He saw, indced, how futile, as to any real knowledge of the universe, had been the inquiries of the early philosophers. As an Athenian, he participated in that general prejudice against physical science, which Athenians had ignorantly imbibed against all philosophy, when they characterized it as idle talk and drivelling dotage. But as a genuine philo­sopher, in spite of his Athenian prejudices, he saw and felt that there was a real moral agency pervading the world ; and he judged that, by observation of this, principles of real use for the right direction of human life might be discover­ed. Tinctured too, as an Athenian, with the superstition of his countrymen, and at the same time correcting it by his superior judgment and feeling, he was disposed to draw every phenomenon into his moral and religious theory of the uni­verse. To stop to inquire into any thing whether it might be explained on simple natural causes, or to doubt its mo­ral design, would appear to his mind as sceptical and pro­fane. Hence, we see at once displayed in him the common character of the Athenian, in his dislike of physical science, and his susceptibility of superstitious influences from the most trivial things; and, on the other hand, the wisdom and religiousness of the true philosopher, in his constant devout disposition to refer all things to a providential design and moral agency.

It is well known how anxiously the heathens watched the most minute circumstances, not only in their reli­gious rites, but in the actions of daily life, as intimations of the will of the gods. Not only dreams and visions, but flights of birds, the meeting any particular object, sneezing, a voice, or any sound, and the like trivial things, were re­garded with seriousness and awe. Socrates felt the mystic influence of such incidents; only he thought more deeply on them than the generality, and that,—not with the vulgar emotions of fear or of hope, according as the omen might be interpreted,—but with calm and pious reference to the benevolent design which he attributed to them as divine intimations. Further, not only did he apply this sentiment to the outward circumstances of daily life ; but he also took into his view the state of his own mind. He conceived that he received at times mysterious signs distinctly percep­tible to himself, not indeed of any positive good to be ex­pected from a particular course of conduct, but of precau­tion,—warnings against evil concerning others as well as himself. These presages he interpreted,—or others perhaps, taking his account of his impressions in too literal a manner, have so represented it,—as a voice addressed to him on each occasion. Instances too, are alleged in which this divine voice was the means of saving him and those who obeyed its direction, from danger. In the retreat of the Athenians after the unfortunate battle at Delium, it is said to have prevented his taking a particular road, and thus saved him, together with Alcibiades and Laches, from being pursued and overtaken by the enemy ; whilst others taking another way were overtaken and slain.@@1 This circumstance, ac­cording to Plutarch, was a great occasion of the fame at Athens of the “ demonion,”—or “ genius,” as it was call­ed by Latin writers,—of Socrates.@@’ To this voice is attri­buted his active devotion of his life to the moral reform of his countrymen by private and personal addresses to them, and his refraining at the same time from all political exer­tion.

The name of a particular dæmonion, or genius, was evi­dently not assigned by Socrates himself to these extraordi­nary presages, while he confidently declared their reality. It was rather the misconstruction of the vulgar, and of his

assailants, interpreting what he affirmed generally of divine intimations, as assertions of the presence of some particular divinity ascertained by his own convictions, and distinct from the gods worshipped at Athens. Heathens were incapable of forming a notion of the Deity, but as a local and tutelary god. They could not rise to the sublime conception of the one universal Being, ***το δαιμόνιον,*** the God in all the world, than whom there is none else. In the view of Socrates, this belief in a presaging voice addressed to his private ear, was nothing more than an extension of the prophetic science, or divination of the heathen world, to practical purposes, and to the cultivation of religious feelings.

It must be remembered, that the Athenians had their augurs or prophets among the regular officers of the re­public, without whose presence no matter of public coun­sel or of war was ever transacted. These were the recog­nized interpreters of the divine will. But Socrates claimed a special authority for the presages with which he was peculiarly favoured, and thus seemed to innovate on the science, and encroach on the established forms, of divination. He enjoined, indeed, a devout reference to the Delphic oracle, in all questions of hazardous conduct, teaching that, whilst human reason was the guide in all matters of human power, in those, on the contrary, which were out of human power, as the future event of actions, resort should be had to every means offered for exploring the will of the gods. He professed to have adopted his own course of life on the evidence of such communications. He advised Xenophon to consult the Delphic oracle, as to whether he should do well in accepting the invitation of Proxenus to join the ex­pedition of Cyrus.@@3 But with this reverence for the re­cognized sources of divine information, he combined a sus­picion of the pretenders to prophecy, who were counte­nanced by the popular superstition,—the fcoμdrτ<ιr and ***χpησ∙*** μuδβt,—who abounded at Athens.@@4 He relied rather on the sagacious auguries of his own mind, drawn from observa­tion of some passing incident, or some rapid conclusion re­specting the consequences of actions—a kind of intuitive judgment and forecaste, mingling and confounding itself with his religious impressions,—a second hearing, as it were,—a perception of a voice unperceived by the common ear, mys­teriously telling of danger to come from some particular course of conduct. Thus was a pretext given to his enemies to say, that he introduced “ new divinities ;” whilst public opinion tolerated the grossest pretensions to divine revela­tions, and a system of mercenary imposture founded on them. Public opinion upheld the system of divination as it existed, with its external array of augurs, and prophets, and ceremonial. Socrates, on the contrary, led every man to consult the will of the Deity, not without devout preparation in the inward recesses of his own mind, nor without refer­ence to his own obedience and moral improvement.@@5 Super­stition, doubtless, strongly tinctured his notions of religious duty. This made him construe many things into divine in­timations, which were frivolous and irrelevant. Still he rose above the superstition of the popular divination, in the per­sonal piety which laid hold of each occasion for its exercise and cultivation, and taught men to regard the Divinity as in­terested in the protection of the good, and ever present to the words, and actions, and even the silent thoughts of men.@@6

Xenophon appears to have faithfully stated the difference between the popular divination and that professed by So­crates, in the following account : “ He introduced nothing new beyond others who, acknowledging the reality of di­vination, make use of omens, and voices, and objects pre-

@@@1 Plutarch, de Socr Gen. 298. Cicer∙ de Divin, i. 54.

@@@2 Ibid. p. 299.

@@@• Xenoph. Anab. iii. 1, 4.

@@@« Plato, Apol. 22. c. p. 51.

@@@• Plato, Alcib. ii. 150, p. 99. Καί *yàp Savin’* <⅛ <ι *πpos ra δώρα και 6υσιas άποβλίπουσιν ημών όι βtdi,* άλλα *μη irpos την ψvχhv, Sv* τιr *Sirios κal δίκαιοι, κ.* τ. λ.

@@@• Xen. Mem. i. 1, 19. Kni *yàp tπιμt)κiσlat 6coiιs lvoμιζtv avt)p<ιmωvt* oυχ *Sv τρόπον dl* πολλά! *voμsζoυσιv,* κ.τ.λ∙