What is a Daimon?

What does it have to do with astrology?

Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum
What is a Daimon?
Why daimon and not spirit?  
Or demon?
A Multiplicity of Daimons

- between divine and mortal ministers and messengers of the gods
- departed good souls become daimons
- mediators between gods and humans – presiders over oracles, sacred rites
- evil daimon – corrupts or injures humans – linked to passions
- good daimon – encourages human virtue – linked to dispassions

- personal daimon • guides a human life • aids humans
Mesopotamia
Categories of beings

• Gods
• Protective divinities
  – Ilu (also Akkadian for ‘god’)
  – Ishtar
  – Shedu
  – Lamassu
• Evil spirits that bring disease and other unfortunate things
Mesopotamia

Lamassu, guardian divinity, protecting Sargon II’s throne room. Khorsabad, Iraq. Now in Chicago, Oriental Institute

The ‘demon’ Pazuzu keeping away the evil ‘demoness’ Lamashtu. Assyrian, 9th-7th c. BCE plaque, cast copper or bronze. The Louvre, Paris
Mesopotamia

Lamassu

‘On the 16th of Simanu let him take the rope of a boat travelling upstream; his Lama, the one who keeps him safe, will keep guiding him.’

H. Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1992), 15, No. 23, rev. 1-6; I thank Francesca Rochberg for this translation
Egypt

- $n\text{tr} = \text{god (pronounced ‘netcher’)}$ plural $n\text{trw}$ (‘netcheru’)
- great gods
- lesser gods
- A human becomes a $n\text{tr}$ after death
- evil beings that cause disease/injury/death
Egyptian ‘demons’

Funerary papyrus of Taminiu, detail showing ‘demons’ with knives, ca. 950 BCE. British Museum
**Shai**

- Shai: Egyptian god of ‘fate’
- the word ‘š3[1]’ in Egyptian means: order, decree, determine, predestine
- force of a law
- ordain or command (Old and Middle Kingdom)
- more explicit ideas of fate in New Kingdom i.e. a life divinely decreed
- (but these decrees can also be appealed)
Shai

- Shai associated with length of life, death as ordained by the gods
- Shai responsible for a fate given at the moment of birth
- Shai also the name of the Demotic 11th place [house] in astrology
Shai and Friends

Shai is also associated with other deities, such as:

**Renenet**

goddess of nourishing, often portrayed as a snake

**Meskhenet**

divine midwife
Weighing of the Heart in the Book of the Dead: Papyrus of Ani, British Museum

Ani’s Ba

Meskhenet and Renenet

Shai
Shai and Friends

Shepset

• Shepset means ‘noblewoman’, represents good fortune

• Can also be a personal divine protector, as can Shai and Renenet

• Shepset is the name of the Demotic 5th place (house) in astrology (this place is called ‘Good Fortune’, ‘Agathe Tyche’)}
In O. Hor 3 (2nd c. BCE)
Isis presides over a birthday celebration for Ptolemy VI Philometor

- She ‘caused you to be born’ and gives Ptolemy ‘every good event’
- She ‘opens the year’ which is ‘favorable for your Shai and favorable for your Shepset’
Shai/Agathos Daimon/Sarapis
Renenet/Agathe Tyche/Isis

- In the Ptolemaic period, Shai becomes connected to the Greek Agathos Daimon
- Connections also to Sarapis
- Retains his Egyptian characteristics even if Greek name used
- Consort is Isis (connects to Renenet, also linked to Agathe Tyche, Good Fortune); she also is a fate goddess
- His links to Shepset endure as well, especially in astrology
Shai/Agathos Daimon and Isis/Agathe Tyche: World Superstars

Coin from Alexandria, representing an altar (perhaps to Agathos Daimon?), with snakes on either side representing Agathos Daimon and Agathe Tyche. Bronze, time of Antoninus Pius, ca. 161 CE; Munzkabinett, Berlin Staatliche Museen

The Tyche of Antioch

Roman copy of a statue by Eutychides (Galleria dei Candelabri, Vatican Museum)
Isis/Agathe Tyche

• Isis has a huge presence in Ptolemaic and Greco-Roman periods as a universal goddess
• At ancient Narmouthis (modern Medinet Madi) there was a temple to Renenet/Thermouthis (her Greek name)
• Hymn to Isis, by Isidorus, found there
• ‘Wealth-giver, Queen of the Gods, Queen Hermouthis, / Almighty, Agathe Tyche, renowned Isis, / Most exalted Deo, inventor of all life’

Hymn I.1-3, in Vanderlip 1971, p. 17
Agathos Daimon, Agathe Tyche and Philia(?)

Athens, Acropolis, ca. 360 BCE. Acropolis Museum
Agathos Daimon and Agathe Tyche
Personal Religion

Relief in white marble, from private house, Delos. Agathos Daimon and Agathe Tyche in human form, each holding a cornucopia; on the base between them a bearded snake, perhaps Agathos Daimon in snake form? Hellenistic period.
Sarapis/Agathos Daimon and Isis/Tyche

Marble relief, Roman Acropolis. British Museum, Charles Fellows Collection
Greece: Categories of daimons

• In Homer, an active, divine force understood in context as good or evil
• In Hesiod, a hero who has become divine 'they are called pure daimons dwelling on the earth, and are kindly, delivering from harm, and guardians of mortal men; for they roam everywhere over the earth, clothed in mist and keep watch on judgements and cruel deeds, givers of wealth...' 

Greece: Categories of daimons

- An intermediary between gods and humans
“He [Eros] is a great daimon, and like all daimons he is intermediate between the divine and the mortal.” “And what,” I said, “is his power?” “Interpreting and transporting human things to the gods and divine things to men; entreaties and sacrifices from below, and ordinances and requitals from above: being midway between, it makes each to supplement the other, so that the whole is combined in one. Through it are conveyed all divination and priestcraft concerning sacrifice and ritual [203a] and incantations, and all soothsaying and sorcery. God with man does not mingle: but the daimonic is the means of all society and converse of men with gods and of gods with men, whether waking or asleep. Whosoever has skill in these affairs is a daimonic man to have it in other matters, as in common arts and crafts, is for the mechanical. Many and diverse are these daimons, and one of them is Love.”

Greece: Categories of daimons

• Good daimons (*Agathoi daimones*)
  – Associated with happiness (*eudaimonia*)
  – Zeus Ktesios, property, protection, acquisition
  – ‘Daimon, the grand and dreaded leader’
    Orphic Hymn 73, trans. Athanassakis and Wolkow

• Bad/evil daimons (*Kakoi daimones*)
  – Associated with passions and death, especially violent death
  – Avenging wrongs
  – ‘Their character is wholly violent and deceptive and lacking the supervision of the better daimonic power’ (Porphyry, *On Abstinence* II, 38.4, trans. Clark, slightly modified)
Greece: Categories of daimons

• Local spirits who can be good or evil depending on how they are propitiated

• ‘they can do harm if they are angered by being neglected and not receiving the accustomed worship... they can do good to those who make them well-disposed by prayer and supplication and sacrifices and all that goes with them’ (Porphyry, On Abstinence from Killing Animals, II, 37.5, trans. Clark)
Heraclitus

‘Character is destiny’ [?]  
ἦθος ἀνθρώπωι δαίμων  
ēthos anthrōpōi daimōn

Heraclitus

‘Character is destiny’
ἦθος ἀνθρώπωι δαίμων
ēthos anthrōpōi daimōn

• ‘A man’s character is his fate’ J. Barnes; J. Burnet
• ‘Man’s character is his daimon’ G. Kirk, J. Raven, M. Schofield
• ‘A man’s individuality is his daimon’ W.K.C. Guthrie
• ‘Character for man is destiny’ Kathleen Freeman
• ‘A man’s character is his guardian divinity’ P. Wheelwright
• ‘Habit for man, god’ Albert Cook
Plato and the Daimon

“Concerning the most lordly part of our soul...we say god has given each of us, as his daimon, that which is housed at the summit of our body, and which raises us from earth to our kindred in heaven, since we are not an earthly but a heavenly plant. ... But he who has seriously devoted himself to learning and to true thoughts (phronēseis), and has exercised these qualities above all his others, must necessarily and inevitably think thoughts (phronein) that are immortal and divine, if he lays hold of truth ... and inasmuch as he is always tending his divine part and keeping the daimon who dwells together with him well-ranked, he must be especially good-spirited (eudaimōn).”

-Timaeus, 90a-c, trans. R.G. Bury, modified
‘So let the written statute on wounding be set as follows: if anyone wishes intentionally to kill a friendly person – except whom the law sends him against – [and] wounds, but is unable, to kill him, he who thus intended and inflicted the wound is not worthy of pity, nor respected in any other way than as a murderer who must suffer the penalty for murder. Yet out of respect for the not wholly bad fortune which came to him, and the Daimon who, in pity for him and the wounded man, kept the wound of the one from being fatal and the fortune and offence of the other from being accursed, in gratitude to the Daimon for this and not opposing it, to cancel the death penalty of the wounder, and remove him to a neighbouring city for the rest of his life, enjoying the fruits of all his own possessions.’ Trans. Greenbaum
Plato and the Daimon

Socrates’ daimon

For to me, judges ... something wondrous has happened. For the customary divination from the daimonion was always very frequent in all former time, opposing me even in quite small matters if I were about to do something incorrectly. Now, you yourselves see what has occurred to me, these very things which someone might suppose to be, and are believed to be, extreme evils. But the daimonic sign did not oppose me when I left the house this morning... it has nowhere opposed me in any deed or speech concerning this action. What, then, do I take to be the cause of this? ...what has occurred to me has turned out to be good. For there is no way that the accustomed sign would not have opposed me unless I were about to do something good.

Plato, *Apology*, 40a, trans. Thomas G. West, slightly modified
When Er and the souls arrived, their duty was to go at once to Lachesis; but first of all there came a prophet who arranged them in order; then he took from the knees of Lachesis lots (klēroi) and examples (paradeigmata) of lives, and having mounted a high pulpit, spoke as follows: ‘Hear the word of Lachesis, the maiden daughter of Necessity. Mortal souls, behold a new cycle of life and mortality. Your daimon will not be allotted (lanchanō) to you, but you will choose your daimon; and let him who draws the first lot have the first choice, and the life which he chooses shall be his of necessity. Virtue has no master, and as a man honors or dishonors her he will have more or less of her; the responsibility is with the chooser—God is not responsible.’ So saying, the prophet scattered lots indifferently among them all, and each of them took up the lot which fell near him....
The Myth of Er (cont.)

[619b] And when he had spoken, he who had the first choice came forward and in a moment chose the greatest tyranny....
[619c] ...instead of throwing the blame of his misfortune on himself, he accused chance (tyche) and the daimons and everything rather than himself. ... [619d] ... And owing to this [inexperience of theirs], and also because of the chance of the lot, many of the souls exchanged a good destiny for an evil or an evil for a good. [620d-e; 621a] Now when all the souls had chosen their lives, they approached Lachesis in the order the lottery had assigned them, and she sent with them the daimon whom they had chosen, to be the guardian of their lives and the fullfiller of the choice: this daimon led the souls first to Clotho, and drew them within the revolution of the spindle impelled by her hand, thus ratifying the destiny (moira) of each; and then, when they were fastened to this, carried them to Atropos, who spun the threads and made them irreversible, whence without turning round they passed beneath the throne of Necessity....

Trans. Benjamin Jowett, modified
Porphyry and the Myth of Er

On What is Up to Us

• Very interested in Plato’s Myth of Er from Republic, and how astrology and the personal daimon combine in what kind of life we have on earth
• We choose 2 kinds of lives, one physical and environmental circumstances (once chosen cannot be changed)
• how we live that life is up to us
• the daimon enforces our choice and guides us in our life on earth
Porphyry *On What is Up to Us*

- The role of astrology in *heimarmenē* (fate) as well as in ‘what is up to us’, i.e. in our own power
- Souls are allotted and take their lives in order (271 F Smith) (as in the Myth of Er)
- Connects the order of the lots with the zodiac and the lives the souls choose
- These are according to ascensions of degrees
- Soul is able to ‘manage [the life] through either virtue or vice’ (271F, 109-10)
Daimon Leading the Souls into Life

The Tabula Cebetis

Drawing by Giulio Clovio (1498-1578), now in Florence
Plutarch, *On the daimonion of Socrates*: The Myth of Timarchus

• 591f ‘in the stars that are apparently extinguished, you must understand that you see the souls that sink entirely into the body; in the stars that are lighted again, as it were, and reappear from below, you must understand that you see the souls that float back from the body after death, shaking off a sort of dimness and darkness as one might shake off mud; while the stars that move about on high are the daimons of men said to “possess understanding (*nous*)”’
Plutarch, *On the daimonion of Socrates*: The Myth of Timarchus

593f-594a...when in the course of countless births a soul has stoutly and resolutely sustained a long series of struggles, and as her cycle draws to a close, she approaches the upper world, bathed in sweat, in imminent peril and straining every nerve to reach the shore, God holds it no sin for her own daimon (*oikeios daimōn*) to go to the rescue, but lets whoever will lend aid.

-trans. DeLacy/Einarson
Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus*, 22.23-51

- *Daimon*, once a man, but now nearing the more divine dispensation (*aisa*) of a *daimon*, since you have loosed the bond of human necessity, and in the vigour of your spirit have swum from the roaring billows of the bodily frame towards the shore of a peaceful headland, in your haste to set going the well-turned course of a pure soul far away from the mob of sinners.

-trans. Mark Edwards, modified
Vettius Valens and the Daimon

- IX, 12.31: ‘...those who possess intelligence must follow the daimonion as it wishes (for it provides the idea for what it wills)’

- IV, 11.7 And at that point, we spent much time wretchedly, and while we were sadly making changes of locales, associating with those who have seriously studied such things, we kept on experimenting, until the wished-for daimonion, through a certain providence (pronoia), made the transmission in a certain place through a certain man who loved learning.

- IX, 1.10 And so sailing on the open sea and travelling through many a land, becoming an explorer of regions and races, plunged into labours in a long-standing experiment, I was thought fit by God and providence (pronoia) to light upon a secure and safe harbour.

-trans. Greenbaum
Valens and the Daimon

- VI, 1.7, 230.25-6: ‘...and I myself am exalted because of the heavenly theory being poured over me by the daimon.’
- VI, 1.15-16: ‘...but when I lit upon the divine and revered theory of the heavens, I wished to purify my way of life of every vice and pollution, and anticipate the immortal soul. From that point divine things seemed to converse with me, and I acquired the intellectual capacity for sober investigation.’
‘Daemon’ – Sculpture by Stephen Frank
The Astrological Daimon

• Daimon and the Body of Astrology
  – Daimon places in the chart

• Daimon and the Soul of Astrology
  – Lots
  – Finding the personal daimon in the chart
Daimon (and Fortune) Places in the Chart
Planetary Joys and Aspects to the Ascendant
The eleventh from the Ascendant is called Good Daimon, being the place of Jupiter. For when Jupiter happens to be present in this place, he rejoices beyond all the other stars. It signifies the reckoning concerning alliance and patronage, and in addition to these is indicative of good hopes.

-Paulus Alexandrinus, Introduction, ch. 24, trans. Greenbaum
Demotic Egyptian and Greek Names for Places

5th Place
Shepset
(t3) špšy(.t)
Agathe Tyche

6th Place
tny.t ḫne
Lot of Abomination
3.wy wry
House of bad fortune
Kakē Tychē
Bad Fortune

11th Place
Shai
p3 šy
Agathos Daimon

12th Place
p3 sšr
The Evil Spirit (slaughtering demon)
Kakos Daimōn
Bad Daimon
What the Places Tell You

The God gives signs about the father, Goddess about the mother, Good Daimon about children, Good Fortune about marriage, Evil Daimon about illnesses, Bad Fortune about injuries, the Lot of Fortune and the Ascendant about life and manner of living, [the Lot of] Daimon about intentional mind (φρόνησις), Midheaven about action, [the Lot of] Eros about desire, [the Lot of] Necessity about enemies.’

The Importance of the Places

After these four cardines, that is, after Rising, Setting, Midheaven [M.C.] and Lowest Heaven [I.C.], there are four other places in nativities which have ensuing and favourable power, i.e. Goddess, God, Good Fortune and Good Daemon, which are so named by the Greeks: thea, theos, agathe tyche, agathos daemon.

Julius Firmicus Maternus, Mathesis, II, 16.1, trans. Greenbaum
Manilius on the Eleventh Place

But what follows nearest to the height of gleaming heaven,
So that it may not yield to that constellation to which it is
joined
It soars up higher, being better because of its hope
And seeking the victory palm and triumphant over prior ones...

The region nearest the summit,
Though lower than it, is described by the portion (sors) of Fortune
Which is called ‘Happy’. Thus is our closest approximation To the Greek tongue, which renders this name for theirs. Jupiter dwells here: believe that its ruler makes it revered.

-Astronomica 2.881-884, 886-890, trans. Greenbaum, following Goold and Huebner
Daimon and the Soul of Astrology: Lots

• First, a word about glyphs

or

For Lot of Daimon

Why?
• Usually Hellenistic astrologers used words for Fortune and Daimon; glyphs for these appear in medieval tradition

Lot of Daimon:

Laurentianus pluteus, 28,34, fol.141r, 10th century

Ms. Selden Arch. B. 19, Ox. Seld. 22
Daimon and the Soul of Astrology

Lots of Daimon and Fortune
Daimon and the Soul of Astrology: Lots

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<th>Lot of Daimon</th>
<th>Moon</th>
<th>Lot of Fortune</th>
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Attributes taken from Vettius Valens (I, 1; II, 20; IV, 4 & 25; IX, 2); Antiochus of Athens (CCAG I, 160; VII, 127); Paulus (ch. 23); Olympiodorus (ch. 22)
‘One particular cause determines [the daimon and fortune]: the Sun and Moon, respectively, because the Lots of Daimon and Fortune are found from these gods in our nativities, which is clear to those trained in astrology.’

Daimon and the Soul of Astrology: Lots

The Lots of Eros and Necessity and why they are important
Macrobius and the Caduceus

“...the caduceus, which the Egyptians have designed as the sacred staff of Mercury. It shows a pair of serpents, male and female, intertwined; the middle parts of the serpents’ coils are joined together as in a knot, called the knot of Hercules; their upper parts are bent into a circle and complete the circle as they meet in a kiss; below the knot their tails rejoin the staff at the point at which it is held, and at that point appear the wings with which they are provided. [17] The Egyptians also maintain that the attributes of the caduceus illustrate the generation, or ‘γένεσις’ (‘genesis’) as it is called, of mankind; for they say that four deities are present to preside over a man’s birth: his Daimon, Tyche, Eros and Ananke (Daimon, Fortune, Love and Necessity). By the first two they understand the sun and the moon; for the sun, as the source of the breath of life and of heat and of light, is the creator and the guardian of a man’s life and is therefore believed to be the Genius, or god, of a newborn child; the moon is Fortune, since she has charge of the body, and the body is at the mercy of the fickleness of change; the kiss of the serpents is the symbol of Love; and the knot is the symbol of Necessity. ... the coiled bodies of the serpents have been specially chosen, as illustrating the serpentine course of each of the two stars.”

*Saturnalia*, I, 19.16-17, trans. Davies, slightly modified
Daimon and the Soul of Astrology: Lots of Eros and Necessity

Calculation according to Vettius Valens
Vettius Valens’ Lots of Eros and Necessity

Eros (Day) from Fortune to Daimon Asc + Daimon – Fortune
(Night) from Daimon to Fortune Asc + Fortune – Daimon

Necessity (Day) from Daimon to Fortune Asc + Fortune – Daimon
(Night) from Fortune to Daimon Asc + Daimon – Fortune

Julius Firmicus Maternus’ Lots of Cupido and Necessitas

Cupido (Day) from Daemon to Fortune Asc + Fortune – Daemon
(Night) from Fortune to Daemon Asc + Daemon – Fortune

Necessitas (Day) from Fortune to Daemon Asc + Daemon – Fortune
(Night) from Daemon to Fortune Asc + Fortune – Daemon
For Valens, the lots can be as important as the places: ‘The operative and active zodiac signs are the Hour-marker, Midheaven, Good Daimon, Good Fortune, the Lots of Fortune, Daimon, Eros and Necessity; middling are God, Goddess and the remaining two centrepins; but the rest are barely sufficient and malefic.’

*Anthologies IV, 11.49 (167.20-23 Pingree)*

trans. Greenbaum
Porphyry is associated with this method of the personal daimon from the Myth of Er to the astrological chart is plain. He believes each incarnated soul enters into the chosen life, with her daimon ratifying the chosen life, at the appropriate astrological moment.

Porphyry is also an astrologer, who writes about how to find an overall ruler of the nativity.
Daimon and the Soul of Astrology: Finding the Personal Daimon in the Chart

Porphyry’s conversation with Iamblichus

... For the personal daimon does not guide just one or another part of our being, but all of them at once, and it extends to the whole administration of us, even as it has been allotted to us from all the regions of the universe. And indeed the evidence that you adduce concerning daimones presiding over various parts of the body which attend to their health and condition, and then a single overseer established over all in common, this you may take as an indication of the supervisory role granted to a single daimon over everything that concerns us; do not therefore make a distinction between one daimon concerned with the body, another with the soul, and another with the intellect.

Porphyry, Letter to Anebo, 16a = Iamblichus, De Mysteriis IX.7, 281.6-13, trans. Clarke, Dillon, Hershbell
Astrology has an interest in finding administrators who oversee the chart, and an interest in daimons. My contention is that for Porphyry, an analogue for the personal daimon can be found in the chart, as the Lord of the nativity. Three factors:

- Predominator
- ‘Housemaster of the nativity’
- Lord of the nativity
Antiochus: He (Antiochus) says that the House-master of the nativity, lord and predominator are different from one another. For he says that the predominator is the one of the two luminaries which predominates more over the theme’s birth-hour, and some say that by day the Sun predominates, but by night the Moon.

-in CCAG VIII/3, 118.9-12, trans. Greenbaum (Summary of Book I of Antiochus’s Introduction)
Daimon and the Soul of Astrology: Finding the Personal Daimon in the Chart

Porphyry: Furthermore, precise definitions are required to differentiate house-master of the nativity, lord and predominator from one another. For the ancients entangle the names up and do not distinguish their characteristics. For each has its own power, just like a skipper and a pilot (kubernetes); so we will teach how they are different from each other.

- In CCAG V/4, 206.3-7, trans. Greenbaum (Porphyry’s comments on Antiochus in italics)
Porphyry on finding the lord of the nativity:

‘For the search for this is long and perhaps more difficult than all others.’ CCAG V/4, 208.1-2

Find ‘the one placed most sympathetically in the nativity, that is, the one situated better [in a good place], more in a phase of visibility, or more on its own places and having the most power in relation to the configuration of the nativity and those co-witnessing it’ 207.23-27
Daimon and the Soul of Astrology:
Finding the Personal Daimon in the Chart

• ... he is surely happy (eudaimōn) who, learning the celestial configuration of his own birth, and hence recognising his personal daimon, is enabled to neutralise by sacrifices the power of fate.

Daimon and the Soul of Astrology

Proclus on the daimon:

The daimon alone moves all, governs all, orders all our affairs. For it perfects the reason, moderates passions, inspires nature, maintains the body, provides the accidentals, fulfils the decrees of fate and bestows gifts from providence; and this one being is king of all that is in us and all that has to do with us, steering our whole life.

Daimon and Tyche (Endowment and Chance) determine a human’s fate – rarely or never one of these powers alone.

—S. Freud, The Dynamics of Transference, in Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 12, p. 99 n.2
‘Eros und Ananke sind auch die Eltern der menschlichen Kultur geworden.’

‘Eros and Ananke [Love and Necessity] have become the parents of human civilization too.’

Sigmund Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, Vienna 1930, p. 64

(*Civilization and its Discontents*)