Iamblichus (c. 245-c. 325 C.E.) established a major school of Neoplatonism in Syria and is known primarily for transforming Neoplatonic philosophy from the rationalism of Plotinus and Porphyry into a religious/ritualistic magical practice. Dodds, writing in the middle of the 20th century, called Iamblichus’ *On the Mysteries* “a manifesto of irrationalism.”¹ Although there is certainly truth to Dodds’ claim that Iamblichus favored an approach to philosophical enlightenment that depended heavily on ritualistic and religious beliefs, there is also much more rationalism in Iamblichus’ writings than Dodds gave him credit for. Further, the concept of the “irrational” in Platonism does not begin with Iamblichus but has a long tradition. In this paper I will explore Iamblichus’ use of rationalism and irrationalism in his philosophy, especially as it is expressed in his *De Mysteriis*, and will show how it is part of a larger Platonic tradition. I hope to show that Iamblichus is not any more “irrational” than many of his Platonic predecessors and in many ways is more rational.

I wish to explore two areas of what 20th-century analytic philosophers would have considered “irrational”: demonology and the souls of the dead. As I hope to show by the end of this paper, one person’s irrational is another’s serious philosophical concern.

1. Plato

The use of irrationalism and even what we might call magic begins with Plato himself. To begin with demonology, Plato tells us that Socrates listened to a daemon, which he describes as a sort of voice that prevents Socrates from performing certain actions.² In the *Symposium* (202c–203a), Plato has Diotima place daemons as intermediaries between gods and mortals. In so doing, daemons are positioned in a special religious and magical role. Diotima says that the race of daemons is involved in (Smp. 202e3–203a4):³

¹ Dodds 1951, 287.
² Plato refers to Socrates’ daemon in *Apology* 31c7-d6, where Socrates says that it is “a kind of voice” (φωνή τις, d3) that keeps him from performing but does not prompt him to do an action (d3–4). Cf. *Phdr. 242b8-c3*, where Socrates claims the daemon “always holds me back from that which I intend to do” (ἀει δέ με ἐπίσκεψι γὰν μέλλω πράτειν, c1) and again likens it to a voice (τινα φωνήν ἔδοξα αὐτόθεν ἀκούσαι, c1–2). For other instances in the dialogues, see *Alc. 103a4-b1*; *Tht. 151a3–5*; cf. also *Euthyd. 272e3–4*.
³ ἐρμηνεύον καὶ διασφημεύον θεοὶ τὰ παρ’ ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀνθρώπως τὰ παρὰ θεῶν, τῶν μὲν τὰς δεήσεις καὶ θυσίας, τῶν δὲ τὰς ἐπιτάξεις τε καὶ ἁμοίβας τῶν θυσίων, ἐν μέσῳ δὲ ὧν ἀμφότερων συμπληροῖ, οὕτω τὸ πάνα αὐτῷ συνδεδέσθαι. διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡ μαντικὴ πᾶσα χωρεῖ καὶ ἡ τῶν
interpreting and carrying matters human to the gods (prayers and sacrifices) and matters divine to humanity (commands and repayments for the sacrifices). Since it is in the middle, it completes both, so that everything is bound itself to itself. Through it, all the mantic art proceeds, the art of priests concerning sacrifices, rites, spells, and every mode of divination and magic. God does not mix with humanity, but through it is every communion and exchange between gods and human beings, for those who are awake and asleep.

It should be noted that the daemons are good and, since they can travel between realms as the gods cannot, perform helpful services for gods and mortals. In the *Phaedrus* Plato also includes daemons among the followers of the gods’ processions from the cosmos to the realm of the Forms beyond the sphere of the fixed stars (246e6–247a1). They, like the gods, travel easily to the world of the Forms. Thus, Plato gave daemons a special place and useful role in the cosmos.

Plato also discusses ghosts of the recently dead. In the *Phaedo*, after stating that the souls of philosophers leave the body pure and unsullied (80d6–81a11), Plato says that other souls still hold on to a portion of the corporeal even after the separation from the body. As an example of such souls, Plato mentions the souls of the dead who wander around memorials and tombs in graveyards (81c8-d5). Plato is not giving the reader a classification of ghosts. Rather he is taking their existence for granted and using that common belief in ghosts to support his contention that non-philosophical souls retain some amount of corporeality. The relationship between ghosts and souls is easy enough to see. Ghosts that wander graveyards were once humans who were too attached to this realm. Plato does not assert any relationship of these ghosts to daemons, and this fact opened up an area for later Platonists to ponder.

2. Demonology, Ghosts, and the Human Soul

The third head of the Academy, Xenocrates (396/395–314/313 BCE), who had studied with Plato and even traveled with him to Sicily, had, as we learn from the writings of Plutarch, worked out a demonology and gave a geometrical dimension to the daemons. After citing Plato’s principle from the *Symposium* that daemons form an intermediary class, Plutarch reports that Xenocrates relates the gods to equilateral triangles, daemons to isosceles, and human beings to scalene, thereby showing geometrically the intermediary status of daemons. The equilateral triangle is poros antheropous, Kai ergygoros kai kadeodosu.

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5 Diogenes Laertius 4.6.
6 Apud Plutarch, *De Defectu Oraculorum* 416c5–9: δεδείξεται μετὰ μαρτύρων σαφῶν καὶ παλαιῶν, ὅτι φύσιςς τινές εἰσιν ὡσπερ ἐν μεθορίῳ θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων δεχόμεναι πάθη θητα καὶ μεταβολὰς ἀναγκαίας, οὓς δαίμονας ὀρθῶς ἔχει κατὰ νόμον πατέρων ἡγουμένους καὶ ὄνομάζοντας σέβεσθαι.
angles and sides, the isosceles two equal angles and sides, and the scalene none. Thus the isosceles is intermediate in the sense that it is partially like the divine equilateral (having two equals) and partially like the human (having one unequal), just as daemons share immortality with the gods and passions with human beings (De Defectu Oraculorum 416c10-d5). 7

The role of the triangles is puzzling. Plato in the Timaeus had the Demiurge make the four elements out of two sorts of triangles, the isosceles right triangle and the scalene right triangle (53c4-d7), but it is hard to see what this construction has to do with Xenocrates’, although it may be that he purposely chose triangles not merely to mark off the difference between the makeup of the elements of the gods, daemons, and human beings but also to indicate that gods, daemons, and souls could be transformed into one another, since the three triangles are geometrically convertible into each other simply by adding other triangles to them. 8 Although we lack sufficient evidence to be sure, we can at least see that the triangles are different in type and the different characteristics mark off one kind of living thing from another.

There is one more aspect of the demonology of Xenocrates that Plutarch also mentions. In his De Iside et Osiride 361b1– 8, he says: 9

Xenocrates thinks that unlucky days and any feasts that involve some blows, lamentations, fasts, abusive speech, or obscenities are unrelated to honors given to gods and good daemons but that there are in the environment around us natures that are great and strong but intransigent and sullen that delight in such things and, when they happen upon them, turn themselves to nothing worse.

Xenocrates here introduces a group of evil daemons and distinguishes them from both the gods and from a second, better group of daemons. He is, of course, taking heed of a class of daemons sanctioned in the ordinary, non-philosophical Greek world, but the inclusion of evil daemons represents a change from Plato’s doctrines and will become a problem that will have to be dealt with later in the Platonic tradition, as we shall see. How these daemons mesh with the triangular categories of the De Defectu is not easy to see. Perhaps they are every bit as scalene as human beings, although it seems that since the quality of being scalene relates to mortality,

7 Παράδειγμα δὲ τῷ λόγῳ Ἑξοκράτης μὲν ὁ Πλάτωνος ἑταῖρος ἐποίησατο τὸ τῶν τριγώνων, θείω μὲν ἀπεικάσας τὸ ἰσόπλευρον νῦντῷ δὲ τὸ σκαληνὸν τὸ δ’ ἱσοσκελὲς δαιμονίῳ τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἴσον πάντη τὸ δ’ ἄνισον πάντη, τὸ δὲ πὴ μὲν ἴσον πὴ δ’ ἄνισον, ὥσπερ ἡ δαιμώνων φύσις ἔχουσα καὶ πάθος θνητοῦ καὶ θεοῦ δύναμιν.
8 I wish to thank Colin McKinney of the Department of Mathematics at Wabash College for explaining to me via email that “from a geometric perspective it would be easy to start with any type of triangle and turn it into another type … just add a chosen length to 1 side or two chosen lengths to two sides.”
9 ὁ δὲ Ἑξοκράτης καὶ τῶν ἡμερῶν τὰς ἀποφράδας καὶ τῶν ἐορτῶν, ὡς πληγᾶς τινας ἢ κοπετοὺς ἢ νηστείας ἢ διαφήμια ἢ αἰσχρολογίαν ἔχουσιν, οὔτε θεοῦ τιμας οὔτε δαιμόνων οὔτε προσήκειν χρηστῶν, ἅλλ’ εἰναι φύσεις ἐν τῷ περιέχοντι μεγάλας μὲν καὶ ἱσχυρὰς, διστρόφους δὲ καὶ σκυθρωπᾶς, αἱ χαίρουσι τοῖς τοιούτοις καὶ τυγχάνουσα πρὸς οὐδὲν ἄλλο χείρον τρέπονται.
evil/irrational daemons would still have to be isosceles, but a different sort of isosceles than the good/rational daemons.⁰ If so, the quality of being isosceles would be variable. Whereas every isosceles triangle gives rise to immortality, perhaps some forms are more appropriate for rationality than others. The only manner in which isosceles triangles can differ from one another is in size—that is, in the length of their sides and the degree of their two equal angles. Perhaps as those triangles approach the 60-degree angle of the equilateral triangle, the resulting daemon is more rational and vice versa, by the greater disparity between the equal angles and the unequal one, the more irrational the daemon is. Further speculation is useless. We can say definitely only that Xenocrates included a class of evil daemons alongside the good daemons of Plato’s Symposium, and he thought that these daemons were the power behind the more emotional sorts of ritual practice in Greece. The last clause in the quotation from Plutarch further suggests that, if they are not softened by obtaining what they want, they are capable of harm.

Plutarch himself was also interested in daemons, and his longer discussion of the daemons in his De Iside and De Defectu raises other considerations. Like Xenocrates, he sees the daemons as intermediaries. Citing Plato along with Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Chrysippus, and “the earlier theologians,” he says that Isis, Osiris, and Typhon are neither gods nor mortals but daemons (De Iside 360d5-e2). In particular he states that “there are differences among human beings and daemons with regard to virtue and vice” (De Iside 360e5–6).¹¹ For daemons (De Iside 360e2–5):¹²

…sharing in the nature of the soul and in the sense perception of the body (which is receptive of pleasure and pain and the many affections that accompany these changes) are sometimes more stirred up and sometimes less.

Thus, again like Xenocrates, Plutarch thinks that daemons are subject to passions to a greater or lesser degree.

Plutarch, however, may take matters further. We saw that Xenocrates held that the daemons were constructed somehow from isosceles triangles whereas human beings from scalene. This suggested that the two species might be able to transition into one another, since the two triangles are convertible. Plutarch seems to agree that they can change species. The problem for interpreters of Plutarch’s doctrine, however, is that the interlocutor giving the crucial evidence may not represent Plutarch’s own view.

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⁰ On this topic, see Dillon 1977, 32, who suggests that “two proportions would be required between gods and men, good and evil daemons representing different ratios, such as, perhaps, 4 and 6 between 2 and 8.”

¹¹ γίνονται γάρ ὡς ἐν ἀνθρώποις καὶ δαίμονις ἀρετής διαφοραί καὶ κακίας.

¹² ἀλλά καὶ ψυχῆς φύσει καὶ σώματος αὐστηθεὶς [ἐν] συνειληχοις ἡδονήν δεχομένη καὶ πόνον καὶ ὀσα ταύταις ἐπιγενόμενα ταῖς μεταβολαῖς πάθη τοὺς μὲν μάλλον τοὺς δ’ ἔττον ἐπιταράττει.
The main speaker in the *De Def. Or.* is Lamprias, Plutarch’s brother, who speaks in the first person. It is not Lamprias but Cleombrotus, one of the interlocutors, who raises the issue, citing Hesiod (*De Def. Or. 415b1–6*). Note that in the process, he also adds another species, that of heroes, to the list:¹³

Hesiod first posited clearly and distinctly four classes of rational things: gods, daemons, heroes, and in addition human beings. From these he seems to have made a transition of the golden race into many good daemons and the demigods into heroes.

Cleombrotus can conclude that souls change from one species to another (*De Def. Or. 415b10-c1*):¹⁴

The better souls make their transition from human beings into heroes, and from heroes into daemons. A few souls transition from daemons having been completely purified after much time because of their virtue and have a share of godhood.

It should be noted here that the human soul can transition into that of a daemon and even to that of a god.

Although Cleombrotus claims (with Hesiod) that the souls of human beings can be transformed into daemons and heroes and back again, Lamprias does not. Later in the dialogue, referring again to the Hesiodic passage on the Golden Age, Lamprias leaves the question open (*De Def. Or. 431e1–3*), giving both options as possibilities: whether “the souls are separated from a body or never had a body at all.”¹⁵

In the *De Iside*, Plutarch again refers to Hesiod as evidence that there are two sets of daemons, good and bad. He equates the daemons in the *Symposium 202e* (*De Iside 361b11-c3*) with those in Hesiod’s *Works and Days* 123f. (*De Iside 361b8–11*):¹⁶ “Hesiod called them noble and good, ‘holy daemons,’ and ‘guardians of human beings;’ [they are] ‘givers of riches, and they have this kingly prerogative.’”

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¹³ Ἡσιόδος δὲ καθαρώς καὶ διωρισμένως πρῶτος ἐξέθηκε τῶν λογικῶν τέσσαρα γένη, θεοὺς εἶτα δαῖμονας εἰδ’ ἥρωας τό δ’ ἐπὶ πάσαν ἄνθρωπον, ἐξ ὧν ἔοικε ποιεῖν τὴν μεταβολήν τοῦ μὲν χρυσοῦ γένους εἰς δαίμονας πολλοὺς κάγαθος τῶν δ’ ἡμιθέων εἰς ἥρωας ἀποκριθέντων. In the sequel (*De Def. Or. 415b6-c4*) Cleombrotus mentions an unnamed set of writers who have these souls transform along with their bodies into other species: human beings into heroes, heroes into daemons, daemons into gods; souls that succumb to passions re-enter bodies. In *De E apud Delphos* 391e4–9, Plutarch says that there are these four species along with a fifth, animals.

¹⁴ ἐκ μὲν ἄνθρωπων εἰς ἥρωας ἐκ δ’ ἥρωων εἰς δαίμονας αἰ βελτίων ψυχαὶ τὴν μεταβολὴν λαμβάνουσιν, ἐκ δὲ δαίμονων ὁλίγαι μὲν ἐν χρόνω πολλῷ δι’ ἀρετὴν καθαρθέοις παντάπασι δεισίτητος μετέχον.

¹⁵ εἰ γὰρ αἱ διακριθέασι αὐῶν ἡ μὴ μετασχητοί τὸ παράσπαν ψυχαὶ δαίμονες εἰσὶ κατὰ σὲ καὶ τὸν θείον Ἡσιόδον: ἄγνοι ἑπιχόθνιοι φύλακες θητῶν ἄνθρώπων’ ...

¹⁶ τοὺς δὲ χρηστοὺς πάλιν καὶ ἅγαθοῖς ὃ θ’ Ἡσιόδος ἄγνοις δαίμονας καὶ ‘φύλακας ἄνθρώπων’ προσαγορεύει, πλουτοδότας ‘καὶ τούτῳ γέρας βασιλήμον ἐχόντας.’
These quotations come from the Hesiodic passage on the golden age. Hesiod portrays a golden race of human beings (Erga 109: χρύσεον ... γένος μερόπων ἄνθρώπων) who live an easy life. After they have died, he says (122–126):¹⁷

These are called pure, earthly, good daemons who ward off evil, guardians of mortals who watch over judgments and cruel deeds. They are clothed in air, going everywhere on the earth, givers of riches: they have this kingly prerogative.

For Hesiod, then, the mortals of the Golden Age were transformed into good daemons in their next existence. Plutarch, however, does not commit to the view that these were human beings but instead calls them daemons even when they were alive in the Golden Age. The De Iside passage cannot be used, therefore, to confirm that transition from human to daemonic souls was possible. Plutarch makes use of a fragment from Empedocles to mark the paths for those daemons who lived impurely (De Iside 361c3–9):¹⁸

For Empedocles says that daemons pay the penalty for their errors and offenses (DK fr. 115.9–13):

For the strength of the heaven pursues them to the sea, The sea spits them out onto the surface of the earth, the earth into the rays of the relentless sun, which casts them into the whirlwinds of the ether. One receives them from another, and all hate them.

until having been punished in this way and purified again, they recover the place and rank that belongs to them by nature.

And so in the De Iside it is specifically daemons that may either be rewarded with better lives as good/rational daemons or be punished for past sins.

Although in the De Defectu we cannot be certain that Plutarch endorsed Cleombrotus’ words, his discussion in the dialogue shows that he is aware of different interpretations of the doctrine of daemons. In the De Genio Socratis, Plutarch returns to the topic once again and again quotes from Hesiod’s myth of the golden race (593d7). The speaker is Theano, a guest in Thebes and a Pythagorean. Again, we cannot be

¹⁷ τοῖς μὲν δαίμονεσ ἄγνοι ἐπιχθόνιοι καλέονται ἐσθλοί, ἀλεξίκαιοι, φύλακες θητῶν ἄνθρώπων, [ο]ὶ τῷ φυλάσσον ὑπ’ δίκας καὶ σχέτλα ἔργα ἡρὰ ἐσάμενοι πάντη φοιτάντες ἐπ’ αἰῶν.] πλουτοδόται· καὶ τούτο γέρας βασιλήν ἔσχον.

¹⁸ Ἐμπεδοκλῆς δὲ καὶ δίκας φησι διδοῖ τοὺς δαίμονας ἂν ἄν ἔξαμάρτωσι καὶ πλημμελήσωσιν ἀἰθέριον μὲν γάρ σφέ μένος πάντοτε διώκει, πάντοτε δ’ ἐς χθόνος οὐδὰς ἀπέττυσε, γαία δ’ ἐς αὐγάς ἥλιον ἀκάμαντος, ὡς δ’ ἀιθέριος ἐμβάλε δίναις· ἄλος δ’ ἐς ἄλλου δέχεται, στυγεύσις δὲ πάντες,’ ἄρα τικι κολασθέντες οὕτω καὶ καθαρθέντες ἂν ῥεῖ τὴν κατὰ φύσιν χώραν καὶ τάξιν ἀπολάβωσι Ἐμπεδοκλῆς.
certain that Theano’s words echo Plutarch’s thoughts. Since Theano is Pythagorean, there is some reason to conclude that he is acting as a Plutarchian voice. Nonetheless, it is Simmias, the companion of Socrates and Plato, who has a better claim to that role in this dialogue, and so we cannot be sure of the status of Theano’s report.¹ Theano reports that the souls of the good who have lived out their cycle of births are rewarded by the gods by becoming daemons (593d2–7).² These in turn aid others as they reach the end of their last cycle (593e1–594a7). Thus, in Theano’s account, human souls of the very good transition into daemons and return to aid other good human souls to do the same.

Plutarch represents a transitional figure in Middle Platonism. He has a firm grasp of the Platonic texts and holds in view contemporary notions of demonology. We see him considering non-Platonic doctrines, but not necessarily adopting them. The reason for his hesitancy is obvious enough. In the Symposium Plato demarcated gods from daemons: gods cannot descend to mortal creatures but daemons can. Claiming that daemons could become gods and vice versa held the potential for contradicting the Symposium, and Plutarch may well have been reluctant to do so. Other Middle Platonists were not as reserved.

Middle-Platonic demonology derived from Xenocrates but evolved in other directions. Plutarch may not have committed himself to possible ramifications of the doctrine, but he knew of them. The writings of Philo of Alexandria, in the generation before Plutarch, and of Apuleius, afterwards, show how Xenocratean demonology metamorphosed from the late first century BCE through the second century CE.

Philo discusses daemons and souls in two works, De Gigantibus and De Somniis. As is his usual practice, Philo comments on passages from the Old Testament but imports Platonic ideas into his interpretation. In De Gig. 6–18, he is commenting on Genesis 6.2: “The angels of god, when they saw that the daughters of human beings were beautiful, took from among all of them wives for themselves, whomever they

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¹ Earlier in the De Genio, Simmias presents an account of the soul that was given to Timarchus in a vision (591d3-f7). An unseen god explains the vision to Timarchus. As Simmias reports what the god said to Timarchus, we discover that the human soul is twofold, a higher aspect of it, called the intellect (νοῦς), exists above the body, while the lower, called simply soul (ψυχή) sinks into the body and as a result loses rationality in the process, being overcome with pleasures and pains. Since the intellect is external, it is also called a daemon. In spite of the terminology, what we have clearly enough is the Platonic division of rational soul (which in the Timaeus is in the head) and the lower spirited and irrational souls (which exist below in the trunk of the body). The term “daemon” therefore does not indicate a species of soul higher than human except in a metaphorical way. The intellect is the immortal part of the human soul, but it is a human soul. Simmias’ speech, therefore, differs from Theano’s account of the soul, but it does not necessarily contradict it, since the human intellect may yet later transform itself into a true daemon. Thus, based on Simmias’ speech here, we still cannot state with certainty whether Plutarch did or did not support Theano’s account.

² Θεοι μὲν γὰρ οὖν ὀλίγων ἄνθρωπων κοσμοῦσι βίον, νῦς δὲ ἄκρως μακαρίους τε καὶ θείους ὡς ἄληθφως ἀπεργόσασθαι βουληθῶσι· αἱ δ’ ἀπηλλαγμένα γενέσεις ψυχαί καὶ σχολάζουσι τὸ λοιπὸν ἀπὸ σώματος, οίνον ἐλεύθερα πάμπαν ἀφείμενα, δαίμονες εἰσὶν ἄνθρωπων ἐπιμελεῖς καθ’ Ἡσίοδον.
chose.”²¹ Philo interpreted these “daughters of human beings” allegorically as vices and passions (4.4), and he now goes on to state that “what other philosophers call daemons, Moses is accustomed to call angels, which fly in the air” (6.3–7.1).²² The verb “is accustomed” (ἐἰσωθέν) is important. Philo is not claiming that these “angels of god” that live lives of passion and vice are daemons, except in a restricted sense, as we shall see.

In 12.3–15.8, Philo divides the classes of ascending and descending souls into three varieties. The first are those that do not descend into bodies but (following the Symposium) serve god for the benefit of humanity (12.3–13.1). These are the good Platonic daemons. The second are souls that have descended into bodies but through philosophy re-ascent to have an incorporeal, indestructible life with god (13.1–15.1). The third are those that descend and instead of the life of the mind pursue the things associated with the body such as reputation, money, government posts, and honor (15.1–9). These last two classes describe the human soul that has descended into body, not the daemons of the Symposium. Philo adapts the language of the Symposium, Phaedrus, and Phaedo to portray these last two classes.²³ In 16.1–3, Philo says that “soul,” “angel,” and “daemon” are different words for one and the same underlying reality.²⁶ Just as we say that souls are good and bad and that daemons are good and bad, so too we can say that angels are good and bad. But how is this possible? The good angels are, of course, equivalent to the good daemons of the Symposium, but there are also those that are “unholy and undeserving of the designation.”²⁵ Citing a passage about “evil angels” (δὲ ὁγγέλων πονηρῶν, 17.3) in Psalm 77:49, Philo says:

These are evil [entities] who have assumed the name of “angels.” They do not know the daughters of right reason, knowledge and virtue, but seek pleasures, the mortal offspring of mortal human beings, which do not bear the true beauty that mind alone sees but rather the false beauty of form through which perception is deceived.

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21 De Gig 6.1–2: ίδόντες δὲ οἱ ἀγγέλοι τοῦ θεοῦ τὰς θυγατέρας τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὤτι καλαὶ εἰσὶν, ἔλαβον εὐαυτοῦ γυναῖκας ἀπὸ πασῶν, ὑπὸ ἐξελέξαντο.
22 οὗς ἄλλοι φιλόσοφοι δαίμονας, ἀγγέλους Μωυσῆς εἶσωθέν ὁνομάζειν· ψυχαὶ δ’ εἰσὶ κατὰ τὸν ἄερα πετόμενα.
23 The three classes re-appear in De Somn. 1.138.1–143.5. Again, it is the highest class, the souls that were never attached to bodies, that Philo says are called “daemons” by philosophers but “angels” in the Old Testament.
24 16.1–3: ψυχαὶ οὖν καὶ δαίμονας καὶ ἀγγέλους ὀνόματα μὲν διαφέροντα, ἐν δὲ καὶ ταύτῳ ὑποκείμενον διανοηθεῖς ἄχθος βαρύτατον ἀποθήκη δεισιδαιμονίαν.
25 16.7: ἀνέφρος καὶ ἀνάξιος τῆς προσφησεως.
26 17.4–18.1: οὕτω εἰσιν οἱ πονηροὶ τὸ ἀγγέλων ὄνομα ὑποδύμενοι, τὰς μὲν ὀρθοὺς λόγους θυγατέρας, ἐπιστήμασι καὶ ἀρετάς, οὐκ εἰδότες, τὰς δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων θνητὰς θητην ἀπογόνους ἡδονάς μετερχόμενοι γνήσιον μὲν οὐδὲν ἐπιφερομένας κάλλος, ὁ διἀνοία μόνη θεωρεῖται, νόθον δὲ εὐμορφίαν, δι’ ἦς ἡ αἰσθήσεως ἀπατᾶται.
Thus these fallen souls falsely take on the name of “angels,” but they are not angels at all. They are evil human souls that have descended from the Intelligible into generation. They have abandoned philosophy, and it is they—not god or daemons/angels—that cause harm in the world.

The “angels of god” in the Genesis passage, then, are not Platonic daemons or Old Testament angels. They are impure human souls. It is for this reason that in 16.3 Philo says that we can avoid δεισιδαιμονία, that is “fear of evil daemons.” There are no such beings. Evil is caused not by god or daemons, but by ourselves. Thus, Philo rejects Xenocrates’ claim that there are evil daemons.

There is more evidence for this position in the De Somniis. In 1.133–143, Philo is interpreting Genesis 28.12:

“He [Jacob] dreamed,” he [Moses] says, “and behold a ladder stood fast upon the earth, of which the top reached into heaven, and the angels of god were ascending and descending on it, and the lord stood fast on it.”

Philo writes that the ladder is air, the seat of souls (1.135.1–2). Whereas human souls descend to join with bodies, angels (which, Philo tells us, philosophers call “daemons,” 1.141.1) act as mediators between gods and mortals. These are, again, the daemons of the Symposium, intermediaries who do the work of god. We note also that the air is their abode.

Philo, therefore, accepts daemons (or angels) into his system, but not of the evil variety. Evil arises from the desires and passions of human beings. He also seems thereby to preserve the distinction between the three classes: god, angels/daemons, human souls. There would be no changing from one to the other.

Apuleius, the Middle-Platonic philosopher of Madaura, lived in the generation after Plutarch. In his De Deo Socratis, he gives a detailed account of his demonology, one in which human beings possess a daemon-intellect but do not actually transition into one another.

27 And so I disagree with Dillon 1977, 173: “Philo also recognizes evil angels or daemons.”

28 De Somn. 1.133.3–6: “ἐνυπνιάσθη” φησὶ “καὶ ἵδιον κλίμαξ ἐστηριγμένη ἐν τῇ γῆ, ἢς ἢ κεφαλὴ ἀφικνεῖτο εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν, καὶ οἱ ἀγγέλοι τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνέβαινον καὶ κατέβαινον ἐπ’ αὐτῆς ὁ δὲ κύριος ἐπεστήρικτο ἐπ’ αὐτῆς.”

29 In both De Gig. 7.2–12.1 and De Somn. 1.134.2–138.1, Philo argues that god could not have left any area of the cosmos empty of life. Since there are living creatures in the heavens, in water, and on earth, he would not have left the air bereft of creatures. This in part follows Timaeus 41b7-c2, where the Demiurge says that the world would be incomplete without creatures of the air, water, and earth, but for Plato the creatures of the air were, of course, birds. The idea that air is the domain of daemons comes from the P.-Platonic Epinomis 98d8-e3; cf. Dillon 1977, 172–173. Apuleius makes a similar argument in De Deo 9–11.

30 For a good overview of Apuleius’ demonology, see Dillon 1977, 317–320. Dillon compares Plutarch, but wrongly (in my estimation) thinks that Plutarch and Apuleius agree that souls migrate into daemons and vice versa.
Apuleius places the daemons between gods and mortals, following Plato’s *Symposium* (*De Deo* 13). Daemons share immortality with the gods, and passions with us. Apuleius sums it up this way (13): “Indeed, in order to define them, daemons are in class living creatures, in mind rational, in soul susceptible to passions, in body aerial, in time eternal.” Daemons thus occupy the same territory for Apuleius as they did for Plutarch. As in *De Iside et Osiride* 361b1–8, it is daemons and not the gods that crave sacrifices and other offerings from human beings (*De Deo* 14). Starting in section 15, Apuleius begins to divide the class of daemons, and it is here that he departs from Plutarch. Apuleius calls the first type of daemon *Genius*. This is a human mind, situated in a living human being, that verges toward the good. Apuleius ties the name *genius* to the Latin for “knee” (*genu*) since the knees are grasped when we supplicate someone. The idea is that the *genius* has both a psychic and a corporeal component (mind and knees), and therefore encapsulates the duality of the human being (mind and body). This mind is, appropriately, immortal.

The second class of daemons are also human souls but of those who have died rather than of those who are living. Apuleius calls this type of daemon a *Lemur* (15). He then subdivides the category further. The good daemon of this class is called a *Lars*, which calmly and peacefully watches over family and home (15). The bad daemon in this class is the *Larva*. These daemons are being punished for past sins and so wander the earth without a home. They present harmless frights to good persons but to the bad they can be positively harmful (15). Encompassing both the *Lares* and *Larvae* are the *Di Manes*, although Apuleius is quick to point out that the

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31 *Quippé, ut fine comprehendam, daemones sunt genere animalia, ingenio rationabilia, animo passiva, corpore aeria, tempore aeterna.*

32 *De Deo* 15: *Nam quodam significatu et animus humanus etiam nunc in corpore situs daemon nuncupatur ... Igitur et bona cupido bonus deus est.*

33 As Dillon 1977, 319 points out, the idea that the intellect is a daemon is found in Plato’s *Timaeus* 90c4–6, where Plato puns on the Greek word for happiness ἕπαθωσι. See also A. E. Taylor 1928, 633–634 and F. M. Cornford 1935, 354.

34 The word is not appropriate since *lemures* were normally conceived as vengeful and dangerous. Apuleius is clearly more interested in creating categories than in finding appropriate terminology.

35 *Ex hisce ergo Lemuribus qui posterorum suorum curam sortitus placato et quieto numine domum possidet, Lar dicitur familiaris.*

36 *Qui vero ob adversa vitae merita nullis (bonis) sedibus incerta vagatione ceu quodam exilio punitur, inane terriculamentum bonis hominibus, ceterum malis noxium, id genus plerique Larvas perhibent.*
term “gods” (di) is honoris gratia, given as a term of honoring them, for they are not strictly speaking gods but daemons. Although Apuleius says that the term includes both kinds of Lemures, his explanation of the category shows that the term is not strictly applicable to the evil Larvae. The Di Manes, Apuleius says, have lived their previous life “justly and prudently” (iuste ac prudenter), and this does not jibe with the punishments the Larvae are facing for the misdeeds in their former life.³⁷

At any rate, Apuleius says that these daemons are rewarded with temples and rites of their own (15).³⁸ What is clear is that in these twofold or threefold categories of daemons Apuleius places both good and evil daemons, although the evil ones are dangerous only to bad human beings. Good human beings, evidently, need fear no daemon, good or bad. This is an odd contention, unlike what we found in Plutarch or Philo. It presents interesting evidence for an optimistic view of evil daemons. It should also be noted that the Larvae are the only class of evil daemons mentioned by Apuleius and that, like Philo, Apuleius sees these “evil daemons” as basically human souls of the dead. They are not the daemons of the Symposium. They are, rather, the intellects of those who lived unphilosophically in their immediate past life. They bear some relation to the ghosts that Plato mentioned in the Phaedo except that they are not simply haunting graveyards but wander the earth for an unspecified time.

Apuleius does not assign a name to his final category of daemons, but he is speaking of daemons that were never attached to bodies (and thus were never human). These daemons are eternally good, are entrusted with specific functions in the world (as Love cares for our wakefulness and Sleep for our sleeping), and are associated with the guardian daemon assigned to each person at birth (16).³⁹

In this class Apuleius also includes Socrates’ daemonion. Our own daemon accompanies us through life, escorts us to Hades, and bears witness for or against us at our underworld judgment. Apuleius argues at length that it is in our best interest to cultivate this daemon by being good ourselves. These daemons, unlike the others, are fully separate from human beings and act as intermediaries in the Symposium sense.

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³⁷ Perhaps, though, the misdeeds of the Di Manes were minor, and their lives were on the whole just. Even so, it’s difficult to imagine such daemons having to wander the earth, terrifying bad mortals.

³⁸ Cum vero incertum est, quae cuique eorum sortitio evenerit, utrum Lar sit an Larva, nomine Manem deum nuncupant: scilicet et honoris gratia dei vocabulum additum est; quippe tantum eos deos appellant, qui ex eodem numero iuste ac prudenter curriculo vitae gubernato pro numine postea ab hominibus praeediti fanis et caerimoniosis vulgo advertuntur, ut in Boeotia Amphiaraus, in Africa Mopsus, in Aegypto Osiris, alius alibi gentium, Aesculapius ubique.

³⁹ Sunt autem non posteriore numero, praestantiori longe dignitate, superius alius, augustius genus daemonum, qui semper a corporis conpedibus et nexibus liberis certis potestatibus curant. Quorum e numero Somnus atque Amor diversam inter se vim possident, Amor vigilandi, Somnus soporandi. Ex hac igitur sublimiore daemonum copia Plato autumati (singulis) hominibus in vita agenda testes et custodes singulis additos, qui nemini conspicui semper adsint arbitri omnium non modo actorum verum etiam cogitatorum.
It should be noted that Apuleius does not consistently use this classification of daemons. Leaving aside the (possibly unphilosophical) uses of the Lares in the *Metamorphoses*, the only other time that Apuleius refers to the terminology we have just encountered is at *De Platone* 1.12.25–27, where he is clearly discussing the daemons of the *Symposium*: “They think that daemons, which we can call Genii and Lares, are ministers of the gods and guardians or interpreters for human beings, if they [i.e., the human beings] should wish anything from the gods.”⁴⁰ These Genii and Lares are not previously human beings but rather the best class of daemons that have not been in bodies before. There is a disconnect between terminology and philosophy, but what is more important is that there is also a problem in fitting evil daemons into the Platonic conception of daemons. Apuleius does not mention evil daemons in the *De Platon*.

In the *De Deo Socratis*, at least, we see Apuleius trying to fit ordinary notions about daemons into a Platonic setting. This leads him to create a hierarchy of daemons which seems to include what we would call disembodied and embodied human souls. Among the disembodied variety he includes quasi-evil daemons—they do harm but only to evil human beings. As with Plutarch and Philo, there is here again a difficulty bringing evil daemons fully into the Platonic world. Why did this problem arise for Platonists?

There can be no doubt that there was a belief in daemons and ghosts in popular Greek culture. We have already seen that the concept dates back to at least Hesiod. The spells in the *Papyri Graecae Magicae* make use of daemons and ghosts and help show the power these beings held in the popular imagination. *PGM* 4.1227–64 offers a spell to drive a daemon out. It is multidenominational, calling on the Hebrew and Christian deities as well as on the Gnostic Yao Saboath. The spell follows, complete with a god’s sacred name:⁴¹

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Exellent rite for driving out daemons: *Formula* to be spoken over his head: Place olive branches before him, and stand behind him and say:

“Hail, God of Abraham; Hail, God of Isaac; Hail, God of Jacob; Jesus Chrestos, the Holy Spirit, the Son of the Father, who is above the Seven, who is within the Seven. Bring Iao Saboath; may your power issue forth from him, NN, until you drive away this unclean daemon Satan, who is in him. I conjure you, daemon, whoever you are, by this god Sabarbarbahthioth, Sabarbarathiouth Sabarbarbathioneth, Sabarbarbaphai. Come out, daemon, whoever you are, and stay away from NN, now, now, immediately, immediately. Come out, daemon, since I bind you with unbreakable adamantine fetters, and I deliver you into the black chaos in perdition.”

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⁴⁰ Daemones uero, quos Genios et Lares possimus nuncupare, ministros deorum arbitra[n]tur custodesque hominum et interpretes, si quid a diis uelint.

The spell then indicates how to make a whip from olive branches to use during the exorcism and how to construct an amulet for the possessed to wear afterwards, presumably to keep the demon from re-entering.

For the connection between demons and the souls of the dead, *PGM 4.2006–2125* describes the reanimation of corpse, which we are instructed to summon using a skull, *nomina barbara*, and the skin of an ass, while saying “I conjure you, demon of a dead man [νεκυδαίμων].”⁴ This instance neatly reverses the cases discussed by interlocutors in Plutarch, where the soul of the deceased is transformed into a good daemon as a reward. Here the soul is imagined as an evil daemon that is conjured to do the bidding of a magician.

These two examples, which could easily be multiplied, show that daemons could be dangerous and possess a victim’s body or helpful if controlled by magical spells to do one’s bidding.

It is true that the evidence of the *PGM* is late (probably fourth century) and is aimed at a magical subgroup of society, but some of the individual spells are certainly earlier and there is ample evidence that magical practices were rife in antiquity. The papyri can be supplemented by Philostratus’ third-century CE biography of Apollonius of Tyana, who lived in the first century CE. In 4.10, Philostratus records the remarkable story of the stoning of a beggar man who turns out to be a daemon causing a plague among the Ephesians. At 3.38–39, we learn that Apollonius at a remote distance successfully exorcised a daemon from a boy by handing the boy’s mother a note filled with threats to take to the daemon. The daemon was formerly a soldier slain in combat.³ To this can be added the evidence of Lucian, who delighted in making fun of sorcerers who conjured or exorcised daemons.⁴⁴

Platonic philosophers were therefore caught in a dilemma whether to remain true to Plato’s vision, keeping daemons as helpful intermediaries and as guardians throughout our lives, or somehow taking into account the common views that daemons were dangerous and indeed even the souls of the troubled dead. Furthermore, the everyday stories of ghosts and daemons were finding their way into aristocratic writings like those of Philostratus and others, including even the satiric Lucian. The more accommodating of the Platonists, like Apuleius, began to find ways to include these evil/irrational daemons in their systems. The fit was not perfect, and special pleading was needed, and in the end it would take a synthesizer with a flair for systemizing to solve the problems.

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⁴² Betz 1992, 73–75. For the translation here, see Ogden 2009, 202–203.
⁴³ For another, more traditional exorcism, see 4.20.
⁴⁴ See *Philopseudes* 13 (a Hyperborean evocates daemons from Hades), 16 (Syrian exorcist), 30–31 (a Pythagorean exorcises a ghost from a haunted house).
3. Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*

Confronted with the problem of the role of the human soul in the hierarchy of divine beings, Iamblichus laid out his doctrine clearly in his *De Anima* (section 7):

The doctrine opposed to this, however, separates the Soul off, inasmuch as it has come about as following upon Intellect, representing a distinct level of being, and that aspect of it which is endowed with intellect is explained as being connected with the intellect certainly, but also as subsisting independently on its own, and it separates the soul also from all the superior classes of being, and assigns to it as the particular definition of its essence, either the middle term of divisible and indivisible beings <and of corporeal and in> corporeal being, or the totality of the universal reason-principles, or that which, after the ideas, is at the service of the work of creation, or that life which has life of itself, which proceeds from the Intelligible realm, or again the procession of the classes of real Being as a whole to an inferior substance.

For Iamblichus, the human soul is separate not only from Intellect and the gods, but also from all the other superior classes of souls: angels, daemons, and heroes. In this way, Iamblichus rejects the Hesiodic and common notion that daemons transition from re-born human souls. In *De Myst. 1.8* Iamblichus argues against the view that gods have ethereal bodies, daemons aerial bodies and human souls earthy ones. Among other problems with this conception, Iamblichus says, is the result that the gods and daemons would be permanently separated from humankind in another circumscribed area of the cosmos and so theurgy would be impossible (28.4–10). In 1.9 Iamblichus introduces his doctrine of divine illumination, which allows gods and the superior classes to affect rites on the earth without actually descending or coming into contact with matter. The god or angel shines its ethereal light on the world below and thereby fills it with its power.

Later in 1.20, Iamblichus contrasts the daemons with the gods, bringing out important differences between them. After stating that the visible gods rule the whole of the cosmos whereas the daemons control restricted areas (63.3–9), he says this about the daemons (63.13–64.2 and 64.6–7): “But the attachment to the nature of generation and the division caused by it give a lesser apportionment to the daemons... The gods, therefore, are freed from the powers declining toward generation, but the daemons are not fully purified from them.”

Thus, the daemons not only exercise their authority over only small areas of the earth but they are also to a certain degree contaminated by matter, causing them to be less rational than the gods. This is in keeping with the Middle-Platonic view that daemons are susceptible to passions, but Iamblichus will add a specific theurgic consequence, as we shall see.

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45 ἄλλα τὸ τῆς γενεσιουργῆς φύσει προσκείθεται καὶ μερίζεσθαι παρ’ αὐτήν ἐξ ἀνάγκης καταδειεστέραν μοῖραν δίδωσι τοῖς δαίμοσιν ... Τοιγαροῦν οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ῥεπουσῶν εἰς τὴν γένεσιν δυνάμεων εἰσὶν ἀπηλλαγμένοι δαίμονες δὲ τούτων ὦ πάντη καθαρέως...
Having distinguished daemons from the gods in Book 1 of the De Mysteriis, Iamblichus turns in book 2 to the differences between the various superior classes. (He also introduces here archangels and two kinds of archons into the superior kinds.) The differences in 2.1–10 make clear that the archangels and angels tend to the higher, more unified, better sort of activities while the daemons, heroes, and souls tend to be lower and more divided in what they do. Given the lower group’s proximity to and association with matter, this is not surprising. It does allow for a delineated hierarchy from gods through souls that proves useful in divine rites.

In 2.7, Iamblichus considers differences among the classes with regard to how they present themselves in divine manifestations in rituals (ἐν ταῖς αὐτοτιθεμέναι ἐπίδειξις, 83.8–9). Gods appear with a host of other gods or archangels, archangels with angels, and angels with their own appropriate works (83.9–13). He then turns to a threefold division of daemons (83.13–84.3): 46

Good daemons provide for our observation their creations and goods that they give us; punishing daemons show the forms of their punishment; the others being evil in any way whatever are surrounded by certain wild beasts that are harmful, greedy for blood, and savage.

Iamblichus’ first group can easily be assimilated to the daemons of Plato’s Symposium, whose duties include bringing gifts from the gods above. The second group is not Platonic, but is derivable with a little effort from the Platonic underworld myths, where human souls are allotted a guardian daemon and where they are punished for offenses committed on earth. 47 It is important to notice that these daemons are not evil and should rather be imagined as carrying out justice. 48 The third group are evil and remind us of the goddess Hecate in magical contexts, where she is often accompanied by savage dogs. 49 This is Iamblichus’ first reference to evil daemons. Their evil, we assume, is caused by their partial nature and proximity to matter.

Iamblichus speaks of these evil daemons again, this time in relation to theurgic rites, in 3.31. Iamblichus prefaces his account by saying that it is what he has heard from Chaldaean prophets (176.1–2). 50 In theurgic rituals, the gods are the givers of good and by their illumination make what is “evil and daemonic (τὸ κακὸν καὶ δαμόνιον)” disappear (176.6–7). When the theurgists in charge of the ritual are impure, however, they fail to make contact with the gods and encounter evil daemons instead (176.11–177.6). Thus, these misguided theurgists and evil daemons are respon-

46 τῶν δ’ ἀγαθῶν δαμόνων τὰ σφέτερα δημιουργήματα καὶ ἀγαθά, ἃ δωροῦνται, συνθεωρεῖσθαι παρεχόμενα, τῶν δὲ τιμωρῶν δαμόνων τὰ εἰδή τῶν τιμωρῶν ἐμπαινόντων, τῶν δ’ ἄλλων ὁπωσοῦν ποιητῶν θηρία τινά βλαβερὰ καὶ αἰμοβόρα καὶ ἁγία περικειμένων.
47 Plutarch acknowledged a category of punishing daemons as well, as we have seen: De Def. Or. 417a11-b1, ἄλλους δὲ τῶν ὑπερήφανῶν καὶ μεγάλων τιμωροὺς ἀδικῶν περιπολεῖν.
48 Pace Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell 2003, 101 n.137.
49 See for example Apollonius Rhodius, Argonautica 3.1216–1217; Horace, Satires 1.8.34–35.
50 For the role of evil daemons in the Chaldaean Oracles, see Lewy 2011, 259–309 and Majercik 1989, 13–14.
sible for theurgic rites that have gone wrong. The theurgists aim to bring in a god and bring in instead evil daemons or *antitheoi* (177.13–14).\(^5\)

Iamblichus’ compromise, then, is to allow for the existence of evil daemons and to give them a role in the cosmos. They are a separate category, not related either to human souls or (it seems) to good or punishing daemons. As in the Greek mainstream, the evil daemons cause trouble for human beings and are a source of evil in the cosmos, but Iamblichus stresses their role in derailing successful theurgy. It is important to notice that they are not alone responsible since an incompetent theurgist is also needed. In Iamblichus’ opinion, the well-trained competent theurgist would not accidentally contact an evil daemon. The theurgist knows the art and unerringly contacts the correct superior kinds or deities. Book 2 of the *De Mysteriis* is full of signs that give an indication that the correct divinity has been reached. The theurgist knows these signs as well as others. And once the right divinity has been encountered, the success of the ritual is guaranteed. The gods eradicate any evil daemons in the area, removing them with their illumination.

The main role of evil daemons, therefore, is a negative one. They give an explanation for what one might think is bad theurgy or black magic. The distinction between true theurgy and *γοητεία* is a central concern of Iamblichus in book 3 of the *De Mysteriis*. The corruption of the would-be theurgist and the meddling of evil daemons helps inform the distinction and at the same time provides a defense of theurgy as the only trustworthy method by which human beings can make contact with the gods.

### 4. Conclusion

The role of daemons in daily life might seem irrational to many today, but in the ancient world daemons were part of the religious machinery. Any philosopher who had a concern for religion and theology could not avoid them. Plato himself was such a religious figure. In the *Republic* (379b1-c7) he claimed that since god is good, he could do nothing harmful (βλαβερόν). God is the giver of good things to humankind. In the *Symposium*, Plato gave a similar role to daemons, who became the gods’ go-betweens with mortals, bringing good things to them. In the *Phaedo*, he showed that ghosts were merely souls weighed down with matter from their previous lives.

In the non-philosophical world, daemons and ghosts were not so helpful. They were evil and caused harm to human beings. The intellectual elite took note of these popular notions, and even Platonists began to consider a role for them in their philosophies.

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\(^5\) καὶ ποτὲ μὲν, ὡς δοκεῖ, θεόν ἄλλον ἀνθ’ ἥτερου ποιοῦντα ἐπικωμάζειν, τοτε δ’ αὐ δαίμονας πονηροὺς ἀντὶ τῶν θεῶν εἰσκρίνοντα, οὕς δὴ καὶ καλοῦσιν ἀντιθέους. For the term ἀντίθεος, see Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell 2003, 199 n.244.
No philosopher was more concerned about religious matters than Iamblichus. His *De Mysteriis* is a meticulous rebuttal of what he saw as the false argumentation of his fellow Platonists. Iamblichus begins with basic Platonic doctrines: the gods are good, daemons are intermediaries, and the gods do not descend into this world. He then begins to speculate on the underlying rationale for these and other Platonic precepts. The gods kept clear of the material realm themselves, but they could create pure spaces within it by illuminating the area or objects with their ethereal light. This conception allowed sacred objects (stones, statues, etc.) to exist on earth and also provided a means for the gods to raise us to them via their rays, both integral parts of theurgy. As a corollary, the realm of matter itself seemed darker, more dangerous. Plato had already suggested the danger of matter in the *Phaedo* and *Timaeus*, as well as elsewhere. Iamblichus exploited that notion, and argued that matter affected not only human souls but also those of the lower divinities that participated directly with it: daemons and heroes. Iamblichus had already argued that daemons had a jurisdiction over parts of the material realm. It was a natural extension of this concept that some daemons, like many human souls, became contaminated by matter, took on problematic desires. These desires caused them to want what they shouldn’t have, and thus they became evil daemons, masquerading as gods and interfering with theurgical rites. Given Iamblichus’ concern for religion and religious rites, the progression is natural. It is also rational, carried out with logical aplomb. Furthermore, his resulting doctrine not only solves problems with his contemporaries’ and predecessors’ views, it also is more coherent and more thorough than theirs. He gives a rational explanation and underpinning for the workings of the religion of his times, including the role of daemons and souls of deceased human beings in it.