ship might wear the form of caricature, the grotesque, the farcical, and even the profane, as being merely the pan­tomime in which some recondite interior religion was dimly and wildly shadowed. The people laughed at what they saw and heard at their festivals. But amidst their laugh there was evidently a feeling of awe, which sub­dued the luxury of their mirth ; a consciousness that, whilst they sportively shook the chain of their superstition, its iron entered into their soul. We see, on the other hand, Aspasia, the favourite of Pericles, at the time of the great­est popularity of that most popular leader, summoned before the courts, to answer a charge of impiety, and scarcely de­fended by the eloquence and the tears of Pericles himself, from the inexorable power, whose vengeance she had pro­voked by her philosophical speculations. Protagoras, ad­mired as he was and courted at Athens for his talents in his profession of a Sophist, was expelled from the city and bor­ders of Attica by the Athenians, and his books were collect­ed by proclamation and burnt in their agora, for his avowed scepticism as to the existence of the gods.@@1 Æschylus, whose very poetry is instinctive with religion, was accused before the Areopagus of divulging the mysteries in one of his tragedies.@@1 The philosopher Anaxagoras, like Galileo under his papal inquisitors, suffered imprisonment at the hands of Athenian persecutors, for having asserted the ma­terial nature of the heavenly bodies, and only escaped death by the intervention of Pericles, and by exile from his adopt­ed home. The extent again, to which prosecutions for of­fences against the popular religion could be carried at Athens, is shewn in the number of persons who were im­prisoned on suspicion of being implicated in the impieties charged on Alcibiades, and the execution of so many, on that occasion of panic, on the unsupported evidence of se­cret informers. Lastly, not many years before the accusa­tion of Socrates, Diagoras the Melian, and Theodorus of Cyrene, were branded with the epithets of atheists ; and the former was forced to fly from Athens on a charge of profa­nation of the rites, with the price of a talent set on his head for any one who should kill him. And long after the time of Socrates, the same spirit subsisted to drive Aristotle from the Lyceum, and later still, to intimidate the speculations of Epicurus. So strictly was the *authority* of the establish­ed worship guarded by a jealous and watchful inquisitorial power, in a state which boasted of its perfect liberty of speech, its *παρρησiα,* above all others.

In fact, there was no liberty of speech on this subject in Greece. Every thing relating to religion was to be receiv­ed as handed down from former ages ; as the wisdom of an immemorial antiquity, home along on the lips of the priest and the prophet, or impressed on mystic rituals, the heredi­tary trust of sacred families, or symbolized in the pomp and pageant of festivals and games, in the graceful majesty of temples, and the solemn shadows of sacred groves. The inward devotion of such a religion naturally took the form of silence, and reserve, and awe. It was concentrated in the simple dread of profanation. The more superstitious indeed a people is, the more necessary is it that the rites of their religion should be strictly shut up from all inquiry, and a feeling of reserve should be inculcated as essential to the religious character. It is the indefiniteness of super­stition that holds together the system. Let any one part of the vaguely-floating system be touched too palpably, and the whole crumbles. Thus it has been found, that su­perstition and infidelity have always gone hand in hand. Diagoras was made an atheist from being at first supersti­tious. The Athenian people, in like manner, from their su­perstitious character, were peculiarly exposed to a reac­tion of impiety. And it was but a wise policy, therefore, that the religion of Athens should be jealously guarded with an awe forbidding all inquiry into its truth.

The colloquial and lively spirit of the Athenians miti­gated the intensity of this feeling in the minds of the people at large ; and the managers of the system were fain to re­lieve it, by blending recreation, and mirth, and interesting spectacles, with its public celebration. Grecian supersti­tion accordingly, whilst it bore the essential marks of its oriental origin, in the submissiveness exacted of its votaries, and its mystic reserve, assumed also the mask of cheerful expression characteristic of the genius of the people. Still we see that submissiveness and that reserve strongly mark­ed in the stern denial of the right, not only of private judg­ment on questions of religion, but even of bringing such questions at all into discussion.

Now, though, as we have already observed, we cannot distinctly trace the steps by which this spiritual despotism was brought to bear on Socrates, we cannot doubt that his was a case which must have attracted its notice. During more than forty years, Socrates had been seen at Athens, going about among all classes of the people, exciting among them a spirit of moral inquiry, urging on them the importance and the duty of self-knowledge, of taking no opinion on mere hearsay, or indolent and self-satisfied trust, but of bringing every thing to the test of discussion and learning, of acquainting themselves, as their first step to knowledge, with the depth and extent of their igno­rance. Observers saw in this extraordinary teacher, one of their own citizens, educated in their own institutions, fami­liar with the habits of Athenian life, ever at home among themselves, recommending himself alike to the young and the old, by the honest though quaint dignity of his manner, and the interest and charm of his conversation. He was not, like Anaxagoras, or Protagoras, or Prodicus, a stranger sojourning among them ; a philosopher or rhetorician by profession, or one pursuing philosophy as a trade and a source of subsistence, waiting to be resort­ed to and courted by the affluent and noble, and reserv­ing himself for occasions of display or profit ; but he was found, an Athenian among Athenians, in the market place, in the streets, in the work-shops, at the tables of the wealthy, himself seeking out persons to instruct, asking questions of all around him, and engaging them, even in spite of them­selves, in conversation with him.@@3 In other teachers, philo­sophy had spoken, according to the observation already made, as from an oracular shrine, to those only who came to inquire of it as votaries and disciples. With Socrates, philosophy walked abroad, insinuating itself into the scenes and business of daily life, and drawing forth the secret treasures of men’s minds with its own hands. According to that homely but apt illustration of his mode of teaching, which he was so fond of employing, from midwifery,

@@@ Diog. Laer. ix. c. 8. Cic. De Nat. Deor. i. 23. See the story of the daughter of Neæra, as told by Demosthenes, in his oration against Neæra, p. 1369. She had been married under the pretence of being an Athenian citizen, to an Athenian who served the office of the king-archon. As the wife of this officer of the state, she was admittcd to the rites of religion, and solemnly inducted into the mystic temple of Bacchus at Limns. But it was unlawful for any but a true-born citizen to enter into the temple, or to witness the rites ; and her husband consequently was tried before the court of Areopagus for the impiety, and only escaped on the plea of his ignorance of the fact, and on the condition of his dismissing her from his house.

@@@‘ Ælian, Var. Hist. v. 19.

@@@ Plato, Euthyphro. 3 d. *"Eγω δ's ροβοϋμαι, μη M f>ιλavδgu>rias δοxω aυrο'.* ô, *ri mg* sχω fxxιχι⅞u{κω( *m.ri àvdçi λiγtm,* où 'xéror, *âvfu μισύοΰ,* αλλά *xai* tjoλ√Λ⅞ ar *ήδιως lîrri μου ίίίλοι άχούιιν.* Op. t. i. p. 6. Xenoph. Mem. i. 2. ’Αλλά rivβi *rοι βl Mχ,βiaι, if>η, διηsu, ω Σύχςαπ;, riιι fxυrian* xαι *ran nxr6van xai ran χaλx'εan, xai γag olμaι* (Critias is speaking) *avroi∣ς ηδr xararεrξ!φ6aι διal)oυλλoυμinυ( wri mυ.* P. 21.