of Dionysus, Alcibiades describes how Socrates' words (without *aulos* of Marsyas) cast a spell on him and made him possessed (215b–d) so that he felt drunk and, with his pounding heart and tears flowing, more

agitated than the Corybantes (215e) (cf. Morgan 1990: 95–9).<sup>78</sup> He admits to feeling shame and anger at himself for his inability to live virtuously as his beloved Socrates exhorts him to do (216a–b). 'I refuse to listen to him; I stop my ears and tear myself away from him, for, like the Sirens, he could make me stay by his side till I die . . . he makes me feel ashamed . . . yet, the moment I leave his side, I go back to my old ways' (216a–b). This sense of shame is not an untypical response to elenctic examination (Belfiore 1980: 134), but besides his emotional agitation Alcibiades describes being possessed and intoxicated, states of mind that result from the 'madness and frenzy of the philosopher' (218b), whose words are truly divine (221a). He uses the same vocabulary of possession (218d) we found in the *Ion*'s description of poets possessed by the Muses (534b–e). The decisive difference in the *Symposium* is that it is Socrates who causes these dramatic effects, not a supernatural force. This power animates Socrates' erotic nature, which expresses itself as both lover and beloved. In the *Euthyphro* he says: 'the lover of inquiry must follow his beloved wherever it may lead him' (14c). Xenophon and Aeschines also attest to Socrates' love for Alcibiades and his other companions.<sup>79</sup> His erotic pedagogy, with its disruptive but curative power, shares therapeutic features with the telestic madness of the Bacchic mysteries as distinct from the prophetic skill derived from Apollo and the Pythagoreans (Morgan 1990: 95).<sup>80</sup> The possession-trance Socrates induces in Alcibiades – and the less intense state experienced by Meno – exemplify the Dionysiac method of imposing madness or bewilderment as a cure for the patient's fears. In Socrates' cultivated version of the method, he aims to remove false beliefs in part through

confusion and shame. But while Socrates may not have been an active participant in communal Bacchic cult, with its reliance on intoxicating substances, dance and music, he may have practiced the true Bacchic mysteries alluded to in the *Phaedo* (67c–d), which aimed to effect a radical transformation of the personality by means of the private, esoteric practices of Orphic-Pythagoreans in southern Italy and exemplified in the mystic Gold Plates (Dodds 1951: 147–56; Graf and Johnston 2007; Kingsley 1995: 256–72, 308–14; Morgan 1990: 95–7). These quasi-shamanic practices involved the dismemberment of the initiate's old self and the reconstitution of a new, transformed self (see Seaford 2006: 105–14). Students of Socrates must judge whether the religious experiences and beliefs of Socrates in *Crito*, *Charmides* and *Gorgias* flow in the same stream as those in the Alcibiades episode and portions of the *Phaedo* that allude to ecstatic transformation of the self or whether the latter represent Platonic embellishments.

The last examples of Socratic religious experience to consider are the episodes mentioned at the beginning and towards the end of the *Symposium*. On his way to the party Socrates falls behind, standing motionless in a porch (175b). After Socrates arrives, Agathon refers to the wisdom Socrates may have acquired during the episode (175c–d). Socrates playfully rebuffs the request, but what is significant about the report is that these episodes appear to be regular occurrences for Socrates, which his companions think is a source of his wisdom (*sophia*). Later, Alcibiades recounts how Socrates astonished his fellow soldiers at Potidaea by standing in the same spot from sunrise to sunrise. On the second morning 'he said his prayers to the sun and went away' (220d).

Scholars disagree about his state of mind while he stood motionless for twenty-four hours. Some accept a rationalizing explanation, focusing on the verbs employed in Alcibiades' account. Vlastos contends that 'Plato represents Socrates as thinking, investigating, searching (*sunmoēsas*, *skopōn*, *zētōn*), not contemplating' (1981: 97 n. 51; similarly Dover 1980: 173).<sup>81</sup> The last two verbs commonly denote 'considering' or 'inquiring', but the first can mean more than 'thought' in some contexts.<sup>82</sup> I take it to mean 'concentrated awareness'. In any case, Socrates' demeanour during this long period of time suggests to many scholars that he was absorbed in a trance state (Ahbel-Rappe 2009: 13; Burnet 1911: xlvii, 38; Bussanich 2006: 210; Greene 1944: 274; Guthrie 1969: 404–5; Hegel 2006: 128; Morgan 1990: 97–8; Prior 2006: 144). The episode occurred when Socrates was in the far north, just before he returned to Athens and mentions the Corybantes at the beginning of *Charmides*. The prayer to the sun is also noteworthy. Socrates says he believes the sun and moon are gods (*Ap.* 26d), but possibly relevant is the identification of the sun-god Helios with Apollo by the Pythagoreans (Burkert 1972: 149–50, 1987: 70–1), Parmenides and Empedocles (DK 28A20, 31A23) and Plato (*Lg.* 946b–c, 947a; on Plato see Dodds 1951: 221, 232 n. 70; Morrow 1960: 447). In Aeschylus' lost *Bassarai*, Orpheus descends to the darkness of Hades and, seeing a bright light (a mythic image of initiation into the mysteries), returns to worship the sun as Apollo.<sup>83</sup> Orphic-Pythagorean sun-worship in the context of mystic initiation is a possible backdrop for a devotee of Apollo who has just emerged from a long trance.

I find no analogies in classical antiquity to Socrates' standing motionless for twenty-four

hours. For examples of such behaviour one can cite South and East Asian religious virtuosos, as did Pliny in his description of Indian yogis: 'Their philosophers, who are called Gymnosophists, remain in one posture, with their eyes immovably fixed upon the sun, from its rising to its setting, and, during the whole of the day, they are accustomed to stand in the burning sands on one foot, first one and then the other' (Pliny *HN* 7.2.38, trans. Bostock). Many accounts of yogis and Zen masters standing or sitting motionless for long periods of time while absorbed in concentration (*samādhi*) are readily available.<sup>84</sup>

In referring to what appear to be Socrates' altered states of consciousness, I have employed, without prejudice, the terms 'trance' and 'ecstasy' as do classical scholars and anthropologists generally. It is beyond the scope of this essay to dig deeply into the meanings of these terms, but a few points are worth noting for those wishing to pursue the matter further. Ecstasy is, of course, a Greek word that means 'being outside of oneself' or 'outside one's normal state of mind' (Burkert 1985: 110; Dodds 1951: 77). Among anthropologists and classical scholars alike ecstasy is often used interchangeably with trance, which can be confusing (Rouget 1985: 3–29). Though it may not apply to the phenomenology of Socrates' experiences or to the *Phaedrus* taxonomy of *mania* with which we began, this distinction may be helpful in thinking about both. Rouget contrasts the two terms, applying 'ecstasy' to altered states 'attained in silence, immobility, and solitude,' and 'restricting 'trance' to those that are attained by means of noise, agitation, and in the presence of others' (1985: 7). As examples of the former he cites the mystical experiences of St. Teresa of Avila, South Asian yogis and Sufi mystics (7–9), and, as

examples of the latter, the Corybantic agitation and telestic madness mentioned by Plato as well as similar phenomena in other cultures (197–8).<sup>85</sup> If in fact Socrates experienced some sort of ecstasy or trance, it would be of the quiet or inward-turning kind evidenced in the *Symposium*, in the meditative states alluded to in the *Phaedo* and the internal quietening described in *Republic* (571).<sup>86</sup> Plutarch (1993: 104) claimed that his calmness enabled him to apprehend the *daimonion*.

Parallel to the recent naturalistic explanations of the causes of the Pythia's trances, some scholars maintain that Socrates' abnormal behaviour and altered states – for example, hearing voices, withdrawn self-absorption – display the symptoms of non-convulsive (i.e. mild) Temporal Lobe Epilepsy (Muramoto and Englert 2006).<sup>87</sup> This idea deserves further study. At the same time, neuropathological explanations of religious phenomena have been critiqued as reductionist by William James and others (see Taves 1999: 274).<sup>88</sup> Even if Socrates were epileptic, knowing this would add little to our understanding of the life he lived and his responses to the experiences he had and the manner in which Plato represented them. Less speculative than this medical diagnosis and possibly more cogent is testimony about the physical regimen Socrates lived by and his detachment from pleasure and pain. Plato emphasizes this facet of Socrates' personality less than Xenophon, but it surely raises the question whether his yogic behaviour conditioned some of his experiences or, indeed, whether his detachment might be seen as a side effect of ecstatic experience. Alcibiades reports Socrates' preternatural calmness on the battlefield at Delium (*Smp.* 221b; cf. Arist. *Clouds* 362–3) and how impervious he

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was to temperature extremes (219b–220b), even to the extent of walking barefoot through ice and snow. Xenophon testified to his self-sufficiency and freedom from desire (*Mem.* 1.2, 5–6, 2.1.1), asserting that self-control (*enkrateia*) was the foundation of virtue (1.5.5) and necessary for achieving wisdom (4.5.6, 7, 9).<sup>89</sup> The diverse images

of Socrates left to us by the ancient sources present him as the relentless analyser of his own and his interlocutors' beliefs – one of Western philosophy's rational heroes – and also as a servant of the gods and a barefoot visionary. In the end, he remains an enigma.

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(*Mem.* 1.1.3–4; *Apol.* 12–14; cf. *Mem.* 4.3.12–13) and we have solid grounds for supposing that Socrates' *daimonion* was indeed its primary target. Cf. Burkert 1985: 317 and Garland 1992: 149.

<sup>72</sup> Versnel 1981: 121–2 notes that foreign cults tended to be associated with private rituals, which in turn fostered all sorts of suspicions. He also persuasively shows through a survey of cult-introduction in Athens (102–31) that 'in addition to the negative connotations of foreign cults . . . there is also a marked resistance to the *novelty* of non-traditional gods and cults' (130): a resistance to religious change that extends back to Hesiod (fr. 322) and which shows up in Xenophon's advice from Delphi to 'follow established custom' (*Mem.* 4.3.16). Thus, the *daimonion* could represent to some Athenians the worst possible religious threat: not only a foreign import but a new one as well.

<sup>73</sup> McPherran 1996: 135; cf. Kraut 2000: 17.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Garland 1992: ch. 7 and Kraut 2000.

<sup>75</sup> Although Socrates himself never names the *daimonion* as a source of the 'first accusations' that led to the formal specifications, it may be alluded to when he speaks at *Apology* 23a of unspecified slanders connected with the allegations that he possesses wisdom and when he notes at 23d–e the allegation that he teaches about 'the things aloft'. In fact, since it is clear that the *daimonion* was the source for the formulation of one of the formal specifications, it seems likely that Meletus would try to use a formulation that *does* pick up a pre-existing prejudice and that the *daimonion* – as the source for the second specification's formulation (II) – was, then, a source of pre-trial prejudice.

<sup>76</sup> Namely: 'Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius: please pay the debt and do not forget' (*Phd.* 118a7–8). In McPherran 2003a, I argue that we should understand Socrates here as instructing Crito to repay their mutual debt for (1) the philosophy-encouraging dreams Socrates has received from Asclepius (e.g. *Ap.* 33c, 43d–44b; *Phd.* 60c–61c); and (2) for Asclepius having saved both Crito and himself from death during the plague of 430–420, and thus, having saved them for a life of philosophizing.

## CHAPTER 12

<sup>1</sup> For a theoretically sophisticated analysis of reductionist paradigms in the interpretation of possession, trance and ecstasy see Smith 2006: 39–56. Though the focus of his study is on South Asian religious phenomena, the methods he discusses are also deployed widely in accounts of Socrates' experiences. (1) Approaches based on theological orthodoxy that classifies certain phenomena as superstitious. (2) Psychoanalytic approaches, e.g. Freudian and diassociation theory, that interpret subjective experiences as caused intra-psychically. (3) Various naturalistic schemes, e.g. the biomedical approach, which relies on psycho-physical mechanisms as primary causal factors and excludes the possibility of non-sensory forces influencing an individual's consciousness.

<sup>2</sup> See Flower (2008: 84–90) for a lucid exposition of Plato's typology of divination, which does not reflect actual Greek experience. Plato's overly schematic distinction influenced Cicero, who distinguished between natural and artificial divination, the former involving spirit possession, the latter rational and technical readings of bird flight and animal entrails: *On Divination* I.6.11–12, I.18.34.

<sup>3</sup> Burkert 1977 points out that in the early fourth century no clear boundaries separate Orphic, Eleusinian, Pythagorean and Corybantic rites and teachings.

<sup>4</sup> Nagy 1990 traces the interconnections between mantic and poetic inspiration.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed introduction to Socratic piety in relation to classical Greek religion see McPherran, Chapter 11, in this book. Here I shall only highlight a few aspects of this theme that have a bearing on Socrates' religious experiences.

<sup>6</sup> Schefer 2000 argues that Plato's Apollonian faith remained constant throughout his writings, despite significant development in his metaphysical and ethical ideas.

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed portrait of Apollo see Graf 2009a.

<sup>8</sup> See Davies 2009: 51–4. In *R.* I 427b–c Socrates validates Apollo's unique legislative authority. See Mikalson 2010: 131–9 on Plato's accounts in *R.* and *Lg.* of how the

gods, and particularly Apollo, through the Delphic oracle, established sacrificial cults, religious laws (e.g. on pollution), civic laws and institutions, song and dance honouring the gods, funerary practices, etc.

- <sup>9</sup> See Graf 2009a: 45–51, who links the ecstatic side of Apollo's character to travel and wisdom acquired from abroad, in these respects like Dionysus.
- <sup>10</sup> See Reeve 2000: 24–9 for discussion of the twenty-three references to Apollo in Plato's *Ap.* Schefer 2000: 97 notes fifty references to Apollo with *theos* in the dialogues, compared to ten for Zeus and Poseidon.
- <sup>11</sup> On the Delphic background to the Socratic paradoxes see O'Brien 1967.
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. *Sph.* 230b–d on the purificatory effect of the elenchus.
- <sup>13</sup> See McPherran, Chapter 11, in this book, and 1996: 29–82. Vlastos 1991: 157–99 champions Socrates as a moral revolutionary whose untraditional theology led to his execution. B-S 2000a: 236 reject this claim; see also Parker 1996a: 202–3, who points out that criticism of myths, which Socrates conducts in *Euthphr.* 6a and elsewhere was common and not considered impious. For a critique of Vlastos and McPherran on the *do ut des* principle cf. Lännström 2011.
- <sup>14</sup> Reeve 2000: 29–30. McPherran 1996: 218 stresses 'the great epistemological and metaphysical chasm separating humanity from the gods . . . Socrates would have us labor to perfect ourselves, but with no hope . . . of *our* ever crossing this divide' (author's emphasis); see also McPherran 1996: 291–302.
- <sup>15</sup> On the oracle as the inspiration for Socrates' mission see McPherran 1996: 208–46, B-S 1989: 87–99.
- <sup>16</sup> On the prestige of the oracle see Dodds 1951: 74–5, Green 1989: 92, Green 2009: 30. See Mikalson 2005: 99–111 and Graf 2009a 64–71 for an overview of the oracle as a religious institution in classical times. Broad 2006 is an engaging popular history. Fontenrose 1978 is a comprehensive survey that is still valuable, though outdated in some respects.
- <sup>17</sup> In both the ideal state of the *R.* and the Cretan city of the *Lg.*, Delphic Apollo governs religious laws and institutions: *R.* I 427abc, 461e, 540bc, *Lg.* 738b–d, 759a–e, 828a. See Morrow 1960: 401–11. In both works Plato approves the traditional conduct of sacrifice, cult, prayer and hymns.
- <sup>18</sup> See Maurizio's 1995 critique of received opinion, e.g. Parke and Wormell 1956:I.37–9, who claim that, owing to her being in a 'hypnotic trance', the Pythia's babble had to be revised or shaped into publishable form by the male attendants (*prophētēs*, 'one who proclaims publicly') at the Delphic sanctuary. In his authoritative study Burkert 1985: 116 also endorses this dubious position.
- <sup>19</sup> On comparative anthropological data see Maurizio 1995: 72–6 and Arnott 1989, which compares the Delphic oracle with contemporary Tibetan oracles. On the anthropology of possession see Smith 2006 and Bourguignon 1976.
- <sup>20</sup> One of Plutarch's characters says that the god 'initiates the movement, and each of the prophetesses is moved according to her nature . . . Voice and sound, diction and meter, belong not to the god but to the woman. He merely puts the concepts into her mind, and gives her soul light to view the future; that is what possession (*enthousiasmos*) means' (1993: 62).
- <sup>21</sup> Graf 2009b: 596–8, Maurizio 1995: 85–6 and Maurizio 2001: 50–4 discuss the interpretative challenges posed by the frenzied behaviour of prophetesses portrayed in literature, like Cassandra. Dodds 1951: 87 n. 41 also objects to early-twentieth-century characterizations of the Pythia's inspiration as 'hysterical excitement'.
- <sup>22</sup> Graf 2009a: 593–5 discusses Plutarch's use of the Control template in *Mor.* 414d–e. Comparing the case to ventriloquists, he says that 'it is foolish to believe that god himself . . . enters into prophets' bodies and uses their mouths and voices as his instruments' (Plut. 1993: 21).
- <sup>23</sup> Graf 2009a: 594–5: divine and human natures mix and are attuned, or not, depending on a seer's state of mind and body: 'the force of the spirit does not affect everyone in the same way, nor the same person in the same way at all times' (Plut. 1993: 55–6).
- <sup>24</sup> Green's analysis (1989: 91–111) exposes the hermeneutic limitations of recent rationalist historians like Fontenrose, who, urging that the Delphic oracle be seen as part of a

- political con-game, dismiss out of hand strong empirical evidence of gaseous intoxication. For additional arguments complementing Green see Graf 2009a: 598–602 and Maurizio 1997.
- <sup>25</sup> Graf stresses these sociocultural and psychological factors (2009a: 601). On the regimen of priestesses see also Connelly 2007. Dietrich 1978: 5–6 emphasizes that the Delphic oracle as well as other oracles had chthonic associations. The Pythia's isolation, sensory deprivation and mantic inspiration is paralleled by the ascetic regimen and inspired states cultivated through the practice of incubation in caves by many religious virtuosos in the archaic and classical periods. See Kingsley 1999 *passim*. Ustinova 2009: 125–55 details chthonic aspects of Delphic cult and incubation generally, but is uncertain whether trances were induced by either gases or religious practices or both. Graf 2009b: 52–3 traces the links between Apollo the healer and incubation.
- <sup>26</sup> See Maurizio 1995: 71, 75, who discusses Apollo's sexual penetration of the Pythia. See Flower on women as seers (2008: 211–39) and on Diotima in Plato's *Symp.* as an example of the wandering type of seer (29, 212–13).
- <sup>27</sup> On Socrates receiving instruction from female – but not male – figures see Blair 1996.
- <sup>28</sup> For Plato's critique of divination see B-S 2007.
- <sup>29</sup> In Xenophon's version Socrates is said to be more free, just and prudent (*Ap.* 14). That wisdom is omitted proves for Waterfield 2009: 10–11 that 'Xenophon's mission was to make Socrates out to be a paragon of conventional virtue'. On Xenophon's oracle story see O'Connor 2011: 65–7.
- <sup>30</sup> McPherran 1996: 214–15 surveys opinion on the range of philosophical issues Socrates may have debated. For the idea that Socrates engaged in cosmological speculation before the oracle see Vander Waerdt 1994 and Janko 2003 and 2006.
- <sup>31</sup> Nehamas 1986: 305–6 thinks that Socrates tests the oracle in the same way he tests his interlocutors.
- <sup>32</sup> McPherran sharply contrasts 'conventional methods of oracular interpretation' with Socrates' 'rational method' (2011: 123).
- <sup>33</sup> To Partridge 2008: 286–8 'voice' comprises an auditory event without verbal content. Aristotle recounts that for the Pythagoreans it was natural to see and hear *daimones*; see Aristotle *frr.* 193, 196 Rose with Burkert 1972: 73.
- <sup>34</sup> For the *daimonion* as a target of the impiety charges see McPherran 1996: ch. 3, 2005, Mikalson 1983: 66, Parker 1996a: 203. Cartledge 2009: 88–9 and Garland 1992: 146 argue that although new gods were often assimilated into Athenian civic cult – witness the festival of Bendis in the opening frame of the *Republic* – because it communicated with only one person and showed no interest in public welfare, the *daimonion* could not have been approved as an object of public cult.
- <sup>35</sup> Most scholars, accepting the *daimonion*'s apotropaic character in Plato, dismiss Xenophon's account as a sign of his conventional piety. Representative of this view is Vlastos 1991: 181–7. Waterfield 2004: 100–1 minimizes the differences between the two accounts on the grounds that an alarm not to perform a certain action amounts to an endorsement of the opposite action. He also points out that the *daimonion*'s giving advice to Socrates' friends suits Xenophon's ideal of the gentleman as someone who benefits his friends.
- <sup>36</sup> Vlastos 1991: 283 n. 147, 284 contests translating *tekmērion* as 'proof'. He argues instead that Socrates is convinced that death is not an evil on rational grounds not because of the silence of the *daimonion*. For a critique of Vlastos on this point see B-S 2005: 53–4.
- <sup>37</sup> H. Tarrant 2005: 138 discusses the extensive use of variants of *sunousia* in Xenophon's *Mem.*, which in his view links it thematically with *Thg.* and *Tht.* He also notes (2005: 150) five instances of *sunousia* in *Ep. VII*, which he also considers inauthentic and assigns to the Academy after Plato. Many scholars challenge the *Ep. VII*'s authenticity, but it is considered genuine by a greater number of scholars than those who consider the *Alc. I* and *Thg.* to be by Plato.
- <sup>38</sup> See the meticulous discussion of the intertextuality of passages in *Tht.*, *Thg.* and *Alc. I* with discussion of opposing views in Joyal 2000: 82–9. Joyal 2005: 108–10 interprets the assimilation of *theos* and *daimonion* as evidence of its inauthenticity. However, he fails to address the meaning and identity of *theos* in either dialogue, being content to characterize it

- as 'indeterminate' (110). Most scholarship on this point is remarkably incurious about the implications of protreptic divine activity.
- <sup>39</sup> H. Tarrant 2005: 141–5, 153–5 prefers the first decades of the third century in the Academy under the direction of Polemo. He also discusses various scenarios for how *Tht.* influenced the authors of *Alc. I* and *Thg.*
- <sup>40</sup> Hutchinson 1999: 605–6 thinks these non-Platonic texts supply valuable evidence about Socrates' religiosity.
- <sup>41</sup> Shorey 1933: 429 and Rist 1963: 19 also criticize *Thg.* for its superstitious treatment of the *daimonion*. Cobb defends the dialogue's authenticity. He suggests that the 'credulous' attitude in the passage belongs to Theages not Socrates and that Plato may have intended to criticize it (1992: 277–8).
- <sup>42</sup> For recent discussions of this section of *Thg.* see Droge 2005: 72–8, Joyal 2000: 93–9 and H. Tarrant 2005: 141–5. For D. Tarrant 1958: 98, touching implies miraculous powers. The idea is problematic for two reasons. First, the evidence she cites is from the New Testament, which is the product of a totally different religious milieu. Second, while Jesus sometimes heals through touch (but more often through other means like language), *he* is the instigator. In the dialogue, it is Theages who tries to touch Socrates – as do Agathon and Alcibiades in *Symp.* Cobb 1992: 283 sees nothing magical in the passage, but rather evidence of charisma.
- <sup>43</sup> See Taylor's analogous distinction between the 'porous' pre-modern self, which is open to forces and interventions outside its permeable boundaries, and the 'buffered' modern, post-Enlightenment self 2007.
- <sup>44</sup> For a critique of employing the individualized, subjective concept of the self in Descartes and Kant to analysis of the ancient Greek model of the self, see Gill 1996: 1–15. See also his critique of relying on the Kantian notion of autonomy for interpreting Greek ethical reflection (1996: 29–41).
- <sup>45</sup> On educative *erōs* see Friedländer 1964: 152.
- <sup>46</sup> Annas 1985 argues for authenticity, N. D. Smith 2004 against. Joyal 2000: 128–9 sharply contrasts *Tht.* with *Thg.* and *Alc. I*.
- <sup>47</sup> For an open-minded approach to *Thg.* and *Alc. I* see Friedländer 1958: 34–5.
- <sup>48</sup> Friedländer 1964: 328 n. 14 defends the authenticity of *Thg.* and argues that Plato circumscribed in other dialogues the wider scope of the *daimonion*'s operation in this dialogue. While the authenticity of *Thg.* was undisputed in antiquity, its depiction of the *daimonion* provoked comment. See Opsomer 1997 on Plutarch's defence of the dialogue's portrayal of the *daimonion* against criticisms.
- <sup>49</sup> On ancient demonology from Homer through late antiquity see Luck 2006: 207–84, which includes a generous selection of primary texts. On the emergence of evil *daimones* in the Hellenistic period see Martin 2004: 93–108.
- <sup>50</sup> On demonology in later Platonists see Plutarch 2010, Joyal 1995, Droge 2005: 65 ff., Long 2006: 69–72 and, in late antiquity in general, Dodds 1965: 37–68.
- <sup>51</sup> Joyal contends that in *Thg.* the *daimonion*'s active assistance in the learning process falsely characterizes it as an agent, like the mediating *daimōn* of *Smp.* 203a (2000: 92 ff.).
- <sup>52</sup> For illuminating discussion of the differences between the two entities see Long 2003: 134–6. Destrée 2005: 75 distinguishes the *daimonion* and *daimones*, but thinks that the *daimonion* is common to all humans. Rist 1963: 16 speculates that the *daimonion* might be 'a manifestation that Socrates was guided by something superior to the *daimones* of other men'.
- <sup>53</sup> Reeve 2000: 26 thinks that the *daimonion* is the voice of a *daimōn*.
- <sup>54</sup> Though he is included in this group, Vlastos 1991: 159 argues that gods and *daimones* are 'natural' not supernatural, because they don't transcend nature.
- <sup>55</sup> Zeller's is one of the earliest statements of this idea: 'By the *daimonion* in the sense of Socrates, no genius, no separate or distinct personality can be understood, but only vaguely some heavenly voice or divine revelation' (1885: 85–6, quoted in Reeve 1989: 68 n. 81).
- <sup>56</sup> Hans 2006: 83–9 also internalizes the *daimonion*, but does so along Heideggerian lines.
- <sup>57</sup> Cf. McPherran's critique of this view 1996: 205–6 n. 65. He cites her statement (from correspondence) that 'Socrates understands his citations of the *daimonion* to be surreptitious references to his own secular powers of reason dolled-up in the language of the superstitious



## NOTES

many: Reason, that is, understood as a form of intuition – a “hunch” produced by unconscious inference’.

- <sup>58</sup> Other recent rationalizing readings of the *daimonion* include Versenyi 1963, 1982, Nehamas 1987: 305–6.
- <sup>59</sup> Rowe 1986: 165–6 interprets the sign in the *Phdr.* as ‘a literary device’.
- <sup>60</sup> See the beginning of *Tht.* where Euclides remarks that Socrates spoke ‘prophetically’ (*mantikōs*) about the promise of the young Theaetetus. On Socrates’ prophetic insight see Desjardins 2004: 153–5.
- <sup>61</sup> Socrates introduces the myth of the afterlife at the end of the *Grg.* (523a) as a true *logos*. On the ambiguity between *logos* and *muthos* see Kingsley 1995: 80–1, Gocer 1995: 7 and Buxton 1994: 11–14. Note also Socrates’ statement that we are not servants of *logoi* but vice versa (*Tht.* 173c).
- <sup>62</sup> Reeve also argues that Socrates’ mission originated from ‘elenctically based ethical reason’ (1989: 66). It has been objected that he uses reason to understand the oracle, but he accepts it as true *before* he proceeds to examine his fellow citizens (B-S 2005: 57).
- <sup>63</sup> The genesis of this view may be seen in the stimulating debate between Vlastos and Smith in Smith and Woodruff 2000: 194, where Smith suggests that ‘Socrates’ trust in his *daimonion* is akin to the trust we put in ordinary experience’.
- <sup>64</sup> On the *daimonion* and rationality see also Reeve 1989: 45–61, B-S 2000a: 247–52, Partridge 2008.
- <sup>65</sup> Vlastos 1991: 168 n. 50 stresses that the dream only ‘seems’ clear to Socrates, in support of his claim that this and the *Phd.* dream possess low epistemic value.
- <sup>66</sup> Adam 1927: 27 thinks she is a figure for ‘fate’, as in Socrates’ reference to his ‘fated day’ at the end of *Phd.* (115a). In Kingsley 1999 the goddess who welcomes Parmenides to Hades and reveals truths to him is Persephone.
- <sup>67</sup> Sara Ahbel-Rappe, unpublished talk ‘Socrates’ Dreams’. Her other example of a spiritual consort is Diotima who reveals to Socrates truths about *daimones* and the realm of forms. On Socrates’ female guides see also Blair 1996. Kingsley 2003: 153 argues that Socrates received guidance mostly through dreams.
- Ahbel-Rappe points out that the action of the *Prt.* (310b) also begins with Socrates awakened from sleep and that he enters a kind of underworld – he quotes from *Od.* 11.601 where Odysseus reports what he saw in the underworld – when he perceives the great sophists seated around Protagoras, enchanted as if listening to Orpheus (315b–e).
- <sup>68</sup> The *Phd.* also exhibits ring-composition, albeit in a more complex fashion, with Socrates’ dream near the beginning and the imaginative journey to the underworld at the end. See McPherran 2003a: 80.
- <sup>69</sup> Phthia itself may be a Pythagorean pun on Hades (Phthia for Phthies, that is, land of the dead) and death for Pythagoreans was the beginning of a voyage (Detienne 1962: 49–50).
- <sup>70</sup> Dodds 1959: 296–7, 1951: 225, Kingsley 1995: 104–5, 165–9, Burkert 1972: 248 n. 48, Morgan 1990: 72–5. B-S do not find Orphic-Pythagorean content in the *Grg.* myth, which supports their grouping it with the conclusions of the *Ap.* and of the *Cri.* and contrasting them all with myths in Plato’s ‘middle dialogues’ (2010: 256–7).
- <sup>71</sup> That Socrates does not argue for his metaphysical beliefs is also maintained by B-S 2010: 255–6.
- <sup>72</sup> See Dickie 2001: 18–45 on the ambiguity of the term magic in classical Greece. He demonstrates that Plato has no clear concept of magic. On Socrates and magic see Rinella 2010: 184–95.
- <sup>73</sup> See Belfiore 1980: 134 who claims that the *epoidē* has an emotional appeal unlike the elenchus. Laín Entralgo offers a rationalizing view 1970: 114–27.
- <sup>74</sup> *Phd.* 107c–115a, *Lg.* 653b, 656b, 659d. See Belfiore 1980: 133–5, McPherran 2004: 26–9 and Gellrich 1994. Laín Entralgo 1970: ch. 2 maintains that Plato’s use of charms and songs is metaphorical.
- <sup>75</sup> For criticism of the interpretation of these figures as shamans see Bremmer (2002: 27–40).
- <sup>76</sup> See also Vernant 2006: 381–7 and Dodds 1951: 217–18. Hadot argues against taking Socrates as a shaman in any sense (2002: 182–3). Following Dodds 1951: 209–10, Morgan 1990: 99 and *passim* argues that the philosopher displaces the ecstatic shaman and seer and practices a ‘rational ecstatic rite’. The

idea that the practice of dialectic exhibits ritualistic features is cogent, but his study leaves unclear in what sense dialectic is ecstatic.

<sup>77</sup> Taylor 1911b: 1–39, 129–77. For a critique of Taylor's thesis see B-S 1989: 20, 35.

<sup>78</sup> On Plato's critique of the popular *aulos* and how it was employed to induce trance in cult see Rouget 1985: 214–19. Plato favoured Apollo's lyre as opposed to Marsyas' emotion-inducing *aulos*.

<sup>79</sup> Xenophon discusses Socrates' love-potions and spells in association with Antisthenes (*Mem.* 3.11.16–17). On Socrates' eros for Alcibiades in Aeschines see Kahn 1996: 21–7, Vlastos 1991: 247. On Xenophon's Socrates' erotic intensity and self-sufficiency see O'Connor 2011: 60–5 1994. On Socratic eros generally see Chapter 9, in this book, Hadot 1995: 158–70, Friedländer 1958: 32–58.

<sup>80</sup> A passage in Plutarch offers one way of imagining the paradoxical combination of both Apollonian and Dionysian traits in Socrates: 'It seems that our beloved Apollo finds a remedy and a solution for the perplexities connected with our life by the oracular responses he gives to those who consult him; but as for the perplexities connected with our power to reason, it seems that it is rather he himself who implants and propounds these to him who is by nature inclined to the love of knowledge, thus creating in the soul a craving that leads on to the truth' (Plut. *De E* 384, trans. Babbitt modified).

<sup>81</sup> Remarkably, Lear 2011: 33–4, 84–5 contends that Socrates simply does not know what his next step should be. Lear's Socrates is not thinking about an intellectual problem at all.

<sup>82</sup> In *Ti.* 71e the verb *sunnoein* designates the cognitive state of a rational man who 'reflects on' what is said by those who are in a state of divination or possession. In *R.* I 571d–e, quoted above, the noun *sunnoia* designates the cognitive state of the person who has calmed the two lower parts of the soul, 'himself having reached understanding (or awareness) of/ with himself'. This is analogous to the phrase used in the porch-episode: 'he applied his mind (*nous*) to himself' (174d).

<sup>83</sup> See Seaford 2005 who discusses the symbol of the light appearing in the darkness in Orphic-Pythagorean mysticism. He also traces

the association of Dionysus with mystic light in the *Bacchae* and his identification with the sun in late Orphic texts. He speculates that the mystic ritual may be in part a dramatization of near-death experiences (2005: 605).

<sup>84</sup> The sixteenth-century Chinese Ch'an Master Han Shan recounts several such episodes from his own experience in Lu 1971: 81–2, 85.

<sup>85</sup> Rouget's study is a rich resource for the comparative study of ecstasy, trance and possession in classical antiquity and in other cultures. His distinction is analogous to Weber's distinction between apathetic and agitated ecstatic states (Weber 1958: 149). Rouget believes that Plato held Bacchic trance in relatively low regard (1985: 200) in contrast to Linforth 1950: 171.

<sup>86</sup> The internal quietness Plato endorses in the middle dialogues is explored in Gocer 1999. Kingsley 1999: 162, 180 ff. discusses Parmenides' practice of silence and stillness as an Orphic-Pythagorean healer-seer (*iatromantis*). Dionysiac possession also produces calmness in the end (Seaford 2006: 106).

<sup>87</sup> On the neuropathology of altered states, including epilepsy, in shamans and other religious virtuosos see Winkelman 2000: 113–90.

<sup>88</sup> For a philosophically sophisticated discussion of trance and ecstasy with respect to the contemporary phenomenon of split personality see Hacking 1995: 142–58.

<sup>89</sup> For Antisthenes' praise of these features of Socrates see Kahn 1996: 7–8, 30–1. O'Connor 1994 highlights the self-sufficiency of Xenophon's Socrates.

## CHAPTER 13

<sup>1</sup> Nehamas 1998: 153 challenges Nietzsche's assessment of Socrates' health, pointing out that Nietzsche was sick most of his life, while Socrates was an embodiment of health and vigour; Nietzsche was always bundled up against the cold, while Socrates wore the same tunic winter and summer, and walked around barefoot; Nietzsche could not tolerate any alcohol, while Socrates could drink prodigiously without getting drunk; Nietzsche spent his life writing in private, completely alone and withdrawn from the world, while Socrates was

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