

FATE AND DEATH THROUGH A DAIMONIC LENS

FATE AND DEATH THROUGH A DAIMONIC LENS

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the ancient Greek conceptualization of fate and death, as explored through the figure of the *daimon* in literature from Homer and Hesiod to Plato and Euripides. Filling a gap in scholarship, I elucidate the spectrum of meaning inherent in the word *daimon*, and how it shifts over time. From the Archaic to the Classical period the word *daimon* is found as a synonym for *theos*, “god”, as a vocative address, or in reference to “fate” and the generalized “will of heaven.” At the same time, a particular group of divine personifications, including Thanatos, Moira, Ker, and Erinys are counted as *daimones*. We also find the term used to designate unnamed but individuated lesser divinities, guardian spirits, and demonic possessors, and even as the divine aspect of the self. In the early Archaic poets these latter categories are only nascent. The individuated *daimon* becomes the focus of the lyric poets and pre-Socratic philosophers; in the later pre-Socratics the *daimon* begins to be internalized, moving from possessive spirit to psychic force. Tragedy meanwhile focuses on the *daimon* as a force of retribution, as curse or afflicting demon. It is Plato who explores and expands upon all of these categories, crystallizing the notion of the internalized *daimon*, as reconceived in the context of his philosophical eschatology. Chapters 1 and 2 provide surveys of the word *daimon* diachronically in each of these genres, mapping the expanding continuum of meaning. Chapter 3 explores the personifications of fate, doom, and death, and their place in this daimonic framework.

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DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

The author declares that the content of this research paper has been completed by Jason Solomon Binder, with recognition of the contributions of his supervisory committee consisting of Dr. Sean Corner, Dr. Paul Murgatroyd, and Dr. Spencer Pope during the research and writing process.

Introduction

The Greek conceptions of fate and death converge in the figure of the *daimon*, an entity that Plato aptly describes as πολλοὶ καὶ παντοδαποί (*Symposium* 203a). But what are these “many and varied” forms? The *daimon* can be a faceless divinity, or simply the general will of heaven, to whom the contingent events of life, the twists and turns of fortune, might be ascribed. It is at the same time man’s lot in life as well as the divine being that ratifies it. Still further, it is a guardian or fiend, a spirit closely guiding the course of a particular mortal life, in some instances to the point of being completely internalized as a facet of a person’s psyche. As personifications of these functions certain *daimones* assume a name and face. This thesis shall explore and parse the concept of the daimonic in an attempt to map this shifting conceptual continuum, in order to elucidate how the Greeks conceived of their lives and deaths.

This project began as an exploration of the status and significance of death in Greek thought, as examined through the figure of Thanatos, with the inclusion of Moros and Ker early on as natural extensions. In my initial research the *daimon* became apparent as a common thread, implicated with all of these figures of death and fate. Understanding this I determined to reframe the research, examining these aspects of the Greek cultural consciousness through the lens of the daimonic. Many questions arose in these early stages surrounding this group of deities: what precisely are *daimones*? What is the difference between Thanatos and his loathsome female counterpart Ker, and what is the status of Moros? Why is Thanatos so often depicted as erotically beautiful in iconography? What is the significance of the descriptive/iconographic differences

between Thanatos and Ker, and is there a connection to the cultural/iconographic significance of birds, sirens, harpies, and sphinxes in funerary monuments? How do all of these personifications fit within the daimonic framework? And most importantly, what does this all mean for the Greek conception of fate and death? While I recognize that I will not be able to find one, uniform answer for any of these questions across genres, fields, and times, nor will I attempt to answer every question, I nevertheless have reason to believe that in terms of the logic of the cultural imagination, it should be possible to elucidate some sort of pattern within this apparently chaotic picture: an underlying sense of what the *daimon* meant in the Greek collective consciousness.

What are *daimones*? In the *Apology*, Socrates poses the following question (27c-d):

τοὺς δὲ δαίμονας οὐχὶ ἦτοι θεοὺς γε ἠγούμεθα
ἢ θεῶν παῖδας; φῆς ἢ οὐ; πάνυ γε.

And do we not truly reckon *daimones* to be gods (*theos*) or the children of gods? Do you affirm this or not? Certainly, yes.

Daimones, it would appear, then, were commonly understood to be gods (*theoi*) or the children of gods.¹ *Daimon* is also often used in relation to unnamed or unspecified divinities (e.g. θεοί τινές at *Apology* 27d). But does the term refer simply to divinity, or may it refer to a particular kind or sphere of divinity? Turning to the *Symposium* we find Diotima explaining the divine nature of Eros (202d-203a):

ὥσπερ τὰ πρότερα, ἔφη, μεταξὺ θνητοῦ καὶ
ἀθανάτου.

¹ cf. de Ruiter (1918), 16.

τί οὖν, ὦ Διοτίμα;

δαίμων μέγας, ὦ Σώκρατες: καὶ γὰρ πᾶν τὸ δαιμόνιον μεταξύ ἐστὶ θεοῦ τε καὶ θνητοῦ.

τίνα, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, δύναμιν ἔχον;

...θεὸς δὲ ἀνθρώπῳ οὐ μίγνυται, ἀλλὰ διὰ τούτου πᾶσά ἐστιν ἡ ὁμιλία καὶ ἡ διάλεκτος θεοῖς πρὸς ἀνθρώπους, καὶ ἐγρηγορόσι καὶ καθεύδουσι: καὶ ὁ μὲν περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα σοφὸς δαιμόνιος ἀνὴρ, ὁ δὲ ἄλλο τι σοφὸς ὢν ἢ περὶ τέχνας ἢ χειρουργίας τινὰς βάνυστος. οὗτοι δὲ οἱ δαίμονες πολλοὶ καὶ παντοδαποὶ εἰσιν, εἷς δὲ τούτων ἐστὶ καὶ ὁ Ἔρως.

Just as I said before, [it – Eros – is something] between a mortal and a god.

What, O Diotima?

A great *daimon*, O Socrates; for all of the daimonic is between god and man.

And I said, what power does it have?

...A god does not mingle with a man, but through this (the *daimon*) all association and discourse for gods with man is accomplished, both for those waking and those laying to sleep; and the wise man concerning these things is *daimon*-like, being wise in some other thing whether concerning skills or some trades as an artisan. In fact these *daimones* are many and varied, and Eros is counted among their number.

Here Plato provides a further explanation of the *daimon* as being a liminal figure, acting as a kind of cosmic middleman between men and gods (*theoi*).² But what are these “association(s) and discourse(s)” that the *daimon* accomplishes for men? And how are they accomplished?

² cf. de Ruiter (1918), 15, 21.

The *daimon* has received little systematic attention from scholars. De Ruiter (1918) proves an exception, providing a survey of the *daimon* and its study from Homer to the 20th century, with the major body of the work focused on Homer's use of the word. This is certainly useful, but the other ancient writers bear more detailed treatment, which, I believe, leads to some different conclusions. Darcus (1974) still more briefly surveys the figure of the *daimon* in Homer, Hesiod, the lyric poets, and the pre-Socratic philosophers up until Heraclitus (who is the main focus of Darcus' attention). Again, his classifications are not always correct. Dodds' (1962) examination of the irrational in Greek thought treats the *daimon* as only one, small topic among many, and I would challenge his interpretation of key passages. Several other sources discuss the *daimon* in passing (Borecký, Mikalson, Kahn, etc.). As for the personifications, far more has been written about the Moirai and Erinyes and far less about Thanatos and the Keres. Moreover, the treatments that exist rarely consider these figures in the context of the daimonic, and even then only with passing mention.

This study is composed of three chapters: the first contains a survey of the *daimon* in epic and lyric poetry, as well as among the pre-Socratic philosophers; the second chapter is a continuation of the survey, examining the *daimon* in the works of the three tragedians and Plato; finally, the third chapter examines the place of the personifications, Thanatos, Ker, Moirai, etc., within the daimonic complex. The first two chapters are structured diachronically, albeit with some generic considerations leading to some departures from this scheme. The third is organized around the personifications of fate

and death, with emphasis on Thanatos, Ker, and the Erinyes/Eumenides, determining their connection to the daimonic established in the first two chapters.

Literature is the primary source for this thesis. Homer and Hesiod provide the launching point. The reason for this is that, as Edmonds rightly notes, all of the eschatological themes, from spirits of the dead to transcendence into godhood, go back to Homer and Hesiod, and demonstrate the epics' influence over the collective imagination concerning life, death, and the afterlife.³

³ Edmonds (2004), 99; *cf.* Garland (2001), ix-x, 1, 20.

Chapter 1 – The Archaic *Daimon*

The Greek conceptions of fate and death converge in the figure of the *daimon*, a complicated term with various shades of meaning. The word *daimon* belongs to a lexical cluster built on the root **dai-* denoting division and distribution, apportionment and allotment.⁴ This points to a connection between the ‘*daimon*’ and a person’s lot: their portion of fate or death. Borecký, in his monograph *Survivals of Some Tribal Ideas in Classical Greece*, convincingly argues that this connection arose in the conditions of early Greece, with the distributive order of tribal society (in respect of the allotment of material and symbolic goods) providing a metaphorical model for the order of the cosmos.⁵ As he writes, the Greeks treated fate and death as lots distributed by some higher power, expressed in terms rooted in tribal notions of division/distribution, such as *luchos*, *langchano*, etc, with *moira* serving as perhaps the clearest example, its concrete sense of “part, share, portion” coming also to mean the lot of every man in a more abstract sense. In this context, Borecký, citing Thomson (*AA* 50, *SAGS* 338 sq.), defines the Δαίμων as the “Divisor, i.e. the ancestral spirit deciding moira for every mortal.”⁶

Mikalson defines the *daimon* differently, explaining that in the classical period *daimon* came to denote the divine source of men’s ill fortune. Whereas good fortune is ascribed to the gods (*theoi*), negative events (defeat, plague, death) are never blamed on *theoi* but are rather reserved for an unspecified *daimon* or Fortune.⁷ Thus in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* at lines 634-645 we read:

⁴ Borecký (1965), 12; Darcus (1974), 394.

⁵ Borecký (1965), 12; Darcus (1974), 390, 394.

⁶ Borecký (1965), 12; *cf.* de Ruiter (1918), 20.

⁷ Mikalson (1983), 19, 59; *cf.* de Ruiter (1918), 3, 19.

Χορός

πῶς γὰρ λέγεις χειμῶνα ναυτικῶ στρατῶ
ἐλθεῖν τελευτήσαι τε δαιμόνων κότῳ;

Κῆρυξ

εὐφημον ἦμαρ οὐ πρέπει κακαγγέλῳ
γλώσση μιαίνειν: χωρὶς ἢ τιμὴ θεῶν.
ὅταν δ' ἀπευκτὰ πῆματ' ἄγγελος πόλει
στυγνῶ προσώπῳ πτωσίμου στρατοῦ φέρη,
πόλει μὲν ἔλκος ἐν τῷ δήμιον τυχεῖν,
πολλοὺς δὲ πολλῶν ἐξαγισθέντας δόμων
ἄνδρας διπλῆ μάστιγι, τὴν Ἄρης φιλεῖ,
δίλογχον ἄτην, φοινίαν ξυνωρίδα:
τοιῶνδε μέντοι πημάτων σεσαγμένον
πρέπει λέγειν παιᾶνα τόνδ' Ἐρινύων.

Chorus

For how do you say the storm, by the rancor
of *daimones*, came against the naval host and
died away?

Herald

It is not fitting to besmirch an auspicious day
with bad words; to be apart is the honour of
the gods (*theoi*). And whenever a messenger
with a gloomy visage brings word to the city
of the abominable calamity of their fallen
army--a single public wound befalling the
city, and many men from many homes have
been driven out as victims by the two-handed
whip, the one beloved of Ares, a double bane,
a bloody pair--indeed it is fitting when he is
packed with these calamities to utter the
paians of the Erinyes.

Here the Herald explains to the Chorus that it is not right to mar the gods with tales of woe, as the gods (*theoi*) are to be kept apart from such things, as is their honour. In place of the gods the Herald substitutes the Erinyes, who, as we shall see, can be considered among the ranks of the daimonic. Mikalson argues that the *daimon* “existed largely, I suspect, because of the Athenians’ reluctance to hold ‘the gods’ responsible for

misfortunes, failure, and death. The daimons provided, conceptually if not in cult, the supernatural sanction for the unpleasant side of life.”⁸ Mikalson’s analysis, however, only scratches the surface of this complex conceptual system, and he himself notes that the distinction between god and *daimon* is ambiguous and imprecise.⁹ Through careful analysis of the primary texts I intend to explore the many facets of the daimonic as a force of fortune, fate and death.

As we shall see, a survey of the *daimon* in epic (Homer, Hesiod), philosophy (pre-Socratics, Plato) and drama (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides) reveals that there are essentially six categories¹⁰ of *daimon*: 1) a divine being, synonymous with *theos*;¹¹ 2) the generalized representative of the supernatural in its influence upon mankind, manifest in a man’s fortune (good and ill) and one’s destiny – what we might call “the will of heaven”; 3) spirits that have the role of minor deities, including personifications such as Thanatos, Ker, and the Erinyes; 4) the heroic or noble dead;¹² 5) an external spirit responsible for a person’s individual course or destiny, figuring somewhere on the continuum between possessive demon, haunting ghost, and guardian angel;¹³ and 6) an internalized cause, a person’s character or genius as affecting his or her destiny.¹⁴ Defining the term’s meaning in a given context is not always easy, however, and several senses of the term are often in

⁸ Mikalson (1983), 66. *cf.* de Ruiter (1918), 19.

⁹ Mikalson (1983), 65.

¹⁰ Ignored here is the use of the *daimon* as a vocative address (*daimonios*), an expression of familiarity. Examples from epic include: *Iliad* 1.561; 2.190, 200; 3.399; 4.31; 6.326, 407, 486, 521; 9.40; 13.448, 810; 24.194; *Odyssey* 4.774; 10.472; 14.443; 18.15, 406; 19.71; 23.166, 174, 264; *Theogony* 655; *Works and Days* 207.

¹¹ *cf.* Darcus (1974), 394; de Ruiter (1918), 6-8. De Ruiter compares this usage to the Roman *numen* and *deus*.

¹² *cf.* Darcus (1974), 395; de Ruiter (1918), 14.

¹³ *cf.* Dodds (1962), 42; de Ruiter (1918), 8-10.

¹⁴ *cf.* Dodds (1962), 42-43; Edmonds (2004), 195; Mikalson (1983), 131 n.9; de Ruiter (1918), 11, 13; Shorey (1933), 536.

interplay simultaneously. This is observed most clearly in that the *daimon* can be both the allotter of fate and simultaneously *be* that fate, a characteristic conflation for the Greek mind.¹⁵ This chapter will explore the daimonic in Homer, Hesiod, the lyric poets, and the pre-Socratics, and the subsequent chapter will conclude the survey with the tragedians and Plato.

Epic

The *daimon* in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* typically fits within the first two classes: the term is employed in reference to "the will of heaven" (or in the exclamation "by heaven!"),¹⁶ or in place of *theos*¹⁷ when describing an Olympian or other deity (or men who are acting like deities). While some cases of the use of the term could potentially denote an individuated, fate-dealing *daimon*, the lack of the article and context indicates a generalizing force, the sense of an ambiguous divine will, rather than a specific agent. However, on some occasions *daimon* may refer to a particular entity or spirit, and indeed there is room for ambiguity. Often characters utilize the word *daimon* precisely when it is uncertain what specific deity or agent is at work in their life.¹⁸ One such example is found

¹⁵ cf. Darcus (1974), 395; de Ruiter (1918), 13; I do not agree, however, with Darcus' example, nor her claim that most uses of the word *daimon* in Homer refer to "a single, though unidentified, divine power." See note 23.

For the conflation of fate and fate itself think, for example, of Thanatos, who is simultaneously the god of death, with attendant duties as *psychopompos*, and death itself. For more on Thanatos, see chapter 3.

¹⁶ *Iliad* 7.291, 377, 396; 11.480, 792; 15.403, 418, 468; 17.98, 104; 19.188; 21.93; *Odyssey* 2.134; 3.166; 4.275; 5.396; 6.172; 7.248; 9.381; 11.587; 12.169; 14.386, 488; 15.261; 16.64, 194, 370; 17.243, 446; 24.306.

¹⁷ Gods: *Iliad* 1.222; 3.420; 6.115; 23.595; *Odyssey* 3.27; 5.421; 10.64. Men fighting like gods: *Iliad* 5.438, 459, 884; 16.705, 786; 20.447, 493; 21.18, 227.

¹⁸ Darcus (1974), 394-395; Dodds (1962), 12-13; Mikalson (1983), 65; de Ruiter (1918), 20. Mikalson explains that Homer often illuminates the identity of the ambiguous *daimon* later, though he provides no examples. He does however provide examples of this synonymous use in later classical examples, such as

in *Odyssey* 16.194-195: here Telemachus, in disbelief that it truly is his father Odysseus who stands before him, incredulously asserts that “you are not Odysseus, but some god (*daimon*) bewitches me.”¹⁹ Telemachus reasons this because “no mortal man could contrive such a thing by his own mind, unless a god (*theos*) himself coming and being willing made him rather easily young or old” (16.196-198).²⁰ Telemachus reckons that a god (*theos*) is involved in this action, but cannot identify a specific divine agent, and so utilizes the term *daimon*.²¹

Odyssey 16.64 is another example of *daimon* used in reference to an unspecified agent, here tied directly to fate. Eumaeus explains to the inquisitive Telemachus how the disguised Odysseus came to be at his hut: ὧς γὰρ οἱ ἐπέκλωσεν τά γε δαίμων (“for these are the things *daimon* has spun for him”). While this can easily be understood as “heaven,” the use of the verb ἐπέκλωσεν hints at the Moirai and their spinning (and hence Clotho). *Iliad* 8.166 is a rare instance of *daimon* being used in the sense of a person’s “doom”²²: “I will give you your *daimon*,” Hector boasts, threatening the retreating Diomedes.²³

Isocrates 1.12-13. Darcus also provides (often abridged) lists of these various uses of the *daimon*, though I disagree with some of his categorizations. Dodds goes a step further, rightly explaining that *daimones* were accredited not only with unexplained phenomena in the world, but also with variances from typical human behaviour, such as extreme courage or madness. Examples will be explored below.

¹⁹ οὐ σύ γ’ Ὀδυσσεύς ἐσσι, πατήρ ἐμός, ἀλλά με δαίμων/ θέλγει...

²⁰ οὐ γὰρ πῶς ἂν θνητὸς ἀνὴρ τάδε μηχανόφτο ᾧ αὐτοῦ γε νόῳ, ὅτε μὴ θεὸς αὐτὸς ἐπελθὼν ῥηϊδίως ἐθέλων θείῃ νέον ἢ ἐ γέροντα.

²¹ Dodds notes that this use of *daimon* to explain all manner of psychological and even physical phenomena is typical of the *Odyssey*, where the *Iliad* more often utilizes a specific *theos*. While he is correct that this use is more apparent in the *Odyssey*, as will become clear from this section, there are several passages of interest from the *Iliad* as well. cf. Dodds (1962), 11.

²² Darcus translates the *daimon* here as “destiny,” but I believe “doom” is more apt. cf. Darcus (1974), 395.

²³ πάρος τοι δαίμονα δώσω. Darcus uses this example to show early signs of the double meaning, of the *daimon* being both agent and lot, though I do not see that in this instance. cf. Darcus (1974), 395. De Ruiter also gives the *daimon* an active force here, though again I fail to see how the *daimon* works as an agent in

Several uses of *daimon*, however, suggest further shades of meaning. *Iliad* 9.600 is a curious example, wherein Phoenix beseeches the spurned Achilles that he not think these things in his heart, nor let *daimon* turn him.²⁴ While the term may still be taken in the sense of ‘heaven,’ the phrase raises questions. Is the *daimon* here an internal or external force? Does it complement Achilles’ personal thoughts or oppose them? What conception is at play here of the relationship between the will of heaven and the decisions and motivations of the individual? Similar is *Odyssey* 11.61, where Elpenor explains to Odysseus that “an evil αἴσα (“lot/destiny”) of/from *daimon* and vast amounts of wine destroyed me.”²⁵ Here we find the idea of one’s lot/fate tied with the *daimon*, and while *daimon* here lacks an article (but in Homeric Greek, of course, it is not required), its combination with αἴσα is suggestive of the later idea of a *daimon* as a specific agent who intervenes to bring about a person’s fortune and fate.²⁶ Dodds ties the daimonic intervention to the wine itself, explaining that the madness resultant from wine is due to there being “something supernatural or daemonic about it.”²⁷ At the same time we might wonder here, given the apposition of “δαίμονος αἴσα” with the boundless wine as together

this instance. cf. de Ruiter (1918), 8. For scholiastic justifications for the presented interpretation (that *daimon* here comes to mean one’s “doom” or “lot”), see Schenkeveld (1988), 112-114.

²⁴ ἀλλὰ σὺ μὴ μοι ταῦτα νόει φρεσὶ, μὴ δέ σε δαίμων/ ἐνταῦθα τρέψει φίλος... “but do not think thusly in your heart, and let your *daimon* not turn you there...”

²⁵ ...ἄσέ με δαίμονος αἴσα κακὴ καὶ ἀθέσφατος οἶνος. It might be argued that, given Elpenor’s tragicomic character, he is attempting to shift blame from himself in a manner that is meant to be comedic. Even so, this speaks to the commonality of this line of thinking, as will be seen with Odysseus at *Odyssey* 14.475-488, explored below. See note 31.

²⁶ A similar example is found in *Odyssey* 3.27, where Athena, in the guise of Mentor, seeks to embolden the young and inexperienced Telemachus by explaining that “some things you yourself will know in your heart, and other things a *daimon* will place there.” Here we find the idea of the *daimon* as a guardian, one that will ensure that Telemachus reach his ultimate lot by assisting where his *ethos* may falter. Admittedly the instance is still ambiguous, and Athena’s following words (οὐ γὰρ οἴω/ οὐ σε θεῶν ἀέκητι γενέσθαι τε τραφέμεν τε – “for I do not think that you have been born and raised without the favour of the gods”) may indicate that the entire exchange is a coy hint at her own divine involvement.

²⁷ Dodds (1962), 5.

the cause of Elpenor’s destruction, whether there is not also some sense of a person’s fate as working through his character, as would later be manifest in Heraclitus and the pre-Socratics. That is to say, rather than the wine having some kind of daimonic power, the *daimon* is particular to Elpenor: it is his lot to be a prodigal drunk, which is what brings him to his fate. Whether an internal or external force, it is clear that the daimonic intervenes in Homer via what Dodds terms “psychic intervention.”²⁸

In *Odyssey* 4.275 Menelaus, recounting the story of the Trojan Horse, rationalizes Helen’s actions: “Some *daimon* urged you forward, one who wished to bring glory to the Trojans.”²⁹ Here Menelaus reasons that Helen’s preternatural curiosity was the result of divine intervention, but in the absence of any further information, he may attribute it only to unspecified divine agency – some *daimon*.

Odyssey 9.381 provides another instance of the daimonic as a force influencing men’s actions and course. Odysseus here recounts that, as he and his companions prepared the wooden stake for the cyclops, “*daimon* infused [us] with great courage.”³⁰ The use of *daimon* is ambiguous, pointing to “heaven” or an unspecified divine being, but again a being that influences men’s minds and actions so as to realize their fate. This idea is echoed in *Odyssey* 14.475-488, when Odysseus, disguised, concocts a story of his supposed time with Odysseus during the Trojan War:

νῦξ δ’ ἄρ’ ἐπῆλθε κακὴ Βορέας πεσόντος,
πηγυλῖς: αὐτὰρ ὕπερθε χιῶν γένετ’ ἠὔτε πάχνη,
ψυχρή, καὶ σακέεσσι περιτρέφετο κρύσταλλος.
ἔνθ’ ἄλλοι πάντες χλαίνας ἔχον ἠδὲ χιτῶνας,

²⁸ Dodds (1962), 5.

²⁹ “κελευσέμεναι δέ σ’ ἔμελλε δαίμων, ὃς Τρώεσσιν ἐβούλετο κῦδος ὀρέξαι...” cf. Darcus (1974), 394-395.

³⁰ αὐτὰρ θάρσος ἐνέπνευσεν μέγα δαίμων.

εὔδον δ' εὐκηλοὶ, σάκεσιν εἰλυμένοι ὦμους:
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ χλαῖναν μὲν ἰὼν ἐτάροισιν ἔλειπον
ἀφραδίης, ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἐφάμην ῥίγωσέμεν ἔμπης,
ἀλλ' ἐπόμην σάκος οἶον ἔχων καὶ ζῶμα φαεινόν.
ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τρίχα νυκτὸς ἔην, μετὰ δ' ἄστρα βεβήκει,
καὶ τότε ἔγων Ὀδυσῆα προσηύδων ἐγγυὺς ἐόντα
ἀγκῶνι νύξας: ὁ δ' ἄρ' ἐμπαπέως ὑπάκουσε:
“διογενὲς Λαερτιάδη, πολυμήχαν' Ὀδυσσεῦ,
οὗ τοι ἔτι ζωοῖσι μετέσσομαι, ἀλλὰ με χεῖμα
δάμναται: **οὐ γὰρ ἔχω χλαῖναν: παρά μ' ἦπαφε δαίμων**
οἰογίτων' ἔμεναι. νῦν δ' οὐκέτι φυκτὰ πέλονται.”

And evil night came with the bitter North Wind falling
[upon us]; and snow came down like rime, cold, and the
ice froze upon our shields. Then all the other men had
brought cloaks and tunics, and they slept in peace,
covering their shoulders with their shields; **but I going**
with my comrades in my folly left my cloak behind,
since I did not think it would be so thoroughly cold,
but I was following with only my shield and my brilliant
loin-cloth. But when it was the third vigil of the night,
after the stars had gone, at that time having nudged him
with my elbow, I spoke with Odysseus who was near me:
“Divine born son of Laertes, Odysseus, man of many
contrivances, I will no longer be among the living, but
the winter overcomes me; for I do not have a cloak;
daimon beguiled me to remain lightly-clad; and now
there is no longer any escape.”

Here the disguised Odysseus explains his mistake – not taking a cloak – by claiming that *daimon* tricked him into coming unprepared. This replaces his earlier admission: that he simply did not think it would be so cold in the field. Odysseus' revision of the event is founded on the idea of the daimonic influence on one's character, here bordering on possession – the notion that he was not in his right mind.³¹

³¹ As Dodds rightly notes, it is doubtful that Odysseus is seriously blaming his mistake on the influence of some unknown divine assailant (though it seems Dodds is confused, despite his correct assertion – while the action is trivial, which Dodds emphasizes, it is also fictitious in the first place, a much more important piece of evidence in support of his argument that Dodds seems to miss). Instead this is an example of colloquial talk and what was likely conventional thinking. cf. Dodds (1962), 11.

Homeric epic, however, is not concerned to theorize its cosmology. Rather than resolve the question of the relationship with the supernatural by means of a systematic hierarchy of causation, the epic tends to over-determination,³² as is exemplified by the use of *daimon* in *Iliad* 17.98. Here, with Patroclus having just fallen and Hector leading the Trojans forward, Menelaus questions his course of action. Talking to himself, he contemplates the circumstances in which a man goes against ‘heaven’ (*daimon*) to fight someone whom the god honours/esteems (ὅπποτ’ ἀνὴρ ἐθέλη πρὸς δαίμονα φῶτι μάχεσθαι ὃν κε θεὸς τιμᾷ, τάχα οἱ μέγα πῆμα κυλίσθη – “whenever a man wishes contrary to *daimon* to fight against a mortal whom the god honours, quickly he is swept up in great calamity”). The lack of the article and the subsequent phrase at line 101, ἐκ θεόφιν πολεμίζει (“he fights in accordance with the gods”) indicates that *daimon* is here again being used to refer to the general “will of heaven.” At the same time, *daimon* here may be taken in the sense of one’s fate: a man going against his destiny.³³ Menelaus goes on to say, however, that if Ajax had been present, they might have turned back and fought “despite being against ‘heaven’ (*daimon*)” (17.104). While we may wish to psychologize this as merely empty words, meant to embolden his shaking spirit, the conception is consistent with the over-determined scheme of causation characteristic of the Homeric

³² cf. Dodds (1962), 7; Morrison (1997), 274-275, 293. According to Dodds, the Greeks simultaneously held subjective and objective perspectives on causation, which he demonstrates using the example of Patroclus (*Iliad* 16.849f). Here the slain warrior explains that three beings are responsible for his murder: Euphorbus directly, Apollo indirectly, and his own lot or *moira* as what Dodds terms the “subjective” cause.

³³ In fact, Darcus cites U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, who claims in his *Der Glaube der Hellenen* (1931) 1.358-359 that the use of the *daimon* in the phrase πρὸς δαίμονα may be synonymous with the phrase ὑπὲρ μόρον, marking another instance of the *daimon* being used as “fate” itself. cf. Darcus (1974), 395 n.17. With the follow-up of ὃν κε θεὸς τιμᾷ it is hard to agree, as the *daimon* seems to be wrapped up in the idea of the “will of heaven,” but I cannot review Wilamowitz’ evidence to test his rationale, and Darcus seems to take it as merely a suggestion, relegating it to a footnote.

poems' treatment of the deeds of mortals, the intervention of the gods, and the ordinances of Fate.³⁴ The conception of *daimon* here is expressive of a fundamental ambiguity in respect to the nature and limits of human agency in relation to the will of heaven.

Thus we might say that we find in Homer a core conception of the daimonic that would become more elaborated over time – an entity used to explain the unexplained, deeply enmeshed with one's lot in life to the point of affecting one's mind and actions.³⁵ Hesiod, writing around the time of Homer,³⁶ introduces the *daimon* as a lesser deity,³⁷ straddling categories 3 (personifications), 4 (heroic dead), and 5 (personal divine being).³⁸ A key instance of the use of the term – and one that will be called upon throughout our reading of the Greek corpus, especially within the realm of philosophy – is found at *Works and Days* 122-125, which encompasses all three categories. Here Hesiod explains the ultimate fate, after death, of those born in the golden generation of humankind:

³⁴ This order of causation is perhaps best exemplified by Zeus weighing the scales for Achilles and Hector (*Iliad* 22.208-213), a determined fate that just prior Zeus questions (22.168-181). Here the various perspectives of Dodds (see note 32 above) are presented, as we find the direct action, Achilles and Hector fighting, the indirect action, the influence of Zeus and Athena, and the subjective force of fate, the weighing of the scales. Another example is the bringing forth bloody rain to lament the unavoidable death of Zeus' son Sarpedon (*Iliad* 16.419-461), a death that Zeus seems to have the power to avert but decides not to, per the advice of Hera. For an exploration of the former instance, known as a *kerostasia* or *psychostasia*, see Morrison (1997), 274, 278, 287-288, 293. This will also be explored further in chapter 3. For the latter event, see Morrison (1997), 286-287.

³⁵ I am in agreement with Dodds that, while Homer does present several examples of direct daimonic influence on man, as has been demonstrated, the poet does not go as far as presenting daimonic possession. *cf.* Dodds (1962), 10. The same can be said for de Ruiter's claim that the personal *daimon*, the genius assigned to each and every mortal from birth that assigns and guides his/her lot in life, is not present in Homer. *cf.* de Ruiter (1918), 9. I would assert, however, that the groundwork has clearly been laid here with Homer for both of these ideas, to be expanded upon by the poets and philosophers to follow.

³⁶ It is uncertain whether Hesiod preceded or followed Homer. As such I will take them as essentially contemporaneous. *cf.* Ulf (2009), 97; Wees (2002), 98.

³⁷ *cf.* Darcus (1974), 395; de Ruiter (1918), 16, 18, 20.

³⁸ Example of *daimon* as the "will of heaven/fate": *Shield of Herakles* 94. The same issue arises here as in Homer, as while this example could certainly be interpreted as a personal, lot-dealing *daimon*, the lack of an article gives it a general force.

Theogony 656 may be an example of *daimon* being used in place of *theos*, as here Cottus addresses Zeus as δαίμόνι'. More likely, though, it is simply the vocative address, and is thus included in the list above in note 10.

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τοῦτο γένος κατὰ γαῖ' ἐκάλυψε,—
τοὶ μὲν δαίμονες ἀγνοὶ ἐπιχθόνιοι καλέονται
ἔσθλοί, ἀλεξίκακοι, φύλακες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων,
οἳ ῥα φυλάσσουσιν τε δίκας καὶ σχέτλια ἔργα
ἠέρα ἐσσάμενοι πάντη φοιτῶντες ἐπ' αἴαν,
πλουτοδόται...

But in fact when the earth concealed this generation,
— they are called good *daimones* that dwell beneath
the earth, warders off of evil, and guardians of dead
men, who watch over judgments and unhappy deeds,
themselves clothed in mist they go throughout the
entire world, and they give wealth.

After their passing, that godlike golden generation became *daimones* who act in the afterlife and in the world as guardian spirits, agents of fortune.³⁹ Their status as guardians of the dead in particular, as well as their cloaking in mist/air, recalls the personifications whose purview is death, especially *Thanatos*.⁴⁰

A parallel to *Iliad* 8.166 and *Odyssey* 11.61 is found at *Works and Days* 313. Here *daimon* is used of one's lot or destiny in life: δαίμονι δ' οἷος ἔησθα, τὸ ἐργάζεσθαι ἄμεινον... (“whatever is your *daimon*, working is better...”). While the phrase itself is ambiguous, the context points to its use simply as one's “lot,” since here Hesiod is explaining that in any socio-economic condition to work is always best. This line also can be construed as the individuated *daimon*, the private agent of fate that manipulates the

³⁹ This guardianship of the dead anticipates their role as *psychopompos*, found for example in Plato, explored below.

⁴⁰ The wrapping in mist (ἠέρα ἐσσάμενοι) is perhaps a reference to their status as the dead/protectors of the dead. Vermeule posits that *Thanatos* himself is not actually a god of death in Homer, but is instead an elemental concept, the aspect of death manifest in the mist or veil that metaphorically sweeps over a man as he dies. *cf.* Vermeule (1979), 37-41. While I will challenge Vermeule's assessment of *Thanatos* himself (and, importantly, this quote is from Hesiod, not Homer), the association of mist with death (and those attendant to the process of death) is apt. Also note that while ἠέρα comes to mean “air” (specifically the “lower air,” in Aristarchus, for example), in Homer and Hesiod it is always used as “mist” or “haze.” See LSJ *s.v.* ἀήρ, A.

path of one's life.⁴¹ In this way the line anticipates the lyric poets and pre-Socratics, especially Theognis, Phocylides, and Heraclitus. Thus while Edmonds is correct in his assertion that the origin of the idea of an individuated *daimon* is unclear, we can say that the groundwork is laid with the daimonic forces of epic, the spirits that affect and sway the minds and lives of men.⁴²

Lyric

While the lyric poets continue to use *daimon* as a substitute for *theos* and the “will of heaven”,⁴³ the idea of *daimones* as protective guardians and damning, possessive demons (category 5) is prominent in their song. Dodds rightly notes that the *daimon* has become individuated, a fate intrinsically tied to a mortal from birth.⁴⁴ Theognis provides excellent examples at 161-164, and 165-166:

πολλοί τοι χρω̃νται δειλαῖς φρεσί, δαίμονι δ' ἐσθλῶ,
οἷς τὸ κακὸν δοκέον γίγνεται εἰς ἀγαθόν:
εἰσὶν δ' οἱ βουλῆ τ' ἀγαθῆ καὶ δαίμονι δειλῶ
μοχθίζουσι, τέλος δ' ἔργμασιν οὐχ ἔπεται.

Certainly many men have evil minds, but are possessed of a good *daimon*, and for these men the thing that seems evil becomes good; and there are those who toil with good advice and are possessed of a miserable/vile *daimon*, and the end does not come for their works.

οὐδεὶς ἀνθρώπων οὔτ' ὄλβιος οὔτε πενιχρὸς
οὔτε κακὸς νόσφιν δαίμονος οὔτ' ἀγαθός.

⁴¹ Dodds explains it as “part of a man's natal endowment as beauty or talent,” in that it is one's innate, personal fortune. cf. Dodds (1962), 42. The same interpretation is found in de Ruiter (1918), 8, who views it as a *numen* with the power to assign one's lot.

⁴² Edmonds (2004), 190.

⁴³ For a list of examples, see Darcus (1974), 395 n. 18.

⁴⁴ Dodds (1964), 42. See note 41 above.

No man is rich or poor, neither bad nor good, apart
from *daimon*.

Here the *daimon* figures simultaneously as the divine agent that assigns man's lot as well as the lot itself.⁴⁵ In the first section, it seems that while one's character is one's own, one's fate is still dependent on one's particular *daimon*, which supersedes one's *ethos* to bring about the destined lot.⁴⁶ The impact of *daimon* in guiding one's life is emphasized in the latter section, which recalls *Works and Days* 313, though again *daimon* here may be taken simply as the "will of heaven." Theognis 341-350⁴⁷ is also interesting as here the poet, in a prayer to Zeus, asks that he "see a good *daimon*, who will bring these things about in accordance with my will." While the prayer is originally directed towards Zeus, Theognis concludes by turning to an ἐσθλὸς δαίμων, implicating the *daimon* in his personal life.⁴⁸ The *daimon* here is explicitly personal, an actor entangled in the speaker's life. This will be found again with Phocylides in fragment 16 D, explored below, wherein

⁴⁵ Darcus (1974), 396; Edmonds (1931), n.47. While de Ruiter is in agreement that 161-164 is an example of the individuated *daimon*, he contends that 165-166 is an example of *daimon* being utilized as a synonym for *theos*, using Theognis 171-172 to bolster his claim (θεοῖς εὖχου: θεοῖς ἐστὶν ἐπὶ κράτος: οὗτοι ἄτερ θεῶν γίνεται ἀνθρώποις οὔτ' ἀγάθ' οὔτε κακά – Pray to the gods [*theoi*]; the gods have power; indeed without the gods there are neither good things nor misfortunes for men). cf. de Ruiter (1918), 7, 10. In light of Theognis 161-164 and 341-350 (the latter of which will be explored), however, it seems that while one may pray to a *theos* for good fortune, Theognis still hopes for a good *daimon* to personally affect his life.

⁴⁶ cf. Dodds (1962), 42.

⁴⁷ ἀλλὰ Ζεῦ τέλεσόν μοι Ὀλύμπιε καίριον εὐχὴν./ δὸς δέ μοι ἀντὶ κακῶν καὶ τι παθεῖν ἀγαθόν:/ τεθναίην δ' εἰ μὴ τι κακῶν ἄμπαυμα μεριμνέων/ εὐροίμην, δοίην τ' ἀντ' ἀνιῶν ἀνίας./ αἴσα γὰρ οὕτως ἐστί: τίσις δ' οὐ φαίνεται ἡμῖν/ ἀνδρῶν οἱ τὰ μὰ χρέματ' ἔχουσι βίη/ συλήσαντες: ἐγὼ δὲ κύων ἐπέρησα χαράδρην/ χειμάρρῳ ποταμῷ πάντ' ἀποσεισάμενος./ τῶν εἴη μέλαν αἶμα πιεῖν, ἐπί τ' ἐσθλὸς ὄροίτο/ δαίμων, ὅς κατ' ἐμὸν νοῦν τελέσειε τάδε.

“But Olympian Zeus fulfill my timely prayer, and give to me to endure something good rather than evils; and let me die if I being anxious might not find rest from evils, and I might give troubles in exchange for troubles. For fate is thus; and no retribution manifested for me upon those men who having robbed me still hold my possessions; but I as a dog traversed the stream having shaken off all in the overflowing river. Whose dark blood is it to drink, and to this task may a good *daimon* rise, who might bring these things about in accordance with my desire.”

⁴⁸ Darcus (1974), 396.

the *daimon* is a vehicle for fortune and the contingencies of the course of an individual's life.

Theognis 1345-1348,⁴⁹ which describes the ascension of Ganymede to the status of *daimon*, shares with *Works and Days* 122 and *Theogony* 991 the idea of the ascent of a noble or heroic soul to divinity. As in the latter passage where Phaethon rises to become δαίμονα δῖον, here Zeus establishes his beloved cupbearer as a *daimon*. While Darcus takes this as an illustration of man's ability to achieve a level of divinity,⁵⁰ the issue is complicated, just as it is in the case of *Theogony* 991, since Ganymede, like Phaethon, is of divine blood. Regardless of this, and of the fact that neither actually dies, we may place them with the fourth category, the heroic dead, inasmuch as they have transcended the mortal plane and obtained sacred duties and powers in their respective 'afterlives'.⁵¹ We might see this, however, as a liminal stage in anticipation of the theories of Empedocles, Heraclitus, and Plato, who all put forward the notion of living *daimones* –the fallen *daimones* who live as mortals, as in Empedocles, and the ability for mortals to achieve the status of *daimon* in life, as hinted at in Heraclitus and fully elucidated in Plato.

The idea of the *daimon* as a guardian is found in Phocylides fragment 16 D, as recounted by Clement of Alexandria in his *Stromata* (5.725):

ἔτι πρὸς τοῖσδε φωκυλίδης τοὺς ἀγγέλους δαίμονας
καλῶν, τοὺς μὲν εἶναι ἀγαθοὺς αὐτῶν τοὺς δὲ φαύλους ...
παρίστησιν:

⁴⁹ Παιδοφιλεῖν δέ τι τερπνόν, ἐπεὶ ποτε καὶ Γανυμήδους/ ἠράσατο Κρονίδης ἀθανάτων βασιλεύς,/ ἀρπάξας δ' ἐς Ὀλυμπον ἀνήγαγε, καὶ μιν ἔθηκε/ δαίμονα παιδείης ἄνθος ἔχοντ' ἐρατόν – “To love a boy is a delightful thing, since that time when the son of Cronus, king of the immortals, loved Ganymede, having snatched him up he led him to Olympus, and he set him being in the blossom of childhood as a *daimon*.”

⁵⁰ Darcus (1974), 396.

⁵¹ The argument could perhaps be made that Ganymede is no longer alive in any real sense in his new role as cupbearer to the *athanatos* Zeus. We might say that his mortal coil has been metaphorically shuffled off.

“ἀλλ’ ἄρα δαίμονές εἰσιν ἐπ’ ἀνδράσιν ἄλλοτε ἄλλοι,
οἱ μὲν ἐπερχομένου κακοῦ ἀνέρας ἐκλύσασθαι ...”

In addition to these things Phocylides refers to the angels as *daimones*, and some of them are good while others are bad... saying:

“but there are for men different *daimones* at different times: on the one hand those who free men from coming evil...”

Here Phocylides explores the idea that at times *daimones* are assigned to men, some of whom act in the capacity of a guardian.⁵² It is no wonder then that Clement would translate this ancient Greek idea into the Christian notion of angels, though with the crucial difference that some of these spirits are in fact indifferent or even bad, depending on one’s translation of φαύλους.⁵³ Thus men, in Phocylides’ perception, are each possessed of different *daimones* at different times, and it is in this way that the lyric poet comes to terms with the personal contingencies of human life, the way that each life unfolds idiosyncratically, with good and ill fortune in arbitrary measures. The personal *daimon* explains these contingencies, and through this rationalization of the randomness of life the contingencies of fortune collapse into the necessity of fate, the particular lot assigned each man.

The nature of the *daimon* as an individuated divine being, a particular actor who directly influences the course of an individual’s life as agent of his fate, is found in Pindar’s *Ninth Olympian*. At 9.28-29 Pindar explains that men become wise and good based on their *daimon*.⁵⁴ Here the idea of *daimon* as the cause of a person’s “fate” directly

⁵² cf. Darcus (1974), 396; Dodds (1962), 42; de Ruiter (1918), 10.

⁵³ de Ruiter (1918), 19.

⁵⁴ ἀγαθοὶ δὲ καὶ σοφοὶ κατὰ δαίμον’ ἀνδρες/ ἐγένοντ’... “Men became good and wise in accordance with [their] *daimon*...”

impacts the person's character, recalling *Odyssey* 11.61 (the gluttony of Elpenor).⁵⁵ Theognis takes this idea of daimonic influence on a person's life even further at 637-638.⁵⁶ Here Theognis describes "hope" and "danger"⁵⁷ as being "difficult *daimones*," both holding the same place in the mortal sphere. The use of *daimon* here signifies both that these are nebulous forces, in contradistinction to particular *theoi*, and that they have the distinctive property of psychically affecting men. "Hope" and "danger" are quasi-possessive forces, forces outside of a mortal's control and yet are implicated in his/her action.⁵⁸ This follows the examples found in *Odyssey* 4.275 (the curiosity of Helen), 9.381 (the foolishness of Odysseus), and to a lesser extent 11.61 (the gluttony of Elpenor).

Pre-Socratic Philosophy

Turning to the pre-Socratics we find a further crystallization of the use of *daimon*. Both Parmenides and Empedocles stress the idea that the *daimon* is a lesser deity. In the former we find the *daimon* as the guide (B1)⁵⁹ and director (B12)⁶⁰ of what Darcus terms the

⁵⁵ cf. Darcus (1974), 397.

⁵⁶ ἔλπις καὶ κίνδυνος ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὁμοῖα/ οὗτοι γὰρ χαλεποὶ δαίμονες ἀμφοτέρω. "Hope and danger are alike among men, for these are both dangerous *daimones*."

⁵⁷ Curiously Darcus and Dodds translate κίνδυνος as "fear," though I have found no such entry for it in LSJ. Perhaps they are extrapolating the attendant emotions involved with κίνδυνος. cf. Darcus (1974), 396; Dodds (1962), 41. Edmonds translates it as "risk", but also presents an interpretation from Powell that it could be taken as "the spirit of adventure," though he too does not indicate the rationale. cf. Edmonds (1931), n.151.

⁵⁸ Darcus (1974), 396; Dodds (1962), 41.

⁵⁹ Ἴπποι ταί με φέρουσιν, ὅσον τ' ἐπὶ θυμὸς ἰκάνοι, πέμπων, ἐπεὶ μ' ἐς ὄδον βῆσαν πολύφημον ἄγουσαι δαίμονος, ἢ κατὰ πάντ' ἄστη φέρει εἰδῶτα φῶτα· τῇ φερόμην· τῇ γάρ με πολύφραστοι φέρον ἵπποι ἄρμα τιταίνουσαι, κοῦραι δ' ὄδον ἡγεμόνευον.

⁶⁰ ἐν δὲ μέσῳ τούτων δαίμων ἢ πάντα κυβερνᾷ· πάντα γὰρ <ἦ> στυγεροῖο τόκου καὶ μίξιος ἄρχει πέμπουσ' ἄρσενι θῆλυ μιγῆν τό τ' ἐναντίον αὐτίς ἄρσεν θηλυτέρω.

“world of Seeming (*Doxa*).”⁶¹ This stands in contrast to the world of Being, which contains true divinity as what *is* is worth more than what *seems to be*, whereas the world of *Doxa* can only contain lesser divinity.⁶² Empedocles takes this concept a step further, asserting that *daimones* are actually fallen gods, suffering exile from the divine realm for their corruption (B115):⁶³

ἔστιν Ἀνάγκης χρῆμα, θεῶν ψήφισμα παλαιόν,
αἰδίων, πλατέεσσι κατεσφρηγισμένον ὄρκοις·
εὐτέ τις ἀμπλακίησι φόνωι φίλα γυῖα μίηνη,
<νεϊκεῖ θ’> ὅς κ(ε) ἐπίορκον ἀμαρτήσας ἐπομόσση,
δαίμονες οἴτε μακραιῶνος λελάχασι βίοιο,
τρίς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,
φρομένους παντοῖα διὰ χρόνου εἶδεα θνητῶν
ἀργαλέας βιότοιο μεταλλάσσοντα κελεύθους.
αἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφε μένος πόντονδε διώκει,
πόντος δ’ ἐς χθονὸς οὐδας ἀπέπτυσσε, γαῖα δ’ ἐς αὐγὰς
ἡελίου φαέθοντος, ὁ δ’ αἰθέρος ἔμβαλε δίναις·
ἄλλος δ’ ἐξ ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγέουσι δὲ πάντες.
τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἶμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης,
νεϊκεῖ μαινομένωι πίσυνος.

There is a matter of Necessity, an old decree of the gods, eternal, made with full oaths; when some [god] might stain their own limbs in error, and swear a false oath having done wrong, these *daimones* who have been assigned long-lasting life, they shall wander away from the blessed ones for thirty thousand years, being born as all sorts of mortal forms over time searching out painful paths of life.

For the might of air forces them seaward, and the sea spits them out to the surface of the earth, and the earth [forces them] to the light of the shining sun, and it throws [them] to the whirls of the air; and each receives [them] from the other, and they all hate [them]. And I now am one of them, an exile and wanderer from the gods, reliant on mad strife.

⁶¹ Darcus (1974), 398.

⁶² Darcus (1974), 398.

⁶³ This is potentially based upon the Hesiodic idea of gods who have fallen from Olympus for transgressing an oath (*Theogony* 780-806). cf. Santaniello (2012/3), 305.

The *daimones* manifest themselves in the world of mortals as men of importance – “seers, writers, doctors, and princes” (B146)⁶⁴ – until they rise once more, cleansed, and “share the hearth of the other deathless ones” (B147).⁶⁵ Thus the *daimon* for Empedocles seems to be a lesser deity—a fallen god that resides within mortals while attempting to regain its divine status—and simultaneously the divine potential of man.⁶⁶ As such I would categorize this as an adaptation of category four, the noble dead, though it is better labeled here as the noble good, as here a mortal may be considered a *daimon* not simply upon death, but also in life. This is also found, albeit obscurely, in Heraclitus, and will be developed further by Plato.

Plutarch, in *De tranquillitate animi*, cites a passage of Empedocles (B122) consisting of a list of paired names.⁶⁷ Plutarch explains (474b):

ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον, ὡς Ἐμπεδοκλῆς, διτταί τινες
ἕκαστον ἡμῶν γιγνόμενον παραλαμβάνουσι καὶ
κατάρχονται μοῖραι καὶ δαίμονες:

⁶⁴ εἰς δὲ τέλος μάντιες τε καὶ ὑμνοπόλοι καὶ ἰητροὶ καὶ πρόμοι ἀνθρώποισιν ἐπιχθονίοισι πέλονται, ἔνθεν ἀναβλαστοῦσι θεοὶ τιμῆσι φέριστοι.

⁶⁵ ἀθανάτοις ἄλλοισιν ὁμέστιοι, αὐτοτράπεζοι ἐόντες, ἀνδρείων ἀχέων ἀπόκληροι, ἀτειρεῖς.

⁶⁶ Darcus (1974), 398; Dodds (1962), 153; Edmonds (2004), 93-94; Garland (1985), 63; de Ruiter (1918), 12; Santaniello (2012/3), 306, 308. As Edmonds notes, Empedocles is convoluted, referring to himself for example as *theos* as opposed to *daimon* in fragment DK 112.4 (ἐγὼ δ’ ὑμῖν θεὸς ἄμβροτος οὐκέτι θνητός – “I am to you an immortal *theos*, no longer mortal”). While the differentiation between *theos* and *daimon* may be blurred in Empedocles’ writings, I assert that the transcendent potential of man is still apparent, and anticipates Plato’s *Cratylus*, explored below. Edmonds, citing Detienne (1963), provides the example of the Pythagoreans as another group of philosophers positing the transcendental potential of man. The Pythagoreans believed one could attain daimonhood by living a virtuous life, another possible precursor to Plato’s *Cratylus*. Edmonds admits, however, that lack of evidence undermines Detienne’s exploration of the *daimon* as personal agent in Pythagorean thought. De Ruiter, in his exploration of Plato’s internalized *daimon*, purports that this also follows the Orphic tradition. cf. de Ruiter (1918), 13, 20. Dietrich posits both as options. cf. Dietrich (1964), 117. For more on the historiography of these two often-entangled sources of inspiration for Plato, see Edmonds (2004), 164-165.

⁶⁷ ἔνθ’ ἦσαν Χθονίη τε καὶ Ἡλιόπη ταναῶπις,/ δῆρις θ’ αἱματόεσσα καὶ Ἀρμονίη θεμερῶπις,/ Καλλιστῶ τ’ Αἴσχηρ τε Θόωσά τε Δηναίη τε,/ νημερτής τ’ ἐρόεσσα μελάγκαρπός 8 τ’ Ἀσάφεια. “There was both Chthonia and Heliopie the far-sighted, and blood-red Deris and stern Harmony, and Kallisto and Aischra and Thoösa and Denaia, and charming Nemertes and sweet Asaphaea.”

But rather, as Empedocles said, some two *moirai*
or *daimones* take up each of us when we are born
and govern us;

The names, it would seem then, are those of these pairs of divinities.⁶⁸ Here *daimones* are identified with *moirai* (as will be explored in chapter 3). This of course emphasizes the role of the daimonic as agents of fate. Here this connection pertains in the context of personal *daimones*, spirits attached to each man at his birth and guiding the course of his life.

In Heraclitus, the first of the pre-Socratics to deal with the *daimon*, the conceptualization of the *daimon* as a spirit that guides one's life is psychically internalized, implicated in a person's character.⁶⁹ Fragment B119, ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων, may be translated verbatim as "character for man is *daimon*." This is often interpreted through a humanistic lens, with *daimon* here as destiny: "Character is destiny".⁷⁰ However, as Darcus notes, since *ethos* is the disposition of man, something that is acted upon rather than itself being an actor, and since *daimon* has the attendant meaning of a divine agent of fate, as Edmonds rightly notes, this is perhaps better translated as

⁶⁸ As Helmbold (1939) contends, the names are meant to be taken as "Earth-maiden, Sun-maiden; Discord, Harmony; Beauty, Ugliness; Swiftmess, Slowness; Truth, Uncertainty." cf. Helmbold (1939), 221 n.6. While the implication behind "Earth-maiden" or "Sun-maiden" is unclear, the rest certainly make sense as personal daimonic actors, agents of one's particular lot.

⁶⁹ Darcus (1974), 399; de Ruiter (1918), 11.

⁷⁰ Benardete (2000), 624-625; Dodds (1962), 42, 181-182. Benardete provides the example of Ajax, who, in Sophocles' *Ajax*, becomes "nothing but the sound of woe (*aiai*)."

Dodds goes as far as to claim that this was an attempt by Heraclitus to quell traditional superstition, an attack on ideas of fate and destiny. His rationale is simply that Heraclitus was part of the Enlightenment, and in a few other instances voiced criticism of traditional ideas surrounding, for example, burial and ritual cults. I find this argument to be less convincing, especially in light of fragments B79, B83, etc., explained below. Nevertheless, it is entirely possible that this is the meaning of the dictum, and is indicative of just how tricky the phrase truly is. That said, even if Dodds is correct, it then must mean the notion of daimonic influence was a commonly held belief.

“character is the product of/is influenced by *daimon*.”⁷¹ The fragment encapsulates the notion of the individuated *daimon*, which works through internal psychic forces as a possessing/inspiring entity, with direct influence on one’s character.⁷² This is not to say that Heraclitan man lacks free will; on the contrary, Heraclitus often exhorts men to adjust their outlook.⁷³ This is another example of Greek over-determinism: where man’s *ethos* ends and *daimon* takes control is impossible to discern.⁷⁴

Daimon appears once more in the Heraclitan corpus, in fragment B79: ἀνήρ νήπιος ἤκουσε πρὸς δαίμονος ὅκωσπερ παῖς πρὸς ἀνδρός (“man is called childish compared to a *daimon* just as a child [is called childish] compared to a man”). While Kahn is correct that, at its simplest, this represents a “gradient scale of knowledge,”⁷⁵ as Darcus notes, the terms here – child, man, *daimon* – also indicate potentiality. In explaining this potentiality, Darcus claims that where a child becomes a man, a man may be blessed with a good *daimon*, one to establish and guide his *ethos*, as Heraclitus explains in B119.⁷⁶ In fragment B83, he elaborates man’s relation to *theos*: ἀνθρώπων ὁ σοφώτατος πρὸς θεὸν πίθηκος φανεῖται καὶ σοφία κάλλει καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις πᾶσιν (“the

⁷¹ Benardete (2000), 625; Darcus (1974), 399; Edmonds (2004), 191. De Ruiter also takes this fragment as an example of the internalization of the older idea of a personal *daimon*, and adds a corroborative example of a similar dictum found in fragment 17 of Epicharmus: ὁ τρόπος ἀνθρώποισι δαίμων ἀγαθός, οἷς δὲ καὶ κακός – the way for men is good *daimon*, and for others is bad *daimon*. cf. de Ruiter (1918), 11. See Darcus for an elaboration on the role and conceptualization of *ethos* throughout early Greek literature.

⁷² Darcus (1974), 399-400; de Ruiter (1918), 11. While I agree with much of Darcus’ explanation of the Heraclitus fragment, I do not see Heraclitus as departing from tradition. While Heraclitus does take this idea further than his predecessors, he is, as my analysis has shown, working within an existing literary and conceptual framework. This is further proven by the fact that Epicharmus, cited in the note above, provides essentially the same dictum contemporaneously. Edmonds (2004) would agree with my contention, though he is flimsier in his conviction, stating that “Heraclitus’ famous dictum... may refer to the same idea,” the idea being that there are daimonic guides afoot in the world, as per Menander, Empedocles, etc. cf. Edmonds (2004), 190-191.

⁷³ Darcus (1974), 399. Darcus provides a list of examples: B2, B41, B50, B73, B80, B85, B112, and B114.

⁷⁴ cf. Darcus (1974), 400.

⁷⁵ Kahn (1964), 201.

⁷⁶ Darcus (1974), 406.

wisest of men will seem to be an ape compared to a *theos* with respect to his wisdom and beauty and all other things”). Per Darcus’ analysis, whereas the child will become a man, the ape of course will not: likewise, whereas one may be blessed with a good *daimon*, one may not touch the divine heights of the *theos*.⁷⁷ This difference is also indicated in B78: ἦθος γὰρ ἀνθρώπειον μὲν οὐκ ἔχει γνώμας, θεῖον δὲ ἔχει (“the character of man does not have judgment/knowledge, but the divine (*theion*) does”).⁷⁸

While I believe Darcus is correct that B79 does indicate potentiality, he does not go far enough in his explanation. I contend that Heraclitus’ adage actually hearkens back to Hesiod (*Theogony* 991) and the fourth category of *daimon*: that of the noble dead. Just as the child will grow to become and, importantly, is guided by a man, the man may not only be blessed, and therefore guided, by a good *daimon*, but may also eventually become a *daimon*, though he cannot ever achieve the status of *theos*. This interpretation is given further credence by examination of Heraclitus’ view of death. For Heraclitus the soul can be dry, which approaches the element of fire, or wet, which approaches water and, further than that, earth. The spectrum from wet to dry can be traversed, and the ascent of the soul upward toward dryness is the ideal.⁷⁹ Those who live a simple life will find themselves as water and even earth (B29),⁸⁰ while those who live noble lives will rise to smoke and finally to fire, and act as guardians of the living and dead (B63):

⁷⁷ Darcus (1974), 406.

⁷⁸ Darcus (1974), 400.

⁷⁹ Kahn (1964), 199. See fragment 36: ψυχῆισιν θάνατος ὕδωρ γενέσθαι, ὕδατι δὲ θάνατος γῆν γενέσθαι, ἐκ γῆς δὲ ὕδωρ γίνεται, ἐξ ὕδατος δὲ ψυχή. “For souls to become water is death, and for water to become earth is death, but from earth it becomes water, and from water is the soul.”

⁸⁰ αἰρεῦνται γὰρ ἐν ἀντία πάντων οἱ ἄριστοι, κλέος ἀέναον θνητῶν, οἱ δὲ πολλοῖκεκόρηται ὄκωσπερ κτήνεα. “The best men are chosen one from among all, eternally flowing glory for mortals, and the many were satiated as if wild beasts.” Kahn takes this as a barb, in that these people will “simply pass into the

__ λέγει δὲ καὶ σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν ταύτης (τῆς)
φανερᾶς, ἐνῆ̃ γεγενήμεθα, καὶ τὸν θεὸν οἶδε ταύτης
τῆς ἀναστάσεως αἴτιον οὕτως λέγων· ἔνθα δ' ἐόντι
ἐπανίστασθαι καὶ φύλακας γίνεσθαι ἐγερτὶ ζώντων
καὶ νεκρῶν. λέγει δὲ καὶ τοῦ κόσμου κρίσιν καὶ
πάντων τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ διὰ πυρὸς.

... and he says also that those of the manifest flesh
rise up, and we become old, and he knows of the
divine cause of the rising up, speaking thusly; and
then they are set up and become busy guardians of
the living and the dead. And he speaks of order and
of all the things in this as through fire.

This recalls the duty of the Golden Generation of Hesiod (*Works and Days* 122-125).⁸¹

Thus a distinction between *daimon* and *theos* is drawn, the former an intimate, personal being, the latter remaining transcendent. The *daimon* for Heraclitus is simultaneously the guide, guardian, and fate itself, manifest through one's character (B119), while also being the final evolution in the transmigration of the soul – an ascendant divine being (B63, B79).

inert elements, water and earth.” He compares this to the insult hurled by Menelaus against his cowardly allies at *Iliad* 7.99 - ἀλλ' ὑμεῖς μὲν πάντες ὕδωρ καὶ γαῖα γένοισθε... “but might you all become water and earth...” cf. Kahn (1964), 199.

⁸¹ Kahn (1964), 199-200.

Chapter 2 – The Classical *Daimon*

Thus far I have explored the *daimon* in literature from the epic poetry of Homer and Hesiod, through their lyric successors, and finally to the pre-Socratic philosophers. The contours of a continuum have been traced and its depths have been probed, with the use of *daimon* ranging from an ambiguous divine actor to that of an individuated entity deeply entangled within one's mind, bordering on possession. It is in this chapter that I will continue my literary survey, now turning my attention to the three tragedians, before returning to philosophy in the work of Plato. Throughout the tragic corpus we find the *daimon* in all its facets, albeit with a greater stress on the negative – the bringers of doom and ill fortune, the avengers, the possessive curses – as is wont of tragedy to focus on the darker side of life.⁸² It is in Plato that we find the fully crystallized expression of each of these facets, including, finally, category 6 – the fully internalized *daimon*.⁸³

Drama

In tragedy we find the tragedians reflecting and reflecting upon the new thought of their times in the context of a traditional mythopoetic framework inherited from epic and lyric. We still encounter of course many examples of *daimon* as a synonym of *theos*,⁸⁴ as

⁸² cf. Dodds (1962), 41.

⁸³ cf. Dodds (1962), 42-43; Mikalson (1983), 131 n.9; de Ruiter (1918), 13; Shorey (1933), 536.

⁸⁴ *Daimon* as *theos*: Aeschylus: *Persae* 628, 811; *Seven Against Thebes* 77, 96(?), 106, 173, 211, 236, 523 (Typhon); *Prometheus Vincit* 85, 199, 229, 494, 660; *Agamemnon* 182(?), 519(?); *Choephoroe* 214; *Eumenides* 23, 920, 1016; *Supplices* 85, 100, 217, 482, 893, 922; Euripides *Cyclops* 335 (jokingly refers to his stomach as the “greatest *daimon*”), 524, 580, 606-607; *Heraclidae* 102, 260, 508, 769, 935(?), 955; *Supplices* 218, 563, 610, 615; *Medea* 619, 671, 1208, 1391, 1410; *Hecuba* 97, 164, 490; *Troades* 49, 56, 949; *Orestes* 667; *Hippolytus* 13, 16, 99, 107, 475, 1401, 1092, 1267, 1406, 1415; *Andromache* 277, 1008, 1036, 1228; *Iphigenia at Taurus* 267, 391, 570(?); *Iphigenia at Aulis* 976, 1076, 1514; *Ion* 4, 827, 1353, 1551, 1620; *Helen* 663, 915, 1075, 1678, 1688; *Bacchae* 22, 42, 200, 219, 256, 272, 298, 377, 413, 417, 481, 498, 769, 1246, 1325, 1388; *Rhesus* 241, 301 (godlike), 317, 884, 996(?); *Phoenissae* 18, 413, 491, 531, 984, 1199; *Electra* 1141, 1234; Sophocles *Oedipus Tyrannus* 34, 244, 886, 912, 1378; *Trachiniae* 280;

well as signifying “fate” or “divine will,”⁸⁵ and these old and basic usages require no real examination. Tragedy also utilizes *daimon* as noble/heroic dead, guardian/agent of fate, and also as possessive spirit, as we shall explore.

The *daimon* as the transcendent dead, a category described first by Hesiod, is found in Aeschylus’ *Persae*, in the case of the *daimon* of the recently perished king Darius, and in Euripides’ *Alcestis*.⁸⁶ Darius is called a *daimon* at 620 where Atossa calls for a libation to him (τόν τε δαίμονα Δαρεῖον ἀνακαλεῖσθε – “call forth the *daimon* Darius”), as well as at line 642, where the Chorus beseeches the rulers of the underworld to release Darius (ἀλλὰ σύ μοι Γᾶ τε καὶ ἄλλοι χθονίων ἀγεμόνες δαίμονα μεγαυχῆ ἰόντ’ αἰνέσατ’ ἐκ δόμων, Περσᾶν Σουσιγενῆ θεόν – “but you Gaea and the other rulers of those beneath the earth let the proud *daimon* leave your home, the Persian god, son of Susa”).

Electra 658; *Oedipus at Colonus* 634, 710, 1480; *Antigone* 282(?), 921; *Philoctetes* 447, 462, 1116, 1468(?); *Ajax* 1130.

⁸⁵ *Daimon* as fate: Aeschylus: *Persae* 601, 825, 911(?), 921(?), 942(?); *Seven Against Thebes* 515(?), 814, 823 (δυσδαίμονας); *Agamemnon* 1342; 1663; *Choephoroe* 513(?); Euripides *Alcestis* 499, 561, 914, 935; *Cyclops* 110; *Supplikes* 463, 592, 1008; *Medea* 1110, 1231, 1347; *Troades* 101-102, 204(?), 1202; *Hippolytus* 772-773; *Andromache* 98, 974; *Iphigenia at Aulis* 1136; *Ion* 752; *Helen* 211, 669; *Rhesus* 183, 728(?); *Phoenissae* 1607, 1653; Sophocles *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1194, 1301, 1311; *Trachiniae* 910; *Electra* 917, 999; *Oedipus at Colonus* 76, 1337; *Antigone* 832; *Philoctetes* 1100; *Ajax* 504, 534, 1214.

Daimon as “will of heaven”: Aeschylus *Persae* 581; *Agamemnon* 635, 1667; *Choephoroe* 436; *Eumenides* 560; Euripides *Alcestis* 1159; *Supplikes* 552(?); *Medea* 966; *Hippolytus* 871; *Andromache* 1182(?), 1284; *Iphigenia at Taurus* 157(?), 202-204, 864-866; *Iphigenia at Aulis* 444(?); *Bacchae* 894; *Rhesus* 56(?); *Phoenissae* 1000, 1266, 1662(?); Sophocles *Oedipus Tyrannus* 828, 1258, 1479; *Electra* 1267; *Oedipus at Colonus* 1443, 1452(?), 1567, 1750(?), 1766(?); *Antigone* 376 (“heavenly”).

Daimon as exclamation: Aeschylus *Persae* 845, 1005; Euripides *Helen* 455; Sophocles *Trachiniae* 1026; *Philoctetes* 1187.

A strange example occurs at *Eumenides* 802: ὑμεῖς δὲ μὴ θυμοῦσθε μηδὲ τῆδε γῆ βαρὺν κότον σκῆψητε, μηδ’ ἀκαρπίαν τεύξητ’, ἀφείσαι †δαιμόνων σταλάγματα, βρωτῆρας αἰχμᾶς σπερμάτων ἀνημέρους – “And you, hurl not the weight of your wrath upon Attica; be not indignant, nor make barrenness, by shedding the fairy-drops (*daimonwn stalagmata*), whose sharpness doth ungently devour the seed” (translation by Verrall (1908), 144). Verrall’s commentary glosses *daimonwn stalagmata* as “angel-drops, ghost-drops, fairy-drops,” also noting, as this study has shown, that “no modern English word represents the vagueness of *daimones*” (pg. 144). The commentator hypothesizes that perhaps certain blights or other agricultural phenomena were attributed to a divine toxin, and that editors need not assume the line is corrupt.

⁸⁶ cf. de Ruiter (1918), 14.

While this represents an oriental notion of divine kingship (as perceived by the Greeks), the language also reflects Greek ideas about the noble dead.

Euripides' *Alcestis*, at line 995, provides by far the best example of the noble dead in tragedy:

μηδὲ νεκρῶν ὡς φθιμένων χῶμα νομιζέσθω
τύμβος σᾶς ἀλόχου, θεοῖσι δ' ὁμοίως
τιμάσθω, σέβας ἐμπόρων.
καί τις δοχμίαν κέλευθον
ἐμβαίνων τόδ' ἔρεϊ:
Αὐτὰ ποτὲ προύθαν' ἀνδρός,
νῦν δ' ἔστι μάκαιρα δαίμων:
χαῖρ', ὦ πότνι', εὖ δὲ δοίης.
τοῖα νιν προσερούσι φήμα.

And let not the tomb of your wife be reckoned as the mound of perishing dead, but let her be honoured as the gods, an object of worship to merchants. And someone walking on the path across [from her tomb] will say the following:

“This woman died at once in place of her husband, and now she is a blessed *daimon*; hail, O mistress, and do well for us.”

With this address they shall enjoin her.

Here the Hesiodic and Heraclitan ideas emerge in full force: Alcestis, in death, shall become a *daimon* for her nobility in life, a protective and blessed spirit who looks over mortals. She is not to be counted among the regular dead (μηδὲ νεκρῶν ὡς φθιμένων χῶμα νομιζέσθω τύμβος σᾶς ἀλόχου). As we will see again in the case of Plato's *daimones*, Alcestis finds herself as one of the Golden Generation of man, not by birth, but by virtue of her actions.

The *daimon* as agent of fate, allotter of one's lot, is found throughout the tragic corpus. In Aeschylus' *Suppliants* the Chorus beseeches Zeus that he allow the earth to be

fruitful, and follows with a few wishes for men (691-693): πρόνομα δὲ βότ' ἀγροῖς πολύγωνα τελέθου: τὸ πᾶν τ' ἐκ δαιμόνων λάχοιεν – “and may their cattle grazing in the fields be fruitful; and may they come upon everything from *daimones*.” Here the Chorus alludes to the fact that all things come from the divine. *Daimones* could be taken here simply as *theoi*, but it is possible that this is in fact a reference to the personal *daimon*, the divine spirit responsible for guiding one’s life. Where Zeus is seen as cosmic overlord, propitiated for specific macrocosmic issues like crop fertility that he “bring them about” (ἐπικραίνω – line 689), everything in general is allotted to men (λάχοιεν) by unspecified *daimones*. Turning to *Oedipus Tyrannus* we find at line 816 a curious example. Here Oedipus, talking with Jocasta, says of the man who killed Laius, τίς ἐχθροδαίμων μᾶλλον ἂν γένοιτ' ἀνήρ; (“who is more *echthrodaimon* than him?”). ‘Hateful to the gods’ is the only sense given by LSJ, and the term is a hapax.⁸⁷ Could it also perhaps have the meaning of “cursed with an evil/abhorrent *daimon*?”

The use of *daimon* as personal agent of fate may be found in Euripides’ *Orestes*. At line 1545 the Chorus references the power of *daimon* over the lives of men: τέλος ἔχει δαίμων βροτοῖς, τέλος ὅπα θέλη. (“*daimon* holds the end for mortals, the end as it wishes”). While we may be tempted to translate *daimon* as fate here, *thele* personifies the concept. The Chorus continues by explaining that through some avenging spirit the house of Agamemnon has fallen (δι’ ἀλαστόρων ἔπεσ’ ἔπεσε μέλαθρα τάδε δι’ αἱμάτων – “through *alastores* through blood this house has fallen, has fallen”). Though this text is

⁸⁷ See LSJ s.v. ἐχθροδαίμων, A.

corrupt, it hints at the *daimon* as a bringer of evils, an avenging spirit that claims blood for blood. This aspect will be explored below.

At line 1269 of *Ion* the protagonist explains: ἐσθλοῦ δ' ἔκυρσα δαίμονος, πρὶν ἐς πόλιν μολεῖν Ἀθηνῶν... (“I met with a good *daimon*, before I came to Athens...”). Again *daimon* here can mean both fate or the agent of this fate. Ion simultaneously met with his good fortune **and** the spirit that brought about the good fortune. *Daimon* is thus the end that one meets with as well as the fortune conveying one to that end. Ion also adds a short proverbial statement towards the end of the play at line 1374: τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ μὲν χρηστά, τοῦ δὲ δαίμονος βαρέα... (“things from the god are useful, and things from the *daimon* are heavy...”). Here *theos* and *daimon* are clearly distinct. *Daimon* could again be “fate” here, or an individuated, afflicting spirit.

The *daimon*, as well as being associated with a particular person, can also act on a particular group. At line 158 of *Persae* the Chorus addresses their queen, Atossa, as θεοῦ μὲν εὐνάτειρα Περσῶν, θεοῦ δὲ καὶ μήτηρ ἔφους, εἴ τι μὴ δαίμων παλαιὸς νῦν μεθέστηκε στρατῶ (“you were the wife of a god of the Persians, and you are the mother of a god, unless now the former *daimon* has somehow changed sides for the army”). I hold that Winnington-Ingram is correct his assertion that *daimon* here is the “half-personification of the *moira*... of the Persian host,” i.e. it is the personal *daimon* of the entire army. And, as in Phocylides 16 D, as fortune is variable, so the *daimon* is changeable (*methesteke*), for good and ill.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Winnington-Ingram (1973), 212.

At line 123-128 of *Choephoroe* we find a confluence of the *daimon* as guardian spirit and *daimon* as the noble/heroic dead. Here Electra utters prayers as the Chorus instructs her, calling upon Hermes and the *daimones* beneath the earth:

κῆρυξ μέγιστε τῶν ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω,
ἄρηξον, Ἑρμῆ χθόνιε, κηρύξας ἐμοὶ
τοὺς γῆς ἔνερθε δαίμονας κλύειν ἐμὰς
εὐχάς, πατρῶων δωμάτων ἐπισκόπους,
καὶ Γαῖαν αὐτήν, ἣ τὰ πάντα τίκτεται,
θρέψασά τ' αὖθις τῶνδε κῦμα λαμβάνει:

Greatest herald of those above and those
below, assist me, chthonic Hermes,
summon forth the subterranean *daimones*
to hear my entreaties, the guardians of my
ancestral home, and Gaia herself, who
begets all things, and having nourished
[them] in turn receives young sprouts from
them;

This seems a clear reference to Hesiod's Golden Generation, the noble dead that become subterranean *daimones* that in turn act as protectors.⁸⁹ These protective chthonic spirits are also found in *Persae*, where, at line 203, Atossa describes an offering to ἀποτρόποισι δαίμοσιν – “*daimones* that ward off evil,” while at line 628 the Chorus calls upon the “chthonic *daimones*”: ἀλλά, χθόνιοι δαίμονες ἀγνοί, Γῆ τε καὶ Ἑρμῆ, βασιλεῦ τ' ἐνέρων, πέμψατ' ἔνερθεν ψυχὴν ἐς φῶς (“but, earthly pure *daimones*, Gaea and Hermes, and the king of those below, send forth from below the spirit to the light”). While the “earthly pure *daimones*” could refer to Gaea, Hermes, and Hades, it is possible that these *daimones* are distinct entities, Hesiod's underworld guardians (which is more likely,

⁸⁹ Fontenrose correctly asserts that among the ranks of the *daimones* here is Agamemnon, the particular spirit that Electra seeks to address in this scene. The use of the plural, he argues, has a generalizing force, or (more likely, in my opinion) it groups Agamemnon's spirit with “ancestral spirits and underworld gods,” i.e. the guardian *daimones* of Hesiod. cf. Fontenrose (1971), 88.

given the same use of the adjective ἄγνοί), perhaps a forerunner to the guides of Plato, explored below.

This idea of the *daimon* as guardian, specifically of things in the underworld, is found also in *Eumenides* at line 947. Here the Eumenides are elaborating their wishes for the city of Athens, the last of which, a reference to the silver mines,⁹⁰ is: γόνος δ' πλουτόχθων ἐρμαίαν δαιμόνων δόσιν τίσι (“may the rich product of the earth honour the heaven-sent bounty of the *daimones*”). While *daimon* here could simply refer to gods or “the will of heaven,” it more likely hearkens back to the Hesiodic notion of subterranean guardian *daimones*, their purview logically encompassing the gifts of the earth: precious metals.

Despite these positive instances, there are many more where, as we might expect of tragedy, *daimon* is an evil spirit, a bringer of misfortune. In Euripides’ *Hecuba*, for example, at 722 the Chorus laments their pitiable queen, exclaiming: ὦ τλῆμον, ὡς σε πολυπονωτάτην βροτῶν δαίμων ἔθηκεν ὅστις ἐστὶ σοι βαρὺς (“O wretch, how some *daimon* who is heavy for you made you the most suffering of all mortals”). An identical construction is found at line 1087 (δαίμων ἔδωκεν ὅστις ἐστὶ σοι βαρὺς). The *daimon* here is a specific agent, as indicated by the demonstrative ὅστις, as opposed to “fate” or “the will of heaven.”

⁹⁰ Smyth (1926) *ad loc.*; Verrall (1908), 166. Both commentators gloss ἐρμαίαν and ἐρμαίαν δαιμόνων δόσιν respectively as an “unexpected find” and “gift of luck.” Smyth notes Hermes’ position as the god of chance discoveries, hence the use of an etymologically connected word here. Verrall references *Persae* 241 as corroborative evidence for such a translation.

In this vein the *daimon* is often associated with or seen as an ἀλάστωρ (“avenger/avenging spirit”), a word that seems to have a negative connotation,⁹¹ as well as with ἄτη (“bane/ruin,” but also “bewilderment/delusion”)⁹² or ἀρή (“bane/ruin”).⁹³ In *Persae* at lines 353-354, when explaining to Atossa how the Persian army was routed by the Greeks, the Messenger says: ἤρξεν μὲν, ᾧ δέσποινα, τοῦ παντὸς κακοῦ φανεῖς ἀλάστωρ ἢ κακὸς δαίμων ποθέν (“O mistress, an avenger or an evil *daimon* having appeared from somewhere started off the whole disaster”). It is possible that this “*alastor* or evil *daimon*” is in fact the ἀνὴρ γὰρ Ἑλλήν ἐξ Ἀθηναίων στρατοῦ (“the Greek man from the Athenian ranks,” line 355), who tricked Xerxes.⁹⁴ Yet consistently the Messenger references some daimonic influence, for example earlier at lines 345-346: ἀλλ’ ᾧδε δαίμων τις κατέφθειρε στρατόν,/ τάλαντα βρίσας οὐκ ἰσορρόπῳ τύχῃ (“But some *daimon* destroyed the army, having tipped the balance with unequal fortune”). Similarly, at lines 361-362, the Messenger blames both the Greek messenger and the gods: ὁ δ’ εὐθὺς ὡς ἤκουσεν, οὐ ξυνεῖς δόλον/ Ἑλληνος ἀνδρὸς οὐδὲ τὸν θεῶν φθόνον (“but straightaway when he heard this not perceiving the trickery of the Greek man nor the jealousy of the gods”). It seems that actors on the mortal and the divine plane were at odds with the Persian king, inseparable from one another in accordance with the conceptual framework of over-determinism.⁹⁵ The *daimon* as connected with *ate* is found,

⁹¹ See LSJ *s.v.* ἀλάστωρ, A: “*avenging spirit* or *deity*, with or without *daimon*, frequent in tragedy.” But also LSJ *s.v.* ἀλάστωρ, A.II: “*he who does deeds which merit vengeance, wretch*.”

⁹² LSJ *s.v.* ἄτη, A. and A.II.1, 2.

⁹³ LSJ *s.v.* ἀρή, A.

⁹⁴ Dodds (1962), 40.

⁹⁵ Winnington-Ingram (1973), 213. Similar examples are found at lines 472 (Atossa) and 515 (Chorus), as well as possibly 921 (Chorus). Xerxes also laments the influence of a *daimon* (911, 942), though these are easily construed simply as “fate” and are less clear.

for example, in *Hippolytus* line 241, where Phaedra laments: ἔπεσον δαίμονος ἄτη (“I have fallen by the bane/bewilderment of *daimon*”). The use of *daimon* here is complicated, as the audience knows it to be Aphrodite, but this is a case of dramatic irony, for Phaedra has no such knowledge and so can only attribute her fate to some *daimon*. In both of these plays *daimon* is a nebulous evil spirit, a bringer of ruin. The use of *ate* here also hints at the idea of daimonic possession, which will be discussed below.

Integral to this idea of *daimon* as a bringer of evil, an avenger or curse, is the idea of the *daimon* of a house. As Theseus bewails in *Hippolytus* 831-833: πρόσωθεν δέ ποθεν ἀνακομίζομαι/ τύχην δαιμόνων ἀμπλακίαισι τῶν/ πάροιθέν τινος (“From some place long ago I bear the fortune of the *daimones* for the sins of some earlier man”). The sins of the

Winnington-Ingram asserts, however, that the use of *daimon* here is simply as the vague Homeric substitute for an unknown *theos*, akin to the example in *Hippolytus* explored just below, and a common Greek conceptualization of unexplained phenomena. The god, Winnington-Ingram argues, is Zeus, as revealed at line 532 by the Chorus, and again at line 827 by Darius. *cf.* Winnington-Ingram (1973), 213, 217. As Winnington-Ingram notes on the former page, however, Zeus, as lord of Olympus, often represents the divine sphere, and is called upon in a general sense as the lord of the cosmos. It is as much Zeus’ fault as is anything in the world, fitting with the epic cosmology found in Homer wherein the will of Zeus is tantamount to Fate. *cf.* Duffy (1947), 477-478. Thus I contend that it is not Zeus acting, but rather the daimonic avenger, in accordance with the will of Zeus in that it is meting out divine justice (a possibility Winnington-Ingram notes in note 31 on page 217, though he adds that “perhaps it does not matter greatly”). Dodds rightly notes this divine justice, an aspect missed by all the characters save Darius, as is expected of someone who has traversed the Styx. Darius brings attention to this point at lines 808-809 and again at 821-822, explaining that it was Xerxes’ hubris that warranted his punishment. *cf.* Dodds (1962), 39. That said, I would not go as far as Dodds to undermine the influence of the daimonic here. After all, Darius himself sees a *daimon* at the root of his son’s folly. At lines 724-725, Atossa explains to the ghost of Darius that in Xerxes’ closing of the Bosphorus “some daimon must have helped him” (γνώμης δέ πού τις δαιμόνων ξυνήψατο), an outcome Darius laments, saying “Alas, some great daimon came [to him], with the result that he did not think well” (φεῦ, μέγας τις ἦλθε δαίμων, ὥστε μὴ φρονεῖν καλῶς). Here both Atossa and Darius explain Xerxes’ actions by reference to daimonic intervention, with Darius reasoning that Xerxes’ foolish strategem could only have been the result of a divine entity clouding his judgment. This is also an example that borders on daimonic possession, which will be explored further below.

I do however agree with Winnington-Ingram’s assertion that, in Darius’ view (based on lines 742: ἀλλ’ ὅταν σπεύδῃ τις αὐτός, χῶ θεὸς συνάπτεται – “but whenever someone hastens to his own downfall, the god assists him”), this “mind sickness” (νόσος φρενῶν 750), a clear reference to daimonic influence and possibly possession, was brought on by Xerxes himself. It was only once Xerxes set himself upon this hubristic path that “the ironical divine helper lends his aid... with the maddest and most fateful of all ways of doing so.” *cf.* Winnington-Ingram (1973), 216.

father, as so often in Greek mythology, are borne by the son, and come under the purview of offended *daimones*. This is found again in *Medea*, here in the lines of the Nurse at 127-130: τὰ δ' ὑπερβάλλοντ' / οὐδένα καιρὸν δύναται θνητοῖς, / μείζους δ' ἄτας, ὅταν ὀργισθῆ / δαίμων οἴκοις, ἀπέδωκεν (“Being excessively rich is nothing advantageous for mortals, and whenever *daimon* is angry with households, it gives greater ruin”).

Plays treating the houses of Atreus and Laius provide the best examples of this use of *daimon*. In Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* the Chorus elaborates on this kind of *daimon* at lines 763-771:

φιλεῖ δὲ τίκτειν Ὕβρις
μὲν παλαιὰ νεά-
ζουσαν ἐν κακοῖς βροτῶν
ὑβριν τότε ἢ τόθ', ὅτε τὸ κύρ-
ιον μόλη φάος τόκου,
δαίμονά τε τὰν ἄμαχον ἀπόλεμ-
ον, ἀνίερρον Θράσος, μελαί-
νας μελάθροισιν Ἄτας,
εἰδομένας τοκεῦσιν.

But ancient Hybris is wont now
and then to engender youthful
hybris in evil men, when the
appointed day of birth should
come, and the *daimon*,
incontestable, invincible, unholy
Insolence, and black Curses
(*Atas*) for the house that appear as
their parents.

Here the *daimon* is *thrasos* itself, embodying the arrogant behaviour that has led to the house’s downfall. It is also associated with “black *Atas*,” a dreadful and ruinous curse for

the entire house. This is, of course, a reference to the Curse of the House of Atreus.⁹⁶ Twice more the Chorus ascribes the ruin of the household to a *daimon*: first at line 1174-1176, καὶ τίς σε κακοφρονῶν τίθη-/ σι δαίμων ὑπερβαρῆς ἐμπίτων/ μελίζειν πάθη γοερὰ θανατοφόρα (“and some *daimon* bearing ill-will falling heavily upon you [Cassandra] sets you to sing your mournful death-bearing songs”); and again at lines 1481-1484, ἦ μέγαν οἰκονόμον/ δαίμονα καὶ βαρύμηνιν αἰνεῖς,/ φεῦ φεῦ, κακὸν αἶνον ἀτη-/ ρᾶς τύχας ἀκορέστου (“you speak of a great *daimon* of the household and heavy in his wrath; alas, alas, it is an evil tale of unceasing ruinous [*ateras*] fortune”). As we shall see, Clytemnestra herself claims to be possessed by a *daimon*, an *alastor*.

The same idea is found throughout Euripides’ *Orestes*, voiced first by the Chorus starting at line 332:

ἰὼ Ζεῦ,
τίς ἔλεος, τίς ὄδ’ ἀγὼν
φόνιος ἔρχεται,
θοάζων σε τὸν μέλεον, ᾧ δάκρυα
δάκρυσι συμβάλλει
πορεύων τις ἐς δόμον ἀλαστόρων
ματέρος αἷμα σᾶς, ὃ σ’ ἀναβακχεύει;
ὁ μέγας ὄλβος οὐ μόνιμος ἐν βροτοῖς:
κατολοφύρομαι κατολοφύρομαι. ἀνὰ δὲ λαῖφος ὥς
τις ἀκάτου θοᾶς τινάξας δαίμων
κατέκλυσεν δεινῶν πόνων ὡς πόντου
λάβροις ὀλεθρίοισιν ἐν κύμασιν.

O Zeus, what mercy, what bloody contest comes here, urging miserable you, upon whom some *alastor* heaps endless tears while conveying the blood of your mother to your house, which drives you insane? Great bliss is not stable for mortals; I

⁹⁶ It is curious that the curses are pluralized in the final three lines and described as “appearing as their parents.” I posit that the Chorus here is talking about Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, who personify the black *Ate* that has fallen upon the house.

cry, I cry. But some *daimon*, shaking it back and forth as though it were the tattered sail of a quick ship deluges it in terrible pains as though with the furious and destructive waves of the sea.

This *tis alastoron* is either the *daimon* the Chorus mentions in line 343, or the two are at least connected. The *daimon* here is a bringer of misfortune, lamented by Orestes himself at line 394 (ὁ δαίμων δ' ἐς ἐμὲ πλούσιος κακῶν – the *daimon* is full of evils for me). Later in the play, at lines 496-504, Tyndareus clarifies the identity of this *daimon*, tying it back to the *daimon* of the House of Atreus:

ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἐξέπνευσεν Ἀγαμέμνων βίον
† πληγείς θυγατρὸς τῆς ἐμῆς ὑπὲρ κάρα †,
αἰσχιστον ἔργον — οὐ γὰρ αἰνέσω ποτέ —
χρῆν αὐτὸν ἐπιθεῖναι μὲν αἵματος δίκην,
ὅσιν διώκοντ', ἐκβαλεῖν τε δωμάτων
μητέρα: τὸ σῶφρόν τ' ἔλαβεν ἀντὶ συμφορᾶς
καὶ τοῦ νόμου τ' ἂν εἶχετ' εὐσεβῆς τ' ἂν ἦν.
νῦν δ' ἐς τὸν αὐτὸν δαίμον' ἦλθε μητέρι.

For when Agamemnon died † having been hit over the head by my daughter †, a most shameful action – for I will not approve it ever – it was necessary for him to bring forth a murder charge, pursuing a divine ordinance, and throw his mother out of the house; and he would have obtained prudence in place of misfortune and he might have upheld the law and been pious. But now he comes upon the same *daimon* as his mother.

The *daimon*, a curse, that now afflicts Orestes is in fact the same *daimon* that visited his mother Clytemnestra. This idea of the *alastor* of the house is voiced again by the Chorus, at lines 1545-1549:

— τέλος ἔχει δαίμων βροτοῖς,
τέλος ὅπα θέλη.
— μεγάλα δέ τις ἄ δύναμις † δι' ἀλαστόρων

ἔπεσ' ἔπεσε μέλαθρα τάδε δι' αἱμάτων †
διὰ τὸ Μυρτίλου πέσημ' ἐκ δίφρου.

— *daimon* holds the end for mortals, the end as
it wishes.

— and some great power... through the
alastores the house fell, fell through blood and
through the fall of Myrtilus from the chariot.

Though the text is corrupt, the idea is clear and fits within the conceptual framework we have elucidated, here with *daimon* associated with, or being itself an *alastor*, razing the house in penance for bloodguilt.

I propose that this idea of the *daimon* is also at work in Sophocles' *Electra* at lines 1156-1159, where the protagonist, having mourned over what she believes to be the ashes of her brother, Orestes, explains that he had secretly been sending her letters saying that he would return and bring justice,

ἀλλὰ ταῦθ' ὁ δυστυχῆς
δαίμων ὁ σός τε κάμους ἐξαφείλετο,
ὅς σ' ὧδέ μοι προύπεμψεν ἀντὶ φιλτάτης
μορφῆς σποδόν τε καὶ σκιὰν ἀνωφελῆ.

But these things the *dustuches daimon* took
away, which sent you to me yours and mine
as ash and a useless shadow in place of your
dearest form.

While *dustuches daimon* can be taken as an “unlucky fate,” it may also refer to the Erinys as a ‘harbinger of ill’.⁹⁷ This fits with the idea of *daimones*, evil spirits, besetting the House of Atreus. Further examples of *daimon* as the Curse of the House of Atreus being

⁹⁷ See LSJ *s.v.* δυστυχῆς, A.2. As will be shown below, the Erinyes were often referred to as *daimones*, so applying this specialized meaning of *dustuches* to *daimon* is no stretch.

conceived as a *daimon* will be explored below, with a specific focus on daimonic possession.

It is not only the house of Atreus, however, that we find afflicted with a daimonic curse. Turning to the Theban Cycle, we find several examples in Euripides' *Phoenissae*. At line 350 Jocasta, bewailing her current state and all the misfortune that has fallen upon her house, utters a curse:

ὄλοιτο, τάδ' εἴτε σίδαρος
εἴτ' ἔρις εἴτε πατήρ ὁ σὸς αἴτιος,
εἴτε τὸ δαιμόνιον κατεκόμασε
δώμασιν Οἰδιπόδα:
πρὸς ἐμὲ γὰρ κακῶν ἔμολε τῶνδ' ἄχη.

Let it be undone, whether the sword or
strife or your father is responsible, or the
daimonion that burst riotously on the
house of Oedipus; for the pain of these
evils has come to me.

This *daimonion* recalls the spirit that beset the house of Atreus, both in how it affects the family as well as its source: a curse, the result of bloodguilt. The most recent incident of bloodguilt in the story is Oedipus' slaying of Laius, and Oedipus, at lines 1610-1611, laments that he has doomed his sons with the curse (here *are*) that he himself received from his father (*Phoenissae* 1610-1611).⁹⁸ However, the play notes that it goes back even further. The Chorus, in lines 1061-1066, claim that the bloodguilt and its daimonic curse started in the days of Cadmus:

...φίλα
Παλλάς, ἃ δράκοντος αἶμα
λιθόβολον κατειργάσω,

⁹⁸ παῖδάς τ' ἀδελφοὺς ἔτεκον, οὓς ἀπώλεσα./ ἀρὰς παραλαβὼν Λαῖου καὶ παισὶ δούς – I have produced children that are my brothers, whom I have destroyed, giving them the curses which I received from Laius.

Καδμείαν μέριμναν
ὀρμήσασ' ἐπ' ἔργον,
ὄθεν ἐπέσυτο τάνδε γαῖαν
ἀρπαγαῖσι δαιμόνων τις ἄτα.

...dear Pallas, you who subdued the blood
of the serpent with a stone, urging forth
encumbered Cadmus to the matter, from
which some curse of *daimones* swooped
rapaciously across the land.

Again we find daimonic curses, *are* and *ate*, at the root of the troubles of a house.

This same idea may be present in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* in an exchange between the Chorus and Eteokles concerning Oedipus' children (705-709):

Χορός
νῦν ὅτε σοι παρέστακεν: ἐπεὶ δαίμων
λήματος ἐν τροπαία χρονία μεταλ-
λακτὸς ἴσως ἂν ἔλθοι θελεμωτέρῳ
πνεύματι: νῦν δ' ἔτι ζεῖ.

Ἐτεοκλῆς
ἐξέξεσεν γὰρ Οἰδίπου κατεύγματα:

Chorus
Now it [deadly fate: ὀλέθριος μόρος]
stands by you; although *daimon* is
changed in its purpose over a changing
time, perhaps it might come to a gentler
wind; but now it yet seethes.

Eteokles
Yes, for the curses of Oedipus boil it.

While *daimon* here could simply refer to fate, it is entangled with the idea of the bloodguilt curse, the *daimon* that seeks retribution against the House of Oedipus. It is this *daimon* that Oedipus speaks of in *Oedipus Colonus*, in lines 1348-1396. Oedipus here exclaims that his daughters are taking care of him, acting as men, while his sons/brothers

Polynices and Eteokles are no sons of his. He claims at line 1370-1372 that *τοιγάρ σ' ὁ δαίμων εισορᾷ μὲν οὐ τί πω/ ὡς αὐτίκ', εἴπερ οἶδε κινουῦνται λόχοι/ πρὸς ἄστῳ Θήβης* (“The *daimon* looks angrily upon you – not as he soon will, if actually these armies march against Thebes”). The verb here, *εισορᾷ*, can take the meaning “visits angrily,” which is apt as the *daimon* will be present at the brothers’ dual death, as will be shown.⁹⁹ Oedipus goes on to say that Polynices will never take the city as both he and his brother will die beforehand, being *αἵματι μανθεις* – stained, defiled, polluted with blood (1372-1374). In line with this daimonic theme Oedipus calls forth curses against his sons/brothers at lines 1375-1376 (*τοιᾶσδ' ἀράς σφῶν πρόσθε τ' ἐξανῆκ' ἐγὼ/ νῦν τ' ἀνακαλοῦμαι ξυμμάχους ἐλθεῖν ἐμοί...* “these curses which before I sent against you now I also call to come as allies for me...”), and at 1384 (*τάσδε συλλαβὸν ἀράς...* “receiving these curses...”), finally at lines 1389-1390 calling upon “the hated ancestral darkness of Tartarus, to settle you elsewhere...” (*τοιαῦτ' ἀρῶμαι καὶ καλῶ τὸ Ταρτάρου/ στυγνὸν πατρῶον ἔρεβος, ὡς σ' ἀποκίση...*).¹⁰⁰

Drawing from ideas found earlier in the poetic tradition, in Homer and in Theognis, the tragedians also speak of daimonic possession. In this capacity the *daimon* is again a bringer of misfortune, but as an agent deeply entangled in man’s psyche, manipulating a person into damning himself by his own actions. In Sophocles’ *Ajax* at lines 243-244, Tecmessa describes her husband, who has been turned insane, as *κακὰ δεννάζων ῥήμαθ', ἃ δαίμων/ κούδεις ἀνδρῶν ἐδίδαξεν* (“uttering evil curses, which a

⁹⁹ See LSJ *s.v.* *εισοράω*, A.4; *cf.* *Oedipus at Colonus* 1536.

¹⁰⁰ In Jebb’s translation (1889) he takes *πατρῶον* as “that your father shares,” which points to the darkness being a burden that Oedipus shares. I have translated it here as “ancestral,” however, in order to demonstrate that this darkness, this curse, reaches as far back as Cadmus.

daimon, no mortal, taught him”). Tecmessa does not know of Athena’s involvement, and so surmises only that Ajax’ madness was the result of daimonic influence, an entity whispering in his ear. In *Hecuba* at lines 201-205 Polyxena exclaims: ὦ δεινὰ παθοῦς, ὦ παντλάμων,/ ὦ δυστάνου μᾶτερ βιοτᾶς/ οἶαν οἶαν αὖ σοι λώβαν/ ἐχθίσταν ἀρρήταν τ’/ ὄρσέν τις δαίμων (“O terribly suffering, O all-wretched mother of a wretched life, what sort of hateful and unspeakable outrage has some *daimon* raised/stirred up for you?”). Here, “some fiend,” as Coleridge translates it, has excited the former queen of Troy and and set hard misfortune for her.¹⁰¹

The plays surrounding the events of the House of Atreus and the House of Oedipus again provide the best examples of this idea of daimonic possession. In the *Agamemnon*, the Chorus, conversing with Clytemnestra, addresses her at lines 1468-1469 as δαῖμον, ὃς ἐμπίτνεις δώμασι καὶ διφύι-/ οἰσι Τανταλίδαισιν (“*daimon*, who falls upon the household and the two descendants of Tantalus”).¹⁰² Clytemnestra responds in the affirmative (1475-1480):

¹⁰¹ Coleridge (1938), *ad loc.*

¹⁰² Fontenrose notes that Cassandra has also made the connection, as shown by her use of words to describe Clytemnestra that are often used of Erinyes and other such vengeful spirits, for example at lines 1227-1238: νεῶν τ’ ἄπαρχος Ἰλίου τ’ ἀναστάτης/ οὐκ οἶδεν οἶα γλῶσσα μισητῆς κυνὸς/ λείξασα κάκτεινας φαιδρὸν οὔς, δίκην/ Ἄτης λαθραίου, τεύξεται κακῆ τύχη./ τοιάδε τόλμα: θῆλυς ἄρσενος φονεὺς/ ἔστιν. τί νιν καλοῦσα δυσφιλὲς δάκος/ τύχοιμ’ ἄν; ἀμφίσβαιναν, ἢ Σκύλλαν τινὰ/ οἰκοῦσαν ἐν πέτραισι, ναυτίλων βλάβην./ θύουσαν Ἄιδου μητέρ’ ἄσπονδόν τ’ Ἄρη/ φίλοις πνέουσας; ὡς δ’ ἐπωλολύξατο/ ἢ παντότολμος, ὥσπερ ἐν μάχης τροπῆι,/ δοκεῖ δὲ χαίρειν νοστήμῳ σωτηρίᾳ.

The admiral of the fleets and the destroyer of Ilium does not know what kind of things the tongue of the hateful bitch [is doing] having licked up, having stretching out in friendship and being bright, which things she arrays with evil fortune, the custom of secret *Ate*. Such recklessness; a woman stained with the blood of a man. What hateful beast should I come to call her? A serpent, or some Skylla living among the rocks, a hindrance to sailors, the seething mother of Hades and an implacable curse [*Are*] uttered against loved ones? And how the emboldened woman exalted, just as when there is a turn in the battle, and she seemed to rejoice at his safe voyage.

Fontenrose notes that *kuon* is often used to describe the Erinyes, and Cassandra also calls her what I have demonstrated to be daimonic entities, *Ate*, *Are*, as well as other monstrous creatures (*dusfiles dakos*, *amfisbainan*, *Skylla*). These are also similar to the words of Orestes (*Choephoroe* 248-249), who describes

νῦν δ' ὄρθωσας στόματος γνώμην,
τὸν τριπάχυντον
δαίμονα γέννης τῆσδε κικλήσκων.
ἐκ τοῦ γὰρ ἔρωσ αἵματολοιχὸς
νεῖρα τρέφεται, πρὶν καταλῆξαι
τὸ παλαιὸν ἄχος, νέος ἰχώρ.

And now you have set straight your
spoken opinion, since you have
called upon the thrice-gorged
daimon of this people. For there is a
lust for drinking of blood in the
belly, [and] before the ancient pain
ceases, there will be new blood.

Here Clytemnestra admits that the Chorus addresses the correct being, this “thrice-gorged *daimon*,”¹⁰³ which causes a “lust for the lapping up of blood in the stomach/belly.” This *daimon* is an *alastor* for her dead children, the true culprit of the regicide, as Clytemnestra corrects the Chorus at lines 1497-1504:

ἀρχεῖς εἶναι τόδε τοῦργον ἐμόν;
μηδ' ἐπιλεχθῆς
Ἄγαμεμνονίαν εἶναί μ' ἄλοχον.
φантаζόμενος δὲ γυναικὶ νεκροῦ
τοῦδ' ὁ παλαιὸς δριμύς ἀλάστωρ
Ἄτρέως χαλεποῦ θοινατῆρος
τόνδ' ἀπέτεισεν,
τέλεον νεαροῖς ἐπιθύσας.

Do you confidently declare this to
be my action? Do not think that I

Agamemnon as θανόντος ἐν πλεκταῖσι καὶ σπειράμασιν/ δεινῆς ἐχίδνης – “having died in the twisted coils of a fearsome serpent.” Fontenrose groups Echidna/e with the Erinyes, Gorgons, Harpies, Skyllae, etc., feminine figures of death, going as far as to categorize them all as Keres, “minions of Hades and Thanatos.” His use of the word “Ker” is likely derived from the close relation of these beings, the Keres, Sirens, Sphinxes, etc., as monstrous figures of death. Cf. Fontenrose (1971), 96-98. For more on this association, see Vermeule (1979), 39-40; Vernant (1986), 59-64.

¹⁰³ LSJ notes that this is the epithet of the *daimon* of the house of Atreus, which is possibly an allusion to the three visitations described in *Choephoroe* 1065-1074. See LSJ *s.v.* τριπάχιος, A. One flaw with this explanation is the chronology, as the third visitation of the “storm” (χειμῶν), while vague, is implied to be Orestes’ revenge against Clytemnestra. Perhaps here while the first is Tantalus, the second is in fact Atreus/Thyestes, and the third is the death of Agamemnon (where it is second in *Choephoroe*).

am the wife of Agamemnon. But rather the ancient fierce *alastor* of Atreus, the lord of a horrid feast, appearing as the wife of this dead man punishes this man, having sacrificed a fitting victim for the younger ones.

Clytemnestra’s relationship with the *daimon* of the House of Atreus is explained further at lines 1567-1573, where she elaborates:

ἔς τόνδ’ ἐνέβης ξὺν ἀληθείᾳ
χρησμόν. ἐγὼ δ’ οὖν
ἔθέλω δαίμονι τῷ Πλεισθενιδῶν
ὄρκους θεμένη τάδε μὲν στέργειν,
δύσκλητὰ περ ὄνθ’· ὁ δὲ λοιπόν, ἰόντ’
ἐκ τῶνδε δόμων ἄλλην γενεὰν
τρίβειν θανάτοις ἀθένταισι.

You come upon with truth the divine ordinance. But I having done these things, as hard to bear as they are, therefore wish to swear an oath to the *daimon* of the Pleisthenidae; and in the future leaving this house he will oppress another race with the violent murder their own people.

This “*daimon* of the house of Pleisthenes”¹⁰⁴ that possessed her earlier was in fact a divine agent of vengeance, one that Clytemnestra made a compact with in order to get revenge against her husband. The *daimon* is thus a specific entity afflicting the house of Atreus in particular, and one that can possess hosts in order to exact its vengeance.¹⁰⁵

Clytemnestra implies that this *daimon* that haunts the House of Atreus is that which afflicts all those who kill their kinfolk, and will leave once she has her revenge. Yet the

¹⁰⁴ According to Smyth, Pleisthenes was the actual father of Agamemnon and Menelaus, and himself the son of Atreus. This is explained in Porphyry’s *Questions*. cf. Smyth (1926), *ad loc.* Whether this is true or not is inconsequential, as clearly Pleisthenidae is a synonym for Atreidae.

¹⁰⁵ cf. Fontenrose (1971), 97.

daimon in this instance is often identified specifically as the curse or avenger of the house of Atreus. This speaks to a cognitive dissonance often found in Greek thought, where the *daimon* is envisioned both as an individuated agent, and simultaneously as a force of nature, an arbiter of divine law.¹⁰⁶ Kin-murder is ordained by the gods to meet a reckoning, and the house of Atreus is afflicted with a *daimon* as such, locked into a cycle of retributive justice. Regardless, what is clear is that *daimon* here refers to a possessing spirit, one that brings misfortune and death.¹⁰⁷ As Clytemnestra urges the elders at the end of the play (1659-1661):

εἰ δέ τοι μόχθων γένοιτο τῶνδ' ἄλλης, δεχοίμεθ' ἄν,
δαίμονος χηλῆ βαρεία δυστυχῶς πεπληγμένοι.
ᾧδ' ἔχει λόγος γυναικός, εἴ τις ἀξιοῖ μαθεῖν.

And if this hardship should be enough for these men, we would accept it, having been struck unfortunately by the heavy claw of the *daimon*. This is the word of a woman, if any should deem it worth learning.

Here the Queen calls for an end to the quarrel, the house already having endured enough at the hands of the daimonic avenger.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ cf. Dodds (1962), 42. See Chapter 3 for more examples of this surrounding the figure of the Erinyes/Eumenides.

¹⁰⁷ Zeitlin frames this usage of the *daimon* (and other monstrous entities) in the *Oresteia* from a feminist perspective, viewing the dichotomy of male vs. female as the overarching thread that unites the plays through each of its conflicts. cf. Zeitlin (1978).

¹⁰⁸ Fontenrose on *Agamemnon* 1663 (Aegisthus' response to Clytemnestra), noting that common scholarly opinion regards this use as simply "fate" or "luck", argues that, based on the use of *daimon* at line 1660, Aegisthus is also referring to the possessive *daimon*, the *alastor* or *ate/are*. cf. Fontenrose (1971), 92. The line seems to me best translated as "testing their luck," an idiomatic phrase. On top of that, Clytemnestra's *daimon* had a specific purpose, namely vengeance upon Agamemnon (cf. 1497-1504). It seems strange to me that those same daimonic powers would assist her in killing others.

Dodds takes the same position here as with *Persae* (see note 95), in that while the characters see *daimones* and avenging spirits, the poet (in the same manner of Homer, albeit here found in the voice of the Chorus, for example at lines 1485-1488 and 1563-1567) knows that all of this is actually "the overmastering will of Zeus working itself out through an inexorable moral law." cf. Dodds (1962), 39-40. Again, I contend that this does not undermine the role of the daimonic, but is merely a facet of epic convention, carried over into

This same idea of a daimonic avenger is found in *Choephoroe*, although this time it is associated with the hero. At lines 119-121, in the midst of a stichomythic exchange, the Chorus gives Electra some instruction:

Χορός
ἐλθεῖν τιν' αὐτοῖς δαίμον' ἢ βροτῶν τινα—

Ἥλέκτρα
πότερα δικαστὴν ἢ δικηφόρον λέγεις;

Χορός
ἅπλῶς τι φράζουσ', ὅστις ἀνταποκτενεῖ.

Chorus
[Ask that] some *daimon* or some man come
to them—

Electra
Do you speak of a judge or an avenger?

Chorus
Saying it simply, say someone to kill in
return.

The word δίκηφορος, which here is used to mean “avenger” (as contrasted, not disinterestedly, by Electra with δικαστής, “judge”), has broadly the same force as *alastor* in the examples explored above.¹⁰⁹ It seems that the *alastor* Clytemnestra is replaced with the *dikephoros* Orestes, continuing the cycle of revenge. It is possible that the same idea stands behind the use of *daimon* found in Sophocles' *Electra* at lines 1304-1306, where

the genre of tragedy, and/or simply a general statement lamenting the current fortune rather than actually laying culpability at the feet of Zeus. After all, the Chorus also shows the same propensity to descend into talk of the daimonic as the other characters, for example at lines 1468-1469, explored above, as well as 1507-1508 (πατρόθεν δὲ συλλή-/πτωρ γένοιτ' ἂν ἀλάστωρ – But the patriarchal *alastor* might well be [your] associate) and 1565-1566 (explored below). Clearly the Chorus is as much steeped in daimonic superstition as Cassandra, Clytemnestra and her “excited imagination” (Dodds (1962), 39), and the rest of the characters, despite Dodds' assertion.

¹⁰⁹ See LSJ *s.v.* δίκηφορος, A. Note that, as the LSJ asserts, this word stands in contradistinction to the first of Electra's options at line 120, the *dikaste*. That is, of course, the point of the trilogy – the supplanting of retributive justice for the rule of law.

Electra explains: κούδ' ἄν σε λυπήσασα δεξαίμην βραχὺ/ αὐτὴ μέγ' εὐρεῖν κέρδος: οὐ γὰρ ἄν καλῶς/ ὑπηρετοίην τῷ παρόντι δαίμονι – “and I would not prefer to receive some slight benefit having harmed you; for I would not do service well to the present *daimon*”. While this “present *daimon*” could be taken simply as “this current lot,” in that she would not be serving their current predicament, it is also possible that this *daimon* is an avenging spirit working through Orestes.¹¹⁰

Turning to the Theban plays, daimonic possession is found for example in *Oedipus Tyrannus* at line 1328, where the Chorus asks the recently blinded Oedipus, τίς σ' ἐπῆρε δαιμόνων (what *daimon* roused you [to do such a thing])? The idea here is that since no one would pluck out his or her own eyes, he must have been possessed by some divine entity, in much the same way that Menelaus surmises Helen was possessed in *Odyssey* 4.275. In *Phoenissae* and *Seven Against Thebes*, this notion of possession is used to explain the fraternal feud between Polynices and Eteokles. In *Phoenissae* 886-888, the blind prophet Tiresias explains:

ἐκεῖνο μὲν γὰρ πρῶτον ἦν, τῶν Οἰδίπου
μηδένα πολίτην μηδ' ἄνακτ' εἶναι χθονός,
ὡς δαιμονῶντας κἀνατρέψοντας πόλιν.

For if only this was done in the first place,
that the children of Oedipus became neither
citizens nor lords of the land, since being
possessed by *daimones* they will completely
raze the city.

¹¹⁰ I am clearly not the only one with such an interpretation, as Jebb takes it as “the divine power that attends us now.” While it may not be the possessive power of Clytemnestra’s *alastor*, it does seem an avenging spirit. cf. Jebb (1894), *ad loc.*

Here Tiresias utilizes *daimon* as a verb – δαιμονάω – which means “to be under the power of a *daimon*, to suffer by a divine visitation”.¹¹¹ This is the same verb used in *Seven Against Thebes* at line 1007, where Ismene, addressing the bodies of her dead brothers, laments, ἰὼ ἰὼ δαιμονῶντες ἄτᾱ - alas, alas, you were under the power of a *daimon*, ruin.¹¹² Here, as with Clytemnestra, the brothers were overcome by a divine agent which possessed them, altering their actions so that they would meet their allotted ends.

In comedy, *daimon* is typically utilized only as a vocative address, *daimonie*,¹¹³ or in place of *theos*.¹¹⁴ *Frogs* 1528-1530 is a rare comedic use of *daimon* as guardian. Here the Chorus states: πρῶτα μὲν εὐοδίαν ἀγαθὴν ἀπιόντι ποιητῆϊ/ ἐς φάος ὀρνυμένῳ δότε δαίμονες οἱ κατὰ γαίης,/ τῆ δὲ πόλει μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν ἀγαθὰς ἐπινοίας (“first you *daimones* beneath the earth grant a good voyage to the poet leaving toward the light, and grant to the city good thoughts for great goods”). The apposition of the granting of good ideas to the people to the granting of a good voyage to Aeschylus may suggest that it is the poet who will thus bring good ideas to the city, which then will prosper. Thus the *daimon* here acts in the way of the Hesiodic protector and (as will be seen) the Platonic steward of the dead.

¹¹¹ LSJ s.v. δαιμονάω, A.; cf. de Ruiter (1918), 3-5.

¹¹² As Dodds explains, the verb *daimonaw* is not present in Homer, as the poet does not go as far as describing daimonic possession. The closest Homer gets is *mainetai* – madness. cf. Dodds (1962), 10. The tragedians, as has been shown, took this a step further, describing actual possession.

¹¹³ *Clouds* 38, 816, 1138, 1264; *Frogs* 44, 175, 835, 1227.

¹¹⁴ *Clouds* 574, 578; *Frogs* 1341; *Peace* 39, 394, 584.

Plato

I will conclude my literary survey with Plato. I will specifically be examining *Republic* and *Phaedo*, along with short passages from *Cratylus* and *Timaeus*. Mikalson claims that Plato and his student Xenocrates were largely responsible for turning the *daimon* into a specific entity, though as has been demonstrated, this is simply not the case.¹¹⁵ Dodds asserts that Plato “completely transformed” the *daimon*, as if to say the *daimon* of Plato were something entirely new.¹¹⁶ While the philosopher does manipulate the traditional *daimon* to suit his philosophical ends, Plato’s *daimon* is an adaptation of ideas that had gone before. What Mikalson and Dodds may be getting at is the fact that Plato encapsulates the idea of the daimonic most clearly, fully internalizing the daimonic.¹¹⁷ Plato utilizes the *daimon* in all the senses surveyed thus far.¹¹⁸

When analyzing Plato it is necessary to keep in mind that Plato is writing a philosophical dialogue with a specific moralizing end.¹¹⁹ In the examples I will present Plato is utilizing the generic form of myth to give voice to his ideas. He does so despite his distrust of poets and the power of myth, which he discusses, for example, in *Republic* 595a-608b. I agree with Edmonds that Plato is not at odds with myth itself—it is far too

¹¹⁵ Mikalson (1983), 131 n.9. Mikalson himself notes several counter examples of his own, such as Aeschines 3.137, Demosthenes 42.17, and Isaeus 2.47.

¹¹⁶ Dodds (1962), 42-43.

¹¹⁷ As de Ruiter puts it, “praecipue Platone auctore mediorum numinum doctrina **amplificatur**...” (emphasis mine). Plato simply expanded upon ideas that were already in the Greek tradition. In this use of the sixth category Plato, de Ruiter claims, is following the Orphic tradition. *cf.* de Ruiter (1918), 13, 21.

¹¹⁸ Minor examples include *daimon* used as a vocative address (*Republic* 344.d.6, 522.b.3, 573.c.7) and in place of *theos* (*Republic* 382.e.6, 391.e.11, 531.c.5 [“godlike”], 614.c.7 [“divine/strange”], *Phaedo* 99.c.2), as well as a peculiar use of the *daimon* as a genitive of exclamation in *Republic* 509.c.1.

There is also Socrates’ divine sign, *to daimonion semeion* (ex. *Republic* 496.c.4, *Apology* 31.d), something he argues is unique to himself or at the very least rather rare. It is worth noting in that it seems an exceptional extrapolation on the idea of *daimon* as guardian and guide of one’s *ethos*, as found in Heraclitus, but it is this same exceptionality that sets it outside the purview of this study.

¹¹⁹ *cf.* Edmonds (2004), 159-163; Shorey (1933), 546-547.

powerful a tool to ignore—but rather with its misuse.¹²⁰ *Muthos*, which Edmonds defines as a “traditional tale”, provides the philosopher a different avenue to express his ideas, an imperfect avenue with its own benefits and drawbacks, much like dialectic. The key benefit, which simultaneously is the core reason for Plato’s criticism of its misuse, is that it couches Plato’s philosophy in the well-founded, common body of mythology, providing easier conveyance for his ideas while simultaneously empowering them.¹²¹ Plato’s use of the daimonic in his dialogues is consistent with this, representing not a radical departure but a repurposing of common currency to the end of communicating Plato’s new philosophy.

Turning to *Republic*, at section 392a.5 and 427b.7 Plato lists three categories of otherworldly beings:

περὶ γὰρ θεῶν ὡς δεῖ λέγεσθαι εἴρηται, καὶ περὶ
δαιμόνων τε καὶ ἡρώων καὶ τῶν ἐν Ἅιδου (392a).

“For concerning gods we have said what it is
necessary to say, and concerning *daimones* and
heroes and those in Hades.”

ιερῶν τε ἰδρύσεις καὶ θυσίαι καὶ ἄλλαι θεῶν τε καὶ
δαιμόνων καὶ ἡρώων θεραπείαι... (427b).

“Both the founding of shrines and the sacrifices and
the other methods of worship for gods and
daimones and heroes...”

Though presented as three separate categories, their distinctions are often blurred. The connection between *daimones* and *heros* emerges in *Republic* 468e-469b:

¹²⁰ Edmonds (2004), 168.

¹²¹ Edmonds (2004), 161-170, 219-220. Edmonds here provides a thorough analysis of the historiography around Plato’s use and distrust of myth.

ἀλλ' οὐ πεισόμεθα Ἡσιόδῳ, ἐπειδάν τινες τοῦ
τοιούτου γένους τελευτήσωσιν, ὡς ἄρα—
“οἱ μὲν δαίμονες ἀγνοῖ ἐπιχθόνιοι τελέθουσιν,
ἔσθλοί, ἀλεξίκακοι, φύλακες μερόπων ἀνθρώπων;”
πεισόμεθα μὲν οὖν. διαπυθόμενοι ἄρα τοῦ θεοῦ
πῶς χρὴ τοὺς δαιμονίους τε καὶ θείους τιθέναι καὶ
τῖνι διαφόρῳ, οὕτω καὶ ταύτη θήσομεν ἢ ἂν
ἐξηγῆται;... καὶ τὸν λοιπὸν δὴ χρόνον ὡς
δαιμόνων, οὕτω θεραπεύσομεν τε καὶ
προσκυνήσομεν αὐτῶν τὰς θήκας; ταῦτα δὲ ταῦτα
νομοῦμεν ὅταν τις γήρῃ ἢ τινι ἄλλῳ τρόπῳ
τελευτήσῃ τῶν ὅσοι ἂν διαφερόντως ἐν τῷ βίῳ
ἀγαθοὶ κριθῶσιν...

But should we not believe Hesiod, [who says]
whenever any of this generation dies, that [they
become]—
“Holy *daimones* living on earth, good, warders off
of evil, guardians of articulate men?” We will
certainly believe him. We will therefore ask of
Apollo, inquiring how it is necessary to bury
daimonic and godlike men and carry it out in this
way, and thusly we will carry it out in the way
which has been advised;... and in fact in the future
we will honour and respect their tombs as those of
daimones; and we will practice these same things
whenever someone dies of old age or any other
way, those who were judged good in the course of
their life...

Here the interlocutors come to the conclusion that those who die gloriously at war belong to the Golden Race that Hesiod describes (the quotation at the start of the passage is *Works and Days* 121). These men, as in Hesiod, become *daimones* upon death, and Plato describes them as *daimonious* and *theious* – *daimon*-like and godlike. Socrates also explains how mortals shall bury them, dependent on the approval of Apollo, in order that

future generations recognize their ascension to the status of *daimon*.¹²² Socrates also adds that even those who die of old age or meet some other, less glorious, end, shall receive the same honours if they were exceptionally good.

Plato, through Socrates, provides an explanation for and expansion of Hesiod's Golden Generation at *Cratylus* 398a-c:

Σωκράτης
ὅτι οἶμαι ἐγὼ λέγειν αὐτὸν τὸ χρυσοῦν γένος οὐκ
ἐκ χρυσοῦ πεφυκὸς ἀλλ' ἀγαθὸν τε καὶ καλόν.
τεκμήριον δέ μοί ἐστιν ὅτι καὶ ἡμᾶς φησιν
σιδηροῦν εἶναι γένος.

Ἑρμογένης
ἀληθῆ λέγεις.

Σωκράτης
οὐκοῦν καὶ τῶν νῦν οἶει ἂν φάναι αὐτὸν εἶ τις
ἀγαθὸς ἐστὶν ἐκείνου τοῦ χρυσοῦ γένους εἶναι;

Ἑρμογένης
εἰκὸς γε.

Σωκράτης
οἱ δ' ἀγαθοὶ ἄλλο τι ἢ φρόνιμοι;

Ἑρμογένης
φρόνιμοι.

Σωκράτης
τοῦτο τοίνυν παντὸς μᾶλλον λέγει, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ,
τοὺς δαίμονας: ὅτι φρόνιμοι καὶ δαήμονες ἦσαν,
'δαίμονας' αὐτοὺς ὠνόμασεν: καὶ ἔν γε τῇ ἀρχαίᾳ
τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ φωνῇ αὐτὸ συμβαίνει τὸ ὄνομα. λέγει
οὖν καλῶς καὶ οὗτος καὶ ἄλλοι ποιηταὶ πολλοὶ ὅσοι
λέγουσιν ὡς, ἐπειδὴν τις ἀγαθὸς ὢν τελευτήσῃ,
μεγάλην μοῖραν καὶ τιμὴν ἔχει καὶ γίγνεται δαίμων

¹²² As Adams rightly notes in his commentary on the *Republic* this link to burial rites for the righteous is also found, as I have already explored, in Euripides' *Alcestis* (1000ff.), wherein the Chorus claims that Alcestis will be remembered in much the same way. cf. Adams (1902), *ad loc.* See note 125.

κατὰ τὴν τῆς φρονήσεως ἐπωνυμίαν. ταύτη οὖν
τίθεμαι καὶ ἐγὼ τὸν δαίμονα πάντ' ἄνδρα ὃς ἂν
ἀγαθὸς ᾖ, δαιμόνιον εἶναι καὶ ζῶντα καὶ
τελευτήσαντα, καὶ ὀρθῶς 'δαίμονα' καλεῖσθαι.

Socrates

I think that he (Hesiod) says (at lines 122ff. of *Works and Days*) that the golden generation did not spring forth from actual gold but rather was good and noble. And the evidence of this for me is the fact that he asserts that we are the iron generation.

Hermogenes

You speak the truth.

Socrates

And therefore do you not think now that if someone shows himself to be good that he would be counted among that golden generation?

Hermogenes

Yes, it seems likely.

Socrates

But good men, are they also in some way wise?

Hermogenes

They are wise.

Socrates

Therefore finally this is what he actually says concerning *daimones*, as it seems to me: that since they were wise and knowledgeable (*daemones*), he named them *daimones*; and in the ancient form of our language this name corresponds to the same thing. There both he asserts correctly and many of the other poets who say that whenever someone good should die, he has a great fate (*moira*) and honour and he becomes a *daimon*, a word derived from this word for wisdom. And therefore I set forth the following, that every knowledgeable (*daemon*) man who is good, he is daimonic (*daimonion*) both while living and after he has died, and he is rightly called a *daimon*.

Here Socrates reinvents Hesiod’s Golden Race. They were not actually made of gold, just as subsequent generations are not made of iron. Hesiod, moreover, meant δαίμων (“wise/knowing”), but in old Greek the words *daimon* and *daemon* were synonymous.¹²³ Rather than golden men, then, they were good and noble and wise, and likewise all from subsequent generations who are also good and noble and wise, in life as well as death,¹²⁴ are daimonic (δαιμόνιον) and rightly called *daimon* (δαίμονα). Here we have the moralizing and secularizing of hero cult and the old Hesiodic notion of the Golden Race to support the idea that nobility and, chiefly, philosophy will lead the individual to his fullest potential—that of being *daimon*.¹²⁵

This idea of the *daimon* is found again in *Republic* 540b-c, where Socrates explains that his Guardians shall become *daimones* upon death, receiving public memorials and sacrificial rites, again subject to the approval of the Pythian oracle:

μνημεῖα δ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ θυσίας τὴν πόλιν δημοσίᾳ
ποιεῖν, εἴαν καὶ ἡ Πυθία συναναρῆ, ὡς δαίμοσιν, εἰ
δὲ μή, ὡς εὐδαίμοσιν τε καὶ θείοις.

And the city makes memorials and sacrifices for
them at public expense, if also the Pythia gives the
same answer, as *daimones*, and if not, then as those

¹²³ cf. Borecký (1965), 12.

¹²⁴ The ‘noble good’, as I have termed it, is found in Empedocles, and obscurely in Heraclitus, possible precursors to Plato’s philosophy here. And, as noted above, it is possible that the understanding of Hesiod’s golden generation to indicate daimonic potential upon death for noble men dates back to a Pythagorean tradition, as posited by Detienne (1963), 115. cf. Edmonds (2004), 93. See note 66 above.

¹²⁵ de Ruiter (1918), 14.

This has already been seen with, for example, Alcestis, who receives what we might call “daimonic honours” upon death in much the same way a hero would. Alcestis seems to belong to this new universe of ideas that Plato is here exploring, as she is heroic in that she is selfless. She is thus virtuous in a way that Ajax, for example, is not, but she is also a woman who dies at home, far from the glorious fields of battle. Thus Euripides refigures from tradition, as Plato does. cf. Adam (1902) *ad Rep.* 5.469a; Segal (1993), 213-214, 227, 229. See above, note 122.

blessed with good *daimones* (*eudaimones*) and being godlike.

Here Socrates adds an additional element: if the Pythia does not agree to the honouring of these men as *daimones*, then they shall at least be honoured as *eudaimon* and godlike. A distinction is made between becoming a *daimon* and being *eudaimon*, which can be translated as being fortunate or being possessed of a good *daimon*.¹²⁶ In this way man has the potential to become a *daimon* or, short of this, at least obtain a benevolent guardian spirit or guide.

Plato in *Phaedo* 107d-e discusses the role of the *daimon* as guide in the afterlife:

λέγεται δὲ οὕτως, ὡς ἄρα τελευτήσαντα ἕκαστον ὁ
ἐκάστου δαίμων, ὅσπερ ζῶντα εἰλήχει, οὗτος ἄγειν
ἐπιχειρεῖ εἰς δὴ τινα τόπον, οἷ δει τοὺς συλλεγέντας
διαδικασαμένους εἰς Ἄιδου πορεύεσθαι μετὰ
ἡγεμόνος ἐκείνου ᾧ δὴ προστέτακται τοὺς ἐνθένδε
ἐκεῖσε πορεύσασθαι: τυχόντας δὲ ἐκεῖ ὧν δὴ τυχεῖν καὶ
μείναντας ὅν χρόνόν ἄλλος δεῦρο πάλιν
ἡγεμῶν κομίζει ἐν πολλαῖς χρόνου καὶ μακρῶν
περιοδοῖς.

And so it is said, after he dies the *daimon* of each person, which had obtained him by lot while he was living, this *daimon* leads him by hand to a place at which the dead, having been gathered together, are judged and depart into the land of Hades with that guide which is appointed to convey them thither from hence; and when they have obtained there what they were to obtain and remained for the necessary amount of time, another guide conveys them back after much time and many cycles.

¹²⁶ See LSJ *s.v.* εὐδαίμων, A. As Shorey rightly notes, this is a pun on the words *daimon* and *eudaimon*. *cf.* Shorey (1969). See also below, note 135.

The *daimon* here is a guide, ἡγεμόνος, but a guide for the dead. There are in fact two guides – the one that obtained the mortal by lot upon his birth, a conception that Plato changes in *Republic*, as well as another that leads the mortal back to life.¹²⁷ Thus Plato

¹²⁷ This recalls Empedocles' daimonic pairs in fragment B122.

Plato expands on his geography of the afterlife and notions of resurrection at 113.d-114c:

τούτων δὲ οὕτως πεφυκότων, ἐπειδὴν ἀφίκονται οἱ τετελευτηκότες εἰς τὸν τόπον οἷ ὁ δαίμων ἕκαστον κομίζει, πρῶτον μὲν διεδικάσαντο οἷ τε καλῶς καὶ ὀσίως βιώσαντες καὶ οἷ μὴ, καὶ οἷ μὲν ἂν δόξωσι μέσως βεβιωκέναι, πορευθέντες ἐπὶ τὸν Ἀχέροντα, ἀναβάντες ἅ δὴ αὐτοῖς ὀχήματά ἐστιν, ἐπὶ τούτων ἀφικνοῦνται εἰς τὴν λίμνην, καὶ ἐκεῖ οἰκοῦσι τε καὶ καθαιρόμενοι τῶν τε ἀδικημάτων διδόντες δίκας ἀπολύονται, εἴ τις τι ἠδίκηκεν, τῶν τε εὐεργεσιῶν τιμὰς φέρονται κατὰ τὴν ἀξίαν ἕκαστος: οἷ δ' ἂν δόξωσιν ἀνιάτως ἔχειν διὰ τὰ μεγέθη τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων, ἢ ἱεροσυλίας πολλὰς καὶ μεγάλας ἢ φόνους ἀδίκους καὶ παρανόμους πολλοὺς ἐξεργασμένοι ἢ ἄλλα ὅσα τοιαῦτα τυγχάνει ὄντα, τούτους δὲ ἢ προσήκουσα μοῖρα ρίπτει εἰς τὸν Τάρταρον, ὅθεν οὐποτε ἐκβαίνουσιν. οἷ δ' ἂν ἰάσιμα μὲν μεγάλα δὲ δόξωσιν ἡμαρτηκέναι ἀμαρτήματα, οἷον πρὸς πατέρα ἢ μητέρα ὑπ' ὀργῆς βίαιόν τι πράξαντες, καὶ μεταμέλον αὐτοῖς τὸν ἄλλον βίον βιώσιν, ἢ ἀνδροφόνου τοιοῦτω τινὶ ἄλλω τρόπῳ γένωνται, τούτους δὲ ἔμπεσεῖν μὲν εἰς τὸν Τάρταρον ἀνάγκη, ἔμπεσόντας δὲ αὐτοῦς καὶ ἐνιαυτὸν ἐκεῖ γενομένους ἐκβάλλει τὸ κύμα, τοὺς μὲν ἀνδροφόνους κατὰ τὸν Κωκυτὸν, τοὺς δὲ πατραλοίας καὶ μητραλοίας κατὰ τὸν Πυριφλεγέθοντα: ἐπειδὴν δὲ φερόμενοι γένωνται κατὰ τὴν λίμνην τὴν Ἀχερουσιάδα, ἐνταῦθα βοῶσι τε καὶ καλοῦσιν, οἷ μὲν οὖς ἀπέκτειναν, οἷ δὲ οὖς ὕβρισαν, καλέσαντες δ' ἱκετεύουσι καὶ δέοντα ἑᾶσαι σφᾶς ἐκβῆναι εἰς τὴν λίμνην καὶ δέξασθαι, καὶ εἴαν μὲν πείσωσιν, ἐκβαίνουσι τε καὶ λήγουσι τῶν κακῶν, εἰ δὲ μὴ, φέρονται αὐθις εἰς τὸν Τάρταρον καὶ ἐκεῖθεν πάλιν εἰς τοὺς ποταμούς, καὶ ταῦτα πάσχοντες οὐ πρότερον παύονται πρὶν ἂν πείσωσιν οὖς ἠδίκησαν: αὐτὴ γὰρ ἡ δίκη ὑπὸ τῶν δικαστῶν αὐτοῖς ἐτάχθη. οἷ δὲ δὴ ἂν δόξωσι διαφορόντως πρὸς τὸ ὀσίως βίωσαι, οὗτοί εἰσιν οἷ τῶνδε μὲν τῶν τόπων τῶν ἐν τῇ γῆ ἐλευθερούμενοί τε καὶ ἀπαλλαττόμενοι ὥσπερ δεσμοτηρίων, ἄνω δὲ εἰς τὴν καθαρὰν οἴκησιν ἀφικνούμενοι καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς οἰκιζόμενοι. τούτων δὲ αὐτῶν οἷ φιλοσοφία ἱκανῶς καθηράμενοι ἄνευ τε σωμάτων ζῶσι τὸ παράπαν εἰς τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον, καὶ εἰς οἰκίσεις ἔτι τούτων καλλίους ἀφικνοῦνται, ἅς οὔτε ῥάδιον δηλῶσαι οὔτε ὁ χρόνος ἱκανὸς ἐν τῷ παρόντι.

“And with things coming about in this way, whenever those having died come to this place at which the *daimon* has escorted each, first they submit to trial, both those who have lived beautifully and rightly and those who have not. And those who seem to have lived a middling life, they were conveyed to the Acheron, having gone aboard the conveyances which are in fact there for them, on which they came to the water, and there they were settled and cleansed and those having done wrong are acquitted having paid the penalty, if someone should have done anything wrong, and those having done good they are granted honours in accordance with the worth of each; and those that seem to be incorrigible by the magnitude of their wrongdoings, whether having committed many great acts of sacrilege or many unjust and illegal murders or other things which are of the same sort, fitting fate (*moira*) casts these mortals into Tartarus, from which they never escape. And those who seem to be curable but have transgressed with great sins, such as doing some violent thing to their father or mother while possessed by anger, and they lived the rest of their life with regret for them, or the murderers that were created in some such way, necessity sends them to Tartarus, but having fallen and having spent a year there the wave hurls them out, the murderers through Cocytus, and the patricides and matricides through the Pyriphlegethon; and whenever being carried they come through the Acheron's waters, there they cry out and call, to those whom they murdered, and to those whom they transgressed with hubris, and having called upon them they supplicated and begged that they permit them to go out into the water and to receive them, and if they persuade [them], they come out and leave off from their misfortunes, but if not, they are conveyed back again into Tartarus and then back from there into the rivers, and they do not stop suffering these things until they persuade those whom they have wronged; for this is the very punishment that is prescribed them by the judges. And in fact those who seem to have lived especially in accordance with what is holy, these mortals are freed and released from these

has given *daimones* the role of *psychopompos* normally belonging to Thanatos and Hermes.¹²⁸ The function of these *daimones* is partially elaborated in section 108b-c, where Socrates explains that the souls of the unjust and impure are avoided by guiding *daimones*, while the righteous are attended by *theoi*:

ἀφικομένην δὲ ὄθιπερ αἱ ἄλλαι, τὴν μὲν
ἀκάθαρτον καὶ τι πεποιηκυῖαν τοιοῦτον, ἢ φόνων
ἀδίκων ἡμμένην ἢ ἄλλ' ἄττα τοιαῦτα
εἰργασμένην, ἃ τούτων ἀδελφά τε καὶ ἀδελφῶν
ψυχῶν ἔργα τυγχάνει ὄντα, ταύτην μὲν ἅπας
φεύγει τε καὶ ὑπεκτρέπεται καὶ οὔτε συνέμπορος
οὔτε ἡγεμῶν ἐθέλει γίγνεσθαι, αὐτὴ δὲ πλανᾶται
ἐν πάσῃ ἐχομένη ἀπορία ἕως ἂν δὴ τινες χρόνοι
γένωνται, ὧν ἐλθόντων ὑπ' ἀνάγκης φέρεται εἰς
τὴν αὐτῇ πρέπουσαν οἴκησιν: ἡ δὲ καθαρῶς τε
καὶ μετρίως τὸν βίον διεξελοῦσα, καὶ
συνεμπόρων καὶ ἡγεμόνων θεῶν τυχοῦσα,
ᾧκησεν τὸν αὐτῇ ἐκάστη τόπον προσήκοντα.

And having reached the place where the other [souls] are, this being the soul which is impure and has done some such thing, whether having engaged in unlawful slaughter or having done some such other thing, coming upon such deeds which are similar for those related souls, all flee this [soul] and avoid it and none wish to be either its companion nor guide, and instead the soul roams being in complete confusion until in fact it should be such a time, after which the soul is taken up by necessity to its proper resting place; but the soul which has lived a clean and moderate life comes upon gods who act as companions and guides, and each shall rest in their proper place.

places within the earth just as if [these places were] prisons, and coming to the pure area above they live and they settle on the earth. And those of these same mortals that have been sufficiently cleansed with philosophy they live thereafter in perpetuity without corporeal bodies, and they come upon dwellings still more beautiful than these, which are not easy to explain and there is not currently sufficient time [to explain].”

Here again the *daimon* serves as guide, having been assigned to each man (ὁ δαίμων ἕκαστον κομίζει).

¹²⁸ This use of the *daimon* is also found in the epigraphic record, for example the final line of *GV* no. 1499 = *IG II²* 12974, “...by a daimon you were carried off.” Trans. Mikalson (1983), 74.

Here again the nature of the *daimon* as a guide is stressed, now with the words προστεταγμένου δαίμονος ἀγομένη, and συνέμπορος, as well as ἡγεμῶν. There also seems to be a further distinction between *theoi* and *daimones*, though *theoi* too may serve as guides of the dead. Perhaps these *theoi* are Hermes and Thanatos? Plato does not clarify. As Edmonds argues, this is an allegory for the philosophic life – just as the mortal must follow his daimonic guide to his place in Hades, so too must the philosopher follow his reason to reach *to aides*, the unseen world of the Forms.¹²⁹ Thus Plato takes the notions of *daimones* as minor gods or spirits, as the noble dead, and as guides to men, and uses these to express his distinct philosophical vision.¹³⁰

Turning back now to *Republic* and the “Myth of Er,” we find a revision to *Phaedo* 107d.¹³¹ At *Republic* 617d-e the unnamed prophet at the Crucible of Necessity (likely a reference to Tiresias, whom Odysseus seeks in Hades in *Odyssey* XI) announces to the throngs of souls:

‘ἀνάγκης θυγατρὸς κόρης Λαχέσεως λόγος.
Ψυχαὶ ἐφήμεροι, ἀρχὴ ἄλλης περιόδου θνητοῦ
γένους θανατηφόρου. οὐχ ὑμᾶς δαίμων λήξεται,
ἀλλ’ ὑμεῖς δαίμονα αἰρήσεσθε. πρῶτος δ’ ὁ

¹²⁹ Edmonds (2004), 191. This is in contrast to the unphilosophic person, which is allegorized in *Phaedo* 108a-b by the restless soul:

ἡ δ’ ἐπιθυμητικῶς τοῦ σώματος ἔχουσα, ὅπερ ἐν τῷ ἔμπροσθεν εἶπον, περὶ ἐκεῖνο πολὺν χρόνον ἐπτοημένη καὶ περὶ τὸν ὄρατὸν τόπον, πολλὰ ἀντιτείνασα καὶ πολλὰ παθοῦσα, βία καὶ μόγις ὑπὸ τοῦ προστεταγμένου δαίμονος οἴχεται ἀγομένη.

“But the soul that covets its body, just as I said earlier, for a long time it flutters around it and around the visible plane, and having strived against much and having endured much, it goes being led away by force and with trouble by the allotted *daimon*.”

These souls are confused by the multiple paths of the afterlife and resist their daimonic guides, just as the simple man cannot parse the natural world in a meaningful way so as to reach an understanding of the Forms. The same can be said for the unjust and impure, explored in the main body of the text above. *cf.* Edmonds (2004), 191-195, 219.

¹³⁰ *cf.* Edmonds (2004), 161-170, 195, 219-220.

¹³¹ Adam (1902) *ad loc.*; Darcus (1974), 398; Shorey (1969) *ad loc.*

λαχῶν πρῶτος αἰρείσθω βίον ᾧ συνέσται ἐξ
ἀνάγκης. ἀρετὴ δὲ ἀδέσποτον, ἦν τιμῶν καὶ
ἀτιμάζων πλέον καὶ ἔλαττον αὐτῆς ἕκαστος ἔξει.
αἰτία ἐλομένου: θεὸς ἀναίτιος.’

“Hear the word of Lachesis, daughter of
Necessity. Shortlived souls, this is the beginning
of a cycle of mortality for the race of man. The
daimon will not assign lots to you all, but rather
you will choose a *daimon*. And let the first man,
having been assigned the first position, choose his
life which he will live in accordance with
necessity. And virtue has no master, which each
honouring or dishonouring will have more or less
of her. The responsibility falls to he who makes
the choice; god (*theos*) is blameless.

Here Plato explains that souls choose (in *Phaedo*, are assigned) a *daimon* before rising up to join the living, a *daimon* which acts as guide for them in life and again in death. Once they have been guided to their place of judgment in the afterlife, they receive their punishment/reward, and the cycle renews with the assignment or choice of a new *daimon*. The impact of the *daimon* on one’s life (as opposed to afterlife) is less clear, but it seems Heraclitan in nature in light of sections 620d-e. Here Plato writes that a mortal chooses his *daimon*, which is also to choose his *bios*, the word used at 620d.¹³² In this and the subsequent section Plato describes how Lachesis assigns the chosen *daimon* to his/her mortal (620d-e):

ἐκείνην δ’ ἐκάστῳ ὃν εἴλετο δαίμονα, τοῦτον
φύλακα συμπέμπειν τοῦ βίου καὶ ἀποπληρωτὴν
τῶν αἰρεθέντων.

¹³² ἐπειδὴ δ’ οὖν πάσας τὰς ψυχὰς τοὺς βίους ἡρῆσθαι, ὥσπερ ἔλαχον ἐν τάξει προσιέναι πρὸς τὴν Λάχεσιν...

“But therefore when all the souls had chosen their lives, just as they had been allotted, they went in order before Lachesis...”

And she sent with each the one which he had chosen, a guard to guide his life and fulfill his choices.

Again, the *daimon* is a guide in life, just as it is in death.¹³³ Curiously it safeguards and fulfills the things having been chosen, the *bios*, while simultaneously being the chosen thing. Thus Plato equates *daimon* to one's life, and so in this situation the *daimon* is simultaneously the guide and the destiny.

The major change from *Phaedo* is that the mortal is the active agent, choosing the *daimon*. This is emphasized in section 619b-c of the *Republic*, when a certain heaven-sent man¹³⁴ becomes irate at his choice in *daimon*, failing to realize that among other horrors this destiny involves cannibalism:

εἰπόντος δὲ ταῦτα τὸν πρῶτον λαχόντα ἔφη
εὐθὺς ἐπιόντα τὴν μεγίστην τυραννίδα ἐλέσθαι,
καὶ ὑπὸ ἀφροσύνης τε καὶ λαιμαργίας οὐ πάντα
ικανῶς ἀνασκεψάμενον ἐλέσθαι, ἀλλ' αὐτὸν
λαθεῖν ἐνοῦσαν εἰμαρμένην παίδων αὐτοῦ
βρώσεις καὶ ἄλλα κακά: ἐπειδὴ δὲ κατὰ σχολὴν
σκέψασθαι, κόπτεσθαι τε καὶ ὀδύρεσθαι τὴν
αἴρεσιν, οὐκ ἐμμένοντα τοῖς προρρηθεῖσιν ὑπὸ
τοῦ προφήτου: οὐ γὰρ ἑαυτὸν αἰτιάσθαι τῶν
κακῶν, ἀλλὰ τύχην τε καὶ δαίμονας καὶ πάντα
μᾶλλον ἀνθ' ἑαυτοῦ.

And with him having said these things he said that the man having been assigned the first lot immediately came forward to choose the greatest tyranny, and he chose having not sufficiently looked at all of the options on account of both his thoughtlessness and his gluttony, but he passed over the fact that in this life it was fated that he would eat his own

¹³³ cf. de Ruyter (1918), 13.

¹³⁴ *Republic* 619c-d: εἶναι δὲ αὐτὸν τῶν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἡκόντων, ἐν τεταγμένῃ πολιτείᾳ ἐν τῷ προτέρῳ βίῳ βεβιωκότα... “He was a man that returned from the heavens, having lived before in an ordered commonwealth...”

children, among other evils; and when he examined his choice at his leisure, he both struck his breast and lamented the choice, not standing by what the prophet had said earlier; for he did not blame himself for his misfortunes, but both fortune and the *daimones* and all other things rather than himself.

From this Plato's shift becomes clear: he means to place control in the hands of humankind, to make them accountable for their fate, to stress the importance of the philosophical, examined life. The man here blames the *daimon* and *tuche* and all other possible things except himself, the rightful object of his anger. It is as though Plato has inverted the Heraclitan adage, as here *ethos* produces *daimon*, which essentially equates to one's life. The *daimon* acts as guide in that it is the divine ratifier of that life, carrying out the wishes of the soon-to-be reincarnated souls of the dead.

This same shift is found in Plato's description of the function of the *daimon* at *Timaeus* 90a-c:

τὸ δὲ δὴ περὶ τοῦ κυριωτάτου παρ' ἡμῖν ψυχῆς εἶδους διανοεῖσθαι δεῖ τῆδε, ὡς ἄρα αὐτὸ δαίμονα θεὸς ἐκάστῳ δέδωκεν, τοῦτο ὃ δὴ φαμεν οἰκεῖν μὲν ἡμῶν ἐπ' ἄκρω τῷ σώματι, πρὸς δὲ τὴν ἐν οὐρανῷ συγγένειαν ἀπὸ γῆς ἡμᾶς αἶρειν ὡς ὄντας φυτὸν οὐκ ἔγγειον ἀλλὰ οὐράνιον, ὀρθότατα λέγοντες: ἐκεῖθεν γάρ, ὅθεν ἡ πρώτη τῆς ψυχῆς γένεσις ἔφυ, τὸ θεῖον τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ ρίζαν ἡμῶν ἀνακρεμαννὸν ὀρθοῖ πᾶν τὸ σῶμα. τῷ μὲν οὖν περὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας ἢ περὶ φιλονικίας τετευτακότι καὶ ταῦτα διαπονοῦντι σφόδρα πάντα τὰ δόγματα ἀνάγκη θνητὰ ἐγγεγονέναι, καὶ παντάπασιν καθ' ὅσον μάλιστα δυνατόν θνητῷ γίγνεσθαι, τούτου μηδὲ σμικρὸν ἐλλείπειν, ἅτε τὸ τοιοῦτον ἠῤῥηκότι: τῷ δὲ περὶ φιλομαθίαν καὶ περὶ τὰς ἀληθεῖς φρονήσεις ἐσπουδακότι καὶ ταῦτα μάλιστα τῶν αὐτοῦ γεγυμνασμένῳ φρονεῖν μὲν ἀθάνατα καὶ θεῖα, ἄνπερ ἀληθείας ἐφάπτηται,

πᾶσα ἀνάγκη που, καθ' ὅσον δ' αὖ μετασχεῖν
ἀνθρωπίνη φύσει ἀθανασίας ἐνδέχεται, τούτου
μηδὲν μέρος ἀπολείπειν, ἅτε δὲ αἰεὶ θεραπεύοντα
τὸ θεῖον ἔχοντά τε αὐτὸν εὖ κεκοσμημένον τὸν
δαίμονα σύνοικον ἑαυτῷ, διαφερόντως εὐδαίμονα
εἶναι.

And in fact concerning the most lordly soul among us it is necessary to think of its nature in this way, that the god (*theos*) has given to each man his own *daimon*, this thing which in fact appears to inhabit the top of our bodies, and raises us to our kin in the sky from the earth on the grounds that we are a creature not of the earth but of the sky, saying rightly: for from there, where the first source of the soul came into being, the divine power sets right our whole body by suspending our head and root. Therefore it is necessary for the man who has indulged in passions and revelry and has excessively cultivated all these things to be born into mortal opinions, and in everything as far as is possible he becomes rather powerful with respect to his mortality, and he does not leave behind even a small part of it, as if it increased; but for the man who pursues a love of learning and true practical reason and trains these things rather than the rest of his qualities doubtless it is entirely necessary for him to think deathless and godlike things, if he snatches up the truth, and once more as far as is possible for human nature to share in immortality, and he leaves behind no share of this, but inasmuch as he is always taking care of the divine and holding well his own assigned *daimon* that is associated with him, he will be especially *eudaimon*.

Here Plato explains the interaction of the *daimon* with mortals in life, something left unexplained in *Republic* and *Phaedo* – the *daimon* is part of a man. As he does in the *Republic*, Plato places more of the onus on the mortal than on his divine counterpart. The *daimon* is accessible, if the mortal should seek truth and knowledge, and it seems the

mortal can not only gain from this connection to the divine but also amplify it.¹³⁵ At the other end of the spectrum, the mortal, not the *daimon*, is the cause of the mortal's failings, which are the result of the unphilosophical mind. In this way Plato moralizes the *daimon* for his own philosophical ends, once again placing the emphasis on human action and identifying the daimonic with the philosophical life.¹³⁶

Through these first two chapters I have traced the developmental picture of the daimonic in Greek literature, a cluster of interrelated ideas that stretch out in different directions. Within this continuum we have found a variety of different aspects and forms, and it is tracing out these lineaments that makes sense of this as a cluster, providing a developmental story of this continuum's growth. While we find categories one and two throughout the survey, it is in Homer that we find the nascent versions of five and six. Hesiod introduces category four, while also presenting category five more clearly. The lyric poets emphasized and expanded upon category five, while the pre-Socratics developed categories four and five even further while approaching the concept of category six. In tragedy we find all but category six, with emphasis on the negative *daimones* within the purview of category five. Plato, drawing on his mythopoetic and philosophical predecessors, elaborates categories one, two, four, and five, while finally crystallizing the concept of category six. Chapter three explores the third category of

¹³⁵ Dodds (1962), 42-43; Edmonds (2004), 195; de Ruiter (1918), 13; Shorey (1933), 536.

As Shorey so eloquently puts it, this is "god within the mind."

And in connecting with and amplifying his internal divine spark, he will be *διαφερόντως εὐδαίμονα* ("especially *eudaimon*"), which Lamb rightly notes as a pun, given that the word can be taken as "with a good *daimon*." cf. Lamb (1925), *ad loc.* See also above, note 126.

¹³⁶ Edmonds (2004), 195. This is the same failing explored by Edmonds regarding the *Phaedo*; see note 129.

daimon—the minor deities, Thanatos, Ker, the Erinyes, etc—to elucidate its place within the daimonic continuum.

Chapter Three – Daimonic Personifications

Having examined in detail daimonic categories 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 in chapters one and two, I now to turn to category 3: the named gods and spirits, personifications concerned with fate and death. These are the children of Nyx, according to Hesiod (*Theogony* 211-212):
νύξ δ' ἔτεκεν στυγερὸν τε Μόρον καὶ Κῆρα μέλαιναν/ καὶ Θάνατον, τέκε δ' Ὕπνον,
ἔτικτε δὲ φῶλον Ὀνειρώων... “And Night bore both abominable Moros and the black Ker and Thanatos, and she bore Hypnos, and the race of Dreams...”. It is fitting that these gods are the children of Night, as they themselves are mysterious, dark, and often invisible.¹³⁷ I include among their ranks the Erinyes/Eumenides, whom Aeschylus in the *Eumenides* holds to be the daughters of Nyx (321-323)¹³⁸ and sisters to the Moirai (956-967).¹³⁹ This chapter will elucidate the position of these beings within the conceptual framework established in the previous chapters, treating the Moirai, the distinction between Thanatos and Ker, as both personifications of death, and the Keres and the Erinyes/Eumenides, who, as will be shown, are manifestations of the daimonic, as connected with death and retribution, respectively.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ cf. Vernant (1986), 55-56.

¹³⁸ μᾶτερ ἃ μ' ἔτικτες, ὧ μᾶτερ/ Νύξ, ἀλαοῖσι καὶ δεδορκόσιν/ ποινάν, κλυθ'. “Mother who gave birth to us, O' mother Nyx, as vengeance for blind men and those who see clearly, heed us.”

¹³⁹ This passage is translated and examined below.

¹⁴⁰ Examples of these beings referred to as *daimones*: Moirai – Aeschylus' *Eumenides* 961-963; Thanatos – Euripides' *Alceste* 384, 1140 (“lord of the *daimones*”); Erinyes/Eumenides: Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* 466, 864, 1391; Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* 891; *Eumenides* 101, 150, 302, 928-929. While the Keres are not explicitly called *daimones*, the Erinyes are identified as *keres* in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* at line 1061, as well as in Euripides' *Electra* at 1252, themselves being referred to several times as *daimones*. The Erinyes are also referred to as daughters of Nyx, like Ker and the Moirai, at *Eumenides* 416, and call the Moirai their “sisters by the same mother” and *daimones* at lines 961-963, furthering this association. Though these are but a few examples, and there are other examples of these personifications being referred to as *theoi*, it is the burden of this chapter's argument that the association of these beings in the explored texts owes to their belonging to a conceptual field that might properly be called daimonic. Moros, which is derived from the same root as Moira (μείρομαι – cf. Duffy (1947), 481; LSJ s.v. μόρος, A.), seems to function essentially as a negative form of *moira* – one's doom, or one's allotted misfortunes

Throughout Greek literature one finds Fate personified as the three Moirai. Originally the word *moira*, like *daimon*, was associated with primitive tribal division of material and social goods by lot (along with related words like *aisa*, *heimarmene*, *potmos*, *luchos*, etc.).¹⁴¹ In Homer, *moira* is rarely personified, but is used instead as a common noun meaning anything from one's lot in life (for example, *Iliad* 19.86-87, explored below) to a portion of food (*Odyssey* 20.260) or one's status (*Iliad* 15.209).¹⁴² The general idea of Fate is seemingly identified with the will of Zeus while simultaneously presented as a principle to which Zeus, like all beings, is subject.¹⁴³ In both cases, however, Fate is an irrevocable divine fact.¹⁴⁴

Early on in Hesiod's *Theogony*, the Moirai are personified as the daughters of Nyx, though confusingly conflated with the Keres and given a function akin to the Erinyes (217-220):

(*cf.* Dodds (1962), 6; Hussey (1991), 522), and is almost always a common noun. As Duffy notes, *moros* is never personified in Homer, and aside from the passage in Hesiod, I have not found any instances of its personification (*cf.* Duffy (1947), 481). While there may be examples worth examining, it is for the aforementioned reasons that for the purposes of this paper I have chosen not to examine *Moros* as closely as his brethren.

¹⁴¹ Borecký (1965), 9-10, 22-24, 28, 30.

¹⁴² Dodds (1962), 6-7, 300; Duffy (1947), 478; Morrison (1997), 278; Schenkeveld (1988), 113. As Duffy and Schenkeveld note, *moira* could mean anything from *agathe tuche* to *thanatos*; the word's meaning was dependent on the context of the situation. For specific examples from both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, see Duffy (1947), 478.

Duffy notes that the Moirai are, according to scholarly opinion, personified on but two occasions: *Iliad* 24.49 and 24.209. I am not certain, however, that Duffy is correct in his assertion that we can sweep these two personified instances aside as actually meaning *moira Dios*, the "fate of Zeus" or "ordinance of Zeus," simply because there are other instances in Homer where the gods themselves, specifically Zeus, are the weavers of fate and the dispensers of one's *moira*. Duffy also justifies his conclusion on the premise that Moirai, when personified, are never given descriptive epithets, nor are they called *theai* and given a genealogical record. *cf.* Duffy (1947), 478, 482-483. Is it not possible that, in Homer at least, the function of the Moirai and the other *theoi* overlap? Perhaps one might conclude that the personification of the Moirai in Homer is only nascent.

¹⁴³ Borecký (1965), 28; Duffy (1947), 477; Garland (2001), 97; Morrison (1997), 278, 288-289. The issue is found just prior to the death of Sarpedon, where Zeus contemplates saving his son from his allotted fate. See note 34 above.

¹⁴⁴ Campbell (1898), 69.

καὶ Μοίρας καὶ Κῆρας ἐγένετο νηλεοπίου,
Κλωθὴ τε Λάχεσιν τε καὶ Ἄτροπον, αἶτε βροτοῖσι
γυνομένοισι διδοῦσιν ἔχειν ἀγαθὸν τε κακὸν τε,
αἶτ' ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε παραιβασίας ἐφέπουσιν...

And she gave birth to the Moirai and the ruthlessly
punishing Keres, Clotho and Lachesis and Atropos,
who give unto mortals when they are born both
good and evil to have, who punish the
transgressions of both men and gods...

This blurring of distinctions between these groups speaks to their intimate relation. They appear again later in the work, now distinct from the Keres and described as the daughters of Zeus and Themis (904-906):

...Μοίρας θ', ἧ πλείστην τιμὴν πόρε μητίετα Ζεὺς,
Κλωθὴ τε Λάχεσιν τε καὶ Ἄτροπον, αἶτε διδοῦσι
θνητοῖς ἀνθρώποισιν ἔχειν ἀγαθὸν τε κακὸν τε.

And the Moirai, to whom all-wise Zeus gave the
greatest honour, Clotho and Lachesis and Atropos,
who give unto mortal men both good and evil.

The description of the Moirai as givers of good and evil is anticipatory of descriptions of the *daimon* in later writers, including Theognis and Phocylides.

The Moirai are found in the Classical period in Plato's "Myth of Er." Located at the end of the *Republic* and explored in chapter 2, the three Fates stand at the Crucible of Necessity (ἀνάγκης ἄτρακτον – 616c), working hand-in-hand with the *daimones* as part of the same mythic edifice, managing and administering the fates of men before their reincarnation. The Crucible and its eight orbits are found beginning at *Republic* 616c, and in 617b-c Plato describes its denizens:

στρέφεσθαι δὲ αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς τῆς ἀνάγκης γόνασιν. ἐπὶ
δὲ τῶν κύκλων αὐτοῦ ἄνωθεν ἐφ' ἑκάστου βεβηκέναι
Σειρήνα συμπεριφερομένην, φωνὴν μίαν ἰεῖσαν, ἕνα

τόνον: ἐκ πασῶν δὲ ὀκτῶ οὐσῶν μίαν ἀρμονίαν
συμφωνεῖν. ἄλλας δὲ καθημένας περίξ δι' ἴσου τρεῖς,
ἐν θρόνῳ ἐκάστην, θυγατέρας τῆς ἀνάγκης, Μοίρας,
λευχειμονούσας, στέμματα ἐπὶ τῶν κεφαλῶν ἐχούσας,
Λάχεσιν τε καὶ Κλωθῶ καὶ Ἄτροπον, ὑμνεῖν πρὸς τὴν
τῶν Σειρήνων ἀρμονίαν, Λάχεσιν μὲν τὰ γεγονότα,
Κλωθῶ δὲ τὰ ὄντα, Ἄτροπον δὲ τὰ μέλλοντα.

And it (the spindle) turned around the knees of
Necessity, and above each of the circles walks a being
carried along with it, letting out a single tone, one
pitch; and from all eight of them a single scale
sounded off in harmony. And another three having
been sitting equidistant in a circle, each on a throne,
the daughters of Necessity, the Moirai, clad in white,
having wreaths on their heads, Lachesis and Clotho
and Atropos, they sang in accordance with the Sirens'
harmony, Lachesis on what had been, Clotho on what
is, and Atropos on what will be.

Here the Fates, bearing the same names found in Hesiod, are the daughters of Necessity, rather than Nyx. Thus the Moirai are seen to belong to the realm of the daimonic, a mutable, organic complex of figures and ideas concerned with fate, doom, and death.

Turning to the figures of death, we find most prominently Thanatos, the winged herald, beautiful and cold. In Homer, death is personified as Thanatos only twice, first in a brief mention at *Iliad* 14.231 (...ἐνθ' Ὑπνῷ ξύμβλητο κασιγνήτῳ Θανάτῳ... “where she (Hera) met Hypnos the brother of Thanatos...”), and again in the scene of Sarpedon's death (*Iliad* 16.453-455, 671-675):

αὐτὰρ ἐπὶν δὴ τόν γε λίπη ψυχὴ τε καὶ αἰών,
πέμπειν μιν θανάτῳ τε φέρειν καὶ νήδυμον ὕπνον
εἰς ὃ κε δὴ Λυκίης εὐρείης δῆμον ἴκωνται...

...πέμπε δέ μιν πομποῖσιν ἅμα κραιπνοῖσι φέρεσθαι
ὑπνῷ καὶ θανάτῳ διδυμάοσιν, οἳ ρά μιν ὄκα
θήσουσ' ἐν Λυκίης εὐρείης πίονι δήμῳ,
ἐνθά ἐ ταρχύσουσι κασίγνητοῖ τε ἔται τε

τύμβῳ τε στήλῃ τε: τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστὶ θανόντων.

But in fact when both his soul and his life have left him, send both Thanatos and delightful Hypnos to carry him until such a time that they in fact come to the land of broad Lycia.

...and send swift heralds for him—the twins Hypnos and Thanatos to convey him, that they will quickly set him in the bountiful land of broad Lycia, where his brothers and clansmen shall bury him with a tomb and a stele; for this is the gift for the dead.

Here Hera advises the distraught Zeus how he might honour his son Sarpedon, fated to die at the hands of Patroclus. Zeus then bids Apollo anoint his dead son and hand over his soul to Thanatos and Hypnos for quick conveyance, which Apollo does shortly thereafter (681-683). Thanatos, working here alongside his brother Hypnos,¹⁴⁵ seems to act purely in his function as *psychopompos*. After all, Sarpedon is already dead when he and his brother appear (hence “αὐτὰρ ἐπὶν δὴ τὸν γε λίπη ψυχὴ τε καὶ αἰὼν”), and their sole purpose is thus to transport the body.¹⁴⁶

Hesiod provides scant details about the god, who is is hateful and appears far more menacing than his Homeric counterpart. Thanatos lives with his brother Hypnos in the bowels of the earth, Tartarus (*Theogony* 758-766):

ἔνθα δὲ Νυκτὸς παῖδες ἐρεμνῆς οἰκί' ἔχουσιν,
Ἕπνος καὶ Θάνατος, δεινοὶ θεοί: οὐδέ ποτ' αὐτοῦς

¹⁴⁵ This is indicative of the fact that the two are essentially the same, albeit with a difference in permanence. This is noted in the *Odyssey*, for example, at 13.79-80: καὶ τῷ νήδυμος ὕπνος ἐπὶ βλεφάροισιν ἐπιπτε./ νήγρετος, ἥδιστος, θανάτῳ ἄγχιστα ἐοικώς – “and sweet sleep fell upon his eyes, a sound, pleasant sleep, most nearly like death.” Also, iconographically there are essentially no differences between the two. *cf.* Garland (2001), 59; Hartwig (1891), 345; Hussey (1991), 518; Lethaby (1913), 91; Vermeule (1979), 148.

¹⁴⁶ Hussey (1991), 518; Vermeule (1979), 37, 145; Vernant (1986), 54. Vermeule is correct in noting that Thanatos and Hypnos here are in fact saving Sarpedon, rescuing him from the field of battle. In this, he is a kind of savior. I surmise that this is likely the reason for Hera’s recommendation to send Thanatos and Hypnos in order to honour Zeus’ son.

Ἡέλιος φαέθων ἐπιδέρκεται ἀκτίνεσσιν
οὐρανὸν εἰς ἀνιῶν οὐδ' οὐρανόθεν καταβαίνων.
τῶν δ' ἕτερος γαῖάν τε καὶ εὐρέα νῶτα θαλάσσης
ἤσυχος ἀνστρέφεται καὶ μείλιχος ἀνθρώποισι,
τοῦ δὲ σιδηρῆ μὲν κραδίη, χάλκεον δέ οἱ ἦτορ
νηλεὲς ἐν στήθεσσιν: ἔχει δ' ὄν πρῶτα λάβησιν
ἀνθρώπων: ἐχθρὸς δὲ καὶ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν.

And there the offspring of black Nyx have a home,
Hypnos and Thanatos, dread gods (*theoi*); shining
Helios never beholds them with his beams while
rising up and setting down from the sky. And the
former of them going about the earth and the broad
back of the sea is gentle and kind to men, and the
other has an iron mind, and whose heart is pitiless
bronze; and whichever man he holds from the first
he takes; and he is hated even by the gods.

Here Thanatos seems a great evil in comparison to the neutral or even positive figure he is in Homer.¹⁴⁷ In comparison to his calm and peaceful brother, Hypnos, Thanatos is hard and inescapable.¹⁴⁸

The winged personification of death is also found in tragedy, most prominently in Euripides' *Alcestis* where Thanatos is one of the *dramatis personae*, the claimant on Alcestis' soul.¹⁴⁹ Here Thanatos, despite being at times frightening, is truly an oafish character, a dramatic device, argues Garland, as Thanatos must be outdone by the notoriously boorish and comic Heracles.¹⁵⁰ Despite this characterization, there is no

¹⁴⁷ Garland (2001), 56; Vermeule (1979), 37, 145. As Segal notes, though Thanatos is certainly grimmer in Hesiod than in Homer, he is still not a terrifying being, as will be seen with the *keres*. cf. Segal (1993), 214-215.

Thanatos is referred to here as a *theos*, as opposed to a *daimon*. However these distinctions, especially in Homer and Hesiod, as we have seen, are quite blurry. The Erinyes, as will be explored, are often called both *theai* and *daimonai*.

¹⁴⁸ cf. Vernant (1986), 54-55. Thanatos is also referred to as μέλας in *Works and Days* 154-155, in Hesiod's description of the overthrow of the third generation.

¹⁴⁹ Other examples include brief mentions in *Ajax* (854), *Philoctetes* (797-798), *Oedipus Tyrannus* (942), and *Hippolytus* (250, 1373), among others. cf. Garland (2001), 58-59.

¹⁵⁰ Garland (2001), 58. cf. Segal (1993), 214-215.

reason to view the portrayal as a fundamental departure from common and traditional notions; it represents merely a stylization for particular dramatic effect.¹⁵¹

Euripides' *Alcestis* provides a glimpse into the process of dying, albeit a confusing one. What happens when Thanatos enters the house at the start of the play to consecrate Alcestis with the lock of hair (72-76)? Why does he return again, seemingly after Alcestis has died, only to be ambushed by Herakles (843-850, 1142)? Is Thanatos here both the bringer of death and the leader of souls? Euripides provides no clear answer.¹⁵² Perhaps the “winged Hades” Alcestis fears that has come to take her (259-263) is in fact Thanatos, present here in the process of dying:

ἄγει μ' ἄγει τις: ἄγει μέ τις (οὐχ
ὀρᾶς;) νεκύων ἐς αὐλάν,
ὑπ' ὀφρύσι κυαναυγέσι
βλέπων **πτερωτός Ἄιδας**.
τί ῥέξεις; ἄφες. οἷαν ὁδὸν ἄ
δειλαιοτάτα προβαίνω.

Someone is fetching, fetching
me; someone fetches me (do you
not see [him]?) to the hall of the
dead, [it is] **winged Hades**
looking up from beneath his
dark-glimmering brow. What are
you doing? Release [me]. Such is

¹⁵¹ Garland (2001), 58; Segal (1993), 213.

¹⁵² Nor, as it appears, does Euripides offer a consistent view of Hades: Admetus on the one hand assures his wife that they will resume their relationship in the hereafter (363-64), while on the other hand Alcestis envisages death as a reduction to nothingness (270, 381).

Aristophanes' *Frogs* enters further into the realm of Hades, with Dionysus and his slave entering the dread realm in search of Euripides. Hades appears starkly different from the epic vision, as here the shades are fuller figures, maintaining the character and attributes of their former lives. Comedy, of course, is wont to travesty myth for comic effect. That is not to say, however, that this is all a comic treatment amounts to. With its allusions to the Eleusinian Mysteries, Orphism, and notions of spirits and revenants such as the monstrous Empousa (285ff.), to mention nothing of the fact that the play had to be digestible and comprehensible to the audience, the *Frogs* may be seen to be exploring various current conceptions of the afterlife. cf. Brown (1991), 42-43, 46, 50; Edmonds (2004), 111-113, 117, 120-121, 156.

the journey which I, most
wretched, make.

The play, however, provides no more specific indication, and we still have no explanation for Thanatos' return later.¹⁵³ Perhaps all we can say is that the play is not concerned to provide a systematic eschatology, in the face of what is, after all, such an enigmatic component of life.¹⁵⁴

The connection to the daimonic, however, is clear. Admetus, beginning to recognize the gravity of his loss, laments at line 384, ὦ δαῖμον, οἴας συζύγου μ' ἀποστερεῖς – “O *daimon*, what kind of wife you take from me.” Kovacs (1994), in his commentary, rightly notes that “δαίμων here could be either the 'guardian spirit' of a man, identified as the force that assigns him his lot, or 'god, divinity,' with possible reference to Hades.”¹⁵⁵ Given the action of the play, the latter answer seems the most fitting: the *daimon* here is certainly an agent of death. What Kovacs misses is the possibility that this is a reference to Thanatos himself. Admetus at lines 870-871 laments: τοῖον ὄμηρόν μ' ἀποσλήσας/ Ἄϊδη Θάνατος παρέδωκεν – “such is the captive that Thanatos, having stripped me of her, consigns to Hades.” Here Admetus identifies Thanatos as the divine power at work, and so it is plausible too that the *daimon* he has in mind earlier is also

¹⁵³ It also fails to answer why Thanatos entered, visible to the audience, only to be invisible to the characters, and subsequently somehow leave, now invisible to the audience. Allen argues that for this reason, as well as Alcestis' mention of Charon just prior (252-256), these are certainly the hallucinations of a mind in the throes of death. *cf.* Allen (1898), 37-39.

¹⁵⁴ Garland posits that this kind of confusion around the afterlife and exactly how things occur and who does what is evidence of “diffidence or – more probably – indifference” regarding the details of the hereafter. *cf.* Garland (2001), 56. Though Garland may in fact be correct, there certainly had to have been common motifs or themes, some vague eschatological framework, which poets depended upon in shaping their works.

¹⁵⁵ Kovacs (1994) *ad loc.*

Thanatos. We as the audience are also cognizant of Thanatos' role, and this surely colours our interpretation of Admetus' words.

The identification of Thanatos as a daimonic figure is explicit at line 1140, when Herakles explains to Admetus how he retrieved his dearly departed wife: μάχην συνάψας δαιμόνων τῷ κυρίῳ - “I joined in battle with the lord of the *daimones*.” Herakles surely means Thanatos here. De Ruiter cites a scholium (ed. Dindorf) *ad loc.* that reads: μάχην συνάψας: ἢ τῷ τῶν νεκρῶν κοιράνω· φασὶ γὰρ καὶ τοὺς νεκροὺς δαίμονας· ἢ ἐκ τῶν [νεκρῶν] δαιμόνων τῷ ταύτης κυρίῳ - “having joined in battle: either with the ruler of the dead [i.e. Thanatos]—for he also says the *daimones* are the dead—or with her *kyrios* from the [dead] *daimones*.” Here I side with de Ruiter's judgement that in that the first option is more likely, given the context.¹⁵⁶

At the same time, death is embodied by the Keres, bloodthirsty horrors who roam the gory battlefield in search of prey.¹⁵⁷ These are perhaps, by virtue of their mysteriousness, the most interesting of the death-dealing gods. They are depicted upon the Shield of Achilles at *Iliad* 18.535-538:

ἐν δ' Ἔρις ἐν δὲ Κυδοιμὸς ὀμίλειον, ἐν δ' ὀλοὴ Κήρ,
ἄλλον ζῶν ἐχουσα νεούτατον, ἄλλον ἄουτον,
ἄλλον τεθνηῶτα κατὰ μόθον ἔλκε ποδοῖν:
εἴμα δ' ἔχ' ἄμφ' ὄμοισι δαφοινεὸν αἵματι φωτῶν.

¹⁵⁶ de Ruiter (1918), 14. De Ruiter posits Hades or Thanatos, a reasonable statement given the use of both names in the play. That said, I believe Thanatos is more likely, as I agree with Allen that Alcestis' description of a winged Hades (259-263) are actually the manic hallucinations of a dying mind. *cf.* Allen (1898), 37-39.

¹⁵⁷ The later Athenian *ker* is the equivalent of *psyche* as the soul of the departed, and would be gendered based on the sex of the dead party. *cf.* Hartwig (1891), 344. Hence the Anthisteria festival in Athens, when, on the final day of this Dionysiac celebration, the Keres, here the souls of the dead, were ushered away with the words: Θύραζε, κήρες, οὐκέτ' Ἀνθουστήρια. *cf.* Garland (2001), 6, 44; Sourvinou-Inwood (1995), 305; OCD, 67. An exploration of the *keres* in ritual, specifically during the Classical period, would prove of interest, but is beyond the scope of this paper.

And Eris and Kydoimos joined among them in battle,
and destructive Ker, grabbing one man yet living who
was just wounded, another man without a wound,
another having already died they dragged by the feet
amid the battle-din; and the garment that she had
about her shoulders was dark with the blood of men.

These vampiric divine agents are also found in the Hesiodic *Shield of Herakles* at lines
248-265:

αἰ δὲ μετ' αὐτοὺς
Κῆρες κυάνεαι, λευκοὺς ἀραβεῦσαι ὀδόντας,
δεινωπαὶ βλοσυραὶ τε δαφοναὶ τ' ἄπληταὶ τε
δῆριν ἔχον περὶ πιπτόντων: πᾶσαι δ' ἄρ' ἴεντο
αἷμα μέλαν πιέειν: ὄν δὲ πρῶτον μεμάποιεν
κείμενον ἢ πίπτοντα νεούτατον, ἀμφὶ μὲν αὐτῷ
βάλλ' ὄνυχας μεγάλους, ψυχὴ δ' Ἄιδόσδε κατῆεν
Τάρταρον ἐς κρυόενθ'. αἰ δὲ φρένας εὖτ' ἀρέσαντο
αἵματος ἀνδρομέου, τὸν μὲν ρίπτασκον ὀπίσσω,
ἅψ δ' ὄμαδον καὶ μῶλον ἐθύνεον αὐτίς ἰοῦσαι.
Κλωθὴ καὶ Λάχεσις σφιν ἐφέστασαν: ἡ μὲν ὑφήσσω
Ἄτροπος οὐ τι πέλεν μεγάλη θεός, ἀλλ' ἄρα ἦ γε
τῶν γε μὲν ἀλλάων προφερέης τ' ἦν πρεσβυτάτη τε.
πᾶσαι δ' ἀμφ' ἐνὶ φωτὶ μάχην δριμεῖαν ἔθεντο.
δεινὰ δ' ἐς ἀλλήλας δράκον ὄμμασι θυμήνασαι,
ἐν δ' ὄνυχας χεῖράς τε θρασείας ἰσώσαντο.

And behind them the dark Keres, grinding their white
teeth, fierce-eyed and bristling and stinking of blood
and unapproachable, were in contest over those that
were falling; and all of them desired to drink the dark
blood; and from the first the man whom lying
outstretched or fallen freshly wounded they overtook,
[a *ker*] puts its claws all around him, and his soul goes
down toward Hades into frightening Tartarus. And
when they sated their appetites with the blood of man,
they threw him aside, and going back they darted
along the din and struggle. Clotho and Lachesis stood
among them; Atropos was of lesser stature being in no
way a massive god, but she was placed before the
others and was the eldest of them. And all of them
were fighting bitterly over one man. And having been

angry they looked at each other terribly, and they used
their claws and insolent hands in like manner.

Thus the personified Keres in epic rove the battlefield in search of prey, and are sometimes even depicted as gorgons in a manner that recalls the pairing of these female monsters with the Erinyes in the *Oresteia*.¹⁵⁸ In this passage Hesiod again seems to associate the Keres with the Moirai, as he describes the three sisters standing above the Keres, seemingly acting in unison with them on the battlefield.

The Keres, as bringers of death, are also associated with plagues and sickness, as seen in Hesiod's *Works and Days* at lines 90-92. Here the narrator explains that, prior to Pandora releasing all misfortune on humankind, the world was free of plague:

Πρὶν μὲν γὰρ ζώεσκον ἐπὶ χθονὶ φῦλ' ἀνθρώπων
νόσφιν ἄτερ τε κακῶν καὶ ἄτερ χαλεποῦ πόνοιο
νούσων τ' ἀργαλέων, αἳ τ' ἀνδράσι Κῆρας ἔδωκαν.

For before the generation of men lived on the land
apart from both evils and harsh work and painful
diseases, which give Keres to men.

These ills “gave to men their Keres,” in that they gave them their painful, horrifying deaths, as personified through these terrible agents of death.

Hartwig and Vermeule call *ker*, or *keres thanatoio*, the “executive power” and “agent” of death: that is, *ker* is the bringer death (most often in the context of battle).¹⁵⁹

As Hartwig and Garland rightly note, the *keres* are often figured as some person's, representing one's death-lot in the same way a *daimon* represents one's lot in life.¹⁶⁰ In

¹⁵⁸ Hartwig (1891), 344; Vermeule (1979), 40.

¹⁵⁹ Hartwig (1891), 344; Vermeule (1979), 41.

¹⁶⁰ Garland (2001), 19, 128; Hartwig (1891), 344. A scholium on *Iliad* 5.22 (οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδέ κεν αὐτὸς ὑπέκφυγε κῆρα μέλαιναν...) provides further support for this interpretation. Here the scholiast writes: (συνέστησε Διομήδεα καὶ) μὴ φονεύσαντι δίδωσι τὴν ψῆφον τῆς σφαγῆς. Thus, according to the scholiast,

Patroclus' recounting of his own death to Achilles, for example, he explains (23.78-79):
ἀλλ' ἐμὲ μὲν κῆρ/ ἀμφέχανε στυγερή, ἣ περ λάχε γιγνόμενόν περ – “but hateful *ker* gaped around me, which very one had obtained me by lot when I was born.” Here *ker* is not simply the agent of death, a fiendish spirit; it is death itself, understood as one's doom, fated from the day of one's birth.¹⁶¹

This conception of *ker* is found throughout Homer, above all in the scenes of *kerostasia*, later known as *psychostasia*: the weighing of *keres* to determine the fates of men.¹⁶² This is found twice in the *Iliad*: first with the weighing of the *keres* of the Trojans and the Greeks (8.68-74):

ἦμος δ' Ἥλιος μέσον οὐρανὸν ἀμφιβεβήκει,
καὶ τότε δὴ χρύσεια πατὴρ ἐτίταινε τάλαντα:
ἐν δ' ἐτίθει δύο κῆρε τανηλεγέος θανάτοιο
Τρώων θ' ἵπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων,
ἔλκε δὲ μέσσα λαβῶν: ῥέπε δ' αἴσιμον ἦμαρ Ἀχαιῶν.
αἱ μὲν Ἀχαιῶν κῆρες ἐπὶ χθονὶ πουλυβοτείρῃ
ἐξέσθην, Τρώων δὲ πρὸς οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἄερθεν...

And when Helios had climbed to the middle of the sky, then in fact the father (Zeus) held out his golden scales; and in them he set two *keres* of woe-bringing death [one] for the horse-breaking Trojans and [the other] for the bronze-armed Achaeans, and taking it at the centre he raised it; and the fated day of the Achaeans sank. And the *keres* of the Achaeans went down to the all-nourishing earth, and those of the Trojans cleared away into the heavens...

Later, Zeus again weighs out *keres* of Achilles and Hector (*Iliad* 22.208-213):

this “black *ker*” that Idaeus fails to escape is in fact his “death-lot” (and the same association between *ker* and one's lot, or ψῆφος, is found in the scholium on *Iliad* 10.210, albeit without the descriptor σφαγῆς). Though he is outside of the chronological scope of this paper, Herodianus, in his *Gramm. Gr.* III 1, 398, 5, explains that κῆρ τὸ θηλθκόν, “the female *ker*,” is the equivalent of ἡ θανατηφόρος μοῖρα, “the death-dealing lot.” *cf.* Schenkeveld (1988), 112-113.

¹⁶¹ *cf.* Vermeule (1979), 40-41.

¹⁶² Garland (2001), 97; Morrison (1997), 274; Vermeule (1979), 39, 160.

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ τὸ τέταρτον ἐπὶ κρουνοὺς ἀφίκοντο,
καὶ τότε δὴ χρύσεια πατὴρ ἐτίταινε τάλαντα,
ἐν δ' ἐτίθει δύο κῆρε τανηλεγέος θανάτοιο,
τὴν μὲν Ἀχιλλῆος, τὴν δ' Ἴκτορος ἵπποδάμοιο,
ἔλκε δὲ μέσσα λαβών: ῥέπε δ' Ἴκτορος αἴσιμον ἦμαρ,
ᾧχετο δ' εἰς Αἴδαο, λίπεν δὲ ἐ Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων.

But when in fact they had come upon the springs for the fourth time, then in fact the father (Zeus) held out his golden scales, and in them he set two *keres* of woe-bringing death, the one for Achilles, and the other for horse-breaking Hector, and taking it at the centre he raised it; and the fated day of Hector sank, and went to Hades, and Phoebus Apollo left him behind.

In both examples the *keres*, each assigned to their respective person/groups, are in apposition to αἴσιμον ἦμαρ, the “fated day.” The *keres* in these passages are each person’s doom, his death-*daimon*, here weighed out by Zeus to determine and ratify whose day of doom it is.¹⁶³

Turning to tragedy, one finds *ker* functioning in the same ways as in epic. *Ker* is found as a rapacious beast, as for example in Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes*, where at lines 776-777 the Sphinx that had plagued Thebes is referred to as τὰν ἀρπαξάνδραν/ κῆρ’, “a man-snatching *ker*,” recalling the Keres that roam the battlefields of Troy in Homer, looking for prey.¹⁶⁴ But as in Homer, so too in tragedy *ker*, rather than referring to a death-dealing spirit, may refer to death itself, to one’s doom. In Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* at line 206-208 the Chorus recounts the thought process of their returning king when faced with the divine demand to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia: βαρεῖα μὲν κῆρ τὸ μὴ πιθέσθαι,/ βαρεῖα δ’, εἰ τέκνον δαΐ/ξω... “to disobey is a heavy *ker*, but it is

¹⁶³ Morrison (1997), 278; Vermeule (1979), 39. The *kerostasia/psychostasia* is also present in art. For more on the iconography, see Vermeule (1979), 160-162.

¹⁶⁴ On the association of the Keres with other feminine winged beasts, see above, note 102.

[also] heavy, if I should kill my child...” Here *ker* is best construed simply as “doom.” Similar examples are found in Sophocles’ *Trachiniae*: first at lines 132-135, where the Chorus explains: νύξ βροτοῖσιν οὔτε κῆρες/ οὔτε πλοῦτος, ἀλλ’ ἄφαρ/ βέβακε, τῷ δ’ ἐπέρχεται/ χαίρειν τε καὶ στέρεσθαι – “night nor *keres* nor wealth [remain for mortals], but rather straightaway they go, and to him it comes to rejoice and to suffer loss”; and again at line 453-454, where Deianeira explains that it is important to tell the truth: ὡς ἐλευθέρῳ/ ψευδεῖ καλεῖσθαι κῆρ πρόσεστιν οὐ καλή – “since for a free man to be called a fraud is to be possessed of an ugly calamity (*ker*).” In both cases *ker* essentially amounts to *moira*, or more specifically *moros*, in much the same way as *daimon* so often is used simply as “fate.”

In Euripides’ *Phoenissae* at lines 949-951 Teiresias explains to Creon that he must sacrifice his son to appease Ares, who in turn will accomplish the following:

πικρὸν δ’ Ἀδράστῳ νόστον Ἀργείοσιν τε
θήσει, μέλαιναν κῆρ’ ἐπ’ ὄμμασιν βαλὼν,
κλεινάς τε Θήβας.

And he will set the return home as sharp
for Adrastus and the Argives, hurling at
their eyes a black *ker*, and [he will make]
Thebes renowned.

Ares is setting upon the Argives their collective doom, in much the same way that the collective *keres* of both the Achaeans and the Trojans are weighed by Zeus in *Iliad* 8.68-74. In the *Trojan Women*, Andromache rages against Helen (766-771):

ὦ Τυνδάρειον ἔρνος, οὔ ποτ’ εἶ Διός,
πολλῶν δὲ πατέρων φημί σ’ ἐκπεφυκέναι,
Ἄλαστορος μὲν πρῶτον, εἶτα δὲ Φθόνου,
Φόνου τε Θανάτου θ’ ὅσα τε γῆ τρέφει κακά.
οὐ γάρ ποτ’ ἀρχῶν Ζῆνά γ’ ἐκφῦσαι σ’ ἐγώ,

πολλοῖσι κῆρα βαρβάροις Ἑλλησί τε.

O offspring of Tyndareus, you were never daughter of Zeus, but I say you were born from many fathers, first an Alastor, and next of Envy, and Murder and Death (Thanatos) and however many evils the earth nurtures. For I declare that you were never born of Zeus, you being a *ker* to many barbarians and Greeks.

Here Andromache brands Helen as the daughter of several daimonic entities, finally calling her a *ker* for many Greeks and non-Greeks alike. The implication is that Helen is a bringer of death, the embodiment of the collective doom for many Greeks and Trojans alike. This use of *ker* can also be construed as a fiendish being, a rapacious, man-slaying beast, which follows from Andromache's description of her as child of these terrible personifications.

Hesiod's association between *ker*, disease and plague is also found in tragedy, as in Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, where Philoctetes' gangrenous foot is described by Odysseus as a *ker* at lines 41-42: πῶς γὰρ ἂν νοσῶν ἀνήρ/ κῶλον παλαιᾷ κηρὶ προσβαίη μακράν; “for how can a man being sick with an old *ker* with respect to his leg travel far?” The same use of the word is found in the mouths of the Chorus (1165-1166): ἀλλὰ γνῶθ', εἴ γνῶθ' ἐπὶ σοὶ/ κῆρα τάνδ' ἀποφεύγειν – “but know, and know well, that it is possible for you to be free of this *ker*.” This particular association represents simply an extension, or specialization, of *ker*'s function as grim death-dealer.

While the focus of this paper is literature, it is useful to briefly touch upon physical evidence. In art winged Thanatos, though his attributes may change from

bearded to clean-shaven, armoured to nude, is almost always a figure of erotic beauty.¹⁶⁵ Generalized *daimones* are often similarly depicted, albeit sometimes as tiny winged men, and other times are harpy-like creatures or even birds.¹⁶⁶ The Keres are also depicted as winged, but female, and are found as both beautiful and horrifying.¹⁶⁷ As Vermeule posits, with so much over-lap between these figures and their representations, “it was perhaps inevitable that the roles of Sleep and Death should fuse with those of other daimonic powers.”¹⁶⁸

What is the difference between these death-dealing beings? Hesiod, for example, speaks of Moros, Ker, and Thanatos, as distinct beings (*Theogony* 211-212), but the terms of distinction are unclear. It seems clear from our survey that these three personifications (Moros, Thanatos, and Ker) represent various aspects of the death-experience, an idea for which Hussey has argued in the case of Thanatos and Moros, drawing on Martin West’s commentary on the *Theogony*.¹⁶⁹ On the basis of the Sarpedon scene in the *Iliad*, in which Sarpedon’s spirit has already left his body (as seen above at lines 16.453-455, as well as at line 16.505 when Patroclus actually kills him: τοῖο δ’ ἄμα ψυχὴν τε καὶ ἔγχεος ἐξέρυσ’ αἰχμὴν – “and he drew out both his soul and the spear at the same time”), Hussey argues that in Homer Thanatos represents the state of death, rather than the act of dying.¹⁷⁰ As Vernant puts it, *thanatos* is “a state other than life,” personified as a figure that receives

¹⁶⁵ Hartwig (1891), 342; Lethaby (1918), 91; Vermeule (1979), 148, 150.

¹⁶⁶ Hartwig (1891), 343.

¹⁶⁷ Vermeule (1979), 40.

¹⁶⁸ Vermeule (1979), 151.

¹⁶⁹ Hussey (1991), 522; West (1966), *ad* 211.

¹⁷⁰ Hussey (1991), 522.

and welcomes the newly deceased to the afterlife.¹⁷¹ This perhaps explains Thanatos' function in the *Alcestis*, where he is (potentially) not involved with the process of dying itself, though this is unclear. *Moros* then for Hussey is one's lot of death or doom.¹⁷² Hussey provides no explanation for the figure of *ker*, however.

Vermeule, looking at iconography and specifically examining the Homeric epics, argues that *ker* is the terrible agent of death, vividly described by Homer, the embodiment of the scavengers of the carrion-filled plains of war – birds, dogs, and even sphinxes and harpies.¹⁷³ This is perhaps best exemplified by Hector's words at *Iliad* 8.526-528:

ἔλπομαι εὐχόμενος Δί τ' ἄλλοισίν τε θεοῖσιν
ἐξελάαν ἐνθένδε κύνας κηρεσσιφορήτους,
οὓς κῆρες φορέουσι μελαινάων ἐπὶ νηῶν.

I hope praying to Zeus and the other gods that they
expel from here the dogs urged on by the *keres*,
whom the *keres* convey in their black ships.

Vermeule takes these dogs as an added indignity to the defeated fighter, the final “humiliation of the body,” as she puts it, emblematic of the Greek fear of one's body being left for carrion, without proper rites.¹⁷⁴ This interpretation of the *keres* as ministers of death is perhaps bolstered by the repeated qualification of *ker* with the genitive *thanatou*, acting as a common noun.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Vernant (1986), 54.

¹⁷² Hussey (1991), 522.

¹⁷³ Vermeule (1979), 39-41.

¹⁷⁴ Vermeule (1979), 103, 220. The boat imagery, however, may suggest that this is a metaphor for the Achaeans themselves, the *Keres* here being analogous to the kings of the Achaean host

¹⁷⁵ Vermeule (1979), 39-41. For a list of examples, see page 220. I would note here that Vermeule posits an interesting view of Thanatos, whom she views as not fully developed in Homer. Rather, Thanatos, far more commonly found as a common noun, is an elemental idea as opposed to an actual agent of death. *cf.* Vermeule (1979), 37, 39, 41. While I believe Vermeule is correct in her assessment of the *keres* (though she ignores the use of *ker* as a personal doom, as found in the *kerostasia*), and while I agree that the personification of death as Thanatos is only roughly developed, it is nevertheless present (and, as Hussey

Vernant provides the most complete explanation of how these personifications of death might be differentiated, postulating that Thanatos is a beautiful death: the way death is digested by society in a palatable manner, to strip it of its power.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand Ker figures as terrible death. Here Vernant takes Vermeule's analysis a step further, arguing that Ker is the personification of death in its purest form, without funeral or recognition; it is the direct confrontation with the horror of death, "the gaping aperture of the other side that no gaze can penetrate and no discourse can express."¹⁷⁷ This Thanatos vs. Ker paradigm, Vernant argues, conforms to the dichotomy between female monsters (such as the sphinx, harpies, and sirens) and male beauty prevalent in Greek culture.¹⁷⁸ Perhaps this is why Hera, in instructing Zeus to honour his son Sarpedon in a manner that did not involve rescuing him from his fate, recommends sending Thanatos and Hermes to convey him.

points out, Vermeule's argument also disregards Thanatos in Hesiod. *cf.* Hussey (1991), 528). I believe Vernant (1986), explored below, provides the superior interpretation.

¹⁷⁶ Vernant (1986), 54-55.

¹⁷⁷ Vernant (1986), 55.

¹⁷⁸ Vernant (1986), 54-55. This male/female dichotomy is seen clearly in the *Oresteia*, explored above in chapter 2. See above, note 102.

As Vernant notes, however, Thanatos, while clearly more positive than Ker, is still not a beneficent force, and the dichotomy itself ignores many nuances within the conceptual framework. *cf.* Vernant (1986), 54-55. This is apparent from Thanatos' description in the *Theogony* and his portrayal in the *Alcestis*, as well as some iconographic examples.

On Alcestis' death being unique in Greek literature for the depiction of a normal, seemingly natural death, see Segal (1993), 214-216. Garland also notes this instance as atypical. *cf.* Garland (2001), 15-16.

Garland notes a lekythos from the Reed Workshop, ARV 1384 no. 17, upon which Thanatos is depicted chasing a woman who recoils in fright, with Hermes watching the action from the side. Coincidentally, Garland notes the similarity of this scene to Homer's description of the Keres at *Iliad* 18.853ff. *cf.* Garland (2001), 59, 155. The same scene is found on ARV 1384 no. 19. In both scenes Thanatos is depicted without his brother Hypnos, as well as appearing menacing, though both are uncommon in depictions of Thanatos. *cf.* Kurtz (1975), 63-64, 223. Here we should heed Garland's warning: "the literary allusions to death and the afterlife are, with the exception of Homer, piecemeal at best," so variances are to be expected. *cf.* Garland (2001), ix-x.

I turn now to the Erinyes/Eumenides, who are deeply entangled within this conceptual framework as bearers of misfortune and wretched lots. As Verrall notes in his commentary on the *Eumenides*, the term *erinyes* seems originally to have been as unspecific and obscure as *daimon*.¹⁷⁹ Dodds asserts that the Erinyes in Homer act as divine agents that safeguard and enforce a person's *moira*, in that *moira* constitutes one's social position.¹⁸⁰ This is seen, for instance, in the *Odyssey* at lines 2.135-136, where Telemachus explains to the suitors that he will never send his mother out of her house, in part for the following reason:

...ἐπεὶ μήτηρ στυγερὰς ἀρήσεται ἔρινυς
οἴκου ἀπερχομένη...

...since my mother while departing from the
house will pray for the abominable *erinyes*...

Here Telemachus expresses fear of the *erinyes* that would be sent against him in retaliation for dishonouring his mother in such a way.¹⁸¹ An example of an Erinys in action is found at *Iliad* 9.571-572. Just prior to this the mother of Meleager is described as having cursed her son, praying for his demise:

τῆς δ' ἠεροφοῖτις Ἐρινὺς
ἔκλυεν ἐξ Ἐρέβησφιν ἀμείλιχον ἦτορ ἔχουσα.

¹⁷⁹ Verrall (1908), 144. In fact, the term *erinyes* dates back to what is potentially the oldest known dialect of ancient Greek, the Arcado-Cypriot dialect. *cf.* Dodds (1962), 8.

¹⁸⁰ Dodds (1962), 7-8, 301. An example of interest that Dodds supplies in support of his generalizing claim, Heraclitus fragment 94, is worth noting here: "Ἥλιος γὰρ οὐχ ὑπερβήσεται [τὰ] μέτρα· εἰ δὲ μή, Ἐρινύες μιν Δίκης ἐπικούροι ἐξευρήσουσιν – "For the sun will not go beyond its course; but if it should not [follow this], the Erinyes the maidens of Dike will search after it." In this way the Erinyes keep in check the *moira* of the sun itself, acting, at least in this instance, as morally neutral arbiters of justice. I am not convinced, however, by Dodds' assertion that in Homer these are not vengeful agents. While indeed they are often called upon to enforce morally neutral "claims to status which arise from family or social relationships," which are intrinsically tied to one's *moira* in the sense that *moira* is one's social status (for example *Iliad* 19.86-87, explored below), there are also examples of vengeful, punishing deities (for example *Iliad* 9.571-572, explored above), and so Dodds is hasty to generalize.

¹⁸¹ Dodds (1962), 301.

And the Erinys that walks in the darkness having an implacable heart heard [her prayers] from Erebus.

The gods likewise call upon *erinyes* to safeguard their *moira*, as Hera does at *Iliad*

21.412-414:

οὕτω κεν τῆς μητρὸς ἐρινύας ἐξαποτίνοις,
ἢ τοι χωμένη κακὰ μήδεται οὔνεκ' Ἀχαιοὺς
κάλλιπες, αὐτὰρ Τρωσὶν ὑπερφιάλοισιν ἀμύνεις.

In this way might you satisfy completely the *erinyes* of our mother, who being angry contrives evils against you since you left behind the Achaeans, but nevertheless you help the arrogant Trojans.

Here Athena informs her half-brother Ares of the coming of his mother Hera's *erinyes*, that she has sent against him for deserting the Achaeans whom she favours. In all three of these instances the *erinyes* constitute “maternal anger projected as a personal being.”¹⁸²

The Erinyes also take on a possessive function in that they can affect the character and action of men, much like the *daimones* of category 5. This is found in the *Iliad* at lines 19.86-87 - ἐγὼ δ' οὐκ αἰτιός εἰμι,/ ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς καὶ Μοῖρα καὶ ἠεροφοῖτις Ἐρινύς... (“but I am not at fault, but Zeus and Fate and the Erinyes that walks in the darkness...”).¹⁸³ Agamemnon explains that he was mistaken, blinded by *Ate*, here the “eldest daughter of Zeus who blinds all” (19.91: πρέσβα Διὸς θυγάτηρ Ἄτη, ἣ πάντας ἀάται...). This relation between *ate* and the Erinyes is found again in the *Odyssey* 15.232-234, where Melampus is described as follows:

...κρατέρ' ἄλγεα πάσχων

¹⁸² Dodds (1962), 301.

¹⁸³ Dodds also notes that there is an older reading of this line, where the Erinyes are referred to as those “who suck blood.” cf. Dodds (1962), 6. This is yet another example of the connection between the Erinyes and the Keres.

εἵνεκα Νηληϊὸς κούρης ἄτης τε βαρείης,
τήν οἱ ἐπὶ φρεσὶ θῆκε θεὰ δασπλήτις Ἐρινύς.

...suffering great pains on account of the daughter of Neleus and heavy *ate*, which the frightful goddess Erinyes set in his heart.

The Erinyes appear at least twice in Hesiod, once at *Theogony* 185,¹⁸⁴ describing them as the children of Gaea and the blood of Uranus, and again in *Works and Days* 803-804,¹⁸⁵ where they are described as assisting in the birth of Horkus. The latter relates to the Erinyes' function as guarantors of oaths.¹⁸⁶ The term *erinyes* is also found in the *Theogony* at lines 472-473. Here the narrator explains that Rhea sought the help of Gaea and Uranus in order to save her children and, finally, to overthrow her husband Cronos:

...τίσαιτο δ' ἔρινυς πατρὸς ἐοῖο
παίδων θ', οὗς κατέπινε μέγας Κρόνος ἀγκυλομήτης.

...and that the *erinyes* might take vengeance for his father and his children, whom great Cronos crooked of council ate.

Here again the *erinyes* is the embodiment of maternal wrath, much like the Homeric passages explored above, though this time it is directed against a husband for his actions

¹⁸⁴ γείνατ' Ἐρινύς τε κρατερὰς μεγάλους τε Γίγαντας... – “She (Gaea) gave birth to the powerful Erinyes and the massive Giants...”

¹⁸⁵ ἐν πέμπτῃ γάρ φασιν Ἐρινύας ἀμφοπολεύειν/ Ὀρκὸν γεινόμενον, τὸν Ἔρις τέκε πῆμ' ἐπιόρκους. “For it is said that on the fifth day the Erinyes served as attendants to the birth of Horkos, whom Eris bore as calamity to those who swear falsely.”

¹⁸⁶ Dodds puts forth the strong argument, not specifically referencing Hesiod, that the Erinyes' assignment to witness oaths is predicated upon the fact that oaths serve as a kind of artificially constructed *moira*. *cf.* Dodds (1962), 8.

This duty to punish oathbreakers is also found in Homer, for example at *Iliad* 3.276-280, and 19.259-260. *cf.* Servinou-Inwood (1995), 67, 79.

against his kin. It is surely from this idea that the identification of *erinyes* with curses, found throughout tragedy, descends.¹⁸⁷

In the tragic corpus, the Erinyes/Eumenides find prominence in plays concerning the houses of Laius and Atreus. In *Oedipus Colonus*, the Eumenides are referred to as both *theai* (ex. 458 – προστάτισι ταῖς σεμναῖσι δημούχοις θεαῖς) and *daimones* (ex. 466 – τῶνδε δαιμόνων). At lines 864-865, for example, Oedipus beseeches the Eumenides that they allow him a further curse, here against Creon: μὴ γὰρ αἶδε δαίμονες/ θεῖέν μ' ἄφρονον τῆσδε τῆς ἀρᾶς ἔτι... “no for I wish that these *daimones* would grant me this unspeakable curse still...” This connection with a curse, *are*, makes fitting his invocation of the divinities as *daimones*; the combination is found again when Oedipus sets a curse upon his sons (1389-1396):

τοιαῦτ' ἀρῶμαι καὶ καλῶ τὸ Ταρτάρου
στυγνὸν πατρῶον ἔρεβος, ὡς σ' ἀποκίση,
καλῶ δὲ τὰσδε δαίμονας, καλῶ δ' Ἄρη
τὸν σφῶν τὸ δεινὸν μῖσος ἐμβεβληκότα.
καὶ ταῦτ' ἀκούσας στεῖχε, κάξ' ἀγγελλ' ἰὼν
καὶ πᾶσι Καδμείοισι τοῖς σαντοῦ θ' ἅμα
πιστοῖσι συμμάχοισιν, οὔνεκ' Οἰδίπους
τοιαῦτ' ἔνειμε παισὶ τοῖς αὐτοῦ γέρα.

Such do I pray and I call upon our ancestral
hated darkness of Tartarus, that you be
exiled, and I call upon these *daimones*, and I
call upon Ares who cast terrible hatred into
both of you. And having heard these things,
march, and bear the message, going to all the
Cadmeans those being at the same time your
trusted allies, because Oedipus has dispensed
such gifts to his children.

¹⁸⁷ cf. Dodds (1962), 41-42. According to the LSJ, *Ara* (curse) is sometimes “personified as the goddess of destruction and revenge,” and thus conflated with the Erinyes. cf. LSJ s.v. ἀρά, A.II.

Jebb (1889) here takes πατρῶον as “your father[‘s] share,”¹⁸⁸ though I contend that it could here mean “ancestral,” implying that this “hated darkness of Tartarus” is in fact the curse that has afflicted this Theban house since Laius or even Cadmus (rather than only going back to Oedipus). The *daimones* “of this place” are the Eumenides, in whose sanctuary the play is set.

In Aeschylus’ *Seven Against Thebes* we again find the *erinyes* identified with curses. At line 70 Eteocles calls upon Zeus and other gods, Ἀρά τ’ Ἐρινὺς πατρὸς ἡ μεγασθενής – “and Are, the greatly strong Erinys of my father...” Here Oedipus’ curse is his *erinyes*. Much later the Chorus, recounting the deaths of Polyneices and Eteokles, laments as follows (891-899):

αἰᾶ δαιμόνιοι,
αἰᾶ δ’ ἀντιφόνων
θανάτων ἀραί.
διανταίαν λέγεις πλαγὰν δόμοισι καὶ
σώμασιν πεπλαγμένους, ἐννέπω
ἀναυδάτω μένει
ἀραίω τ’ ἐκ πατρὸς
οὐ διχόφροني πότμω.

Ah ah daimonic ones, ah ah curses
(*arai*) bringing death in response to
death. You say they were struck
with a stroke of calamity right
through to their house and their
body, I say by an unspeakable force
and a destiny that was not at
variance [for the two of them],
cursed from their father.

¹⁸⁸ Jebb (1889) *ad loc.*

Here these *daimones*, in apposition with “curses bringing death in response to death,” are likely the Erinyes.¹⁸⁹ Again the curse in question is Oedipus’. *Arai*, as well as *Ate*, are found personified later in the play as well, in lines 951-956:

τελευταῖαι δ' ἐπηλάλαξαν
Ἄραι τὸν ὄξυν νόμον, τετραμμένου
παντρόπῳ φυγᾷ γένους.
ἔστακε δ' Ἄτας τροπαῖον ἐν πύλαις,
ἐν αἷς ἐθείνοντο, καὶ δυοῖν κρατή-
σας ἔληξε δαίμων.

And the final *Arai* have raised their war cry in their sharp custom, with the race being turned about with tumultuous flight. And it set up a monument to *Ate* at the gates, at which they struck, and the *daimon* having overpowered them abated.

Ate here is called a *daimon*, consistent with the connection we elucidated in chapter two. In the *erinyes* that possesses a person (or a house) and brings him to his doom, *ate*, and afflicting curses, we are in the territory of the conceptual complex of the daimonic.¹⁹⁰ So in the *Agamemnon* the affliction of the House of Atreus is described as a *daimon* and, in lines 1565-1566, as an *are* and as *ate*.¹⁹¹

The Erinyes are found again in *Seven Against Thebes* in the lament of the Chorus (1060-1062):

ὦ μεγάλαυχοι καὶ φθερσιγενεῖς
Κῆρες Ἐρινύες, αἴτ' Οἰδιπόδα

¹⁸⁹ cf. Dodds (1962), 301; LSJ s.v. ἀρά, A.II. See above, note 187.

¹⁹⁰ cf. Fontenrose (1971), 90-91. In associating *ate* and *erinyes* Fontenrose cites *Agamemnon* 1433, where Clytemnestra calls upon “Ἄτην Ἐρινύν θ’” in her prayer. While I believe this is merely a list (as *Dike* is called upon in the previous line and certainly cannot be conflated), there is clearly an association here between the two figures.

¹⁹¹ τίς ἂν γονὰν ἀραῖον ἐκβάλῃ δόμων;/ κεκόλληται γένος πρὸς ἄτα - “Who can cast out this cursed generation from the palace? This generation is joined fast with ruin.” cf. Fontenrose (1971), 91.

γένος ὀλέσατε πρυμνόθεν οὕτως...

O boastful and race-destroying
Keres, you Erinyes, who have
utterly destroyed the race of
Oedipus in this way...

Here the *erinyes* as daimonic spirits of retribution that afflict Oedipus' line are identified with the death-dealing *keres*. Likewise, towards the end of Euripides' *Electra*, the Dioskuroi refer to the Erinyes as *keres* (1252-1253): δειναὶ δὲ κῆρες σ' αἰ κυνώπιδες θεαὶ/ τροχηλατήσους' ἐμμανῆ πλανώμενον – “and the frightening *keres* those dog-faced goddesses will drive you hither and thither, you wandering crazed.”¹⁹² The *erinyes* and *keres* come together in the association of misfortune, death, and doom.

Turning now to the plays concerning the house of Atreus, we find once again that the Erinyes/Eumenides are referred to as both *theai* and *daimones*. The former is found, for example, at line 115 of the *Eumenides*, where the ghost of Clytemnestra refers to them as ὧ κατὰ χθονὸς θεαί – “goddesses beneath the earth,” invoking them to her cause. Just prior, at line 101, the ghost of Clytemnestra, appearing before the sleeping Erinyes, complains that οὐδεὶς ὑπὲρ μου δαιμόνων μνηϊεται – “there is no *daimon* angry on my behalf.” Where Orestes has a god, Apollo, as his guardian, Clytemnestra invokes the daimonic *erinyes* as spirits of her vengeance, *alastores*.

The Erinyes/Eumenides are referred to as *daimones* four more times in the play. The first of these instances is at line 150, where the Chorus refer to themselves as γράϊας

¹⁹² Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, lines 469-472 (ἔνοπλος γὰρ ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἐπενθρόσκει/ πυρὶ καὶ στεροπαῖς ὁ Διὸς γενέτας,/ δειναὶ δ' ἄμ' ἔπονται/ κῆρες ἀναπλάκητοι – “for the armed son of Zeus leapt upon him with fire and lightning, and the frightful unerring *keres* came with him.”), may be another instance of this conflation, as the *keres* here seem to function as retributive daimonic agents. This is less clear, however, than the above examples.

δαίμονας – “old *daimones*.” The Erinyes/Eumenides refer to themselves as *daimones* again at line 302, where they threaten Orestes, claiming that he will become an ἀναίματον βόσκημα δαιμόνων – “bloodless victim for the *daimones*.” This instance is especially interesting, as it would seem to imply that they wish to drain Orestes of his blood, which again recalls the vampiric *keres* as well as the Thanatos of *Alcestis*.¹⁹³ The chorus of Erinyes also refer to themselves as the children of Nyx, and Curses (*Arai*), at lines 416-417: ἡμεῖς γάρ ἐσμεν Νυκτὸς αἰανῆ τέκνα./ Ἄραι δ’ ἐν οἴκοις γῆς ὑπαὶ κεκλήμεθα (“for we are the persistent daughters of Nyx. And in our subterranean homes we are referred to as the *Arai*”).

Athena refers to the Erinyes/Eumenides as *daimones* at lines 928-929, explaining that they will become μεγάλας καὶ δυσαρέστους/ δαίμονας – “great and implacable *daimones*.” The Erinyes/Eumenides connect themselves and the Moirai to *daimones* at the end of *Eumenides* at lines 956-967:

ἀνδροκμη̃τας δ’ ἄω-
ρους ἀπεννέπω τύχας,
νεανίδων τ’ ἐπηράτων
ἀνδροτυχεῖς βίότους
δότε, κύρι’ ἔχοντες,
θεαί τ’ ὦ Μοῖραι
ματροκασιγνήται,
δαίμονες ὀρθονόμοι,
παντὶ δόμῳ μετάκοινοι,
παντὶ χρόνῳ δ’ ἐπιβριθεῖς
ἐνδίκους ὀμιλίαις,
πάντα τιμώταται θεῶν.

And I speak against the
man-slaying untimely
fortunes, and you

¹⁹³ Note also *Iliad* 19.86-87 and Euripides’ *Electra* 1252-1253, examined above. See note 183.

goddesses, the Moirai,
sisters by the same mother,
having the power, give
wedded life to lovely
maidens, you *daimones*
who give proper rewards,
having a hand in every
home, whose just
association falls heavily at
all times, [you are] the most
honoured in every way of
the gods.

Here the Erinyes/Eumenides explain that they will deal proper fates to men in their new status as kindly goddesses. Their status may have changed, but still they remain *daimones* charged with realizing men's lots, kin to the Moirai: "our sisters by one mother, *daimones* who deal proper awards."

All of these beings, then, are connected, personifications belonging to the sphere of the daimonic, as inter-related figures belonging to a conceptual complex linking fortune, death, doom, and fate. The Moirai, often identified with the Keres and the Erinyes, are personifications of overarching fate. Thanatos is the epitome of the guiding *daimon* (which is perhaps why Euripides, through the mouth of Hercules, refers to him as the "lord of the *daimones*" [*Alcestis* 1140]), but in the particular aspect of *psychopompos*. The Keres, fearful embodiments of death, are death-dealing *daimones* and the death lot of each mortal. The Erinyes/Eumenides are avenging *alastores* and punishing *ares*, possessive spirits, figures of *ate*, *daimones* that afflict men and bring them to their doom.

Conclusion

Having surveyed the appearances of *daimon*, as a term and a figure, in literature from the Archaic to the Classical period, across genres, from poetry to philosophy, I have elucidated the multifarious notion of the daimonic, mapping the range of meanings inherent in the term ‘*daimon*’ and the conceptual connections between them. A *daimon* is a god, and yet it is not quite at the level of *theos*. It is “fate”, “the will of heaven”, an unspecific divine agency, and yet it may be something more personal: an individuated being, a man’s guardian spirit or ruinous demon. It is an outside force psychically guiding or misguiding one’s mind, and may be internalized in a person’s own spirit. There are also specific iterations of the *daimon*, personifications of the various aspects of the daimonic: as fate it is Moira; as guide in the hereafter it is Thanatos; as death it is Ker; as vengeance or retribution it is *alastor*, *are*, *ate*, and especially Erinys. The *daimon* arises from the confrontation with the unknowability of one’s course, the necessities and contingencies that govern a man’s fortune and lot in life and bring him to his destiny or doom.

Over time it is clear that the continuum of ideas that defines the field of the daimonic developed and expanded along a number of lines. The impersonal sense of *daimon*, as fate, destiny, and divine will, is predominant in Homer, and persists thereafter. The individuated spirit, with its implication in the lives of men on a personal level, ranging from guide to possessor (categories five and six), is found in a nascent form in Homer. It is in Hesiod that this individuated being, as a guide and guardian, is more fully explored (albeit without the psychic influence found in Homer), and the notion of

transcendence to the level of *daimon* is first introduced (category four). The lyric poets focused their song on category five, emphasizing the effects of *daimones*, good and evil, on one's path in life. The pre-Socratics expanded upon these ideas of guardianship and guidance in life, as well as on the Hesiodic notion of transcendence upon death, most notably with Empedocles' concept of what I term the "noble good," individuals who are considered *daimones* while still living. Heraclitus speaks of the daimonic as a divine force, and possibly potential, in some sense inherent in man (so tending from category five to six). The tragedians dramatized the first five categories but focused, naturally for the genre, on the negative aspects of the daimonic, with specific emphasis on the *daimon* as a bringer of ills: the *daimon* as the *are* of a spurned mother or father; a house-destroying *ate*; the *alastor* of a vengeful wife; the *dikephoros* of avenging children; and, of course, as an *erinyes*, guardian of *moira*, agent of retribution. Lastly, Plato took the *daimon* as guardian and psychic force, categories four and five, and, in the context of a philosophical metaphysics, most completely internalized it, as the divine potential of man, guide of souls, ratifier of one's new life, the new life itself, and finally, the divine within man—category six.

The personifications of these abstract concepts—fate, death, and retribution—are integral parts of this daimonic framework. The Moirai represent the basic function of the daimonic: assigning man his lot. Thanatos is the ultimate guide, the conveyer of souls, and in this function he surely stands as the "lord of the *daimones*" (*Alcestis* 1140). The *Ker/keres* are simultaneously the fiendish bringers of death and the death-lot itself, in much the same way that the *daimon* can be both fate and the ratifier of said fate. And the

Erinyes, sisters of the *keres* by the same mother (Aesch. *Eumenides* 962), are equally terrible in all of their forms, as *are*, *ate*, and *alastor*. They serve these functions as guardians of *moira*, punishing transgressors against the divinely appointed order,¹⁹⁴ while *ker* guides one to his/her *moros*, leading them to their necessary doom.

This complex of ideas, elaborated over time, served to bring order to the world, a paradoxical attempt to simplify the incomprehensible by means of ever-complicating taxonomies. The figure of the *daimon*, in all of its facets, served to give form to the formless, in much the same way that Christians today utilize the notion of angels and demons to conceptualize abstractions like good and evil, healing and sickness, life and death.¹⁹⁵ These many daimonic categorizations, the assigning of phenomena to the purview of specific beings, gave life a discernable, comprehensible meaning.

¹⁹⁴ *cf.* Dodds (1962), 7-8, 301. See note 180.

¹⁹⁵ And, unsurprisingly, it was from the negative uses of the *daimon* – the *daimon* as bringer of evils, of avenging spirit, of crushing curse – that the Christian concept of demons emerges. *cf.* de Ruiter (1918), 19, 21.

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