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Michael R. Jost

The Daimonion of Socrates and the Pneuma-Paraclete of Jesus

Some Observations on the History-of-Religions Context of Johannine Pneumatology

It is well known that the Spirit plays a central role in the Fourth Gospel. Nevertheless, the history-of-religions context of the Johannine Pneuma-Paraclete is a controversial issue in scholarship. So far, the discussion has mostly been oriented toward the meaning of πνεῦμα. In contrast, the present article also asks what the discourse on the δαιμόνιον contributes to the Johannine understanding of the Spirit, which is why a special focus is placed on the Daimonion of Socrates in (Middle) Platonic philosophy. From here, new insights arise both for the history-of-religions context of the Johannine Pneuma-Paraclete and for Johannine pneumatology.

Keywords: Pneuma, Daimonion, Paraclete, Holy Spirit, Gospel according to John, Septuagint

1 Introduction¹

It is well known that the Spirit plays a central role in the Fourth Gospel. Nevertheless, the history-of-religions context of the Johannine Pneuma-Paraclete is a controversial issue in research.² Should the πνεῦμα in John be

1 This article presents some preliminary results of my habilitation project, which I developed in conversation with Jörg Frey (Universität Zürich) and George van Kooten (University of Cambridge). I sincerely thank both for their contributions and encouragement, especially for the invitation as Visiting Scholar at the Faculty of Divinity in Cambridge, and the Swiss National Science Foundation for the funding for eighteen months of research in this highly stimulating context. It was during this time that I received the invitation as a Research Associate of the Department of Old Testament and Hebrew Scriptures of the Faculty of Theology and Religion of the University of Pretoria (South Africa), for which I express my sincere gratitude.

2 For a summary of the research, see J. Frey and J.R. Levison, "The Origins of Early Christian Pneumatology: On the Rediscovery and Reshaping of the History of Religions Quest," in *The Holy Spirit, Inspiration, and the Cultures of Antiquity: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. J. Frey and J.R. Levison, Ekstasis 5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 1–37; J. Frey, "Auf der

interpreted in the context of the teaching on spirits found in the Dead Sea Scrolls? That is, in a context of spirits of light and spirits of darkness, spirits of truth and spirits of falsehood? Or should πνεῦμα be interpreted against the background of Hellenistic philosophy: either Stoicism (i. e., a material interpretation) or Platonism (i. e., as spirit in opposition to the material world)?

Each interpretation has its difficulties. None manages to convince completely. The link with Qumran is not as direct as has sometimes been claimed.³ Indeed, spirits play an important role at Qumran. But in John, the Holy Spirit does not battle with a spirit of darkness. Certainly, there are surprising references to the Platonic tradition in John.⁴ But it is precisely with the spirit that things get complicated. Πνεῦμα does not bear the notion of spirit in Platonism and is generally a term of little regard. Therefore, Platonic influence on the understanding of the πνεῦμα is unlikely. On the other hand, a Stoic interpretation seems to be closer.⁵ Here the πνεῦμα is a central idea. But the Stoic πνεῦμα can hardly be associated with the personal Paraclete of John. The integration of the Paraclete's discourse has therefore not been satisfactorily explained by the Stoic interpretation. Accordingly, Jörg Frey and John R. Levison summarize: "Nearly a century

Suche nach dem Kontext des vierten Evangeliums: Zur religions- und traditionsgeschichtlichen Einordnung," in *Die Herrlichkeit des Gekreuzigten: Studien zu den Johanneischen Schriften I*, ed. J. Schlegel, WUNT 307 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 45–87, and V. Rabens, "Geistes-Geschichte: Die Rede vom Geist im Horizont der griechisch-römischen und jüdisch-hellenistischen Literatur," *Zeitschrift für Neues Testament* 25 (2010), 46–55.

3 See J.H. Charlesworth, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Gospel according to John," in *Exploring the Gospel of John: In Honor of D. Moody Smith*, ed. R.A. Culpepper and C.C. Black (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 65–97.

4 See G.H. van Kooten, "John's Counter-Symposium: 'The Continuation of Dialogue' in Christianity; A Contrapuntal Reading of John's Gospel and Plato's Symposium," in *Intolerance, Polemics, and Debate in Antiquity: Politico-cultural, Philosophical, and Religious Forms of Critical Conversation*, ed. G.H. van Kooten and J. van Ruiten, TBN 25 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 282–357, and id., "The Sign of Socrates, the Sign of Apollo, and the Signs of Christ: Hiding and Sharing Religious Knowledge in the Gospel of John; A Contrapuntal Reading of John's Gospel and Plato's Dialogues," in *Sharing and Hiding Religious Knowledge in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. M. Popović, L. Roig Lanzillotta, and C. Wilde, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – Tension, Transmission, Transformation* 10 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018), 145–170; or H.W. Attridge, "The Cubist Principle in Johannine Imagery: John and the Reading of Images in Contemporary Platonism," in *Essays on John and Hebrews*, WUNT 264 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 79–91.

5 See G. Buch-Hansen, "It is the Spirit that gives life": A Stoic Understanding of Pneuma in John's Gospel, BZNW 173 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), and T. Engberg-Pedersen, *John and Philosophy: A New Reading of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

of study since the History of Religions school reached its pinnacle has led scholars to a maelstrom of perspectives rather than to assurance and clarity.”⁶ A simple dichotomy between a Hellenistic and a Jewish interpretation has been rightly criticized (e.g., Martin Hengel). Yet the interpretation of the spirit brings together different concepts that cannot be harmonized and therefore require a precise historical contextualization to be interpreted properly.

However, it is striking that in the discourse of the Spirit there is a conceptual variability, which is especially evident with the designation of the Spirit as Paraclete in John. Accordingly, we should overcome the tendency to reduce the concept to the term πνεῦμα but rather analyze the notion of Spirit in a broader way. In this article, I would like to evaluate new insights for the interpretation of the Spirit in John by including the δαιμόνιον in the Platonic tradition. To do this, I will first present two observations about the δαιμόνιον in the canonical Gospels. Subsequently, I will outline the understanding of the δαιμόνιον in the Platonic tradition. Then, I will conclude by formulating five theses regarding the history-of-religions context and the notion of the Pneuma-Paraclete in John.

2 Two Observations

Two observations shed new light on the quest for the notion of the Spirit. On the one hand, the term πνεῦμα relates to the term δαιμόνιον several times in the canonical Gospels. And on the other hand, δαιμόνιον is used differently in John than in the Synoptics.

2.1 The Relationship of the Terms πνεῦμα and δαιμόνιον in the Gospels and the Necessity of Terminological Variability

If I say I want to analyze the notion of the Spirit, one might envision an analysis of the word πνεῦμα. However, this narrow approach is not compelling when one examines the Gospels since πνεῦμα is combined with δαιμόνιον on several occasions.⁷ Certainly, this usage does not refer to the Holy Spirit but to unclean spirits. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that apparently the notion of πνεῦμα correlates with that of δαιμόνιον.

Luke 4:33 can be cited as an example. This is the first passage where Luke speaks about spirits, and he uses a striking, unparalleled formulation: “In

⁶ Frey and Levison, “Early Christian Pneumatology” (see n. 2), 31.

⁷ See Matt 10:1, 8; Mark 6:7, 13; 7:25–26; Luke 8:2, 29; 9:42; or Rev 16:14; 18:2.

the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon” (καὶ ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ ἦν ἄνθρωπος ἔχων πνεῦμα δαιμονίου ἀκαθάρτου). Obviously, Luke needs to explain the term πνεῦμα since the term itself is not self-evident for Greek readers. Luke characterizes πνεῦμα as δαιμόνιον,⁸ and more precisely as an unclean δαιμόνιον, because δαιμόνιον did not necessarily have malicious connotations, as we will see later. Consequently, πνεῦμα does not denote air, breath, or substance but rather a spirit. In this way he gives important information to the Hellenistic reader and already dismisses certain philosophical conceptions of πνεῦμα.

Thus, it is necessary to take into consideration the term δαιμόνιον as well and not rely one-sidedly on πνεῦμα alone. Πνεῦμα and δαιμόνιον can be combined because both terms describe spiritual beings. There is a structural analogy between the two terms. This insight is not new. Terence Paige argued in an article from 2002 as follows:

The evidence shows that a typical pagan Hellenistic writer from classical times up until the second century C.E. would *not* have used πνεῦμα to indicate a self-conscious, intelligent, supernatural being (a “spirit”). For this concept, the natural expression in Greek is a δαίμων or δαιμόνιον. Not a single Gentile, non-Christian writer prior to the late second century ever used πνεῦμα to signify a “demon,” “ghost,” or “spirit” of any sort. When Plutarch and Lucian (or Theophrastus before them) refer to such things, the terms used are always δαίμονες, δαιμόνια or φάσματα – never πνεύματα.⁹

The same consideration can be found twelve years later in an article by Heidrun Gunkel, Rainer Hirsch-Luipold, and John Levison, but here explicitly with reference to Plutarch:

A daemon, for instance, in the writings of Plutarch, may communicate in ways that are extremely close to the *pneuma* in the New Testament. In this instance, *daemon* and *pneuma* in the writings of Plutarch and the New Testament, respectively, may lie closer to one another than *pneuma* and *pneuma*.¹⁰

8 As, e. g., Luke 9:42 proves, πνεῦμα and δαιμόνιον are otherwise used synonymous. This speaks for an exegetical interpretation of δαιμονίου at this point and against an interpretation as attributive, qualitative, or partitive genitive. Explained as *genitivus epexegeticus* also in M. Zerwick and M. Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, 5th rev. ed. (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1996), 187, and H. von Siebenthal, *Griechische Grammatik zum Neuen Testament* (Gießen: Brunnen, 2011), 244; see further F. Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas (Lk 1,1–9,50)*, EKK 3/1 (Zürich: Benziger, 1989), 222 n. 24, and I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), 192.

9 T. Paige, “Who Believes in ‘Spirit’? Pneuma in Pagan Usage and Implications for the Gentile Christian Mission,” *HTR* 95 (2002), 417–436, here 433.

10 Cf. H. Gunkel, R. Hirsch-Luipold, and J.R. Levison, “Plutarch and Pentecost: An Exploration in Interdisciplinary Collaboration,” in Frey and Levison, *Holy Spirit* (see n. 2), 63–94, here 77.

If one inquires about the pagan understanding of spirit, one cannot focus on the word πνεῦμα alone. Such a deficiency, however, can be observed in many publications, even recent ones.¹¹ The New Testament authors themselves struggled to find the best choice of words for the phenomenon they were describing. This approach is supported even further when considering Philo since his works represent an excellent example of terminological variability. Philo did not focus on lexemes but on phenomena:

Others there are of perfect purity and excellence, gifted with a higher and diviner temper, that have never felt any craving after the things of earth, but are viceroys of the Ruler of the universe, ears and eyes, so to speak, of the great king, beholding and hearing all things. These are called “demons” (ταύτας δαίμονας) by the other philosophers, but the sacred record is wont to call them “angels” (ἀγγέλους) or messengers, employing an apter title, for they both convey the biddings of the Father to His children and report the children’s need to their Father. (*Somn.* 1.140–141; see also *Gig.* 6–7)¹²

Unlike the Synoptics, Philo does not connect the δαιμόνιον with the πνεῦμα. But on the basis of this passage from Philo, it is methodologically reasonable to compare the πνεῦμα-παράκλητος with the δαιμόνιον. It is therefore crucial to grasp the notion of spirit each author has circumscribed with their respective chosen vocabulary.

2.2 The Peculiar Use of δαιμόνιον in John

John contains not only references to πνεῦμα and παράκλητος but also references to δαιμόνιον. The δαιμόνιον is mentioned in three passages: John 7:20; 8:48–52; 10:20–21. All three references share the following five characteristics: (1) Δαιμόνιον is used in the singular. John never uses the plural δαιμόνια (or δαίμονες) in his gospel. (2) Within the context of all three passages, Jesus is accused of having a δαιμόνιον. (3) It is interesting that only Jesus faces the accusation of having a δαιμόνιον; no one else has a δαιμόνιον in John (cf. John the Baptist in Luke 7:33). (4) The accusation always results from Jesus’s speech. His deeds do not lead to an accusation but rather his message. The daimonic activity is thus connected primarily with teaching and not with miracles or ecstatic experiences. On the contrary, the miracles are cited as evidence against a daimonic influence (John 10:21). (5) The question disputed is always: Who really teaches in the name

11 See R. Feldmeier, *The Spirit of God: Biblical Pneumatology in Its Religious-Historical Context* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2022), and J.S. Adimula, *Πνεῦμα: From the Spiritual Condition of Christ to the Holy Spirit-Agent; A Dialectic of Flesh-Spirit at the Root of New Testament Pneumatology*, EBib 85 (Leuven: Peeters, 2021).

12 Trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker (LCL).

of God? Who really has teachings from God? Who has the right message that testifies of heaven such that the messenger actually honors God?

Hence, John omits a direct association of πνεῦμα and δαιμόνιον, and its usage differs from the other Gospels (e. g., Luke 9:37–43). The influence of a δαιμόνιον is seen as the cause of what opponents believe to be unreasonable and ungodly teachings.

2.3 Conclusion

The two observations call for a closer look at the understanding of δαιμόνιον. On the one hand, it seems that the notion of the spirits in the Gospels can be more closely grasped with it. On the other hand, the notion of δαιμόνιον in Hellenistic literature should be considered in order to draw conclusions about the Gospel of John.

3 Daimonion in Plato, Plutarch, and Apuleius

For the reasons discussed above, it is necessary to sketch the main characteristics of the δαίμονια or δαίμονες in Plato, Plutarch, and Apuleius or, more specifically, of the Daimonion of Socrates.¹³ Currently, there is an intense discussion in scholarship on ancient philosophy that shows the relevance of δαίμονες in Hellenistic thought during the first century CE.¹⁴

¹³ The use and distinction of the two terms δαίμονες and the substantiated adjective δαιμόνια are complex. But *Symp.* 202d and the combination of *Apol.* 24b–c and 27c–d show that both terms are related to each other in the Platonic tradition. P. Destrée, “The *Daimonion* and the Philosophical Mission: Should the Divine Sign Remain Unique to Socrates,” *Apeiron* 38 (2005), 63–79, here 63, proposes one possible explanation for the differentiation: “it is probably because they do not want to confuse this ‘daimonic thing’, whatever it may be, with some traditional religious way of considering a daimon as a personal guardian or the destiny of a person, that they both intentionally avoided such appellation.”

¹⁴ Some of the latest publications on this are A. Lännström, “Trusting the Divine Voice: Socrates and His *daimonion*,” *Apeiron* 45 (2012), 42–59; J.F. Finamore, “Plutarch and Apuleius on Socrates’ *Daimonion*,” in *The Neoplatonic Socrates*, ed. D.A. Layne and H. Tarrant (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 36–50; J. Brandt, “Socrates, the *Daimonion*, and Rational Trust: A Perspectival Account,” *Apeiron* 50 (2017), 415–433; B. Ehli, “Rationalizing Socrates’ *daimonion*,” *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 26 (2018), 225–240; S. Jedrkiewicz, “A Literary Challenge: How to Represent Socrates’ *Daimonion*,” in *Socrates and the Socratic Dialogue*, ed. A. Stavru and C. Moore (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 299–318. For a more general introduction, see G. Sfameni Gasparro, “Daimonic Power,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, ed. E. Eidinow and J. Kindt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 413–427.

3.1 Plato

To begin, the fundamental question arises whether there is a unified concept of δαίμονες in Plato's works. Mark Joyal remarks:

As it is, *to daimonion* in Plato's works is presented inconsistently, even incoherently, and is so often influenced by the demands or the convenience of context that it is sometimes hard to know whether we are dealing with the same phenomenon from one of its appearances to another.¹⁵

The idea that Plato used the word δαίμόνιον in a form adapted to each work, and consequently that there is no overarching concept of δαίμόνιον, should certainly be taken into account. Nevertheless, Plato's texts, and thus the individual elements, can be combined with each other, an approach that Plato himself prompts by referring to the same phenomenon in different texts, namely, the Daimonion of Socrates. Thus, Plato suggests that the reader should entertain intertextual connections. Constructive philosophy in the Middle Platonic tradition acted accordingly wherein interpreters would combine the different statements from *Apology*, *Symposium*, *Timaeus*, *Phaedrus*, etc. Therefore, it seems to me appropriate to grasp the basic contours of the notion of the δαίμονες in the works of Plato, within which, however, different expressions can be found in the individual works. Consequently, I will describe five main characteristics of the δαίμονες or δαίμόνια in Plato's work.¹⁶

First: The δαίμόνια or δαίμονες belong to the world of the gods. This classification becomes clear in the accusation against Socrates, "because he corrupts the youth and does not believe in the gods the state believes in (θεοὺς οὓς ἡ πόλις νομίζει οὐ νομίζοντα), but in other new spiritual beings (δαίμόνια καινά)" (*Apol.* 24b–c), and it becomes clear also in his defense:

[Socrates:] "But do we not think the spirits (δαίμονας) are gods or children of gods? Yes, or no?" [Meletos:] "Certainly." [Socrates:] "Then if I believe in spirits (δαίμονας), as you say, if spirits (δαίμονες) are a kind of gods (θεοὶ τινέες εἰσιν), that would be the puzzle and joke

15 M. Joyal, "To Daimonion and the Socratic Problem," in *Socrates' Divine Sign: Religion, Practice and Value in Socratic Philosophy*, ed. P. Destrée and N.D. Smith (Kelowna, British Columbia: Academic Printing and Publishing, 2005), 97–112, here 111.

16 The relationship between the noun δαίμων (masc./fem.) and the abstract δαίμόνιον (neut.) is complex (see n. 13). For their use in the *Apology*, see A. Timotin, *La démonologie platonicienne: Histoire de la notion de daimōn de Platon aux derniers néoplatoniciens*, PhA 128 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 52–55. See also Destrée, "Daimonion" (see n. 13), 76, and H. Nowak, *Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Begriffes Daimon: Eine Untersuchung epigraphischer Zeugnisse vom 5. Jh. v. Chr. bis zum 5. Jh. n. Chr.*, Dissertation an der Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn (Bonn: Universität Bonn, 1960), 31–37.

which I say you are uttering in saying that I, while I do not believe in gods, do believe in gods (θεούς) again, since I believe in spirits (δαίμονας).” (*Apol.* 27c–d)¹⁷

Even if the δαίμονες are counted among the gods, it should nevertheless be noted that, in the *Symposium*, an explicit differentiation is made between gods and δαίμονες in order to fathom the nature of Eros:

“What then,” I asked, “can Love [Eros] be? A mortal?” “Anything but that.” “Well what?” “As I previously suggested, between a mortal and an immortal.” “And what is that, Diotima?” “A great spirit (δαίμων μέγας), Socrates: for the whole of the spiritual (πᾶν τὸ δαιμόνιον) is between divine and mortal.” (*Symp.* 202d–e)

For this purpose, however, even the mythology had to be rewritten. Eros is now no longer unconceived as in Hesiod (*Theog.* 120–122) but is rather conceived during the festival of Aphrodite’s birth by Penia and Poros (*Symp.* 203b–e). As Kurt Sier precisely observes, Plato thereby “accepts a certain offense, [...] actually there should not be sexuality before ‘eroticism.’”¹⁸ Moreover, Eros is thus degraded in position. He is no longer one of the original four gods but merely one among many. This point is made explicitly in *Symp.* 203a: “Many and multifarious are these spirits, and one of them is Love” (οὔτοι δὴ οἱ δαίμονες πολλοὶ καὶ παντοδαποὶ εἰσιν, εἷς δὲ τούτων ἐστὶ καὶ ὁ Ἔρως). Nevertheless, the δαίμονες undoubtedly belong to the world of the gods.

Second: The δαίμονες represent the intersection of the earthly and heavenly worlds, the intersection between the mortal and immortal worlds, as explained particularly in the *Symposium*:

“Possessing what power?” I asked. “Interpreting and transporting human things to the gods and divine things to men; entreaties and sacrifices from below, and ordinances and requitals from above: being midway between, it makes each to supplement the other, so that the whole is combined in one. Through it are conveyed all divination and priestcraft concerning sacrifice and ritual and incantations, and all soothsaying and sorcery. God with man does not mingle: but the spiritual is the means of all society and converse of men with gods and of gods with men, whether waking or asleep. Whosoever has skill in these affairs is a spiritual man to have it in other matters, as in common arts and crafts, is for the mechanical.” (*Symp.* 202b–203a)

This passage does not require lengthy commentary. The δαίμονες mediate between the humans and the gods. In this way also the Daimonion of

17 Here and the following trans. of Plato taken from H. North Fowler or W.R.M. Lamb (LCL).

18 K. Sier, *Die Rede der Diotima: Untersuchungen zum platonischen Symposium*, Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 86 (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1997), 52 (“Platon nimmt [...] einen gewissen Anstoß in Kauf, [...] eigentlich dürfte es vor der ‘Erotik’ Sexualität nicht geben”).

Socrates is to be understood as an experience at the intersection of divine and earthly world.

Third: Like the gods, the δαίμονες are understood as independent beings and cannot be reduced to a power or substance. A δαίμων is a personal entity. To give one example, I quote from *Phaedr.* 246e. Here, the δαίμονες are personal beings following behind the gods:

Now the great leader in heaven, Zeus, driving a winged chariot, goes first, arranging all things and caring for all things. He is followed by an army of gods and spirits (τῶ δ' ἔπειτα στρατιὰ θεῶν τε καὶ δαιμόνων), arrayed in eleven squadrons; Hestia alone remains in the house of the gods. (*Phaedr.* 246e–247a)

Furthermore, a δαίμων does not act generally but exclusively in a personal way. The Daimonion of Socrates is exemplary in this regard. This personal understanding corresponds also to the popular belief that connected deceased souls with the δαίμονες.

Fourth: The discussion of the δαίμονες is most closely related to the Daimonion of Socrates, for whom the experience of this divine voice (φωνή, *Apol.* 31d) gave decisive impetus to his speech and action (see *Apol.* 40a–c; *Phaedr.* 242c; *Theaet.* 151a; *Resp.* 496c).¹⁹ It is from this experience that the phenomenon is examined.

My good friend, when I was about to cross the stream, the spirit and the sign that usually comes to me came – it always holds me back from something I am about to do – and I thought I heard a voice from it which forbade my going away before clearing my conscience, as if I had committed some sin against deity. Now I am a seer, not a very good one, but, as the bad writers say, good enough for my own purposes; so now I understand my error. (*Phaedr.* 242b–c)

However, Plato's later work *Timaeus* is somewhat different. Although the Socratic experience is implied (*Tim.* 25e–26a), the starting point is a cosmological one, independent of Socrates. Thus, the question shifts from personal experience to a purely philosophical discussion. Nevertheless, the importance of experience should not be ignored.

Fifth: The δαίμονες enable relationships. Primarily, the focus is on the relationships between humans and gods, as we saw in the earlier quotation from *Symp.* 202b–203a. In *Timaeus*, again, a changed view can be discerned. Here the relationship with the deceased comes into view:

¹⁹ So also Destrée, "Daimonion" (see n. 13), 77, who argues convincingly for the Daimonion not being an experience limited to Socrates, but that Socrates serves as the first true philosopher as a paradigm to imitation. Thus *Resp.* 496c also at least hints at this possibility.

We declare that God has given to each of us, as his *daemon*, that kind of soul which is housed in the top of our body and which raises us – seeing that we are not an earthly but a heavenly plant up from earth towards our kindred in the heaven. (*Tim.* 90a)

It is important to note that the δαίμων dwells in the human body – a point that will be criticized later by Plutarch. Whereas in Plato’s earlier works the δαίμονες were localized outside the human being or as an external experience, the daimonic is internalized and becomes a general anthropological principle. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this part called δαίμων is a gift assigned to the human being and dwells within the human being. This very idea shows that the δαίμων is not intermingled with the human being. It is a kind of indwelling of the δαίμων in the human being. In this formulation, the idea of community resonates and leads to the relationship to the deceased.

3.2 Plutarch

Plato’s explanation of the δαίμονες and especially of Socrates’s Daimonion was widely received and discussed in the Middle Platonic tradition.²⁰ There, we find in the texts of Plutarch the same five characteristics previously mentioned. Thus, a certain consistency in the tradition can be observed. As an example, I will only provide a few excerpts from Plutarch’s writing *De genio Socratis*, or Greek *Περὶ τοῦ Σωκράτους δαιμονίου*.²¹

In *De genio Socratis*, Plutarch discusses the manner one experiences the δαίμονες and in doing so deepens a point emphasized earlier. How does one hear this voice? Is it a sneeze? Does it depend on whether one sneezes to the left or to the right (581a–582c)? Does this voice manifest itself while someone is asleep or awake or both (589d)? It is important to emphasize that the sign of the δαίμονες is perceptible to the one who has a corresponding mental receptivity:

In the same way, the thoughts of *daimones* pass everywhere, but echo only in the ears of those who have an untroubled personality and whose soul is tranquil, “holy” and “daemonic” individuals, as we call them. (589d)²²

20 As an introduction, see J.M. Dillon, “Dämonologie im frühen Platonismus,” in *Apuleius, De Deo Socratis, Über den Gott des Sokrates*, by M. Baltes et al., SAPERE 7 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004), 123–141, and P. Donini, “Sokrates und sein Dämon im Platonismus des 1. und 2. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.,” *ibid.*, 142–161.

21 Also important to consider are *De Iside et Osiride* and *De defectu oraculorum*. I analyze these texts in my larger project.

22 Trans. here and in what follows taken from D.A. Russell, in *Plutarch, On the Daimonion of Socrates*, ed. H.-G. Nesselrath, R. Feldmeier, and R. Hirsch-Luipold, SAPERE 16 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

Here, it also becomes evident that the Daimonion is not limited to Socrates alone. The issue of how the δαίμονες affect people is explained a little later:

When the *daimon* pulls on it, it induces what is called repentance for misdeeds and shame for illicit and uncontrolled pleasures. This shame is a painful wound felt because the soul is from this point being checked by its controlling and ruling power, and it continues to be felt until this chastisement makes the soul accustomed and responsive to the rein, like a well-broken animal, needing no blow or pain, but quickly becoming aware of the *daimon* through symbols and signs. (592b–c)

So far, the δαίμονες seem to be something external to the human that affect him. But there are also texts that then show that a person becomes a δαίμων for others:

The gods honour the lives of a few men whom they wish to make supremely blessed and truly godly; but souls which have done with Becoming are free from concern with the body and are left as it were to range free – these are, as Hesiod tells us, the *daimones* that take care of humans. (593d)

With this, an inconsistency now emerges in the notion of the δαίμων, for the divine and earthly-human worlds intermingle. But Plutarch insists that the δαίμων is something external to man. Yet with that interpretation, he has to correct Plato, who says in *Tim.* 90 that the δαίμων resides in the body, as we saw earlier.²³ Plutarch writes:

The part submerged in the body is called the soul (ψυχή): the part that survives destruction is commonly called Intellect (νοῦν), and people believe it to be within themselves, just as they believe reflections to be in mirrors. Those who have the right idea of it, however, call it *daimon* (δαίμονα), regarding it as outside themselves. (591e)

Every ψυχή is related with the νοῦς (591). Νοῦς exists in the earthly human being as well. But the δαίμων is that part related to the νοῦς that is not incarnated and that remains outside of the body or is freed from the body again.²⁴ The δαίμων thus remains a quantity distinct from the earthly man, which acts upon him and therefore cannot be identified with the νοῦς.²⁵

23 J. Dillon, “Plutarch and the Separable Intellect,” in *Estudios sobre Plutarco: Misticismo y religiones místicas en la obra de Plutarco; Actas del VII Simposio Español sobre Plutarco, Palma Mallorca, 2–4 de noviembre de 2000*, ed. A. Pérez Jiménez and F. Casadés Bordoy (Madrid: Ediciones Clásicas, 2001), 34–44, here 40.

24 K. Döring, “Plutarch und das Daimonion des Sokrates (Plut., *de genio Socratis* Kap. 20–24),” *Mnemosyne* 37 (1984), 376–392, here 384.

25 Therefore, from an anthropological point of view, it is too inaccurate when Brenk sees an “identification of *daimon* with *nous*” and like many others speaks of the *Nous-Daimon*; cf. F.E. Brenk, “Plutarch’s Daimonology,” in *Frederick E. Brenk on Plutarch, Religious Thinker and Biographer: “The Religious Spirit of Plutarch of Chaironeia” and “The Life of Mark Antony”*, ed. L. Roig Lanzillotta, Brill’s Plutarch Studies 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 43–65, here 51–52.

The goal, however, is ultimately to participate more and more in this δαίμων, so that one can get out of the cycle of rebirth in the body, thus completely becoming a δαίμων:

So those who have retired from the contests of life and, because of the excellence of their soul (ψυχῆς), have become *daimones*. (593e)

Plutarch's intention is to bring together all the different notions of δαίμονες, as the human soul and the celestial voice, into one overall cosmological concept. But difficulties and contradictions remain. Here, it becomes obvious that a sticking point is the connection between incarnation and daimonology, which he wants to separate consistently.

3.3 Apuleius

Another approach is taken by Apuleius of Madaurus (Algeria), who lived from about 120 to 170 CE. Apuleius sees himself primarily in the tradition of Platonism. Therefore, it is not surprising that the first word of *De deo Socratis* is the name of Plato. In his philosophy, however, he also incorporates Aristotelian, Stoic, and Pythagorean references.²⁶ With *De deo Socratis* "we have the most complete connected version of Middle Platonic demonology extant," as John Dillon writes.²⁷ However, Apuleius does not try to describe the cosmological connection of the different aspects of the *daemonum* but instead wants to bring order into the daimonic world by classifying them into different groups. Thus, he identifies different kinds of *daemonum*: (1) the human soul as a *daemon*, (2) the souls of the deceased as *daemonum*, and, distinct from the former two, (3) the higher *daemonum*, the celestial ones, which were never in bodies.

This allows Apuleius to avoid the problem of conflating the human and divine *daemonum*. They are simply assigned to different categories. Thus, both *Symp.* 202e and *Tim.* 90a–c can be integrated into a coherent concept of the *daemonum*. However, this ordering approach cannot hide the fact that certain points stand in a particular tension with each other in terms of content. This is especially true when one considers the Platonic texts

²⁶ These are also explicitly named in *Deo deo Socratis*; cf. M. Bingenheimer, *Lucius Apuleius von Madaura, De Deo Socratis/Der Schutzgeist des Sokrates* (Frankfurt am Main: Haag & Herchen, 1993), 77, and J. Beaujeu, *Apulée, Opuscules philosophiques (Du dieu de Socrate; Platon et sa doctrine; Du monde) et fragments*, Budé (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1973), 10–14.

²⁷ J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1996), 320.

themselves, which in no way present the notion of the δαίμονες in such a systematized manner.

Of particular interest, however, are the higher *daemonum*, which are described in detail according to their function:

Well, among this crowd of higher spirits, so Plato affirms, particular ones are set over particular persons to be witnesses and guardians in the course of their life; visible to no one, they are always at hand, observing not only their actions but their thoughts too. But when our life is done and we must return, the same spirit who had been set over us immediately catches us and drags us before the judgment seat as if we were his prisoners, and there he stands beside us as we plead our case, refuting any lies we tell and corroborating us in any truths; in short, his testimony determines the verdict that is handed down. (*De deo Socr.* 16.3–4)²⁸

Andrei Timotin asked whether influence from Christian apocryphal traditions can already be detected in Apuleius. He sees such a possibility especially in view of a guardian angel who appears as a witness at the last judgment, as it is found in *Vis. Paul* 14:4–6; *Apoc. Paul* (NHC V,2) 20–21; and *T. Ab.* 12–13.²⁹ This connection is not impossible. Of course, the figure of the *daemon* who accompanies the dead into the underworld is already similarly attested in *Phaed.* 107d and 113d. But leading the soul into the underworld should be distinguished from the judgment, in which the *daemon* appears as a witness. This function is evidenced explicitly in the Platonic tradition for the first time in Apuleius, which Timotin rightly points out. In any case, new functions are added here to the higher *daemonum* that are now also connected with a changed eschatology. This supports a special closeness to early Christian tradition, such that early Christian writings and Middle Platonic texts can be brought into discussion on this point.

But many more functions are added that further emphasize the personal understanding of the *daemonum* and therein describe them as companions of the individuals:

This being that I talk of is a personal guardian, single overseer, household watchman, private caretaker, intimate acquaintance, tireless observer, inescapable onlooker, inseparable witness, who reproves your bad deeds and approves your good ones. Provided that he receives proper notice, attentive recognition, scrupulous worship, as Socrates worshiped his in justice and innocence, he alerts you in uncertainty, forewarns you in

²⁸ Here and the following trans. of Apuleius taken from C.P. Jones (LCL).

²⁹ “Il n’est pas exclu qu’Apulée ait eu accès à une ou plusieurs de ces sources dont il a pu prendre connaissance lors de ses voyages dans le monde méditerranéen (en Égypte, en particulier), et auxquelles il a pu emprunter des motifs comme l’ange-témoin ou le jugement-tribunal” (Timotin, *La démonologie platonicienne* [see n. 16], 273). Traces of this can also be found in Origen, *Hom. Luc.* 35.3–4.

doubt, protects you in danger, supports you in need; by dreams or omens, or perhaps in person if the situation demands, he can sweep away what is evil and promote what is good, raise up what is cast down, steady what is tottering, illuminate what is dark, guide success and undo failure. (*De deo Socr.* 16.7–9)

If one takes note of the task of these heavenly *daemonum*, it will hardly be surprising that this idea would be brought into conversation with the Spirit-Paraclete of John. It is true that Apuleius has been used in various places in New Testament research to analyze aspects of contemporary traditions. Interestingly, however, the writing *De deo Socratis* has hardly been discussed with regard to the *daemonum*.³⁰ Obviously, we are now at a point where the conversation between the Christian and Hellenistic notions of spirits are converging.

3.4 Conclusion

The observations presented allow the conclusion that the idea of δαίμονες was widespread and widely discussed in the Hellenistic context. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that a person like the author of the Gospel of John could know of Socrates's Daimonion even without exegetical knowledge of the Platonic writings.³¹

4 The Platonic Daimonion and the Johannine Pneuma-Paraclete

When the insights presented above are brought into conversation with the Gospel of John and its interpretation, we can draw a number of conclusions.

(1) The widespread diffusion of the discourse of Socrates's Daimonion in the first century hints at an understanding of the spirit as personal being.

The wide dissemination of the idea of a personified spirit named Daimonion shows that the notion of a Pneuma-Paraclete was by no means ex-

30 Exemplary is I.H. Henderson, "Apuleius of Madauros," in *The Historical Jesus in Context*, ed. A.-J. Levine, D.C. Allison Jr., and J.D. Crossan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 193–205.

31 One could also add the *Tabula of Cebe*, a writing probably from the first century. This work also confirms how popular the idea of the Daimonion was in the first century. See R. Hirsch-Luipold et al., *Die Bildtafel des Kebe*. *Allegorie des Lebens*, SAPERE 8 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2005). See further Maximus of Tyre, *Or.* 8–9 on Socrates's Daimonion.

ceptional. The notion of personal spirits was not only widespread in the context of ancient Judaism but also among the Hellenists. The difference between the Daimonion of Socrates and the Pneuma-Paraclete of Jesus is not so much based on the function of the spirit. Nor is the difference based on the spirit's intermediate position and mediation between heaven and earth. Nor is the difference based on a personal identity of the spirit, as it was often assumed in the history of research. On the contrary, these parallels make the notion of a spirit understood as a personal agent all the more plausible, above all because the Synoptic Gospels combine the terms πνεῦμα and δαιμόνιον.

(2) The difference between the positive notion of the Daimonion of Socrates and the exclusively negative δαιμόνιον in the Gospels reveals the importance of the Septuagint. As we have already demonstrated, the δαιμόνιον in John is brought up in the context of who has the right testimony from God and teaches accordingly. This use of the term δαιμόνιον or δαίμων as a means of questioning the proper worship of God is also confirmed in the Septuagint. These terms are found only sixteen times in the Septuagint³² and have exclusively negative connotations, as it is the case in John.³³ It is interesting that the δαιμόνιον is compared with πνεῦμα πονηρόν (Tob 6:8), suggesting that there was also an awareness that the δαιμόνιον could be understood neutrally or positively. Furthermore, it is important to note that δαιμόνιον is used for false, non-existent gods:³⁴

Deut 32:17: ἔθυσαν δαιμονίους καὶ οὐ θεῶ, θεοῖς, οἷς οὐκ ᾔδεισαν, καινοὶ πρόσφατοι ἤκασιν, οὓς οὐκ ᾔδεισαν οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν (“They sacrificed to demons, not God, to deities they had never known, to new ones recently arrived, whom your ancestors had not feared”).

Psalm 95:5 LXX: ὅτι πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν δαιμόνια, ὁ δὲ κύριος τοὺς οὐρανοὺς ἐποίησεν (“For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens”).

Isa 65:3: Ὁ λαὸς οὗτος ὁ παροξύνων με ἐναντίον ἐμοῦ διαπαντός· αὐτοὶ θυσιάζουσιν ἐν τοῖς κήποις, καὶ θυμιῶσιν ἐπὶ ταῖς πλίνθοις τοῖς δαιμονίοις, ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν (“This people who provokes me is before me always; they sacrifice in their gardens and burn incense on their bricks to demons that do not exist”).

32 Δαιμόνιον: Deut 32:17; Tob 3:8, 17; 6:8, 15, 16, 17; 8:3; Ps 90:6; 95:5; 105:37; Isa 13:21; 34:14; 65:3; Bar 4:7, 35; δαίμων: Isa 65:11.

33 Thoroughly analyzed in A. Angelini, *L'imaginaire du démoniaque dans la Septante: Une analyse comparée de la notion de "démon" dans la Septante et dans la Bible hébraïque*, JSJSup 197 (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

34 Angelini, *L'imaginaire du démoniaque* (see n. 33), 184–224.

The term δαιμόνιον is associated with idolatry, which can therefore justify the evangelists' exclusively negative view of it.³⁵ The accusation against Jesus would accordingly be that he proclaims false gods, which fits the context particularly well in each case.

(3) The mention of the δαιμόνιον in John suggests the relevance of the Platonic tradition. The three occurrences of the δαιμόνιον in John seem to be closer to the idea associated with the accusation of Socrates than to the doctrine of spirits as we know it in Jewish writings such as Jubilees or the Qumran Rule of the Yaḥad (1QS). At issue is not a battle between good and evil spirits. At no point in his Gospel does John mention an unclean spirit, contrary to the Synoptic Gospels. Furthermore, unlike the Synoptics, John does not combine the terms δαιμόνιον and πνεῦμα.

This particular use cannot be explained by the Septuagint either. For the Septuagint attests to the combination of πνεῦμα and δαιμόνιον in Tob 6:8 and also mentions evil demons in Ps 90:6 LXX and Tob 3:8.³⁶ So the precise application of the word δαιμόνιον in John as an accusation against Jesus's preaching could be an indication that the author was aware of the Platonic tradition, especially of Socrates's Daimonion.

(4) The fact that πνεῦμα is associated with παράκλητος excludes the Stoic interpretation. The only philosophical tradition in which the concept of πνεῦμα plays a central role is Stoicism. But here the πνεῦμα does not represent a supernatural or spiritual being. The πνεῦμα is the finest divine substance, which holds the world together.³⁷ Thus, we find the same word found in the Gospels. But it is difficult to combine this cosmological and pantheistic understanding of πνεῦμα with the Spirit-Paraclete in John, where the Spirit is clearly described with personal characteristics and pantheistic thoughts are completely alien to it. On the contrary, the connection of πνεῦμα with παράκλητος supports the notion of a personal spirit

35 Also Paul mentions the δαιμόνια in context of idolatry in 1 Cor 10:20–21. In this Angelini recognizes a specifically biblical use. “La spécificité biblique réside, surtout, dans le lien étroit qui se développe entre la critique des démons et la polémique contre les idoles, au point que les deux peuvent être considérés comme des fautes culturelles fonctionnellement équivalentes” (Angelini, *L'imaginaire du démoniaque* [see n. 33], 223).

36 Angelini, *L'imaginaire du démoniaque* (see n. 33), 289–300.

37 T. Tieleman, “The Spirit of Stoicism,” in Frey and Levison, *Holy Spirit* (see n. 2), 39–62, and M. Forschner, *Die Philosophie der Stoa: Logik, Physik und Ethik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2018), 117–122.

that accompanies men.³⁸ The Paraclete is not connected with cosmology. On the contrary, the Paraclete is concerned with and facilitates relationships.³⁹ Thus, the Paraclete does not find its origins in or explanation on the basis of Stoicism.⁴⁰ The consideration of the Daimonion, which is found especially in the Platonic tradition, but which has also become increasingly important in the Stoic tradition,⁴¹ is therefore much more obvious and enlightening, because the discourse of the Daimonion at least offers the possibility of a personal understanding of the Spirit and is comparable with the Johannine Paraclete.

(5) The differences between the Daimonion of Socrates and the Pneuma-Paraclete of Jesus prove a new understanding, consciously distinguished from the Platonic notion. There are, however, important differences between Socrates's Daimonion and Jesus's Pneuma-Paraclete. Unlike Socrates, who did not want to deny the experience of a Daimonion, Jesus denies that he has a Daimonion. More importantly, the divine, Holy Spirit is referred to with other names: He is the Pneuma and Paraclete. What could be reasons for these differences?

There is a fundamentally different appraisal of Socrates and Jesus. Jesus is not an extraordinarily inspired teacher but God himself. The Spirit points to Jesus, who is at the center. Whereas for Socrates, the Daimonion is a superior and unknown entity. Socrates sees himself only as influenced by this divine voice, which he follows and obeys. Jesus, on the other hand, does not see himself as constrained by an unknown power. On the contrary, he

38 This criticism can also be found in V. Rabens, "Sein und werden in Beziehungen. Grundzüge relationaler Theologie bei Paulus und Johannes," in *Relationale Erkenntnishorizonte in Exegese und Systematischer Theologie*, ed. W. Bühner and R. Meyer zu Hörste-Bühner, Marburger theologische Studien 129 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2018), 91–143, here 136–137.

39 For a thorough analysis of Paraclete, see D. Pastorelli, *Le Paraclet dans le corpus johannique*, BZNW 142 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006). He concludes that the semantic commonality can only be seen in "the idea of spatial movement with an associated mandate" (292: "l'idée de mouvement spatial auquel est associée un mandat"), which, in my opinion, involves the encounter of two subjects.

40 For example, there is no reference to the paraclete in B. Inwood, *Later Stoicism, 155 BC to AD 200: An Introduction and Collection of Sources in Translation*, Cambridge Source Books in Post-Hellenistic Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), and in the index of SVF 4.

41 E.g., Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae* 7.88; Epictetus, *Diatr.* 1.14.11–15. See further A.A. Long, *Epictetus: A Stoic and Socratic Guide to Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 163–168. Moreover, it is obvious that the Fourth Gospel does not discuss the relationship between the elements and the ontology of πνεῦμα. This fact alone shows that John contains no Stoic discussion of πνεῦμα.

sees himself in communion with the Father and the Spirit, hence the need for another expression that emphasizes the relational side. It is understandable, then, that the author of the Fourth Gospel would have formulated the text in such a way that Jesus refuses to have a Daimonion and would have avoided this terminology and coined new terminology to describe the Spirit. The term πνεῦμα is prefigured by the Septuagint, which is already familiar with the “spirit of God” (e. g., Gen 1:2; Isa 61:1) and a Holy Spirit (e. g., Ps 51:13; Isa 63:10–11). The Septuagint also attests to a promise of the spirit that goes hand in hand with the messianic era.⁴² The term παράκλητος could probably be explained as an attempt to deepen the relational aspect.⁴³

Another difference between Plato’s Daimonion and Jesus’s Spirit-Paraclete lies in the relationship between spirit and man or more precisely between body and spirit. This relationship is important because behind it stands the encounter between the divine world and the earthly world. The goal of the Gospel of John is not spiritualization, that is, becoming a δαίμων by detaching oneself from the incarnation, as is the case in Platonism. Rather, the goal is the presence of God in the world, the dwelling of the incarnate Logos on earth. That is why the Spirit-Paraclete in John reminds the readers of Jesus of Nazareth, who lived and taught in space and time. The spirit and the body are not in conflict, for the body is the place of communion with God. The believer therefore does not become a spirit but is placed in a community with the Pneuma-Paraclete who bears witness to the incarnate Logos and leads the believer to eternal life.

This shows that Platonic thinking is certainly not the guiding principle in John. Instead, John must be situated in the context of Hellenistic Judaism (specifically also the Septuagint) and the Jesus tradition. Nevertheless, the discussion of the Spirit-Paraclete is not an absurdity for Hellenistic listeners. It seems as if the author had taken the Hellenistic background into

42 “We can say with confidence then that the meaning ‘spirit’ for πνεῦμα is a distinctly Jewish-Christian religious-technical use” (Paige, “Who Believes in ‘Spirit?’” [see n. 9], 433).

43 A different explication is proposed by Buch-Hansen, *Stoic Understanding of Pneuma* (see n. 5), 392: “But why does the Fourth Gospel employ various names for the seemingly same spiritual phenomenon? Probably the answer is the same as I have proposed in relation to the Johannine Jesus’ various names – the Son of God, Son of Man, the Messiah, the Anointed etc. By re-inscribing various traditions from contemporary Judaism and Hellenism into the narrative of Jesus of Nazareth, the Fourth Gospel reinterprets and controls the meaning of the shared signifiers.” But the problem is that there is no common tradition of the Paraclete before, which is why this explanation is not convincing.

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consideration by using the Daimonion quite specifically and at the same time describing the Pneuma-Paraclete in an independent, distinctive way. In so doing, he was able to provoke readers to reflect on who bears witness to the divine voice and to truth, which was a crucial question in both the Gospel of John and the Platonic tradition.

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