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Mystères socratiques et traditions orales de l'eudémonisme dans les dialogues de Platon

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Summary

This work starts from the observation that the main message throughout Plato's *dialogues*, from the *Apologia* to the *Laws*, is less the doctrine of Ideas than the one of "eudaimonism". Happiness can be attained by human being, at least by his soul. In the dialogues, the main character who gives the message is merely Socrates: a philosopher aware of his own ignorance, but also constantly listening to the traditions of the Mysteries that, since time immemorial, reserved for the initiated men the supreme beatitude. So Socrates belongs to the culture of the Mysteries, which involves initiations and a certain practice of the secret. However, in *Apologia*, Plato first represented Socrates as a transparent philosopher who had nothing to hide. Later, in the *Theaetetus* and other *dialogues*, he describes Socrates' midwifery as shrouded in mystery. In doing so, Plato moves decidedly closer to the previous, "rather esoteric" depiction of Socrates established by Aristophanes.

Basing itself on both the study of the oft neglected correspondences between the two depictions, as well as the examination of the "oral structures" recurring in Plato's *Socratic dialogues*, the first objective of this book is to attempt to obtain a better understanding of the "Socratic phenomenon" in all its complexity.

The second aim of this study is to propose an unprecedented attempt to reconstruct the "Socratic Mysteries": during the discussions with his disciples, Socrates could be possessed by the *divine gift* (*theia moira*) and a *demonic wisdom* (*daimonia sophia*). By uttering the *legomena* (obscure and secret Orphic words about *eudaimonia*, salvation of soul), he *transposed the tradition*, drawing new meanings. As a philosopher (unlike Orphic priest-beggars or hierophants) he was also able to make explicit the meaning of the inspired words he spoke, through dialogue (*dialegesthai*). Socrates' cathartic practices of refutation (*elenchus*) and his fulgurous intuitions produced the greatest effect on the disciples, who became in their turn "struck and possessed". As seeds of truth (*spermata*), these intuitions marked the starting point of the maieutic process.