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**Ratiocination and the Daimonion: A Practical Solution**

Recent accounts of Socrates' *daimonion* have been divided on a particularly difficult issue: Does Socrates maintain his commitment to discursive reasoning or to his divine sign when the two come into conflict? On the one hand, Socrates claims obedience to 'nothing except the proposition which appears to me to be best when I reason about it' (*Crito* 46b4-5), but on the other to 'divinations and dreams and every other means through which divine apportionment has ever commanded anyone to do anything' (*Apology* 33c3-5). Scholars such as C.D.C. Reeve and Gregory Vlastos believe that Socrates' commitment to ratiocination 'trumps' that shown to divine signs. M.L. McPherran, T.C. Brickhouse, and N.D. Smith argue that Socrates' deference to extra-rational signals outweighs the authority of his faith in reason.

After a brief sketch of the historical sources with which Socrates would have been familiar, e.g., Homer, Hesiod, and Empedocles, this essay suggests how Socrates' own notion of the *daimonion* was grounded in popular religious beliefs, and was not, as he himself once claimed, something that had occurred to few or none before him (*Rep.*496c3-5). As such, Socrates would naturally have distinguished it from other kinds of mystical experiences, which deflates the claim that Socrates obeyed the *daimonion* on account of the same rational arguments as those for which he respects the gods. Socrates never offers a rational account to defend his belief in this divine sign, and obeys it even when natural reason would suggest otherwise. Thus, it cannot be that reason holds dominion. On the other hand, the *daimonion* never challenges the claims of reason when they come into conflict; when it signals, Socrates unreflectively ceases to do whatever course he decided upon, but he never comes to believe that his train of thought was somehow incorrect.

My own position holds that the *daimonion* never 'trumps' reason, and that reason cannot 'trump' the *daimonion*. They are in fact two separate motivations, with distinct jurisdictions of authority. This is something that has not been considered, that the divine sign only signals Socrates when he is about to *do* something, never when he is simply *thinking*. It never warns him of a false turn in the argument. It only stops him when he (or someone else) is about to perform some action, the full consequences of which reason could not have foreseen. When he is about to construct the defense speech for his trial, or when as a young man he was about to enter politics, only then is Socrates signaled. But though the sign forewarns him of some possible danger, it never once shakes Socrates' intellectual convictions. Socrates can and does maintain his dual allegiance. "What the gods have granted us to do by help of learning, we must learn; what is hidden from mortals we should try to find out from the gods by divination" (Xenophon, *Mem.* 1.1.9).