What is a Daimon?  
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Quotations Used

1. ‘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.’  

2. ‘Wealth-giver, Queen of the gods, Queen Hermouthis,  
   Almighty, Agathe Tyche, renowned Isis,  
   Most exalted Deo, inventor of all life...’  

3. ‘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...’  

4. “'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.’”  

5. Orphic Hymn: To the Daimon  
   Incense: frankincense  
   I call upon Daimon, the grand and dreaded leader,  
   gentle Zeus, who gives birth to all and livelihood to mortals;  
   great Zeus, wide roving, avenger, king of all,  
   giver of wealth when you enter the house, laden with goods,  
   You possess the keys to joy and sorrow as well.  
   So, O pure and blessed one, drive painful cares away,  
   cares that are life-destroying throughout the whole earth,  
   and bring a glorious, sweet and noble end to life.  

6. Porphyry on the bad daimon: ‘Their character is wholly violent and deceptive and lacking the supervision of the better daimonic power’  
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7. Porphyry on local daimons: ‘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’.

8. “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).”
   -Plato, Timaeus, 90a-c, Loeb Classical Library, trans. R.G. Bury, modified

9. ‘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.’
   -Plato, Laws, 867e4-877b2, Loeb Classical Library, trans. D. G. Greenbaum

10. 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, in Plato’s Apology of Socrates, Ithaca 1979, trans. Thomas G. West, slightly modified

   [617d-e] When Er and the souls arrived, their duty was to go at once to Lachesis; but first of all there came a prophet (prophētēs) 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 honours or dishonours her he will
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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.... [618a] Next, the prophet placed on the ground in front of them the sample lives, of which there were far more than there were souls in the crowd. ... [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 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 fulfiller 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....


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).”'

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 daimôn) to go to the rescue, but lets whoever will lend aid.


13. 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.’


‘...those who possess intelligence must follow the daimonion as it wishes (for it provides the idea for what it wills)...’ IX, 12.31
'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.' IV, 11.7

‘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.’ IX, 1. 10

‘...and I myself am exalted because of the heavenly theory being poured over me by the daimon.’ VI, 1.7, 230.25-6 Pingree

‘...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.’ VI, 1.15-16

15. ‘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.’

16. ‘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 (φρονησις), Midheaven about action, [the Lot of] Eros about desire, [the Lot of] Necessity about enemies.’

17. ‘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.*’

18. 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.
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19. ‘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.’


20. “...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.”


21. ‘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.’


22. ‘... 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.’


23. 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.

-Antiochus, *Summary of Book I of Antiochus’s Introduction*, in *CCAG* VIII/3, 118.9-12, trans. D. G. Greenbaum
24. 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.*

-Porphyry, *Introduction to the Tetrabiblos*, in CCAG V/4, 206.3-7, trans. D. G. Greenbaum (Porphyry’s comments on Antiochus in italics)

25. Porphyry on finding the lord of the nativity:

‘For the search for this is long and perhaps more difficult than all others.’

- *Introduction to the Tetrabiblos*, in CCAG V/4, 208.1-2

‘...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’

- *Introduction to the Tetrabiblos*, in CCAG V/4, 207.23-27

26. ‘... he is surely happy (*eudaimôn*) 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.’


27. ‘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.’


28. ‘*Daimôn kai Tuchê* (Endowment and Chance) determine a human’s fate – rarely or never one of these powers alone.’


29. ‘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)*