

*University of Chicago
Studies in Social Thought*



The Daimonion of Socrates

**AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY OF PLATO'S
THEAGES**

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THE DALLIONION OF SOCRATES: A STUDY OF PLATO'S THEAGES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS
COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL THOUGHT

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
JUNE, 1953

PREFACE

Voltaire, in an irreverent passage on the daimonion of Socrates, writes as follows: "Some people, indeed, pretend that a man who boasted his being attended by a familiar genius must infallibly be either a knave or a madman, but this kind of person is seldom satisfied with anything but reason,"¹ one of whom evidently was Voltaire himself. And, indeed, a man who professes to hear "voices" issuing from a divinity would seem to be either honest and witless or sane and deceitful. Were these alternatives exhaustive, not only Socrates but Plato and Xenophon as well, as they give credence to the daimonion, must jointly share the disgrace of their master. There is, however, a third possibility which Voltaire suppresses--that Socrates not only affirmed himself the object of divine attentions but was, in fact, so privileged. This alternative, which I believe to be the correct one, must nevertheless be defended against Voltaire's charge of unreason. We must seek a reasonable explanation that will also save appearances: we must rescue Socrates from both knavery and madness.

The one dialogue in which the daimonion is dealt with at some length, the *Theages*, has been rejected as spurious by most modern scholars (as contrasted with those of antiquity who accepted it)² on the curious ground that it clashes with the account of the daimonion to be found in the canonical dialogues. This judgment presupposes that one understands what we may call the canonical account of the daimonion and that that account is unambiguous. Yet few of the scholars

¹Letters on the English, chap. XIII.

²It was accepted in the canons of Dercylides and Thrasyllus.

who reject the Theages lay claim to understanding the daimonion, though their rejection presumes such understanding. At most they could pronounce a non liquet.

Our own investigation of the Theages is conducted with the thought that, as the Theages is richest in materials touching the daimonion, one might well examine it on its own merits (waiving its authorship tentatively) in our effort to understand the daimonion.

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THE PURPOSE OF THE THEAGES

Toward the end of the fifth century two things frightened wealthy Athenians: horses and sophists. They spent the family fortune and corrupted their sons; they presented fathers a disastrous choice: to preserve the affection of their children by the loss of their wealth or their wealth by the loss of their children. Thus piety quickly dwindled as expense increased. These pleasures of sophistry and luxury Aristophanes had masterfully handled in the Clouds; bankruptcy because of horses he made the occasion for corruption because of sophists, neatly combining the conservatives' double woe.

Quod plerique omnes faciunt adolescentuli,
Ut animum ad aliquod studium adiungant, aut equos,¹
Alere, aut canes ad venandum, aut ad philosophos.¹

Strepsiades, heavily in debt by his son's extravagance, is forced to send him to the school of Socrates, that he might learn how to deceive his creditors; but Pheidippides learns also about strange gods. And what to Aristophanes was the subject of scandal, twenty years later were crimes: "Socrates corrupts the young, and the gods in which the city believes believes not, but in new divinities."²

Whether the grounds were true or not, upon these Socrates had been indicted and condemned. And since the attack centered on them, the defense must refute them: in what Socrates failed, Plato throughout his dialogues attempted to succeed, but especially in the Theages, whose outline, characters, and purpose correspond to those of the Clouds. Demodocus, no longer able to restrain

¹Terence Andria 55-57.

²Apology 24b9 ff.

his son, comes to Socrates to ask for advice; but afterwards asks him to accept Theages as a pupil. Socrates explains, however, that since the signs of the daimonion (which the prosecution thought his new divinity)¹ determine his association with anyone, Theages must wait until it shall favor or refuse him.

It is clear therefore how Strepsiades and Pheidippides became the models for Demodocus and Theages; and how Plato borrowed the plot invented by Aristophanes to explain what he abused. Both confronted Socrates, this Euripides of the marketplace, with the "Marathon Fighters," old respectable men, wealthy citizens and farmers; who, concerned about their sons, as a last resort bring them to Socrates; who in turn reveals his fundamental teaching. The similarity must not be pressed beyond this. As Aristophanes showed how Socrates corrupted the young and despised the old, so Plato wanted to show how he educated the young and honored the old. If Aristophanes employed the triangle of father, son, and Socrates; Plato must also employ it. If Aristophanes pointed out as terrible warnings Strepsiades and Pheidippides, Plato could point out as virtuous examples Demodocus and Theages; and if he proved the impiety of Socrates by revealing Air and Aether as his gods, Plato proved his piety by revealing the daimonion. Thus the Theages is Plato's most direct rebuttal of Aristophanes' Clouds.

The Theages has also preserved the order of the indictment against Socrates as Plato recorded it.² First refuting the charge of corruption, then of irreligion, the Theages, as a living example of his way of life (as the Clouds its perversion), is the true apology of Socrates. Since Aristophanes had imitated the actions of Socrates (however outrageously), a court speech was

¹Xenophon Memorabilia I.1.2; cf. Euthyphro 3b5; Apology 27c4 ff.

²Xenophon (Memorabilia I.1.1) and Diogenes Laertius (II.40) reverse the order, which is probably the actual one.

an insufficient reply: his challenge Plato had to meet on its own ground. True, the Clouds had figured in the Apology, and been refuted. But words are of a doubtful authority when opposed to deeds, and precepts and arguments when opposed to examples: they lack all conviction even before the parodies of the stage. It was not enough to mention Antiphon and his son Epigenes, nor point to Aeschines and his father Sphettius, and the rest on the roll-call which Socrates recites in the courtroom.¹ They are mere shadows next to Strepsiades and Pheidippides; they live only as names, unable to defend Socrates, even were they willing, as well as Aristophanes' creatures can attack him. Thus Plato was almost forced to write the Theages as a counter-weight to the Clouds, as the real apology of Socrates.

¹Apology 33d9-34a2.

THE CHARACTERS AND THE SCENE

Demodocus, an Athenian, meets Socrates, with whom he desires a private conversation; Socrates, acquiescing, follows him to the stoa of Zeus Eleutherios, where the rest of the dialogue takes place. Demodocus at once betrays himself as eager to talk and as unfamiliar with Socrates. His first word "Socrates"--a beginning unique among the dialogues¹--shows his excitement, as the insistence--"even if you are busy unless it is something very urgent"--his ignorance. For Socrates except in war spent his time neither in affairs of trade or politics, but rather talked at his leisure, his cares as unrecorded as his family; at least nowhere do we find him working or even interrupting a conversation because he must attend to business.² He would seem to have loitered his entire life away in philosophy. What then brings Demodocus, a man of importance, to an unknown Socrates? What did Plato intend to show us by thus confronting them?

What Socrates professed himself to be in his Apology, a gad fly, "arousing and persuading and reproaching everyone,³ ever exhorting all to virtue, does not agree with the dialogues themselves. We never find him at his trade, haunting the market-place (indeed except for this dialogue and the Euthyphro he never was in the market-place), ready with a question for every passer-by,

¹Cf. Republic 327c4.

²Theaetetus 172d4 ff.; Phaedrus 227b8 ff.; Apology 31b1-3. In the Protagoras 335c4, where Socrates excuses himself on the grounds of business, it is clear he does not wish to embarrass Protagoras (335a9), and he does stay; at the end (362a2), when he says he must be away, he meets a companion to whom he immediately recounts the whole story (309b6-7).

³Apology 30e1-31a7.

either asking this man what is virtue, or that man what is justice. If he spent his days thus, Plato did not record them. Socrates never questions a member of the Athenian demos: but more important he seldom questions the political man. That the demos has no part in the dialogues, except when they silently condemn Socrates, is easier to understand than that statesmen and gentlemen should not be more conspicuous. In the world of the dialogues they yield their public pre-eminence to the young, whom Socrates, to judge only by numbers, preferred, vices and all.

Flurima sunt iuvenum discrimina, pulchrior ille
Hoc atque ille alio, multum hic robustior illo:
Una senum facies.

To those noble and good men, who have held the highest offices of Athens, dignified, old, and honored, only two dialogues offer a major role, the Laches and the Theages. Demodocus,¹ Nicias and Laches, alone represent that political life always discussed by Plato but rarely exemplified.² They are the only men of the assembly and market-place whom Socrates ever meets: he seems to have learnt everything he wanted to know about gentlemen from these three. They are unique figures in Plato's cast.

The Theages and the Laches further resemble one another. Men of substance, on both occasions, ask Socrates for advice about the education of their sons; Demodocus unwillingly since he cannot control Theages, Melesias and Lysimachus

¹Perhaps the same Demodocus as the successful general mentioned by Thucydides IV.75.1.

²No person in the other dialogues exactly fills these qualifications. Crito, though old, as a friend of Socrates and as non-political, is unlike Demodocus or Nicias (Xenophon Memorabilia II.ix.1); Cephalus is a metic; Euthyphro is never seriously regarded in the assembly (Euthyphro 3b9-c2); and Timaeus is a foreign statesman (Timaeus 20a1-5). Anytus, Critias, and Callicles are possible exceptions: but Critias is still young in the Charmides, and in the Critias he shares in no dialogue but delivers a set speech; Anytus of course is hardly καλὸς κἀγαθός (Xenophon Apology 30); and the same can be said of Callicles, he says what hardly any statesman would admit; in addition, nothing is known of him.

deliberately since they are ashamed of their own obscurity. But they do not immediately come to Socrates; instead they consult two famous generals, who in turn introduce them. Lysimachus, though unacquainted with Socrates, knew his father Sophroniscus; his son and Melesias' however, he remembers, "often talk to each other about Socrates and very much praise him."¹ Since the dramatic date for this conversation must fall between the battle of Delium (424)² and the death of Laches at Mantinea (418)³ Socrates' lack of fame, so that even a fellow-demesman had but indirectly heard of him, has a ready explanation. Socrates may not yet have become famous throughout Athens; for though he would be known to the young men who exercised in the gymnasia, he may not have made so great a mark as to attract the attention and the admiration of their fathers. It would have taken time before they had heard how Socrates served so wisely Lysimachus and Melesias; and longer before they would have been willing to trust him with their own sons. The Theages, in fact, takes place about 409/8,⁴ ten or fifteen years after the Laches: ample time for a Demodocus, living in the country and somewhat rustic in his character,⁵ to have heard these rumors from the city, which would prompt him to consult Socrates directly, without waiting, as Melesias and Lysimachus had, for chance to supply the opportunity.⁶ Nothing would better testify to Socrates' growing renown (not his infamy) than this dif-

¹Laches 180e5 ff. ²Ibid. 181b1 ff. ³Thucydides V.61.1; 74.3.

⁴Theages 129d5 ff.; i.e. just before the defeat of Thrasyllus at Ephesus (Xenophon Hellenica I.ii.1-13).

⁵Theages 121d2; his rusticity is marked in his first speech: 121c3 *ἢτε φύτεϊν ἢτε παιδαγογεϊν δεῖ εὐτην ἀναμύσειν* (cf. Dion. H. Ars Rhet. p. 405 ed. Reiske); the asyndeton between 121c1 and 121c2; and perhaps *δοκῶ γὰρ μοι* (121d1), on which see Appendix.

⁶I see nothing intrinsically improbable in Plato's use of dramatic dates; for they would be our only clue to an understanding of Socrates' changing relation to Athens. Certainly it is curious that most of the dialogues which can be dated occur after Aristophanes' Clouds which would have rocketed him to fame.

ference between the dialogues: when a man of the world applies to the philosopher for assistance, the opinion entertained of him must be as high as the necessity is overwhelming.

Lysimachus and Demodocus begin both dialogues, but in the Laches, although the speakers change and shift in prominence, the argument never permits the children present to have their say, whereas Theages not only disputes with Socrates but (to the neglect of Demodocus) holds the center of the stage. This difference again is easily explained. Melesias and Lysimachus had come by themselves desiring advice: Demodocus is reluctantly forced to come; their sons had not provoked them and were now content to obey: Theages did not cease complaining until his father relented. Thus Socrates talks to Theages, for he who instigates is somehow more interesting than those who submit.¹

Theages, his father believes in emulation of some youths his own age, desires to become wise; and lest he be corrupted associating with someone without himself, Demodocus, considering it best to indulge that 'not ignoble but slippery'² humour, requests that Socrates advise him,³

κἄν τοῖς ἀγροκόοις ἔστι πάλαι δαίμων λόγος

Socrates then is asked to uphold, as his ally, Demodocus' authority; but he him-

¹As the full weight of the confident ἰδιολογήσασθαι (121a1) now becomes clear, so also does the circumstance which would almost sanction its invention: κοινολογήσασθαι, a quite classical compound, would have suited the occasion, had not Demodocus wished to emphasize the privacy desired (excluding Theages), and Plato the irony in that being unfulfilled. But for this ἰδίᾳ λέγειν would have sufficed. So there also may be an implied contrast, in another way, with κοινολογήσασθαι; which, to judge by its use in Herodotus (VI.23.4) and Thucydides (IV.74.2; VII.86.4; VIII.63.3; 98.3), always has the air of conspiracy about it, at least a political meaning. ἰδιολογήσασθαι avoids any such connotation: Demodocus wants a private conversation about a private matter; as a politician such a distinction would always be important. From the sequel we see again how ironic that wish becomes.

²121c7-8.

³Note 122a9-b1: ἔφασκεν τε καὶ κρή; cf. Laches 180e1. Belonging to the same deme as Socrates and being πατρικὸς φίλος Lysimachus' demand is more just than Demodocus'.

self desires to talk to his son, which indeed he manages. This change of speaker, without going over the head of the father (with his approval rather), sets the tone for the rest of the dialogue. Socrates must somehow reconcile his own and Demodocus' intention. He must supplant the wishes of the father by those of the son; dishonor the father while honoring the son; but still he must retain Demodocus as ostensibly 'the advised'¹ while he actually tests Theages. When Demodocus has admitted that they should agree about what they are to deliberate, it is but one draught-move to conclude that Theages must also agree with them; he might desire something other than what they believe he desires; than what, more precisely, Demodocus believes.² Demodocus accepts the shift without complaining,³ unaware of what Socrates implies: 'Perhaps, Demodocus, you do not know what your own son desires; perhaps you do not have the competence to take care of him.' This hidden rebuke at once establishes the subordination of Demodocus to Socrates: courtesy demands that this be hidden, truth that it be said.

Even before the argument proper begins, a question and its answer (embodying a characteristic both of Socrates and of Theages) reflect succinctly the entire course which the dialogue will assume.⁴ Socrates, whom we can imagine to have glanced at least once at Theages,⁵ asks Demodocus, 'What is the youth's noble name?'⁶ But how does he know of this nobility? Of course, he is polite; but were his name not noble, were it not Theages 'sacred to god,'⁷ Socrates'

¹122c3.

²122b6-d4.

³122d5.

⁴The passage also warns us away from accepting a paleographically most excellent emendation that destroys the sense, namely, H. Richards' *κα* for *κα* in 122d6.

⁵121c3.

⁶122d6.

⁷Uf. 122e1. It is possible Plato had in mind Strepsiades' account of his son's name (*Clouds* 62-67)? At least those who gave Theages his name did not work at cross-purposes.

politeness would have appeared to Demodocus as the cruelest form of mockery. Demodocus might well have given his son a name lacking the lustre of a "Theages": Euthyphro, Phaedo, Glaucon, or almost any other name found in the pages of Plato, were certainly admissible; but they are not noble. Demodocus then would surely have been offended if Socrates, his son possessing some unpretentious name, had asked him the youth's noble name. But as it is, he accepts the compliment as perfectly just: yet we cannot. The coincidence seems uncanny and preternatural; it suggests something of divination, as if Socrates somehow knew beforehand what kind of name Theages would bear. Although remarkable, we would usually dismiss it as the merest accident, perhaps a slip of the pen: usually we should be justified. But it is Socrates who guesses, Socrates who laid claim to prophecy;¹ and his guess moreover occurs in the Theages, whose main subject is this very prophecy, his daimonion. That Socrates conjectured correctly, that Socrates should pretend that the arts of divination were his, that Socrates displayed his powers in the Theages which devotes almost half its length to the daimonion: surely such a triple coincidence is quite remarkable.

Socrates' harmless question harbors yet another, a fourth, coincidence. If Socrates desired to please Demodocus, why did he compliment the beauty of Theages' name? Why not compliment the beauty of Theages himself? After all, a beautiful name hardly is an ornament to be compared with personal beauty. Indeed one of the translators, by an understandable misreading, transformed it into this more natural question.² But Socrates had good reason not to refer to Theages' own beauty. He had none. For Socrates himself remarks upon it in

¹Apology 40a4; Phaedrus 242b8-c5.

²G. Burges, Bohn Plato, vol. IV, p. 403. I owe this reference to Mr. L. Weinstein.

the Republic:¹ "The caring for the illness of his (Theages') body restrains him from politics." He sees that not Theages but only his name warrants the epithet *καλόν*. Thus Socrates, in an apparently natural question, foreshadows the entire argument of the Theages.

¹Republic 496c2-3.

THE ARGUMENT

Socrates first inquires of Theages in what knowledge his father ought to have had him instructed but omitted, since obviously in "both letters and lyre-playing and wrestling"¹--an education equal to Alcibiades'² and inferior to Theaetetus'³--he was accomplished. Theages, whose answers until now have been short, breaks out into a denunciation of Demodocus: he told you I desire to become wise (that I acknowledge), but although he knows, he did not tell you wise in what.⁴ At this Demodocus is silent. If Theages here speaks the truth, Demodocus must have hesitated in disclosing what would embarrass him; if Theages before had deceived himself or his father, Demodocus must have assumed what his ambition really was. This second alternative Socrates politely suggests: since you were not compelled to tell the truth, your father thought you were lying; but now you must confess before myself as witness.⁵ When he assumes this role, so unlike what Theages had inferred perhaps from Socrates' insistent "we,"⁶ which foreboded a secure alliance with Demodocus against himself, Theages begins to trust more Socrates' impartiality: his own trial will be conducted by no informer nor accomplice of his father.

Although Demodocus is now to be ignored by both Socrates and Theages, Socrates does not openly state what has happened; but, at the same time, Theages' independence must not wither as quickly as it has been encouraged to take root. Although his reference to himself as witness excluded Demodocus, and made a

¹122e10.

²Alcibiades I 166e4-10.

³Theaetetus 145c7-d3.

⁴123a5-8.

⁵123a9-b3.

⁶122d7; e1; 123a4.

breach between them, Socrates apparently does not wish to emphasize that he alone will talk to Theages. Thus caught between his previous alliance with Demodocus and his impending alliance with Theages, Socrates offers us the perfect compromise. Instead of asking Theages point-blank, "Tell me, Theages, . . .," he quotes his own question: "Come, if you desired this. . . , and I happened to ask you. . . ."¹ As if he were not asking anything, he questions Theages. The hypothetical question, which he uses again,² seems to keep Socrates in the service of Demodocus, while he actually disowns him.

Socrates then chooses two arts whose objects and names Theages ought to know. Who professes either art is a ruler: captain and charioteer, who govern horses and ships.³ Theages desires neither skill; one as too vulgar he would properly despise, the other, which he does not think stupidity,⁴ perhaps would satisfy a less ambitious, if more prodigal, youth. What he pursues is simply wisdom, it bears no other name:⁵ but we had learnt that from Demodocus who, Theages insisted, knew more. Now he himself turns as tongue-tied as his father. However, he soon admits he desires to know how to rule human beings: not the sick nor those who sing in the chorus nor the athletes. Those who do what? Socrates then asks.⁶ At this Theages, unlike Alcibiades when asked the same question,⁷ stumbles: those in the city he answers, not at all indicating what they do, about which in fact he was questioned.⁸ But Socrates at last elicits his desire: "Perhaps this wisdom whereby we rule all of these, farmers and all craftsmen and laymen and women and men?" "That, Socrates, I have meant all

¹123b3-4.

²123c1-4.

³Their similarity Socrates reinforces by using *κυβερνώσων* of both (123b4; c2); for the word itself see Appendix.

⁴123d3.

⁵123d1-2.

⁶123d15-e17.

⁷Alcibiades I 125e1-5.

⁸124a1.

along."¹ Theages then not only wishes to know how to rule carpenters, men and women, but also those who reap and sow: and of these we know one conspicuous example--Demodocus, who himself has drawn this fatal parallel, when he compared his duties as farmer and father.² What he once "planted"³ desires now to rule him, but not alone: Socrates includes himself in his "we."⁴ Together they are to rule.

This quiet mutiny of Theages has advanced him pawn-like across the board into the lines of Socrates. But neither father nor son is so favored that one, at the expense of the other, will always be contemned; for this simple device of "we" had been employed before with the contrary intent.⁵ The uneasy relation between Demodocus and Theages, who may depict more than a domestic quarrel, shows us Socrates' own indecisive relation toward them, the young and the old, for the new alliance, where one member hardly understands his own preferment, cannot be long secure. The perils which beset Theages' rule Socrates proceeds to explain.

Among those who have ruled over cities, some have done so justly, others unjustly; but the five whom Socrates mentions, with as much malice as deliberation, were tyrants, and these, save one, the greatest scoundrels and the most unjust: Aegisthus, Peleus, Periander, Archelaus, Hippias.⁶ Peleus however, "most temperate and third from Zeus"⁷ by Socrates' own admission, hardly belongs here: surely Acastus, who expelled him, would fit more neatly into such company.⁸

¹124b5-9; at 124c3 the position of "men and women" is reversed.

²121b1-c5.

³121b6.

⁴123d8; 13; e1; 7; 12; 124a6, with which compare 124a8: *ἐπιτοίμεθα* *ἀρχεῖν* is not the same as *ἀρχόμεν*. Cf. *Politicus* 259b3-5; 293a6-c3 for Theages' later distinction (126a7) between willing and unwilling subjects.

⁵Cf. *supra* p. 11.

⁶124c1-d6.

⁷*Republic* 391c2.

⁸Cf. Pearson on Sophocles' *Peleus* in his edition of the fragments (Vol. II, p. 140).

Yet perhaps his mention would have served to emphasize to Theages how unfairly his ambition is condemned: Agamemnon's murderer, instead of Agamemnon himself, illegitimate instead of kingly rule, will judge him; while Peleus seems to preserve the arbitrary appearance of the list, as if Socrates selected the names at random. Theages at least makes no objection.

Aristotle and Thucydides offer the clue for Socrates' including Hippias and Periander, whose importance their repetition reinforces.¹ Most Athenians believed that Hipparchus while reigning was killed,² but Theages knows the truth, that Hippias was tyrant; just as has "heard of"³ Periander, who it is said discovered many ways, which others adopted, for preserving tyrannies.⁴ Thus Theages shows himself up as well-acquainted with the tales of tyrants.⁵ We await his recognizing the proper word, when an unusual question prolongs our suspense. "Can you tell me what name Bakis and Sibyl and the native Amphilytus have?"⁶ Socrates asks. And without hesitating, unlike his previous silence before similar questions,⁷ Theages correctly replies: "What other name, Socrates, except soothsayers?"⁸ Now Socrates comes to the end of his first series of probings: "What name does Hippias and Periander have?" "I believe tyrants, for what else?"⁹ What then ties these two answers together? What resemblance is there between prophets and tyrants?

When Peisistratus, whom they nicknamed Bakis,¹⁰ doubted of his success, were he to attack Athens (so that he might regain his throne), Amphilytus' vague

¹124c9-10; d5-6; e2. ²Thucydides I.20.2. ³124c10.

⁴Aristotle Politics 1313a34-37. ⁵Cf. 125d10-12.

⁶124d8-9. ⁷123b7; c4. ⁸Cf. 125d10-12.

⁹124c2-4; cf. Politicus 276b7-cl.

¹⁰Scholium Aristophanes Peace 1071.

hexameters resolved him.¹ Again, the oracular Delphian god prompted Cylon to seize the acropolis at the greatest festival of Zeus.² Both Feisistratus and Cylon aimed at tyranny, both consulted spokesmen for the gods: because no computation of their own could assure and guarantee their success. Chance alone governed the outcome. But what lies in the future finds its remedy in prophecy, for what surpasses human wisdom requires divine assistance.³ The soothsayer thus plays a close attendance in the tyrant's train;⁴ which Theages himself, when he becomes aware that ambition in excess presupposes excessive good fortune, later acknowledges: he would pray to become a tyrant.⁵ In so much uncertainty the gods' favor alone avails. For Theages of course this was merely another question, but to us it explains what Demodocus implied before: his son indeed desires a slippery thing. Theages hastens toward no small danger.⁶

Upon Theages shamefully admitting his real desire,⁷ Socrates rebukes him and his father: Theages gets off lightly (his pardon perhaps undeserved), Demodocus bears the full brunt of his scolding. Socrates now agrees with Theages' first accusation against his father: Demodocus knew all along about this tyrannical desire, but grudged him its fulfillment.⁸ Moreover, not tyranny but Demodocus' reticence is blamed; yet one would expect from Socrates a greater protest than that complaint. He says nothing. Indeed Socrates and Demodocus are to deliberate in common whence Theages would obtain the best training for such an enterprise. Who would make him a wise tyrant?⁹ Although we may suspect

¹Herodotus I.62.

²Thucydides I.126.3 ff.

³Aristotle *Politics* 1314b38-1315a3.

⁴Xenophon (*Memorabilia* I.iii.2) indicates the close connection between tyranny and chance when he lists tyranny and dice among the objects of prayers.

⁵125e8. ⁶121c8; 122a1.

⁷124e9; cf. 124e11: *τυραννεῖν ἡμῶν*

⁸124e11-125a5; cf. 123a5-8.

⁹125a6-8.

that Socrates is ironical when he proposes this, Demodocus, this just statesman of Athens, how could he not take objection to his son's intention? Surely any republican would just bristle at the barest smell of despotism; let alone the rearing of a tyrant at his hearth? Demodocus is unaffected; in fact he welcomes Socrates' advice about a "not contemptible plan,"¹ about what he had called "not ignoble,"² He tacitly then admits his previous knowledge and approval.

Socrates apparently assents to Theages' proposal, but he draws Demodocus into its execution; lest if anyone were to allege this as corruption of youth (and Athens could but reckon that the greatest crime, which would lead to its own subversion), Socrates could boldly reply: no father willingly assists his son's disloyalty, and in his presence, whoever else attempts it would be a fool. Demodocus of course has belied this office of guardian, even as Socrates has changed his own. He was a witness,³ but now, having acquitted Theages and condemned Demodocus, he presides. As judge, his decisions admit of no appeal; and he will enjoy that advantage to the full, dashing the hopes of Demodocus and Theages, the father willing to corrupt, the son willing to be corrupted.

If Theages is to be bridled and checked in his reckless course, the lustrous trappings of the tyrant (which allure a Glaucon, an Alcibiades, an Adeimantus) must be tarnished and stained. As nothing ennoble like verse or degrades like parody, Socrates first quotes an impressive line,

σοφὸς τὴν τιμὴν τῶν σοφῶν συνουσίᾳ

and then by successively substituting other professions, which still preserve the metre, farmers, cooks and wrestlers, the splendor of the tyrant's craft, when the verse is at last repeated, has in this procession of base trades become

¹125b2.

²121c7.

³123b1 ff.

faded and dim.¹ For whatever air of conviction the thought had acquired by its metre, the repetition dispelled: 'stripped of the hues of poetry' its truth about tyrants applies as easily to cooks. Theages, overcome by this absurd iambic parade, cries out despairingly at Socrates' simple question: 'But by Zeus I do not know.'²

Although Theages confesses his ignorance, Socrates does not cease abusing his desire; nor is he content until Theages surrenders a major part of his ambition. With the art of tyranny humbled by low comparisons, there remains to humiliate her artisans. Socrates suggests that Theages must desire to associate with a man who possesses the same skill as that famous Callicrite, the daughter of Cyane;³ she who knew *τυραννικά* as other women *ὑφεντικά*. If this verse refers not to a tyrant but to a woman loved by Anacreon, who uses the image of *τυραννικά* as a metaphor for *ἔρωτικά*, Socrates' misuse of it would justly irritate Theages.⁴ The insinuation would exceed his patience, he would doubt Socrates' earnestness: vile my desire might be, Socrates, effeminate it is not.⁵ But Socrates persists, forcing Theages to admit

¹125b5-d6. This verse Socrates assigns to Euripides both here and in the *Republic* (568a9 ff.), but most others to Sophocles, who undoubtedly was the author (scholia on *Republic* ad loc. and on Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazousae* 21 discuss the confusion; see Sophocles fr. 14 (vol I ed. Pearson) for further references.). Euripides' behavior, however, would account for a deliberate change: he had stayed at the court of Archelaus whereas Socrates had refused his invitation (Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1398a24 ff.). That Antisthenes, a Socratic, and Aristophanes should also err in the attribution is therefore not surprising: the one anxious to disengage Socrates from bad company, the other anxious to heap abuse on Euripides. The Aristophanic scholiast remarks that he did this, *ἢ οὐκ ἐπιτίθεσθαι ἐνὶ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐς ἀπατήσιν*.

²125d7.

³125d10-33.

⁴Bergk believes that the verse does refer to love (in his edition of the fragments CXXXIII); for 'tota autem Anacreontis poesis sacra quasi est Libero atque Veneri.'

⁵125e4.

he overreached himself. Still of course he would like to become a tyrant, and even more a god, but he only covets now the rank of Pericles.¹ Theages has exchanged the imperial purple of his dreams for a shorter, more practical cloak. And the next round of questions prepares us for the peripety of the dialogue.

Theages' gambit, which has contracted his claims within a smaller circle of ambition, retrenched him too far. His confining himself to Athens,² despite the indifference of art to locality, (whether you rule at Athens or Sparta), leaves him open to Socrates' later misunderstanding: that all he wishes is to be a good citizen.³ But this patriotism (or his lack of daring) signals the discord between himself and his father. He concedes that the wise horseman, whom he admires as much as the statesman (if his oaths correspond to his enthusiasm),⁴ is the aptest teacher of his skill; which likewise holds true for the expert in the javelin.⁵ The clever politicians, however, Theages denies have the ability to train him; for their sons are no better than those of shoemakers, whose fathers, if they prove incompetent educating them, will surely fail with himself. He has heard that Socrates says the same.⁶ Demodocus then guessed correctly, when he imagined that Theages' companions, retelling what they had heard in the city, had disturbed him;⁷ but Theages' employment of a Socratic phrase, the infamous shoemaker,⁸ betrays the true culprit. Theages believes the fault lies with fathers, that their sons are not esteemed: but he himself is a gentleman's son.⁹ He is the son of Demodocus who, he implies, not only cannot teach him but does not know. In short, he despises Demodocus, for he despises all politicians.¹⁰ By his contempt of all gentlemen-politicians he

¹125e8-126a11. ²126a8. ³127d7. ⁴126a11; b3.

⁵126b8-c2. ⁶126c3-9; see Stallbaum *ad loc.*

⁷121d1 ff. ⁸*Gorgias* 491a1-3; b1. ⁹122e9; 127e1-4. ¹⁰127e6.

dishonors his own father. But he who thus denies honor to men of authority, to his own father, is corrupt.¹ What Demodocus so strongly feared, were Theages given free rein in the choice of his teachers,² has already happened: Theages is corrupt, Socrates his corrupter.

Whether Theages himself is aware of his disloyalty is unimportant: Socrates knows it, although he cannot directly express it. He still must not offend Demodocus, for whom he is acting as adviser; and, as we shall see, he does not want Theages, who would be driven into Socrates' camp if Demodocus suspected him. Socrates indeed manages to make the corruption of Theages clear without making it obvious. He thinks of Theages himself become a father, and having a son, who, in turn, blames him for not catering to his desire of becoming a good painter, harpist, or flute-player.³ Theages' son does not inherit his father's splendid ambition, but rather, Socrates conjectures, he will pursue an ignoble trade, and in addition, unwilling to learn from its professors, will dishonor them. His disobedience will imitate Theages' own, who despises now political men, 'the noble and the good,' his very father, because he has learnt at second-hand the seductive precepts of Socrates. Theages' son then holds the mirror for Theages as Socrates sees him: vain, silly, corrupt, and worthless, he is little esteemed. Eager to rebel from his father, he embraced what pleased him; but blind to his own failings, which he himself suggested, that his nature perhaps does not equal his father's, let alone excel it (since he is no better than a shoemaker's son),⁴ Theages discovers his alliance with Socrates abruptly at an end. Once his debauchery has been made clear, Theages is rejected. Socrates has deserted his revolutionary camp for the more pious

¹Cf. *Apology* 23c2-d2; *Xen. Memorabilia* I.ii.49 ff.

²122a4.

³126d8-e7; cf. 127a1 ff.

⁴126d2-3.

outworks of his father. After the barrage of contumely Demodocus had sustained throughout the dialogue, it might seem a just compensation.

Theages, still uncertain whither to seek his teachers, turns this self-made dilemma (dishonoring those who alone can instruct him) into an apparent advantage: he requests that Socrates accept him as a pupil.¹ Socrates is astonished,² Demodocus hastens to explain: my son may not have spoken tactfully, Socrates, but I am very pleased all the same; in fact no treasure would I regard more highly than your willingness to ease my worries by accepting him. It is not unlikely that father and son, who have behaved like enemies, are leagued together. For if Demodocus, pretending to come for advice, secretly hoped to enlist Socrates in his design (which quite properly ashamed to blurt out, he would contrive to conceal until he believes Socrates cannot refuse), he and Theages could not have managed everything more advantageously. Just as Demodocus had been silent about Theages' real ambition, so was he silent about his own real intention. With rustic shrewdness he drew Socrates aside where no one would interrupt him; and though perhaps annoyed, when Socrates questioned Theages instead of himself, everything else must please him. His own and his son's intentions were happily made clear; Theages dutifully behaved; and Socrates, unlike the sophists, will exact no pay. What greater profit could Demodocus expect? He will gratify a troublesome son without expense.

When Demodocus and Theages, with their mutual appeals (each addressing the other for the first time), have disclosed their identical purposes,³ Socrates, thus out-numbered, begins to discourage them by discrediting his own ability. He points out that Demodocus' earnestness has much to commend it, but

¹127a8-10; cf. Theages' question with Xenophon *Symposium* IX.1.

²127b1.

³127b7-8; c3-4.

he forgets his own good qualities--his age, his offices and honors--: all perfectly adapted for educating Theages to be a good citizen.¹ Theages' ambition diluted thus, 'its gall becoming anodyne and sweet,' makes it not only more acceptable to Demodocus (as more like his own), but to Socrates as well; who checks himself from stating what had been previously implied, that father and son believed he could benefit Theages *πρὸς τὸ τυράννον σοφὸν γενέσθαι*. Since Theages however scorns the politicians, Socrates suggests the sophists.² These he will describe in similar terms in his *Apology*.³ Many have misused this likeness to prove the *Theages* spurious, as if Plato would not for any reason imitate himself but must be athetized like Homer. But the differences between the two passages, outweighing the similarities, confirm rather the genuineness of both.⁴

Theages
 οὐδ' οὕτω σαφὲς εἶσιν ὅσπερ
 εἰς τὰς πόλεις ἴοντες πέποιθον
 τῶν νεῶν τοὺς γεννησιώτατους
 τε καὶ πλουσιώτατους
 τούτους πέποιθον αὐτοῖς
 συνεῖναι, προσκατατιθέντας
ἀργύριον πάνυ πολὺ μισθοῦ
 καὶ κέρην πρὸς τούτους εἰδέναι.

Apology
 τούτων γὰρ ἕκαστος . . .
 οὗτος τ' ἐστὶν ἰὼν εἰς
 ἕκαστην τῶν πόλεων τοὺς
 νεοῦς . . . τούτους πέποιθον
 . . . σφύσειν συνεῖναι κρη-
 ματα δὲ δόντας καὶ κέρην
προσειδέναι.

¹127d2-e5.

²127e5-128a7.

³*Apology* 19e1-20a2; cf. 23c2 ff.

⁴I have underlined the words added in the *Theages* and lacking in the *Apology*.

Each addition in the Theages has been calculated to magnify both these teachers, who are wise, and their pupils, who, both noble and wealthy, show them gratitude and pay great sums of money besides. This description contains none of the scorn which marks the ironic commendation in the Apology. It is simply praise, devised for the benefit of Demodocus and Theages. To Demodocus nothing would seem more incompatible than expense and gratitude. He would not understand how men were persuaded to pay so handsomely for what he thought so trivial. But this prestige which the sophists have acquired diminishes his own: as Socrates mocked political ambitions, Theages withdrew his extravagant demands; and as Socrates now praises Gorgias, Demodocus finds himself contemned. Whom he had called sophists,¹ Socrates calls wise. The sophists, whose wisdom he had once questioned (τῶν σοφιστῶν δοκούντων εὖναι),² now suspect his wisdom.³ Socrates then, having degraded Demodocus in the eyes of the sophists, degrades himself in the eyes of Demodocus. For if someone, whom political men admired for his worldly wisdom, were to spurn their approval, he could not more quickly excite their contempt than by claiming, in all seriousness, that his sole knowledge, pride and excellence was confined to love: at once he would be disowned and ranked with poets, profligates, and panders, or at best with clowns. He would no longer be σπουδαῖος. When Socrates denies his competence in anything but matters of love,⁴ Theages despairs, even as his discovery that he emulated a woman's art confounded him; again he and his father are ridiculed.⁵ He asserts (to his father) that others his own age or slightly older fared better: worth nothing before, after being with Socrates,

¹121d5; 122a6.

²122a6.

³While Euenus alone is 'blessed' in the Apology 20b9, in the Theages the learning of all the sophists calls forth that praise (121b1-2).

⁴128b2-6.

⁵128b7-cl; cf. 125e4; p. 16.

they proved the best.¹ Socrates, challenged directly, prepares his defense; since Theages presumes what he said was in jest, he must adopt a more serious tone. He reveals his daimonion.

The tables are neatly turned. Socrates had at first drawn out Theages' resentment against his father, making himself a witness to the prosecution; then transformed into their arbiter he had thrown his weight on Demodocus' side, who seconding his son requested that he teach Theages; but hardly eager to cultivate what would yield no harvest, he attempts to dissuade them. While explaining how haphazardly his fortunes prosper and founder (as they depend on what he cannot control), he finds himself on trial.² He summons his testimonies, witnesses, predictions: he threatens, warns, foretells. Theages does not fail to acquit him.

The first tale, which promised to illustrate the power of his daimonion, remains unfinished;³ but we can sense that Charmides' exploit at the Nemean games was fictional (no one else records it), designed as it exalts the daimonion to overwhelm Theages. Indeed the daimonion seems greater because we do not know what happened.

The names themselves in the next tale betray the fancy of their author: Timarchus, Cleitomachus, Euathlus, and Nicias Heroscamander's son.⁴ What fate met Charmides after disobeying the daimonion we do not know, but Timarchus' disobedience cost him his life. His death fulfilled so exactly Socrates' forebodings that the daimonion itself, metamorphosed as it were into its own prediction, appears as his doom. He rushed 'straight at the daimonion.'⁵ Socrates, armed with this vivid phrase, which made the daimonion become what it foretold,

¹128c2-5.

²128d7-8; cf. *Apology* 32a4 ff.

³128d8-129a1.

⁴129a1-b2.

⁵129a3; see Appendix.

begins to impress and terrify Theages. Although Theages has renounced his tyrannical ambition, what he so long cherished would not be surrendered easily: he must learn again its dangers. Philemon and Timarchus seem to have plotted secretly against a tyrant; for the drinking-party, which they attended before the assassination,¹ recalls how Periander the tyrant of Ambracia similarly provoked opposition.² 'If you wish to be tyrant,' Socrates warns Theages, 'Kill or be killed!':³

Ad generum Cereris sine caede ac vulnere pauci
Descendunt reges et sicca morte tyranni.

Socrates, however, tells this story tongue-in-cheek, for he contradicts himself about the power of the daimonion.⁴ Twice its voice prevented Timarchus from leaving,⁵ but the third time 'wishing to give me the slip, he got up, no longer saying anything to me, but slipped away (*ἄλλα λείθων*), having watched until my attention was diverted.'⁶ The difficulty here is not that the daimonion failed to notify Socrates of Timarchus' escape (though one might wonder about that as well). The real difficulty is rather to be seen in the following light. If the daimonion had descended upon Socrates only once at the symposium (to foredoom Timarchus' project), an overall warning 'hexing' the entire evening, then Timarchus' flight would have been disobedience plain and simple. But the case is otherwise. The daimonion descends twice, and as we presume that the daimonion is not redundant in its missions, appearing twice when once would do, we can only conclude that the force of each warning is confined to the immediate occasion. Socrates did not dissuade Timarchus on the

¹129b1.

²Aristotle *Politics* 1311a39-b1; 1313a39 ff.

³As the frequency of *ἄπο θυγῶ-κευ* hammers home: 129a3; 7; c6-7; cf. 124c1-2.

⁴Which Heidel (*Pseudo-Platonica* p. 53 n.3) has also seen, but he believes the contradiction stems from a forger who did not understand the daimonion.

⁵129b6; c2.

⁶129c3-5.

second occasion because of the first warning but because of an additional warning, implying that the first no longer applied. The third occasion, then, was exempt from both warnings, just as the second occasion was exempt from the first. In short, Timarchus did not disobey the daimonion of Socrates. For as it did not appear it did not warn.

Put simply, the question is, Did the daimonion succeed or did it fail? One or the other is the case. At the beginning we are told that Timarchus disobeyed Socrates,¹ meaning clearly that the daimonion did prophesy; but at the end we are told that the daimonion failed to act (Timarchus giving it the slip). The two statements cannot be reconciled; the contradiction remains.

Although Socrates wishes to impress Theages, he does not wish to impress us. We are not to go away with the feeling that there really is something in his prophetic power; only Theages must be made to feel this way. And if Socrates intends this, the contradiction cannot be so obvious that Theages will see through it, nor can the story be so consistent that it deceives us. The story which he tells nicely strikes the balance between these extremes. With Theages more deeply under his spell Socrates is more extravagant in his claims.

The Sicilian expedition or that of Thrasyllus, which are Socrates' next examples of the daimonion's power, did not demand a god to predict disaster: and Socrates in neither case specifies the daimonion as his source.² Only by what came before, the tales of Charmides and Timarchus, does the daimonion seem to prophesy. The outcome of the Sicilian expedition was evident to a Nicias, and that of Thrasyllus' to anyone who weighed the fortunes of Athens and her enemies.

¹129a8.

²129c8-d8; at 129a5 ἐγένετο μοι τὸ σημεῖον need not connote anything daemonic, even if τὸ εἰωθὸς σημεῖον τὸ δαυμόνιον (129b8) deliberately makes it ambiguous.

In all the portents his daimonion has so far delivered it mattered little whether friends or expeditions were involved: they solely concerned the outcome of their undertakings. Socrates now passes to a new subject, how the daimonion distributes its advantages among his own companions.¹ To many the daimonion forbids association (hence no improvement); many it allows but they are not benefited; some improve rapidly once admitted, but the majority of these decline as soon as they quit Socrates; the rest retain its benefit. Omitting examples of the first, second, and fourth effect, Socrates talks at length about Aristeides and Thucydides, the sons of Lysimachus and Melesias; who had also, like Demodocus, importuned Socrates to relieve them of their charges.² In fact, the resemblance between the Laches and the Theages, which on other points we have noted,³ would seem to indicate that the case of Theages will be like Aristeides': his failure foreshadows Theages' own. Aristeides, who in lineage resembles Thucydides but lacks his insolence,⁴ laments the gradual disappearance of his power,⁵ which he absorbed from Socrates whenever he was in the same house or room with him; whether he looked at him or not, while Socrates spoke, he improved more; but holding and touching him most increased his ability.⁶ Although Socrates may exaggerate his sorcery, the daimonion's fallibility he had admitted (whenever his attention flagged as in the case of Timarchus): but Aristeides attributes to it greater prescience--even looking elsewhere he improved.⁷

¹That something else is taken up at 129e1 ff, the $\kappa\alpha\lambda\acute{\iota}$ at 129e2 indicates.

²130a4-e4.

³Cf. pp. 5-6.

⁴130a4-5; a8-b1. The passage 130b1; 4-7 marks Thucydides' attitude toward Socrates as 130b3 Aristeides'; Heidel's objection to $\sigma\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\gamma\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota$ $\alpha\upsilon\delta\rho\alpha\pi\omicron\delta\omicron\upsilon$ (*op. cit.* p. 55n.11) Symposium 215e6 disposes, since Alcibiades' $\omega\varsigma$ $\alpha\upsilon\delta\rho\alpha\pi\omicron\delta\omicron\upsilon$ $\delta\omega$ $\delta\omega$ is but slightly weaker than that of Aristeides'.

⁵Cf. Theaetetus 150e1-151a2.

⁶130d5-e4.

⁷Cf. 129c5 and 130e1.

Indeed he tells the truth when he says that he learnt nothing from Socrates, for he never listened.¹

Socrates neither refuses Theages (as he does not belong among those whom the daimonion instantly rejects),² nor accepts him gladly: he tempers his agreement more than Demodocus his praise.³ But the dialogue itself has judged Theages. His ambition ridiculed, and his vanity exposed, both already denied his suit. His belief that he would become like his friends Socrates denied; for his 'no' may either deny that Theages' improvement depends on himself, or that Theages will improve at all.⁴ Socrates' prognostic seems mirrored in Aristeides: the son of Demodocus shall turn out no better than this grandson of a statesman. What Theages had said unawares, he himself demonstrates: sons of statesmen in no way excel shoemakers' sons.

How the Theages has served as a defense of Socrates, on those two points which summed up the official charges against him, needs no further evidence:⁵ but this very similarity with the Apology in turn defends its own imitations of it, which critics regard as self-incriminating. For whenever the purpose of a dialogue resembles that of another, we may expect the arguments also to correspond; and whenever the interlocutors are not unlike, the arguments, if they are sound in the one case, should be sound in the other. These two conditions are fulfilled by the Theages and Apology: both are defenses of Socrates;⁶ both have listeners who seem closer to one another than to any other character in the dialogues. Demodocus and Theages are more like the unknown and ordinary Athenians, who condemned Socrates, than they are like Crito, Euthyphro, or Alcibiades.⁷

¹Cf. 130d4 and d8.

²130e5 ff.

³131a8-10; cf. Laches 201c4-5.

⁴128c7-d1.

⁵Cf. supra p. 2-3.

⁶Cf. supra pp. 1-3.

⁷Cf. supra pp. 5-6.

As the parallel passages, then, reflect the apologetic nature of these dialogues,¹ so the subtle additions and subtractions, which Plato introduced in each, reflect the different circumstances underlying them. Thus just as the sophists are praised more highly before the rustic Demodocus and Theages than before the jury of the Apology,² so the daimonion enlarges its powers before them. Being more gullible they are given more to swallow.

¹The parallels are the following: Theages 127e6-128a7 with Apology 19e1-20a2 (for which see pp. 20-21); 128b1-2 with 20c1-3 (for which see p. 20 n.3); 128d3-5 with 31d2-4 (for which see p. 30). The parallel between 123e16-124a1 with Alcibiades I 125e1-5 was explained on p. 12; and that between 129b8 and Euthydemus 272e3-4 requires no justification except to note that the daimonion there advises Socrates about himself and not about others; and those between the Theages and the Theaetetus are explained below pp. 39 ff.

²Cf. subra pp. 23-24.

THE DALMONION

Whenever we read a formal treatise, spun out in quiet study, we expect each argument to follow close upon the last, and each objection to summon its rebuttal; but this just expectation has somehow cloyed our taste and suppressed our admiration whenever, in a Platonic dialogue, the same regularity seems to occur. Its precise succession of arguments, which sometimes we believe the endless 'yes' and 'no' more hinder than advance, does not bewilder us; for we succumb to that very order, forgetting we overhear a conversation, not among opinions mouthed by strolling players, who speak or are silent at the nod of Socrates, but rather among men, neither less passionate or more logical than ourselves. Although we seldom find these their interests, affections, appetites recorded, we must not assume that they are ignored; for then a dialogue, surrendering its pretense to be an imitation of actions, might as well become a treatise. Yet if the passions of the speakers influence the course of the argument, if they more than ornament a doctrine, how can the dialogue maintain its apparent rigor? How can Socrates always choose the most apposite question and never retract it, amidst the alternatives the beginning of an argument inevitably presents? For instance, after we learn from Theages that he desires to be wise, and he vehemently denounces his father, Socrates' first question leads at once to the art of ruling.¹ If he had selected geometry, shoemaking, or painting, he would not have altered his immediate design (assigning to each art a name): but those skills would not have offered him an equal opportunity to

¹123b3-9.

discover and degrade Theages' ambition; for, unless Socrates somehow knew of this ambition, there seems to be no necessity why Theages should want the art of ruling (i.e. why Theages identifies wisdom with ruling). How then does Socrates know all this? Plato, of course, knowing his own purposes, could direct and adapt everything to them. But were he to endow Socrates with this previous intelligence, fashioning him into some automaton, against whom the other actors vainly contend, again he would extinguish all the animation and the life his dialogues were meant to convey. He would have made a toy of Socrates, wound up, set in motion, and having performed his mummery, retired. Some diminution in the power of chance, so that we are not invited to fruitless discussions, cannot be avoided; but to deny entirely its effect, were it without warrant in Socrates' own life, would indeed reduce philosophy to theorems, Perhaps we might know what Socrates thought, we would never know how he behaved.¹

It might be objected that some acquaintance with Athenian gentlemen and their sons would instruct anyone, of the least discernment, how to predict their habits and intentions; but Socrates knew something more; he quickly discerned, at the same time that he knew what a man's ambitions were, whether he was fit or unfit for philosophy. Even before Theages might have indicated his immoderate ambitions and thereby his unfitness for philosophy, Socrates had formed his opinion about him. Although his name was fair,² he had, as it were, nothing else to recommend him. Socrates' choice of the arts of charioteering and seamanship foretells everything that we learn later about Theages.³ He desires to rule, he does not desire to know.⁴ As we have suggested before that

¹The historicity of Plato's account of Socrates is irrelevant here, for we are not interested in whether Socrates really had this ability but whether Plato, if he desired to give a picture of a living person, would attribute to him an impossible gift. Of course, I should think that since he clearly thought it possible, he must have seen it in someone, and there is no more obvious candidate than Socrates.

²Cf. *supra* pp. 8-9. ³123d8-e1; cf. *supra* p. 12. ⁴Cf. *supra* p. 13 n. 4.

it was Socrates' daimonion which prompted him to ask Theages' name, we now suggest that it was also his daimonion which knew what questions to ask and hence knew the true worth of Theages. To distinguish between good and bad natures of youths, which repelled them from or attracted them toward philosophy, would seem to have been the particular province of Socrates' daimonion.

Although Socrates' daimonion did not rely on appearances, since they belie as often as they verify the excellence of a soul, yet the rare faculty of discriminating swiftly between the beautiful and the ugly,¹ which has been called taste, bears some resemblance to his daimonion. For as a critic, caparisoned with all the armament of a tedious pedantry, may match the conclusions but not the quickness of a man of sensibility; so we, having studied this dialogue, can testify that Socrates correctly estimated Theages' worth: but had we confronted him directly, without the benefit of questions, surely we would have despaired of any opinion. Our sensitivity indeed shares more in common with the man of taste than with Socrates. In the presence of great beauty no one is easily mistaken, nor remains unaffected; its order and proportions, naturally delighting the senses, compel our admiration, and the more rapidly we are thus affected, the more erotic we are said to be. No calculation obstructs this our instant pleasure: we need no other instrument than our eyes. In the presence of a beautiful soul, harmonically disposed, Socrates likewise responded: instantly attracted he loved, and encouraged it toward philosophy; but the secrecy of that beauty needed a peculiar instrument to detect it, which his erotic temper, his knowledge of love,² seems to have found in his daimonion.

What entitles us to identify Socrates' Eros with his daimonion we read in the Theages, which forced us first, by other evidence, to disprove the charges

¹Cf. Laws 668e7-669a4.

²128b4; cf. Symposium 177d7-8; Lysis 204c1-2; Phaedrus 257a7-8.

brought against it. When Theages had implored Socrates to educate him, he protested that his meager knowledge comprised erotic things alone; and Theages, believing himself mocked, demanded more serious evidence for the ignorance of Socrates; who obliged him with a superstitious account of his daimonion.¹ The substitution of the daimonion for knowledge of love, the divine for the jocular according to Theages, would seem to indicate that the same ability is doubly portrayed. While Socrates' Eros would not discourage Theages, his daimonion, decked out with such marvelous tales of its power, would properly impress him. Thus the change of name, from Eros to daimonion, is enough to satisfy Theages that a different reason is being given. But what can we call Aristeides but a lover of Socrates? All his actions remind us of someone in love, his power increasing with his proximity, and disappearing with his distance.² The daimonion of Socrates not only affected himself but also others; who like Aristeides, though they received no encouragement, appeared, to improve.³ Thus the daimonion turns into his Eros, and the uniqueness which Socrates here claims for the latter he almost claims for the former in the Republic.⁴

<u>Theages</u>	<u>Republic</u>
<p>Τούτο μόντου τὸ μαθήμα παρ' οὐτινοῦν ποιῶμαι δεύρος εἶναι καὶ τῶν προγεγονότων ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν νῦν.</p>	<p>τὸ δ' ἡμέτερον οὐκ ἔστιον λεγεῖν, τὸ δαιμόνιον σημαῖον ἢ γὰρ πού τινι ἄλλῳ ἢ οὐδενὶ τῶν ἐμπροσθεν γε- γονεν.</p>

¹Cf. supra pp. 21-22. G. Krueger, Der Dialog Theages (Diss. Greifswald 1935) pp. 20-21 has observed that the dialogue identifies Eros and the daimonion, but he does not examine the identity because he believes the Theages spurious.

²Cf. Symposium 175d3-e2; 186c5 ff.

³130c3; d7.

⁴128b4-6; Republic 496c3-5.

This likeness however issues only a tenuous warrant for their identity, no more conclusive perhaps than Eros being called a daimonion.¹ We must also appeal to their powers. Again the Theages testifies: *ὅτι δ' αὖ οὐρανὸν ἔχει τῆς οὐρανίας ἑ τοῦ εὐφρονοῦ δὲ δαίμονος.* 2

The daimonion elects those who will be benefited by associating with Socrates, and though never mistaken about their immediate success it cannot be certain that they will secure their progress, or gradually return to their former ignorance. The daimonion does exactly what his Eros does: it discriminates between the beautiful and the ugly, for an attraction toward the beautiful entails an equal repugnance of the ugly. What had rejected Theages' suit in advance, removed Socrates from the sophists, whose policy of selling whatever wisdom they might advertise compelled them to adhere to the conditions of an open market: they could not afford to discriminate among those who bought their wares. As soon as they catered to all who could pay, they excluded no one whose nature displeased them: opening their books to all they threw away the counters of fool and genius.³ Socrates' prophecy, however, attributed by him to his daimonion and by Diotima to Eros (among the other deities),⁴ acted outside the rules of contract and exchange; it admitted and refused, sorting out the good from the bad, in a manner which seemed as arbitrary as Fortune. Yet if the daimonion incites as well as discourages, just as Xenophon asserts,⁵ then the perplexing difference between him and Plato disappears, although it leaves us to explain the apparent discrepancy: Why does Socrates in the dialogues of Plato only describe the negative power of his daimonion?

¹Symposium 202d13 ff.

²129e7 ff.

³Euthydemus 304c2.

⁴See Appendix.

⁵Xenophon Memorabilia I.i.4; IV,viii.1; Apology 12.

On both occasions that Socrates describes the daimonion he addresses men (or is arraigned before them), who neither demand nor deserve a more exact title than citizens of Athens: but the jury in the Apology, whose hostility is proved by their vote, trust Socrates less than Demodocus and Theages.¹ For, unlike the jury, they want something from Socrates; and, lest he refuse their demand, they must never offend him. They must cautiously proceed. Thrown back on petition they force Socrates to defend himself.² His defense, to satisfy them, must explain his reluctance to undertake Theages' education. Consider with what dexterity Socrates conducts his trial. First he places his 'no' so ambiguously with respect to Theages' request, that it may refer either to his own unwillingness or to Theages' confidence that he will improve.³ Next he represents his daimonion negatively: it always dissuades, it never urges.⁴ At once Theages is disarmed. For how can he complain of ill-treatment when the daimonion treats no one well? Since it shows no favourites he could not reasonably think himself an exception. He could not blame the indifference of Socrates, who had not formulated such limitations for his own convenience, but who lived under the tutelage of some divinity even as a child.⁵ Thus by allotting all his preferences to a god, which he was unable to control, Socrates escaped (at least to some extent) the imputation of cabal and intrigue. After he has drugged Theages with the decoctions of miraculous stories, elevating his daimonion to a major deity, he can afford to indicate its positive character.⁶ Not only is he confident that Theages will fail to observe the contradiction,⁷ but also

¹Cf. supra pp. 6-7.

³128d1; cf. p. 24

⁵Ibid.

⁷Cf. supra pp. 24 ff.

²Cf. supra pp. 21 ff.

⁴128d3-7.

⁶129e7; cf. p. 29.

that he will in his fervour attempt to propitiate his daimonion by all the charms known to the expounders of sacred affairs.¹ Socrates again in the Apology, when he defends himself in earnest, employs the same artifice;² but he does not contradict himself, because before his judges he only has to clear himself of the charge of corrupting the young. He does not have to shake off their importunities to educate their sons. He depreciates his own power as much as he can, foisting his suspected partiality on the daimonion; which if it did not secure his acquittal then, obtained it from all posterity. By always keeping the apotropaic face of his daimonion before the Athenians, Socrates left in darkness its partisan side; and since it was not seen, it was thought effectively non-existent.³

Socrates goes still further in depreciating his daimonion. Not only does it not incite him to anything but it keeps him away from politics,⁴ the one field where he might do harm. And politics was that which as much fascinated Theages as occupied the men who indicted and condemned Socrates. To them he would be useless,⁵ his daimonion mere apathy; his neglect of politics assured his indifference; his lack of ambition made him negligible. If Socrates had no share in the life of the city, he ceased to count as a political factor: resolved to be inactive, he abandoned his political identity. What this abandonment means can be made clear if we look at its extreme formulation.

Those who lie furthest beyond a city's influence, whose bodies fill the ranks of no army, are the dead; who form not a cipher in the calculations of statesmen, nor cast a shadow on their decrees. With the death of his body

¹131a5-7.

²Apology of Socrates 31d2-4.

³As for the passages in the Phaedrus 242c6-8 and Euthydemus 272e1, which also describe the daimonion negatively, the context of each must be carefully considered, but this would take us too far afield.

⁴Apology 31d5-32a3; Republic 496a11-e2. ⁵Cf. Thucydides II.40.2.

a citizen's life comes to an end: whether his soul survives him has no political relevance. He is buried outside the city. While he lives, however, such a boundary is never crossed (certain duties ever attending him), but his approach toward it, in its political sense, became for Socrates the definition of philosophy: the practice of dying and being dead.¹ From all bodily things the philosopher tries to escape: from his senses in working out his epistemology; from his passions in all his reasoning; and from the city in his way of life-- 'in truth his body alone stays at home in the city, but his thought flies everywhere.'² Thus is the philosopher 'dead to the world.' The separation of body and soul, then, as it honors only the soul, destroys a man's political usefulness. The prohibition against politics compelled Socrates' retreat to privacy, where artificial necessities diminish, while the necessity of nature holds sway: where his choice of companions, obeying the dictates of his daimonion, as it rejects or approves, afforded him the greatest pleasure.

And yet Philosophy, defined in this way, would seem to deny philosophy as Eros, whose existence depends on what the practice of dying set at naught: his interest in things transcending the city would also transcend his friends. If the philosopher is ignorant of the way to the market-place,³ how could Socrates be a daily visitor? And if he does not know whether his neighbor is a man or some animal,⁴ how could Socrates spend so much time with the young? We had noticed before how Socrates' professing knowledge of love was misunderstood by Theages, who would not take seriously such a vile subject.⁵ It represented to him everything private and unimportant, the very opposite of a political life. An attachment between two, who are not engaged in conspiracy but in talk, dis-

¹Phaedo 64a4-6.

²Theaetetus 173e2-5.

³Ibid. 173d1 ff.

⁴Ibid 174b1-6.

⁵Cf. p. 22.

turbs the politician no more than a single death. Beyond these attachments Socrates rarely ventured. Although he needed the city from which to recruit young men for philosophy, as he needed the city to provide food for his body, his Eros was not the vulgar Eros of political ambition, which, becoming the condottiero of all other desires, leads to tyranny.¹ It was not just purposeless desire, keeping him chained to the senses, but an instinctive desire which attracted him toward those who might become like himself. His instinct could not help being drawn to these, and hence to the city where they alone are found: but his daimonion pulled him and them at the same time away from the city. Though Socrates had to descend into the city, like Orpheus into Hades, to obtain what he desired, he never looked back. Though he instructed his pupils in the ways of the city, in politics, above all else, this study was but the means employed to transcend them. Thus by a curious paradox the way to the marketplace led beyond it: his Eros shares with his daimonion its non-political character.

Even if the daimonion of Socrates and his Eros, coined and stamped alike, can be interchanged, still we barter in unstable currencies: for we do not know their common source and standard. Are they humanly intelligible or great divinities? When Aristotle briefly discusses divination during sleep, he observes that 'since in general, some of the other animals also dream, dreams could not be god-sent. . . . however, they are *Συμφορική*, for Nature is *Συμφορική*.'² In our sleep then we seemingly edge closer to the wakefulness of Socrates, whose daimonion was in need of no other power than nature. Hovering between the human and the super-human, neither so defective as the one nor so perfect as the other, it represented that super-abundance

¹Republic 573e6-7; 574e2; 575a1-2.

²Aristotle *De Divinatione per Somnum* 463b12-14; cf. *Apology* 22c1.

of nature which distinguished Socrates. His was not an accidental humour or disease, nor a supernatural appendage that commanded or forbade against his own inclinations, but the daimonion was his very revulsions and desires. As a noble nature intrinsically pleased him, so his daimonion detected it; and as that nature preceded all adornment by art, so its discoverer (his daimonion attending him from childhood)¹ was instantly attracted. It may have become stronger and more refined through use, it could never change. But although a necessary calculus governed the operations of his daimonion, calling this youth noble and that youth base, yet no necessity decreed that Socrates, son of Sophroniscus and Phaenarete, ought receive this dispensation. He did not strictly inherit the gifts of his parents, nor did his own sons inherit his.² Chance assigned it (like his ugliness) to Socrates, but nature informed both. The daimonion indeed was his by a 'divine fate,'³ even as any natural feature, though staying within the realm of nature, is arbitrarily allotted to this man but not to that. Nature fails to provide for the particular. Thus if Theages is 'dear to the god',⁴ if his nature happens to be good, he will improve. The god's affection for him is that 'divine matter'⁵ about which one deliberates, than which nothing is more subject to chance. What combined then an accidental Socrates with, as it were, a natural prophecy was called his daimonion. Natural because it preceded art and reasoning, prophetic because it responded correctly without 'material' evidence, the daimonion instantly fitted his desire to his intellect: τὸ φαινόμενον καλὸν of the one and the τὸ ὄν καλὸν of the other were the same.⁶

¹128d3; Apology 31d2-3.

²Aristotle Rhetoric 1390b30-31.

³128d2.

⁴130e6; cf. 130e10.

⁵122b5-6.

⁶Cf. Aristotle Metaphysics 1072a26-29; 1072b3.

The apparent contrast between Socrates' daimonion and his Eros dimly shadows another between his ignorance and knowledge. For as Socrates' assertion that he knows and hence teaches nothing¹ is like the apotrepitic action of the daimonion (his ignorance defines what he knows, his daimonion what he cannot do), so his Eros, his only knowledge, is like the positive action of the daimonion. To be restrained from politics would seem as harmless to the Athenians, as to know that one knows nothing seems unprofitable: but his claim of erotic knowledge the same Athenians could have scarcely told apart from the charge of corrupting the young.² By Socrates' denying that he preferred anyone he denied his knowledge, and by pretending to be ignorant he seemed indifferent. He had of course no doctrine for sale, which, once accepted, memorized, recited, minted a new Socrates; but the dialogues themselves show how his questions alone suppose his understanding; for to advance an argument and detect its errors presumes a knowledge of the truth, or at least of the region where it lies. Even in the Theages, despite its brevity, he displayed his dialectic skill; and in the Theaetetus he brings together under the image of μυλεωτική both this and what we referred to his daimonion.

Although Socrates compares his own art to midwifery, he does not carefully draw out every parallel: but except for the two points in which he differs from midwives--ministering to the souls of men instead of the bodies of women--³ we should not be surprised if they correspond. What then do midwives do? Of their double office, delivering children and acting as go-betweens, they only professed the former (although prouder of the latter), because its abuses had earned the name of pandering, and made infamous even the wise among them.⁴

¹Apology 21d5-7.

²Cf. pp. 34 ff.

³Theaetetus 150b6-9.

⁴Ibid 149c9-150a6.

Socrates also, if he midwifed the souls of men, must possess two similar practices: but he imitates their discretion, and conceals his own procuring.¹ To his ability to test a thought, whether it be true or false, he confesses readily enough;² but this art is unlike anything which midwives perform (women never bear shadows).³ Socrates likewise confesses that he is able to rouse and soothe men pregnant with thoughts, which is like the *ἔμψαλητομεία* of midwives.⁴ But his other skill, procuring, he obscures as deliberately as they. That he procures for others he admits: Prodicus and other sophists had received from him many whom he believed were barren.⁵ These evidently, whom he 'guesses' will be benefited by someone else, the daimonion rejected:⁶ but those whom the daimonion allowed, who may be benefited associating with himself, are they not also part of Socrates' procuring? For he had said that midwives knew 'what kind of women living with what kind of men bear the best children.'⁷ Socrates then must know what kind of youth associating with what kind of man bears the best thoughts.⁸ He must know who will be benefited not only by Prodicus but also by himself: his daimonion must procure for himself what his 'guesswork' procured for others. This implies that he is not barren; for he is as necessary to his companions as a man to a woman. Though Socrates may be sterile without them, they certainly would be barren without him. Thus his sterility is as much a pretence as his ignorance; and his Eros as much the truth as his knowledge.

But the daimonion, whose description here agrees so well with that in the *Theages*, is said to act only when his pupils having miscarried what they had

¹Cf. *Ibid* 149a6-9; Xenophon *Symposium* iii.10.

²*Theaetetus* 150b6-c7.

³*Ibid* 150a8-b4.

⁴*Ibid* 151a8-b1; cf. 149c9-d3; *Symposium* 206c1 ff.

⁵*Theaetetus* 151b2-6.

⁶*Ibid* 151a3-5.

⁷*Ibid* 149d6-8.

⁸Cf. Xenophon *op. cit.* iv.56-64.

borne, returned;¹ whereas in the Theages the daimonion discriminates immediately among the young men, when Socrates first meets them.² This difference, however, is only illusory. For although in the Theaetetus all improve at first, 'all' refers only to those whom 'the god allows.'³ But who is this god? Since it seems to do what the daimonion does later, which in the Theages was also called a god,⁴ we can infer that they are the same.

Socrates' prophecy and his dialectic, then, have been brought together under this image of midwifery. As his skill in rousing and soothing those who were pregnant, in telling apart the true from the false answer, defines his dialectic; so his skill in distinguishing between good natures and bad, in procuring for himself the good and leaving the bad to others, defines his Eros and daimonion. To have anticipated the beautiful name of Demodocus' son, that was his prophecy; and to have questioned Theages about the art of ruling, his dialectic;⁵ but they were not separate skills, independent of one another. They were but parts of his new divinity: a divinity that was natural even though it was rare. Thus Plato knew that his own facility in writing the proper question, addressed to the proper person at the proper place and time,⁶ corresponded to something in Socrates himself, which could instantly detect these same dialectical proprieties: that something was the daimonion.

¹Theaetetus 150e1-151a5.

²Cf. p. 23.

³Theaetetus 150d2-6.

⁴130e6.

⁵Cf. pp. 9; 26 ff.

⁶Cf. p. 26.

APPENDIX

Were the Theages labouring under the curse of impure diction as much as the Letters, perhaps no witchcraft of philosophy would ever successfully defend it; but, fortunately, few places have earned this stigma, and those unjustly. Of ἰδολογήσασθαι enough has been said elsewhere,¹ but δοκῶ γάρ μοι requires more proof, since δοκῶ, joined with μοι, usually takes the infinitive. Yet this construction does not want company:

ὅλην ἐπίνομεν τὴν νύκτα δικά σε καὶ σφόδρ᾽²
ἄκρατον μοι δοκῶ.

οὔνοσ Λεσβίωσ
ὄν αὐτὸσ ἐποίησεν ὁ Μαρων ἔμοι δοκῶ.³
οἷ δ' ἐπὶ τ' ἐπὶ Θήβησ ἐστρατευσάν μοι δοκῶ.⁴

As the metre in each case would not exclude δοκέει, the normal usage,⁵ two possibilities remain: either the accidents of time have not preserved other examples in prose,⁶ or it was restricted to comedy for an unknown effect. Perhaps it implies a greater emphasis or a certain rustic flavour, either of which is perfectly appropriate for Demodocus.

¹Cf. supra p. 7 n. 1.

²Menander 67,3 K (Vol. IV p. 88, 1In).

³Clearchus 5 κ (vol. IV, p. 564 M).

⁴Anonymous poet of new comedy 108, 109, 9 K (vol. IV, p. 691 CCCL, 9 M).

⁵Cf. Euthydemus 306e4-5.

⁶Athenaeus, however, quotes Hippolochus (129a): ἐπιπροβάλλουσιν
δολφίτησ δὲσ... ἔμοι μὲν γυμνάσ δοκῶ,
(to which Kock refers on Clearchus note 3 above; and Fritzsche ad loc. incorrectly as Lynceus).

Against Stallbaum's objection to τὸ φυτευθὲν βρωῶ (121b6; Stallb. *ad loc.*) there is a double counter: ἀναβρῶν thrice occurs in Theophrastus applied to plants,¹ which would justify its un-compounded form; and Demodocus, his head full of his son, could readily transfer the phrase from human beings to plants. Although the Latin passage quoted by Stallbaum will not yield the required sense (Cicero *Tusc. Disp.* I.xxiv), this from Cato strictly corresponds: 'si ita severis uti stet, melius vivet.'²

For the phrase ἡ τὴ ἀρχαία κυβερνήσων Heidel has only unkindness: 'a metaphor which is poetical and becomes common only in the faded modern languages.'³ But the significance in transferring the verb from a base to a noble art has been observed;⁴ and lest that seem like so much huffer-mugger, no one has malign'd this from Plato:⁵ ἡοὺ συνοεῖς τοῦθ' ὅτι μεθυσὼν κυβερνήτης καὶ πᾶς πάντος ἀρχῶν ἀνα-τρέπεται πάντα εἴτε πλοῦα εἴτε ἀρχαία εἴτε στρατόπεδον εἴθ' ὅτι ποτ' εἴη τὸ κυβερνήμενον ὑπ' αὐτοῦ.

The case against πολούμαλ δεινὸς εἶναι (128b5) is the strongest; for no parallel exists except from very late authors,⁶ who may, however, be imitating Plato here; Aristaenetus (I ep. iv), for example, almost literally repeats it. Since the root sense of ποεῖσθαι would admit a personal construction, it may well be accidental that no similar use in a classical author survives.

¹*Historia Plantarum* IV.3.11; 14.12; 16.2

²Cato *De Agri Cultura* xlv.2.

³*Op. cit.* p. 55 n. 11.

⁴*Cf. supra* p. 12 n. 3.

⁵*Laws* 640e5 ff.

⁶Listed by Stephanus s.v. p. 1298b; Hesychius s.v. has ποεῖσθαι • προποεῖσθαι.

The phrase εὐθὺ τοῦ δαιμονίου (129a3), though grammatically unimpeachable, has aroused much suspicion, which the explanation offered on page 21 might allay; and this from Aristophanes. Trygaeus concludes an exhortation thus: νῦν γὰρ ἡμῶν ἄρπάζει παρέστιν ἄγαθος δαίμονος.

To which the chorus adds, defining that good daemon: δεῦρο πᾶς χῶρε προθύμως εὐθὺ τῆς σωτηρίας.⁶

Contrariwise, the wretch Timarchus met misfortune, εὐθὺ ἄλδου δωμάτων.

¹Aristophanes Peace 300-301.