

Towards Interpreting Demonic Powers in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity

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I. 'Devil Worship': A Point of Departure

As a starting point for our methodological inquiry, it may be useful to begin with what is patently an inadequate notion, namely the category 'Devil Worship'. This is a term that is frequently applied in third-person statements in the history of the encounter of religions and in internecine religious and/or sectarian quarrels, but one that is so rare as a first-person statement within the history of religions as to be of all but negligible interest. As in much contemporary anthropological study of witchcraft, we are addressing an accusation concerning another's religious activities rather than with that individual's confession, and, thus, the term becomes a special instance of W. C. SMITH's more general observation as to how rare it is that a religion is known by a term of its own choosing¹. Nevertheless, even though it appears to be a false start, there is some theoretical and tactical advantage in beginning with an examination of the term 'Devil Worship' in Late Antiquity.

'Devil Worship' is a term of estrangement applied to others and represents a reduction of their religiosity to the category of the false but not (it is essential to emphasize) to the category of the impotent. In this respect, the term differs from older polemics where the gods and rituals

¹ W. C. SMITH, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York, 1964), pp. 58ff.

of other peoples were held to be not worthy of belief, but were rarely perceived as dangerous. The classical Greek polemics against Egyptian theriomorphic deities were essentially acts of ridicule against the sanity of rational men worshiping irrational animals². The Israelitic polemics against Near Eastern 'idolatry' were not rejections of anthropomorphic 'graven images', but rather acts of ridicule against putting ones faith in that which was lifeless as opposed to a living god³. KARL BARTH has caught the mood of these archaic polemics with precision when he notes that, in the Hebrew scriptures, "idolatry is not a sin; it is foolishness⁴."

In Late Antiquity this has changed. The deities and cults of others were perceived as dangerous and demonic. The worship of other gods has become *daimonomania*. One of the earlier witnesses to this shift is the Septuagint (followed by the Vulgate) translation of Psalm 96 (95) 4f.: ὅτι πάντες οἱ Θεοὶ τῶν ἔθνῶν δαιμόνια / *Omnes dii gentium daemonia*, "For all the gods of the peoples are demons⁵." In the Christian apologists, the use of the term 'demon' for 'heathen' deities is commonplace. Likewise (especially, but not exclusively, in Christian materials) heresy is perceived as the work of demons (already in the συναγωγή τοῦ σατανᾶ in Rev. 2,9; 3,9). As NILS DAHL has demonstrated, one of the earlier technical terms for heretic is "firstborn of Satan" (Polycarp, Philippians 7.1: καὶ ὃς ἂν μὴ ὁμολογῇ τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν· καὶ ὃς ἂν μεθοδεύῃ τὰ λόγια τοῦ κυρίου . . . οὗτος πρωτότοκός ἐστι τοῦ σατανᾶ, "... anyone who does not confess the testimony of the cross, 'is of the devil'; and anyone who perverts the sayings of the Lord . . . — that man is the firstborn of Satan!" [The Apostolic Fathers. A New Translation and Commentary, vol. 5, Polycarp, by W. SCHOEDEL, London-Toronto, 1967]. Compare Irenaeus, Adv. haer. III.4 where Polycarp is reported to say to Marcion: *Cognosco te primogenitum Satanae*)⁶. The demonic origins and nature of heresy is, perhaps, most savagely depicted in Justin's description of Marcion in I Apology 58:

Καὶ Μαρκίωνα . . . προεβάλλοντο οἱ φαῦλοι δαίμονες, ὃς ἀρνεῖσθαι μὲν τὸν ποιητὴν τῶν οὐρανίων καὶ γῆινων ἀπάντων Θεόν . . . ᾧ πολλοὶ πεισθέντες ὡς μόνῳ τάληθῇ ἐπισταμένῳ ἡμῶν καταγελῶσιν, ἀπόδειξιν μηδεμίαν περὶ ὧν λέγουσιν ἔχοντες, ἀλλὰ ἀλόγως ὡς ὑπὸ λύκων ἄρνες συνηρπασμένοι βορὰ τῶν ἀθέων δογμάτων καὶ δαιμόνων γίνονται. Οὐ

² See the material collected by J. E. B. MAYOR, ed., *Thirteen Satires of Juvenal* (London, 1878), Vol. II, pp. 356—362.

³ As well argued in R. H. PFEIFFER's classic article on idolatry, 'The Polemic against Idolatry in the Old Testament', *J. of Biblical Literature*, 43 (1924), 229—240.

⁴ K. BARTH, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh, 1957), Vol. II 1, p. 431 (= ID., *Die kirchliche Dogmatik*, II 1 [Zurich, 1946]).

⁵ The LXX translation is treated in some detail by W. A. L. EMSLIE, *The Mishnah on Idolatry* (Cambridge, 1911), pp. 42f. and more recently by S. GRILL, "Omnes dii gentium daemonia", *Kairos*, 3 (1961), 81—84.

⁶ N. A. DAHL, *Die Erstgeborene Satans und der Vater des Teufels, Apophoreta. Festschrift E. Haenchen, Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und Kunde der älteren Kirche, Beih. 30* (Berlin, 1964), pp. 70—84.

γὰρ ἄλλο τι ἀγωνίζονται οἱ λεγόμενοι δαίμονες, ἢ ἀπάγειν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἀπὸ τοῦ ποιήσαντος Θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ πρωτογόνου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ.

"... the evil demons also introduced Marcion of Pontus who even now urges men to deny that God is the Creator of all things in heaven and on earth . . . Many have believed this man, as though he were the sole possessor of truth, and they ridicule us, even though they do not prove their assertions, but are foolishly snatched away, like lambs by a wolf; they are victimized by the demons and their atheistic teachings. These spirits whom we call demons strive for nothing else than to alienate men from God their Creator, and from Christ, His first-begotten." (The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation, vol. 6. Writings of Saint Justin the Martyr, by TH. B. FALLS, Washington, 1948, repr. 1965).

In these materials, 'Devil Worship' functions primarily as a locative term which establishes outer limits or distance much as wild men or monsters are depicted as inhabiting the borders of antique maps. In the same way as in archaic traditions, the dwelling place of demons is in wild, uninhabited places or ruined cities — that is to say, beyond city walls or where walls have been broken or allowed to fall into disrepair — so 'Devil Worship' lives either in the realm of the pagan (bearing in mind the etymology of the word) for whom the civilizing walls have not yet been erected, or in the realm of the heretic who, to employ one standard Talmudic metaphor, has "broken the fence". In the former, 'Devil Worship' reflects incivility as ignorance; in the latter, incivility as perversity.

Both of these understandings are primarily ethnographic categories — they situate another. A more active, though less common, case is where one recognized as estranged (an enemy, foreigner or heretic) is consecrated or devoted to the demonic powers against his will⁸. In both Semitic and

⁷ The locus classicus is b. Hag. 15a. The metaphor, here as elsewhere (compare Acts of Thomas, XXXII), is in a Paradisical context and may be dependent on a *midrash* of Eccles. 10,8. While this passage is usually interpreted to refer to slander, it is applied to heresy as well (e. g. b. AZ 27b; Eccles. R. X:8:1, etc.). Generalized (e. g. b. Erub. 101a) it is clearly the opposite of the injunction to "make a fence around the Torah". From another standpoint, note the derivation of the key Germanic terms such as *hag* or *hexe* from the A. S. *haga*, hedge or fence — see H. BAECHTOLD—STÄUBLI, ed., et alii, Handwörterbuch des deutschen Aberglaubens, Vol. III (Berlin-Leipzig, 1930/31), col. 1838 s. v. Hexe.

⁸ Compare the devotion-formulae in Rm 1, 24.26.28 παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ Θεὸς εἰς . . . ; K. PREISENDANZ, Papyri Graecae Magicae. Die griechischen Zauberpapyri. Zweite, verbesserte Auflage, mit Ergänzungen hrsg. v. A. HENRICHs, I (Stuttgart, 1973), V, lines 335f. νεκυδαίμων . . . παραδίδωμι σοι τὸν δαίμονα ὅπως μὴ ποιήσῃ τὸ δαίμονα πράγμα; („*Toten-dämon*, . . . *ich übergebe dir den NN, auf daß er nicht ausführe das und das*"); and A. AUDOLLENT, Defixionum Tabellae (Paris, 1904), no. 129: *Q. Letinium Lupum . . . hunc ego apud vostrum numen demando devoveo desacrifico, uti vos Aquae ferventes . . . uti vos eum interemates interficiates intra annum itum* with anathema-formulae such as I Cor 5, 5 παραδοῦναι . . . τῷ σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός and I Tim 1, 20 οὗς παρέδωκα τῷ σατανᾷ. The ultimate transformation of this motif is in gnostic traditions that the god of the Old Testament is evil and that the created world has been 'devoted' to him.

Greco-Roman traditions, this appears to be a transformation of archaic military rituals for devoting an enemy to your god (e. g. the *herem* and *evocatio*) thereby “civilizing” him.

Finally, we may note the category of worship instituted by demons⁹. This occurs in two forms. The first, of wide distribution in Late Antique materials, is that the demons instituted unworthy forms of worship — usually archaic rituals distasteful to a later religious sensibility — such as the common neo-Platonic topos that bloody sacrifices were a demonic invention, Porphyry, *De abstinence*, II.42 and parallels:

τὸ γὰρ ψεῦδος τούτοις οἰκεῖον· βούλονται γὰρ εἶναι Θεοὶ καὶ ἡ προεστῶσα αὐτῶν δύναμις δοκεῖν Θεὸς εἶναι ὁ μέγιστος. οὗτοι οἱ ἡχάροντες λοιβῇ τε κνίσῃ τε,

“... since falsehood is allied to these malevolent beings, for they want to be considered as Gods, and the power which presides over them is ambitious to appear to be the greatest God. These are they that rejoice in libations, and the savour of sacrifices...” (Selected Works of Porphyry, translated by T. TAYLOR [London, 1822], reedited by E. WYNNE-TYSON, *Porphyry, On Abstinence from Animal Food* [London, 1965]).

The second is confined to Christian texts and represents a unique attempt to overcome similarity rather than the perception of dissimilarity which was to the fore in all the other instances noted above. It is the apologetic argument that the rituals and myths of other religions which resemble the Christian do so as a result of either post facto or proleptic demonic plagiarism (μιμησάμενοι οἱ πονηροὶ δαίμονες, “the evil demons, in imitation of this”, in Justin I *Apology* 62, 66. Cf. 23, 25, and 54)¹⁰.

In each of the accusations described above, we have encountered a late permutation of an essentially archaic religious pattern which I have attempted to delimit in a series of articles as a locative map of the world, organized by an imperial figure in which things are sacred by virtue of keeping their place¹¹. In the more archaic pattern, the demon’s place is in uncivilized space and time — the desert or forest, the realm of the dead, the night — walled off from those spaces and times in which man dwells and finds himself at home. The oldest rituals which treat with demons are best understood as rituals of location or relocation. The demon is ‘placed’

⁹ This needs to be distinguished from the Jewish apologetic distinction of rituals instituted by men as opposed to those instituted by God — although both are joined together in Christian euhemerists.

¹⁰ See, in general, S. GRILL, *Vergleichende Religionsgeschichte und Kirchenväter, Heiligenkreuzer Studien* 11 (Horn, 1959) as well as the works by WEY and GOKEY listed in the bibliography below.

¹¹ See J. Z. SMITH, *Birth Upside Down or Rightside Up?*, *History of Religions*, 9 (1970), 281–303 for the most extensive development of this theme.

by being named, entrapped and removed to its proper realm (e. g. exorcism) or redirected to a 'proper' goal (i. e. to somewhere or someone else, as in so-called 'hostile' magic). 'Devil Worship', properly understood, is not a substantive category. It does not refer (save in rare and usually artificial cases) to people worshiping devils or demons. Rather it is a measure of distance, a *taxon*, a label applied to distinguish "us" from "them".

II. Demonic as a Locative Category

Bearing in mind what has been learned from this detour, I shall propose as an initial interpretation of the demonic the sort of model raised to recent prominence by MARY DOUGLAS and others concerned with issues of taxonomy: that negative valence is attached to things which escape place (the chaotic, the rebellious, the distant) or things found just outside the place where they properly belong (the hybrid, the deviant, the adjacent)¹². The former might be illustrated, in terms of the previous examples, by the notion that 'Devil Worship' is the worship of foreign deities; the latter, by the use of the category to label heretics or the notion of 'demonic plagiarism'.

The demonic is a relational or labeling term which occurs only in certain culturally stipulated situations and is part of a complex system of boundaries and limits. In certain situations, the breaking of limits is creative; in others, it is perceived as leading to chaos. In some situations the fixing of boundaries is positive; in others, it leads to repression. A given society at a given moment may cherish the extraordinary at its 'center' where it feels most secure and resist the anomalous at its borders, at those peripheral areas where it feels least secure and most vulnerable. A given society at a given time may value those who are strong enough to leave the 'center' and organize (or do battle with) the peripheral powers; at another time such figures are considered to be polluted, dangerous or guilty of a sort of *hybris*. A given society at a given moment may conceive of law and order as a bulwark against the demonic; at another time, it may perceive law and order as a repressive imposition of the demonic.

It remains a task for future scholarship to attempt to map out these social matrices and their 'concomitant variations' as a precondition for a satisfying set of explanatory theories¹³. For the present, a few examples

¹² See especially, MARY DOUGLAS, *Purity and Danger* (London, 1966) and R. BULMER, *Why is the Cassowary not a Bird?*, *Man*, n. s. 2 (1967), 5—25. Compare, J. Z. SMITH, *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15ed. Vol. I (1974), pp. 911—918, s. v. *Animals and Plants in Myth and Legend*.

¹³ For an impressive beginning, see P. BROWN, *Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, in: M. DOUGLAS, ed., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London, 1970), pp. 17—46. One might wish for a richer treatment from MARY DOUGLAS than that provided in 'Social Preconditions of Enthusiasm and Heterodoxy', in: R. F. SPENCER, ed., *Forms of Symbolic Action* (Seattle, 1969), pp. 69—80.

might suffice to illustrate these deep ambiguities. a) The most frequent form of demons is that of a hybrid or monster, a protean figure capable of a range of transformations or as a being with superfluous parts. To call attention to only one taxic range: the demonic is frequently characterized by the extremes of being either hard and cold (e. g. Satan's penis which is often described in witchcraft literature as being made of horn or iron and icy to the touch) or squishy and rotten (i. e., overheated) which RALPH BULMER has suggested gave rise to the widespread association of witches and toads¹⁴. The same taxic range appears in the debates among Christian savants as to whether the bodies of demons were made of compressed ice or of reanimated but putrescent cadavers¹⁵. To translate this range: demons are perceived as being either overdefined or underdetermined. b) A fruitful comparison might be made between the mythologem of the demonic binding of the cosmic waters in Indic materials and the chaotic and demonic plentitude of waters in ancient Near Eastern traditions. In the former, a divine warrior journeys to the periphery to release the waters; in the latter, to enchain them¹⁶. c) One might explore the widespread shift between a perception of the planets or stars as revelatory of a beneficent divine order and as the repressive forces of a blind Fate¹⁷.

Such examples might be proliferated, but they point to the fact that with the demonic (as with analogous categories such as clean/unclean) we are not attempting to interpret substantive categories; but rather situational or relational categories, mobile boundaries which shift according to the map being employed. Demons serve as classificatory markers which signal what is strong and weak, controlled and exaggerated in a given society at a given moment.

It has been necessary to insist on this point as it raises a theoretical issue of some importance. In formal terms the issue might be formulated as the need for a shift from a logic of identity to a logic of relations; in biological terms, from a monothetic classification to a classification by groups. In terms of the History of Religions, it is parallel to the attack being currently mounted against the utility of the concepts of the 'ambivalence of the sacred' or the distinction between 'magic' and 'religion'.

III. Traditional Interpretations: Exposition and Criticism

The prevailing theoretical framework invoked to interpret demons is that of animism with a subordinate appeal to the notions of survivals and/or

¹⁴ R. BULMER, Karam Classification of Frogs, J. of the Polynesian Society, 77 (1968), 345, 379.

¹⁵ See the material collected by R. E. L. MASTERS, Eros and Evil (New York, 1962), chs. 2—4. The interpretative framework should be ignored!

¹⁶ See the most recent study by M. WAKEMAN, God's Battle with the Monster (Leiden, 1963) — but compare my review of this work in: J. of Biblical Literature, 94 (1975), 442—444.

¹⁷ SMITH, Birth Upside Down, 293—299.

diffusion¹⁸. This constellation, as should be immediately apparent, may be traced back to the general outline provided by E. B. TYLOR in 'Primitive Culture'^{18a}, more particularly, to his article, 'Demonology', in the ninth edition of 'The Encyclopaedia Britannica'¹⁹. Within the field of religious studies, the only rival interpretation occurs in what must be described as 'Romantic' works which take their clue from those remarkable passages on the demonic in GOETHE's 'Dichtung und Wahrheit' (especially, Book XX) and his 'Conversations with Eckermann' (especially, but not confined to, the year 1831)^{19a}. The classical formulation occurs in chapter XXI of RUDOLF OTTO's 'Das Heilige'^{19b} and is continued in both general 'phenomenological' works²⁰ as well as in works on classical religion²¹. For our present purposes, we may simply set this latter interpretation aside.

The animistic thesis, in nuce, requires the postulation of a primitive inability to make distinctions. This inability — whether negatively formulated as *Urduhmheit*, positively formulated as 'ambiguity' or 'multivalence' or stated simply as another mode of thought (e. g. 'pre-logical', *participation mystique*) — has been used to generate a series of contrasting terms, most usually summarized under the broad rubrics of magic and religion. Each series is essentially a-temporal (although an evolutionary theory or the notion of 'survivals' may be invoked to provide a temporal dimension). The literature on demons is, thus, usually a subtype of the general typology of magic and religion which are frequently distinguished under five rubrics:

Magic	Religion
1. Undifferentiated	1. Differentiated
2. Impersonal or collective	2. Personal or individual
3. External	3. Internal
4. Tabu	4. Ethics
5. Relations of fear (e. g. avoidance or propitiation)	5. Relations of reverence (e. g. submission or petition)

¹⁸ See, most recently, the introductory article by C. COLPE to the series of articles on demons in the 'Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum', IX, fasc. 68 (1975), cols. 546—553.

^{18a} E. B. TYLOR, *Primitive Culture*, I—II (London, 1871), Vol. I, pp. 377ss., vol. II, pp. 1ss.

¹⁹ 9th ed. vol. VII (1889) pp. 60—84, s. v. Demonology.

^{19a} See for example: Goethes Werke, hrsg. im Auftrage der Großerzogin Sophie von Sachsen, 29. Band. *Dichtung und Wahrheit IV*: 16. bis 20. Buch (Weimar, 1891), pp. 173 ss. — Goethes Gespräche, Gesamtausgabe von FRHR. v. BIEDERMANN, 4. Band. Vom Tode Karl Augusts bis zum Ende (Leipzig, 1910), pp. 338, 340s., 346s., 356, 358s.

^{19b} R. OTTO, *Das Heilige*. Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen (Munich, 21/22 1932), cap. XXI: 'Das Heilige in der Erscheinung', pp. 184—196.

²⁰ E. g. G. VAN DER LEEUW, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (New York, 1963), ch. 15. He somewhat mixes the Romantic and the Animistic explanations.

²¹ For a stunning example, P. FRIEDLÄNDER, *Platon*, Vol. I. Eidos, Paideia, Dialogus (Berlin—Leipzig, 1928), pp. 38—67 (= *Id.*, *Platon*, Vol. I. Seinswahrheit und Lebenswirklichkeit [Berlin, 1964], pp. 34—62.)

The application of these categories to demons is especially prevalent in lexical articles which tend to adopt a univocal, evolutionary, history-of-ideas approach rather than confining themselves to their legitimate semasiological task²². But the same general outline, it is important to emphasize, underlies most major, synthetic portraits of antique religion from JANE HARRISON's 'Themis' to MARTIN NILSSON's 'Geschichte'^{22a}.

The starting point of such treatments is the notion of a primitive and primordial experience and perception of the Sacred as the powerful and awesome — whether it be framed in terms of OTTO's 'Holy', PREUSS's 'Zauberkraft', LANG's 'Powerful Awful' or VAN DER LEEUW's, WAGENVoort's or NILSSON's '*Dynamis*' — it shares the qualities of being, at one and the same time, both overwhelming and undifferentiated. «*Le sacré, c'est le père du dieu*»²³. This *dynamis*, so the account usually goes, becomes progressively differentiated into either *daimōn* or *theos*, with the former more impersonal (collective), the latter, more individualistic (personal). Both terms, it is usually stressed, are morally neutral at this 'early' stage of development. Thus, while it is possible to find early notions of evil spirits as well as hostile or negative uses of the term *daimōn* in the Homeric epics — it is the impersonal, powerful notion which prevails²⁴. According to this consensus portrait, *theos* most usually occurs with the definite article, is conceived anthropomorphically and receives cultic attentions; *daimōn* occurs more frequently without the definite article, is of indeterminate form and lacks cult²⁵. According to one, influential formulation: *theos* refers to the 'personality' of Divinity as revealed in myth and cult; *daimōn* to the 'power and activity' of Divinity as revealed in 'Nature'²⁶.

²² This portrait has largely been constructed on the basis of the articles in PAULY—WISSOWA's 'Real-Encyklopädie', Suppl. III (1918), cols. 267—322 s. v. Daimon [ANDRES]; G. KITTEL's 'Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament (Stuttgart, 1933ss.), Vol. II (1935), pp. 1—19 s. v. δαίμων [W. FOERSTER], and the 'Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum', IX, fasc. 68 (Stuttgart, 1975), cols. 598—615, s. v. Geister (Dämonen). Note should be taken of the excellent semasiological dissertations by E. BRUNIUS—NILSSON, *Daimonie. An Inquiry into a Mode of Apostrophe in Old Greek Literature* (Diss. Uppsala, 1955) and especially, H. NOWACK, *Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Begriffes Daimon. Eine Untersuchung epigraphischer Zeugnisse vom 5. Jh. vor Chr. bis zum 5. Jh. nach Chr.* (Diss. Bonn, 1960).

^{22a} M. P. NILSSON, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion I. II, Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft V 2, 1. 2* (Munich, 1955/61).

²³ J. E. HARRISON, *Themis, A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*, 2ed. (Cambridge, 1927), pp. 63f.

²⁴ H. HERTER, *Böse Dämonen im frühgriechischen Volksglauben*, *Rheinisches Jahrbuch für Volkskunde*, 1 (1950), pp. 112—143 (= *Id.*, *Kleine Schriften*, hrsg. v. E. Vogt, *Studia et testimonia antiqua* 15 (Munich, 1975), pp. 43—75.

²⁵ See the thorough study by G. FRANÇOIS, *Le polythéisme et l'emploi au singulier des mots theos et daimon dans la littérature grecque d'Homère à Platon*, *Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et lettres de l'Université de Liège CXLVII* (Liège, 1957).

²⁶ O. WASER, in: PAULY—WISSOWA, *Real-Encyklopädie*, Vol. IV (1901), vol. 2010, s. v. Daimon: „läßt sich ein Unterschied statuieren in der Verwendung der beiden Begriffe, so ist es der, daß θεός mehr 'die Persönlichkeit eines Gottes, wie dieselbe durch Cultus und Mythologie bestimmter umschrieben war', δαίμων dagegen mehr 'seine im Leben und in der Natur

It is usually argued that this impersonality of the *daimōn* led 'naturally' to its association with ideas of fate, destiny and fortune. And that, while originally used in its morally neutral sense, the usual context in which language about fate occurs led to a focus on the negative attributes of the *daimōn*. "It is more often a *theos* who dispenses favors and [the] *daimon* who, if not neutral, exerts a baleful influence. Already the *daimon* seems to have gone far on the path from the role of divinity to the role of devil (the later *demon*)²⁷." From this point, so the common wisdom would have it, "it was only a step to that of a 'protective deity' watching over a man's life, or certain portions of it²⁸" — to the *eudaimōn* or *kakodaimōn*, whether conceived of as moral forces, astral influences²⁹, attendant spirits at birth³⁰, or conscience³¹. In the development of this latter understanding, debate over the meaning and valence of the *daimōn* of Socrates — a favorite topos in later philosophical literature as witnessed by the surviving treatises of Plutarch, Apuleius, Maximus and Proclus^{31a} — was of prime importance³².

At this point we may resume our methodological reflections. Despite appearances, the consensus portrait is neither developmental nor chronological. At the technical level, it must be stressed that the exemplary texts cited by each authority are a motley collection from diverse periods and that no single classical author's total use of the term *daimōn* accords with this portrait. On the methodological plane, it must be argued that we have been presented with a series of a-temporal, logical divisions rather than the claimed temporal progression which may be diagrammed as follows:

hervortretende Macht und Wirkung' (PRELLER—ROBERT, 112) ausdrückt, "following L. PRELLER—C. ROBERT, *Griechische Mythologie*, I (Berlin, 1894), p. 112. Note the implicit Nature (demons)/Culture (gods) distinction.

²⁷ W. C. GREENE, *Moira: Fate, Good and Evil in Greek Thought* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948, repr. New York, 1963), p. 13. Compare E. R. DODDS, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), pp. 40—43.

²⁸ FOERSTER, in: KITTEL, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Vol. II (1935), p. 2.

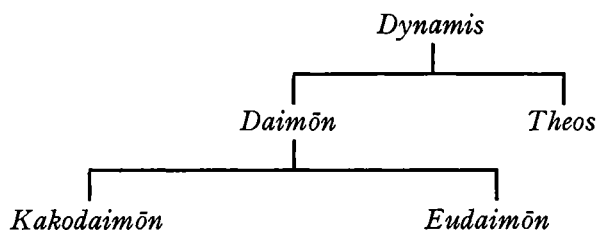
²⁹ ANDRES, in: PAULY—WISSOWA, *Suppl. III*, (1918), cols. 286—290.

³⁰ See P. BOYANCÉ, *Les deux démons personnels dans l'antiquité grecque et latine*, *Revue de Philologie*, 61 (1935), 189—202 and compare P. BOYANCÉ, *Sur le discours d'Anchise (Énéide, VI, 724—751)*, *Hommages à G. Dumézil*, Coll. Latomus 45 (Brussels, 1960), esp. pp. 69—72.

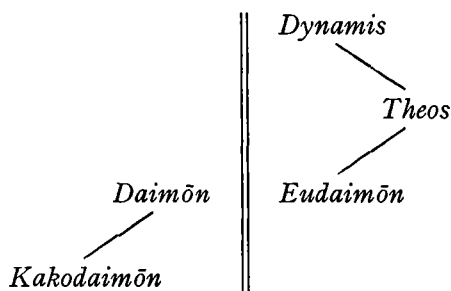
³¹ See the rich collection of materials in A. D. Nock, *The Emperor's Divine Comes*, *JRS* 37 (1947), pp. 102—116, esp. pp. 108—111, reprinted in: A. D. Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), Vol. II, esp. pp. 664—668.

^{31a} Plutarchus, *De genio Socratis* (Περὶ τοῦ Σωκράτους δαιμονίου), ed. W. SIEVEKING, in: *Plutarchi Moralia*, Vol. VIII, edd. W. R. PATON—M. POHLENZ—W. SIEVEKING (Leipzig, 1921), pp. 460—511 (= pp. 575A—598F STEPH.); Apuleius, *De deo Socratis*, Prologus, ed. J. VAN DER VLIET, *Lucii Apulei Madurensis Apologia sive de magia liber et Florida* (Leipzig, 1900), pp. 190—194; Maximus Thyrius, *Or. VIII, IX*, ed. H. HOBELIN, *Maximi Thyrii Philosophumena* (Leipzig, 1910), pp. 86—110; Proclus, ed. V. COUSIN, *Procli Opera inedita* (2ed. Paris, 1864), pp. 377ff.

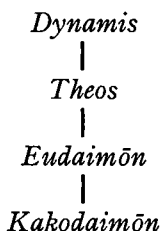
³² See, among others, H. GUNDELT, *Platon und das Daimonion des Sokrates*, *Gymnasium*, 64 (1954), 513—531 (= ID., *Platonstudien, Studien zur antiken Philosophie* 7 [Amsterdam, 1977], 46—64).



Frequently, the symmetry of the division will be 'disturbed' by either introducing a radical dualism (usually by starting a new series at the last division — good/evil — and reclassifying the terms):



or by disarranging the binary divisions and reclassifying according to a logic of subordination:

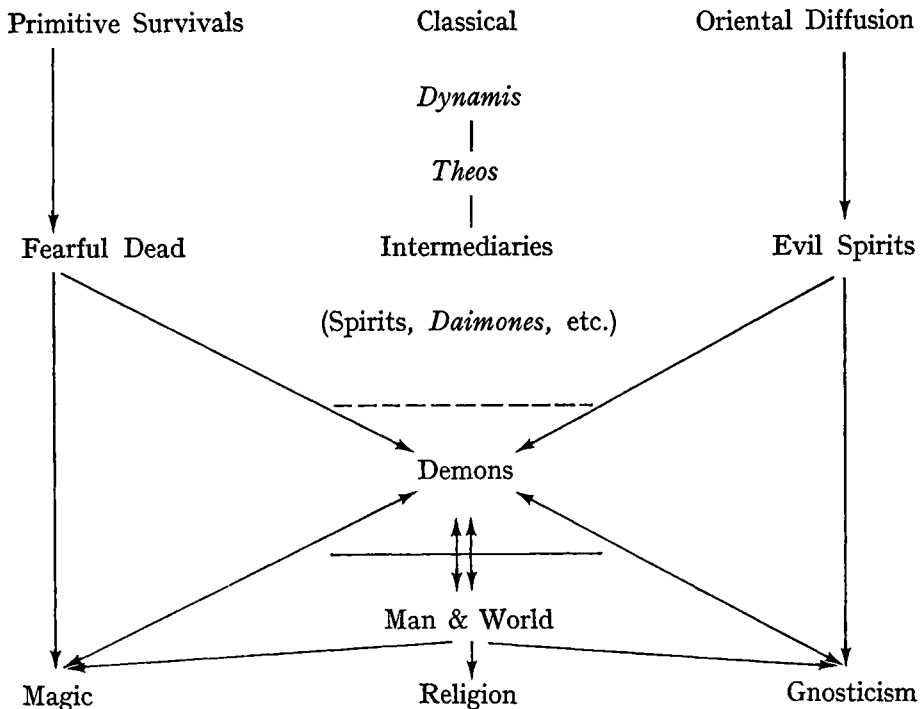


with both options correlated by suggesting that the lowest member of the series is that closest to man or the world.

What is of methodological significance is to note that these 'disturbances' are accounted for by an appeal to the old Tyloorean principles of 'survivals' and diffusion. What was a legitimate (although utterly a-historical) closed, logical taxonomy has been 'disturbed' by an illegitimate appeal to historical process — most usually expressed either as the resurgence of a primitive substrate or the intrusion of an outside influence, both held to be 'foreign' to the 'classical spirit' and resulting in what GILBERT MURRAY characterized as Late Antiquity's "failure of nerve". The only argument that animates scholars holding this consensus portrait is whether these "disturbances" should be dated to the time of Plato or to the later Greco-Roman period³³.

³³ See below, notes 34—40.

In fact, the consensus model is a bit more complex than has been suggested — though no less illicit. Common to all of its versions is the conversion of a logical ‘tree’ of division into a logic of subordination, adding the implicit category of man and the world, while retaining the *daimōn*’s place below that of the god’s. For those who see this as a ‘natural’ development of the ‘classical’ system, the *daimōn* is understood to serve as an intermediary between man and the divine. It remains a morally neutral or ambivalent category, thus preserving the closure of the system. For those who see the ‘classical’ system as ‘broken’ by an extrasystemic historical rather than logical input, the mode of specifying the cause of the ‘disturbance’ is central to what will be taken as the chief question: how the *daimōn* became the demon. If the appeal is to survivals, a general notion of Animism will be invoked with emphasis upon the spirits of the dead. The demonic will be perceived as hostile to man and his terrestrial life. If the appeal is to diffusion, the causative factor will be alleged ‘Oriental’ influences with a concomitant dualism. The demonic will be perceived as hostile to the gods and to man’s spiritual life. In either case, the demonic is perceived as either an interstitial or an opposing category with respect to the divine. It is no longer, as in the logical division, simply a parallel specification. Allowing for such extrasystematic inputs, a complex model of the consensus portrait emerges:



In this model, all of the key, value-laden terms have been collected and the argument reverts to one of origins, that is to say, the precise location of the 'shift' and the assignment of a provenance to the 'disturbance'. Remarkably, most modern scholars have not advanced beyond the options of Hesiod, Empedocles, Plato, Xenocrates, Pythagoras, Chrysippos and Democritos provided by Plutarch in *De defectu oraculorum*, 415–419 and *De Iside et Osiride*, 360–361! Is it to be located in the Hesiodic portrayal of the *daimones* in his myth of the ages of the world? or is this myth itself dependent on Near Eastern traditions?³⁴ Is it to be found in the daimonic intermediary in Plato's *Symposium*, 202d–203a? or has this text been "manifestly misinterpreted by his successors [under Oriental influence] to find in him sanctions for demonology"³⁵? Is it in the astralism of *Epinomis*, 984e? or is this writing best interpreted as a satire on popular belief? or as evidence of Oriental influence on Plato³⁶? or is it a piece of Platonic pseudepigrapha³⁷? Is the originator of the idea of evil demons the figure of Xenocrates as quoted by Plutarch³⁸? or is Xenocrates only quoting an original Pythagorean discovery³⁹? or is it an invention of Plutarch himself, presumably under Oriental influence⁴⁰? And so it goes!

³⁴ For an early discussion, see E. ROHDE, *Psyche* (London, 1925), pp. 70–79, 85–87 (= *Id.*, *Psyche. Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen* [Tübingen 1925], pp. 95–110). E. MEYER's attempt, in his classic article, 'Hesiods Erga und das Gedicht von den fünf Menschengeschlechtern', *Genethliakon. Festschrift der Graeca Halensis für C. Robert* (Berlin, 1910), pp. 157ss., reprinted in: *Id.*, *Kleine Schriften* (Halle, 1924), Vol. II, pp. 17–66, esp. pp. 39–46, to correlate the *daimones* of *Op.* 122f. with the Titans has been all but universally rejected. See, among others, FR. SOLMSEN, *Hesiod and Aeschylus*, *Cornell Studies in Classical Philology XXX* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1949), p. 83, n. 27.

³⁵ This approach has been most relentlessly carried out by A. HILD, *Étude sur les démons* (Paris, 1881), pp. 286–337.

³⁶ See, among others, E. DES PLACES, *Platon et l'astronomie chaldéenne*, in: *Mélanges F. Cumont, Annuaire d l'institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves* 4 (Brussels, 1936), pp. 129–142. A.-J. FESTUGIÈRE, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, vol. II: *Le Dieu cosmique* (Paris, 1949), pp. 196–218 attempts to strike a balance between the 'classical' and 'oriental' character of this treatise.

³⁷ For a convenient bibliography, see H. CHERNISS, *Plato: 1950–1957, Lustrum*, 4 (1959), esp. 85–87.

³⁸ R. HEINZE, *Xenokrates, Darstellung der Lehre und Sammlung der Fragmente* (Leipzig, 1892, repr. Hildesheim 1965), esp. pp. 78–123.

³⁹ This thesis has been argued by M. DÉTIENNE, *Xénocrate et la démonologie pythagoricienne*, *Revue des études anciennes*, 60 (1958), 271–279 and expanded in M. DÉTIENNE, *De la pensée religieuse à la pensée philosophique: La notion de daimon dans le pythagorisme ancien*, *Bibliothèque de la Faculté de philosophie et lettres de l'Université de Liège*, CLXV (Paris, 1963) — but, see the review by W. BURKERT, *Gnomon*, 36 (1964), 563–567.

⁴⁰ The best treatment remains G. SOURY, *La démonologie de Plutarque* (Paris, 1942), esp. pp. 19–22, 46–65. H. ERBSE, *Plutarchs Schrift Peri Deisidaimonias*, *Hermes*, 80 (1952), 296–314 has some important remarks. Alternatively, one might attempt to establish an Iranian *Grundschrift* behind the central texts on *daimones* in Porphyry, *De abstinence*, II. 37–43 and the closely parallel passages in Plutarch, *De defectu oraculorum*, 10; the pseudo-Clementine *Homilies*, VIII–IX and *Recognitions*, IV and, possibly, Minucius Felix, *Octavius*, 26f. with their references to Zoroaster and Ostanes. The two bril-

Ironically, this preoccupation with foreign influences is to employ a demonic interpretation of the history of the demonic!

IV. The 'Place' of Demons: Concluding Observations

It is the burden of this paper that, even if the empirical evidence were to be more secure, the consensus portrait is theoretically wrong. It contains a methodological error in its shift from a logical to a chronological outline. It is inadequate with regard to its unexamined major premise as to the alleged primitive inability to make distinctions. And that, therefore, the chief questions asked of the data (origins, influences and the like) have likewise been misconceived.

As modern kinship studies, monographs on ethnobotany and ethnozoology and other recent treatments have demonstrated — if anything the 'primitive' (if this term be even allowed) is obsessed with the making of distinctions. His myths are rarely concerned with epiphanies of the Sacred, but rather with genealogical and etiological explanations of differences. His greatest cultural creations, the chief objects of his reflection, are the rules, categories and classes of kinship, exchange and pollution. The category of the demonic takes its place within this obsession with system and distinction and preeminently serves as a taxic indicator, a sign of significance. Whenever and wherever the demonic occurs, the observation of JOHN GLANVILLE in his *Saducismus Triumphatus* holds: "The devil is the name for a body politic in which there are very different orders and degrees of spirits and perhaps as much variety of place and state as among ourselves⁴¹." And therefore, the chief question that ought to preoccupy scholars should be: why is it that the demonic, associated with the marginal, the liminal, the chaotic, the protean, the unstructured appear cross-culturally as so rigidly organized a realm? A full and satisfying answer to that question must await future scholarship; but the consequences of adopting such a

liant studies of this complex of texts remain W. BOUSSER, *Zur Dämonologie der späteren Antike*, *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, 18 (1915), 134—172 and F. CUMONT—J. BIDEZ, *Les mages hellénisés. Zoroastre, Ostanès et Hystaspe d'après la tradition grecque* (Paris, 1938, repr. Paris, 1973), Vol. II, pp. 278—282. See the comparison between Asclepius, 27e—29b; Arnobius, *Adv. Nat.*, II. 13—62 and Porphyry by A.-J. FESTUGIÈRE, *Une source hermétique de Porphyre*, *Revue des études grecques*, 49 (1936), 590ff. and ID., *La doctrine des «Uiri Noui» sur l'origine et le sort des âmes*, *Mémorial M.-J. Lagrange* (Paris, 1940), pp. 97—132, reprinted in: A.-J. FESTUGIÈRE, *Hermétisme et mystique païenne* (Paris, 1967), pp. 261—312. H. J. SCHOEPS has reexamined BOUSSER's argument and emphasized a possible Semitic background in 'Die Dämonologie der Pseudoklementinen', in: ID., *Aus frühchristlicher Zeit* (Tübingen, 1950), pp. 38—81.

⁴¹ J. GLANVILLE—H. MORE, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1681), Vol. I, p. 35. Compare, Iamblichus, *De mysteriis*, VI. 6 for a Late Antique parallel.

taxonomic viewpoint may help to clarify, from a different perspective, the 'shift' which has so preoccupied our predecessors.

As has been noted, archaic rituals concerned with demons achieved an adjustment of their 'place' through rites of removal and relocation. In some parts of some traditions in Late Antiquity there was a shift from this 'locative' view of the world to what I have termed a 'utopian' one. While I have dwelt on this shift at length in other articles⁴², one element is critical for our discussion. Within a 'utopian' world-view, it is man who is out of place, who is estranged from his true home 'on high'. The demons are 'in place' — they have their spheres, their realms, their 'houses'. And thus the ritual adjustments are directed against the practitioner rather than the demon. It is the man who will daringly attempt his own redirection or relocation (frequently, as in theurgic materials, by reinterpreting the older rites)⁴³. It is the demons in their role as 'Watchers' (a frequent metaphor in all of the cultures of Late Antiquity) who will either recognize him as an enemy or alien and seek to expel or destroy him or recognize him as belonging to the 'beyond' and become his 'ally'. The man proves his right to stand 'on high' by his *gnōsis*, especially by demonstrating his knowledge of the demon's name, place and taxon⁴⁴.

In the locative cosmology, the demonic was the out-of-place on an essentially horizontal map of center and periphery, of domains and boundaries. In the utopian cosmology, it is man who is out-of-place on an essentially vertical map of 'this world' and the 'Beyond'. There is yet a further Late Antique map which returns to the horizontal but which abandoned the cosmological for the anthropological. Here the boundary, which protects man against external, hostile powers becomes the religious association, the social group. The threat is no longer perceived as chaos or exile — but other men, possessed by demons or sorcerers. Rather than place or transcendence of place, the new center and chief means of access to the divine center will be a highly mobile holy man whose chief skill is that of negotiation rather than the older locative skill of relocation or the utopian

⁴² See above, n. 11.

⁴³ See my forthcoming article, 'The Temple and the Magician', in: W. MEEKS, ed., *Festschrift Nils A. Dahl* (Oslo, 1976).

⁴⁴ The classic example would be K. PREISENDANZ, *Papyri Graecae Magicae. Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*. Zweite, verbesserte Auflage, mit Ergänzungen, hrsg. v. A. HENRICHs, II (Stuttgart, 1974), VIII, lines 1—63: 'Ἐλθέ μοι, κύριε Ἑρμῇ . . . ὀνόματά σοι ἐν οὐρανῷ . . . ταῦτά εἰσιν τὰ ἐν ταῖς δ' ᾠωνίαις τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὀνόματα. οἶδά σου καὶ τὰς μορφάς, αἱ εἰσὶ . . . ἡ βοτάνη σου . . . οἶδά σου καὶ τὸ ξύλον . . . οἶδά σε, Ἑρμῇ, τίς εἰ καὶ πόθεν εἰ, καὶ τίς ἡ πόλις σου . . . οἶδά σου καὶ τὰ βαρβαρικά ὀνόματα, etc.' „Komm zu mir Herr Hermēs, . . . Deine Namen im Himmel lauten: . . . Das sind die Namen in den vier Ecken des Himmels. Ich kenne auch deine Gestalten, die sind: . . . Deine Pflanze ist . . . Ich kenne auch dein Holz: . . . Ich weiß von dir, Hermes, wer du bist und woher du bist und welches deine Stadt ist . . . Ich weiß auch deine ausländischen Namen . . . etc.“ The gaining of such taxonomic knowledge is a central task of visions in texts such as 'I Enoch' and the 'Apocalypse of Peter'. It is likewise one of the chief goals of the system of magical education as described in the 'Confession of Cyprian'.

power of salvation. This latter configuration has been the subject of a brilliant treatment by PETER BROWN which should serve as a model for the study of other aspects of demonology in Late Antiquity⁴⁵.

Selected Bibliography

The series of articles on demons, under the general editorship of C. COLPE, in the *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* IX, fasc. 68—69 (Stuttgart, 1975), cols. 546ff. s. v. Geister (Dämonen), is destined to be the authoritative lexical treatment. Regrettably, there is not a complex study of both terminology and imagery analogous to J. ZANDEE, *Death as Enemy, According to Ancient Egyptian Tradition*, *Studies in the history of religions* V (Leiden, 1960). J. TAMBORNINO, *De antiquorum daemonismo*, *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten* VII, 3 (Gießen, 1909) is a useful, though highly selective collection of texts. G. SOURY, *La démonologie de Plutarque* (Paris, 1942) and K. SVOBODA, *La démonologie de Michel Psellos* (Brno, 1927) remain the best studies of single authors. TH. HOPFNER, *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber. Seine Methoden I. II, Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde* XXI/XXIII (Leipzig, 1921—24), esp. Vol. I, pars. 1—134 remains the standard guide to the magical papyri; A.-J. FESTUGIÈRE, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* (Paris, 1949), Vol. I, *L'astrologie et les sciences occultes*, treats a wider range of material. On Christian materials, the lexical study by E. C. E. OWEN, *Daimōn and Cognate Words*, *J. of Theological Studies*, 32 (1930—31), 133—153 remains essential and forms the base for the extended article in G. W. H. LAMPE, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1962), fasc. 2, pp. 327—331. For interpretative monographs, see H. WEY, *Die Funktionen der bösen Geister bei den griechischen Apologeten* (Winterthur, 1957) and F. X. GOKEY, *The Terminology for the Devil and Evil and Evil Spirits in the Apostolic Fathers*, *Patristic Studies* XCIII (Washington, D.C., 1961). K. THOMAS, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971) is highly overrated, but contains invaluable bibliographies. The most theoretically sophisticated work is that of P. BROWN, especially, 'Religion and Society in the Age of St. Augustine' (New York, 1972), pp. 119—146 and his article on 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity', *J. of Roman Studies*, 61 (1971), 80—101. A convenient summary of the kinds of anthropological studies that have influenced a number of historians working on Western traditions of demonology and witchcraft may be found in M. MARWICK, ed., *Witchcraft and Sorcery: Selected Readings* (Harmondsworth, 1970).

⁴⁵ P. BROWN, *The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity*, *Journal of Roman Studies*, 61 (1971), 80—101.