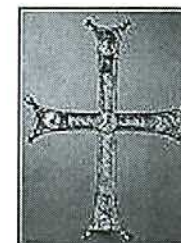




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Edward Moore
Executive Editor

On the Daemon

Phil Meade

There is an ancient tradition that at the start of every philosophical investigation it is the custom, at least for all who are sound minded, to invoke God. Golden Verse 29 of the Pythagorean Golden Verses states "Never start on your task until you have implored the blessing of the Gods." Plato in *Timeaus* 27c adds, "All who have even a small share of good sense call upon God always at the outset of every undertaking, be it small or great." In keeping with the ancients, may Divine inspiration be with us in our attempt to speak about the Good Daemons as guides and more to the ancients.

The focus of this paper will be to explore origins and various ideas concerning the Daemon as recorded in works of Philosophers, mythographers and astrologers. The time frame of our search will span almost two thousand years.

The Greek Philosopher Plotinus (205-270C.E.) is located almost right in the middle of this search for understanding of the Daemon. Homer and Hesiod would be at the beginning and we find Proclus, Michael Psellus and George Gemistos known as Plethon near the end of this search.



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Plotinus starts his discussion of the guardian daemon in Ennead 3.4. He is concerned in resolving an immanence-transcendence dilemma. Is the daemon operating in man's innermost mind like conscience or is the daemon as a transcendent being and in no sense as a force innate in and the property of the human soul. Plotinus' solution rests on Unity, upon the principal that the soul contains the whole intelligible world- in fact that we are "each of us an intelligible cosmos (ordered whole)." From the perspective of Unity we are our own daemon which may be us at a more refined level. The contrast that Plotinus is writing about is between Plato's *Phaedo* 107d where the daemon is represented as an individual entity:

For after death, as they say the daemon of each individual, to whom he belonged in life, leads him to a certain place in which the dead are gathered together, whence after judgement has been given they pass into the world below, following the guide, who is appointed to conduct them from this world to the other: and when they have received their due and remained their time, another guide brings

them back again after many revolutions of ages. (*Phaedo* 107d)

In *Timeaus* 90A of Plato it is identified with the highest part of the human soul. Somewhat implying that our guardian daemon is the level in the hierarchy of being next above that on which we habitually operate on. Hence, though immanent within us, it is yet transcendent to our normal life.

Plotinus tells us in *Enneads* IV.4.43:

Even Celestials, the Daemones, are not on their unreasoning side immune: there is nothing against ascribing acts of memory and experiences of sense to them, in supposing them to accept the traction of methods laid up in the natural order, and to give hearing to petitioners; this is especially true of those of them that are closest to this sphere, and in the degree of their concern about it.

Let us go back further in time to the *Iliad* of Homer to find more clues about this dilemma and perhaps begin to observe seed ideas that are developed through time. In the *Iliad* a wolf's rage, Lyssa, appears in the words of Odysseus describing Hector: "Hector, exulting greatly in his might, rages vehemently, relying on Zeus and holding no one in respect, neither men nor gods. And a powerful lyssa has entered him." (IX. 237-9) The warrior who is possessed by the lyssa had entered it seems into an altered state of conscious and has for a time stopped being fully human: daimoni isos, or resembling a supernatural being is the term used by Homer. This martial rage made warriors behave as Zeus' men or Odin's men if from the germanic tribes, making the men rush forward without armor, mad as dogs or wolves, who bit their shields and were as strong as bears or wild bulls, and killed people at a blow, but neither fire nor iron told upon themselves. This is known as the Berserker's fury, and is a recognized state of being that warriors have entered before a battle to save their land and family.

There are some indications that the idea of "Good Spirits" and "Guides" are connected with ancestors. The Pythagorean Golden Verse 4 "Honor the Divinities under the earth the daemons," supports this. Cross culturally the Egyptians and the Persians could have seeded these ideas to the Greeks. The Persian Zend Avesta makes mention of angelic/daemonic beings as guides for mankind. The Watchmen of Zeus whom Hesiod writes about in his *Works and Days* favors them as separate entities.

Thrice ten thousand are the servants of Zeus, immortal watchmen over mortal men; these watch deeds of justice and of wickedness, walking all ways up and down the earth clothed in the mist. (252 *Works & Days*)

The Stoics will echo this a few hundred years later.

Zeus has placed by every man a guardian, every man a daemon, to whom he has committed the care of the man; a guardian who never sleeps, is never deceived. (Epictetus, *Dissertation* I 14,12)

God is with in, and your daemon is with in." (Epictetus *Dissertation* I 14, 14)

Heraclitus states "Character is your daemon," in one of his fragments.

Pythagoras:

"Father Zeus, O free them all from suffering so great or show unto each the daimon, who is their guide." (Pythagorean Golden Verse 36)

The Poet/Philosopher Empedocles speaks of the long-lived daemons in his poem "On Nature" written in the 5th century before the Common Era in fragment 11/115:

There is an oracle of necessity, an ancient decree of the gods, eternal, sealed with broad oaths: whenever one, in his sins, stains his dear limbs with blood. Or by misdeed swears falsely, of the daimons that is who have won long-lasting life, he wanders for thrice ten thousand seasons away from the blessed ones, growing to be all sorts of forms of mortal things through time, interchanging the hard paths of life. For the strength of aither pursues him into the sea, and the sea spits him onto the surface of the earth and the earth into the beams of the blazing sun, and the sun throws him into the eddies of the air; and one after another receives him, but all hate him. I too am now one of these, an exile from the gods and a wanderer, trusting in mad strife.

The philosopher Democritus was concerned with Divine encounters and tried to understand the truth of these happenings. He attempts to connect them with the imagination and the image making ability of God.

Images draw near to human beings, and some of these do good and some do evil (wherefore Democritus prayed that he might have the fortune to meet happy images), and they are great and marvellous, and they are almost but not quite Imperishable, and they foretell coming events to human beings being visible and speaking. Wherefore men of old, perceiving these images, imagined that each was a god, although God in reality is only that which has Imperishable Nature. (Fragment FV, 55, B166)

Good mortals had the opportunity to choose to become daemons after death as is mentioned in Euripides play *Alcestis* 1003, Plato's *Laws* 713B, *Cratylus* 398B and Plutarch in his "Life of Socrates" 588C. This state is sometimes known as the Philanthropotaos Daemon or full of love for human beings spiritual guide.

Plato builds upon this idea of intermediaries between realms of being or realms of consciousness, with heroes, celestial souls and daemons to act as guides. Socrates has an ongoing dialogue with his personal daemon during much of his adult life which Plato writes about in his dialogue *Phaedrus*. In Plato's *Symposium*, Diotima expounds on the special powers belonging to the order of daemons.

They act, as interpreters and conveyers of human things to the gods, of divine things to men. They carry the prayers and sacrifices of men, the commandments of the gods and their responses to the sacrifices: Occupying a place between the two, they fill up a gap and cause the whole universe to be a coherent whole. All divination takes place by their means, the art of priests, the art of sacrifices and mystical rites and incantations; in a word, all divining and magic. A god has no immediate relation with a man, all converse between men and gods, whether in a waking state or in sleep, takes place through the Daemon-kind. (*Symposium* 202E)

Plato in his *Laws* 713 CD states:

"Kronos gave our communities as their kings and rulers, not men but Daimons, beings of diviner and superior kind just as we still do the same with our flocks of sheep and herds of other domesticated animals. We do not set oxen to manage oxen, or goats to manage goats; we their betters in kind, act as masters ourselves. So the god, in his kindness to man, did the same; he set over us the superior race of Daimones."

Hesiod is quoted in Plato's *Cratylus* 398b:

But now that fate has closed over this race they are holy daemons upon the earth, beneficent, averters of ills, guardians of mortal men.

The *Epinomis* makes the "Athenian Stranger" who has been the chief speaker in the Laws state that each of the five elements- earth, water, air, fire, and aither was the proper habitation of a special kind of living being. To the region of fire belong the visible gods-the heavenly bodies: To the aither and air the daemons, who have bodies composed of airy substance and are therefore invisible to us, and who are capable of emotion, which the true gods are not.

The daemon-kind occupies the intermediate region between men and gods and is the agent of interpretation: it is therefore to be specially honored by prayer in order that the right words may get through... Because the whole sky is full of living beings, they act as interpreters of everything to each other and to the supreme gods, being the intermediate kind of beings and ranging over the earth and over the whole sky with a wonderful swiftness. (*Epinomis* 984E-985B)

As intermediaries bridging the gap between man and god, daemons help prevent the universe from falling into two separate halves. The daemons share characteristics with both men and gods - with gods immortality, with men subjection to passion - and may therefore be seen as the mean between the two. Plutarch goes on to connect their position with that of the Moon and the World Soul. Plutarch tells of Xenocrates theory of daemons in his essay "On the Obsolescence of Oracles":

In the confines, as it were, between gods and men there exist certain natures susceptible to human emotions and involuntary changes, whom it is right that we, like our fathers before us, should regard as daemons, and calling them by name, should reverence. As an illustration of this subject, Xenocrates, the companion of Plato, employed the order of triangles; The equilateral he compared to the nature of the gods, the scalene to that of man, and the isosceles to that of the daemons; for the first is equal in all its lines, the second unequal in all, and the third is partly equal and partly unequal, like the nature of the daemons, which possesses human emotion and divine power. (Fr.23)

Briefly let us mention that Porphyry in his short biography of Plotinus tells us of a ritual means employed by an Egyptian Priest to discern the guiding spirit in Plotinus' life.

At the summons a Divinity appeared, not a being of the spirit-ranks, and the Egyptian exclaimed: 'You are singularly graced; the guiding-spirit within you is not of the lower degree but a God.' It was not possible, however, to interrogate or even to contemplate this God any further, for the priest's assistant who had been holding the birds to prevent them flying away, strangled them, whether through jealousy or in terror. Thus Plotinus had for indwelling spirit a being of more divine degree, and he kept his own divine spirit unceasingly intent upon that inner presence. It was this preoccupation that led him to write his treatise upon 'Our Tutelary Spirit,' an essay in the explanation of the differences among spirit-guides. (Porphyry "Life of Plotinus" 10)

Porphyry was a philosophic astrologer while a student of Plotinus and he discovered a rule on how to discern the guiding daemon astrologically. He speaks about the technique in his commentary on Ptolemy. In his *Sententiae* 32 he lays out a schema of man's ascent through the Virtues starting with the curbing of the passions and the arising of the virtuous man. Next with the cleansing of the passions the daemoniac man/ good daemon arises. In the development of intellectual/intuitive activity free from passions we move with the god. In the merging of the intellect with the ONE we move and merge with the father of the gods. He has his own encounter with merging at the age of 63. Porphyry, in his Letter to Anebo, expresses the idea that the true Eudaimon

(happiness, full good life) was the man who has reconciled with his natal daemon (Iamblichus' *On the Mysteries*, 275. 1-2). Iamblichus of Chalcis a pupil of Porphyry's devotes much of Book IX of his "On the Mysteries" to exploring two ways of finding out about the Daemon:

So therefore, to speak plainly, the treatment of the subject in respect to the personal daemon is twofold, theurgic and technic: the one evoking him from the categories above, and the other from the visible periods in the world of generated existence. The former (theurgic) makes no use of the art of casting nativities, but the latter is devoted to such pursuits. The former (theurgic) pays honor to the daemon more generally as superior to the province of nature, but the latter specifically as pertaining to the realm of nature altogether. (On the Mysteries 273)

The Roman Senator and supporter of the Emperor Constantine, Julius Firmicus Maternus wrote a manual on astrology entitled "Matheseos," soon after Iamblichus wrote "On the Mysteries." In Book Four section XVIII he writes the following about how to find the Part of Daemon:

1. We find the Part of the Daemon in the following way; in a diurnal chart count the degrees of every sign from the Sun to the Moon and, beginning from the ascendant, distribute these degrees to every sign. In whichever sign the last degree falls, that is the Part of Daemon. (Ascendant + Sun - Moon) In a nocturnal chart count from the Moon to the Sun and proceed in the same way. (Night Part of Daemon = Ascendant + Moon - Sun) [The Part of Daemon should be opposite to the Part of Fortune, as shown by Paulus Alexandrinus (note 31), where he counts degrees from the Moon to the Sun in a diurnal chart and the Sun to the Moon in a nocturnal chart. Thus the Part of Fortune can be considered as belonging to the Moon and that of the Daemon as belonging to the Sun as Firmicus tells us Abraham taught.] We have included it in this book because Abram called it the Part of the Sun and it is not right that it should be separated from the Part of the Moon. 2. This place (the Part of Daemon) is also called the essence of the soul; From this place (Part of Fortune) we find professions and material goods; it shows the affection of women toward men. But also this place shows the fatherland clearly. Observe, therefore, what benefic and what malefic planets are in aspect to this Part and you will thus set forth the forecast according to the influence of individual planets. (*Matheseos* translated by Jean Rhys Bram p. 137)

For the Philosophical Astrologers the Part of Daemon was said to signify the soul and body, faith, prophecy, religion and the culture of God awareness, secrets, cogitations, intentions and hidden things. As we see in Julius Firmicus Maternus this Part is also known as the Part of the Sun and indicates that to which the native aspires, the highest possible goal to which the individual can aspire. In Book VII of *Matheseos* more topography concerning the daemon is laid out.

1. After these four cardinal points, that is the ascendant, descendant, Midheaven and IMC (or Nadir), there is another set of four points in the nativity which are also of following and favorable power. These are Dea, Deus, Bona Fortuna (Good Fortune) and Bonus Daemon (Good Spirit) which the Greeks have called thus Thea, Theos, Agathe Tyche, Agathos Daemon. 2. Dea is the third house, that is the third sign, from the ascendant. This house, as we have said, is called that of Thea by the Greeks. Deus is the name of the house which is diametrically opposite this house, that is the ninth from the ascendant. This house is called Theos by the Greeks. Bona Fortuna is located in the fifth house from the ascendant and is called Agathe Tyche by the Greeks, Bonus Daemon is located diametrically opposite this house, that is the 11th house from the

ascendant. This house is called Agathos Daemon by the Greeks. (*Matheseos Liber VII.* translated by Jean Rhys Bram p.47)

Both Plutarch and Julius Firmicus Maternus connect the daemon somehow with the Moon. Why the Moon? First and foremost the Moon Goddess watches over and rules the sublunar realm. It is in the sublunar realm that most of the daemons are said to reside, 'the air is full of them,' according to Plutarch. The neoplatonic philosopher Proclus in his commentary on Alcibiades tells us: "For all daemons come from one mother, that is, they have a common daemon-comprehending source." (Rhea or Hecate see *Alcibiades* 68.5). Proclus tells us more in section 829 of his commentary on the *Parmenides* and reveals the following about the daemon.

The Soul, however has the power residing in its opinative faculty of bringing forward theorems that it is by nature able to produce and to judge, but there are no distinct Ideas at all of the arts or of their products. It is not surprising that their causes are thought to reside among the daemons, who are said to have given them to men, as their patrons and overseers, some of one, some of another, and among the gods only in a symbolic or archetypal manner. For example, the art of Bronze-working may be said to have its patron in the daemon Hephaestus who possesses the Idea of the Art, while the Great Hephaestus could be said only symbolically to have forged the vault of heaven. Likewise the art of weaving has as its patron some demi-goddess in the train of Athena, while Athena Herself is celebrated as weaving, in a different and demiurgic fashion, the fabric of the intelligible Ideas. (*On Parmenides* 829)

Further in Proclus' commentary *On Parmenides* 667:

Naturally, then Adeimantus, being nearer to them, stretches out his hand and shares his good will with them in imitation of that order of divinity that confers power on souls that wish to move upwards by attaching to itself the upward moving capacities in them; for hands are symbols of power. And in giving them his hand he also wishes them "Good Cheer" (*chairein*), since for souls seeking salvation, gladness and freedom from care are gifts of the higher, not the lower, powers. For how could anyone share freedom from care with another when he is himself full of anxiety? Or how share gladness and good cheer when he is himself in despair? Therefore, it is only the gods and after them the divine classes of being, and after them good men, who are the sources of gladness and good cheer: for it is primarily the gods whose life is free of care, and secondarily the divine classes of being and, when they participate in that blessedness, temperate souls, who always manifest good humor, joy, and contentment with their fate. Souls moving upward then receive from their attendant daemons first of all the power to ascend, next cheerfulness and freedom from care, and thirdly a promise of good things to be attained from their daemons. For the daemons incite them to share with them, bestow upon them bountifully everything that it is in their nature to give, and prepare them to receive even more perfect gifts from higher beings. Thus Adeimantus' readiness to promise aid, his beneficence, and his exhortation to the imperfect to become perfect (for every need renders him who feels it imperfect) - all this imitates the beneficent activity of good daemons towards souls. (*On Parmenides* 667)

With the rise of orthodox Christianity the Guardian Angel supercedes the guardian/good daemon.

The Byzantine Philosopher Michael Psellus may have written "Dialogue on the Operation of Daemons" although many modern scholars dispute this. The last word will go to George Gemistos who wrote in his commentary on the Chaldean

Oracles that : "It is said that nature or natural reason, persuades the sacred daemons, and in a word all that proceeds from the God who is good in Himself, to be beneficent," indicating again that the guides, the daemons are good. (P.57 Woodhouse)

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 Empedocles, fragment 11/115.
 Pythagoras, Golden Verses, 4, 36.
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 Plutarch, "Life of Socrates," 588c, "The Obsolescence of Oracles" fragment 23.
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 Porphyry, Sententiae 32, De Antro Nymphorum X, "Letter to Anebo." Life of Plotinus.
 Epictetus, "Dissertations," I 14-12 & 14-14.
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