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This article was originally published in

Plato in Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times:

Selected Papers from the Seventeenth Annual Conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies

Edited John F. Finamore and Mark Nyvlt

ISBN 978 1 898910 909

Published in 2020 by The Prometheus Trust, Lydney, UK.

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On Evil Daemons in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*¹

Julio Cesar Moreira

Introduction

Scholars have noted that, in *De Mysteriis*, Iamblichus rejects Porphyry's daemonology and denies that daemons are subject to passions (πάθη) and affected by matter (ύλη) in a way that would change their essential good nature.² Nevertheless, in the course of his replies to Porphyry, Iamblichus seems to accept the existence of evil daemons without offering any arguments to sustain it. Previous interpreters have attempted to address this question by referencing Iamblichus' exposition in a haphazard way, leading always to unsatisfactory readings of the issue.³ The complication comes from the fact that Iamblichus' discussion of what seems to be an unprecedented daemonology is scattered in an intricate way throughout the ten books that constitute *De Mysteriis*. In an attempt to untangle a coherent understanding of the subject from the warp and woof of Iamblichus' exposition, I propose a systematic analysis of his

¹ Previous versions of this paper were presented at the 17th Annual Conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies (2019) and at the 10th Annual Cambridge Graduate Conference in Ancient Philosophy (2020). I would like to thank John Finamore and the blind reviewer for their critiques, commentaries, and suggestions.

² For Porphyry on evil daemons see his *De Abstinencia*, 2.37-53; Moreira (2019a) 93-94. On Porphyry's daemonology see Timotin (2012) 208-215; Brisson (2018); Akcay (2018); Greenbaum (2018).

³ E.g.: Finamore (2017) 375, n. 31: "This solution, however, must remain a matter of speculation since we do not possess Iamblichus' teaching on the matter". Timotin (2012), unable to understand the distinction between good and evil daemons in Iamblichus, offers a poor conjectural solution by affirming that, for Iamblichus, all daemons are more or less evil: "*Néanmoins, tous les daimones sont, chez Jamblique, plus ou moins mauvais pour autant qu' ils soient liés au monde sensible et à la matière, la distinction entre les αγαθοί et les πονηροί étant beaucoup moins nette que chez Porphyre.*" (221-222). Most recently, O'Neil (2018) states that Iamblichus is inconsistent in his discussion on evil demons and makes a case "for the need for further studies on the demonology of Iamblichus" (161).

daemonology that strictly follows the sequence of his explanations throughout the work, paying close attention to the order and context in which they appear, without anticipating relations in the text.

Given the epistolary nature of the work, his daemonology is exposed in bits amidst his series of responses to the set of problems (ἀπορίαι) proposed by Porphyry on the nature of the gods and the appropriate modes of worshipping them. On initial reading, this makes it seem like the discussion of evil daemons is offered in a disconnected manner. In the sections below, following the book divisions of *De Mysteriis*, we gather and analyze Iamblichus' theory of evil and daemonology, exposing how he, in a coherent dialectic, systematically rejects the possibility of the existence of evil daemons. We argue that, according to Iamblichus, either one confuses other entities for daemons, or when daemons do evil things, they are being manipulated by evil humans.

*

Starting, then, from Book I, from its beginning we apprehend that a daemon is a superior, divine genus,⁴ intermediary between human souls and the gods,⁵ responsible for implementing “order and measure into the participation descending from the better and the receptivity engendered in less perfect beings.”⁶ Being so, daemons are the cause of the indissolubility of the linkage that connects gods with souls, “binding together a single continuity from top to bottom”⁷. Furthermore, daemons are “eternal, and constantly in attendance upon the gods”, acting in a submissive way to the “good will of the gods [they follow]”,⁸ from whom they receive “the causal principles (τὰς ὄλων αἰτίας)”,⁹ “revealing in action their invisible goodness.”¹⁰ In this way, they preserve “an image of the administration of the gods”,¹¹

⁴ For θεῖον γένος: *De Myst.*, I.5.16,5; I.8.24,11; κρείττονα γένος: I.3.9,1; I.4.10,11; I.8.26,5; I.10.33,9-10 I.10.37,2-3; I.10.38,6-7.

⁵ Cf. I.5.17,6-7.

⁶ *De Myst.*, I.5.17,12-13. All translations from *De Myst.* are by Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell (2004), unless otherwise indicated.

⁷ Cf. I.5.17,7-8.

⁸ Cf. I.5.16,12-13.

⁹ Cf. I.5.17,14-15.

¹⁰ Cf. I.5.16,12-13.

¹¹ *De Myst.*, I.10.36,8-9.

“giving expression to the ineffable and causing the formless to shine forth in forms, bringing out *lógos* of that which is beyond *logos*.”¹²

To put it briefly, what we can grasp so far is that daemons are eternal and incorruptible agents of the good will of the gods into the realm of generation and, in this way, they exercise a unilateral relation with materiality, implementing order and measure into it.¹³ Befittingly intermediary beings between gods and souls, daemons bring to completion the common bond that connects top to bottom the chain of beings.

At a certain point (I.8), Iamblichus firmly rejects Porphyry's hypothesis which confines daemons to be assigned to aerial bodies only, and explains further that “they have a prior existence separate from bodies and unmixed in themselves.”¹⁴ In addition, he emphasizes that daemons are “impassible”¹⁵ and do not “admit any alteration emanating from bodies.”¹⁶ Accordingly, they “do not cease to maintain the divine order, and never depart from it.”¹⁷

Following next, in I.18, Iamblichus discusses the cause of evil in the world. He explains that the cause is not the gods or any of the divine beings, but the feeble participation of the material and earthly realm (τῶν ἐνύλων καὶ περιγείων τόπων) in the divine powers. All the gods

¹² *De Myst.*, I.5.17,1-3; Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell (2004) translation slightly modified: τό τε γὰρ ἄρρητον αὐτοῦ ῥητὸν καὶ τὸ ἀνείδειον ἐν εἴδει διαλάμπουσιν, καὶ τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντα λόγον αὐτοῦ εἰς λόγους φανεροῦς προσάγουσιν. Having in mind the role of the φυσικοὶ λόγοι and the ἔνυλα εἶδη in Iamblichus' philosophy, we can grasp from this passage that daemons are the means by which the Demiurgic λόγοι descend from the World-Soul to give form to sensible things in the realm of generation. For an overview of the Iamblican universe, see Dillon's introduction to his edition of *Iamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta* (1973), 29-52. For ἔνυλον εἶδος, see *De Myst.* I.8.24,7; V.8.208,9; VII.2.251,1. For λόγοι, see *In Tim.* fr. 9 and 10, and Dillon's notes *ad loc.*; *De Myst.* V.8.208,8; Manoela (1998) and Lautner (2009) 374-377. See also Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell (2004) 239, n.297.

¹³ See n. 11 above.

¹⁴ Cf. *De Myst.*, I.8.24,8-9: χωριστὰ ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων καὶ ἀμιγῆ καθ' ἑαυτὰ προϋπάρχει. For more details on this dispute about the spatio-material circumscription of daemons, see Timotin (2012), 142-146 and O'Neil (2018) 169 ff.

¹⁵ Cf. *De Myst.*, I.10.37,1-3.

¹⁶ Cf. I.11.37,15-16.

¹⁷ Cf. I.10.36,9-10.

are alike good and causes of good,¹⁸ and their powers are “projected down here and mingled with the realm of generation” for the “preservation” and to “hold together” the whole of this realm. Even though they are entering a realm of change and passion, these powers remain “impassive and unchanging (*ἀπαθεῖς τέ εἰσι καὶ ἄτρεπτοι*).”¹⁹ However, despite the fact that these powers descend for the good of this realm, they are received in an inconsistent, conflicting and divided way (*διαίρεσει μαχομένως καὶ μεριστῶς*). Due to its multiform composition and construction, the realm of generation receives with struggle and in a fragmentary manner the undivided/unitary powers of the gods, flawing them according to its nature.²⁰ Although beings in matter participate in beauty and the perfection of the whole, they assume a share of matter’s indigence and, in virtue of corporality restrictions, they cannot bear the activity of the whole.²¹ Since becoming is only participant in being, becoming diverges from that in which it participates, and by receiving this participation as being another, becoming is incapable of embracing alterity in a full and harmonious manner.²² It follows, then, that evil is an outcome of the flawed reception of divine powers due to the incapacity of materiality to fully take them in. To accuse the gods of being causative of any evil is to transfer materiality’s own debility to the primary causes.²³ It is important to emphasize that, for Iamblichus, matter is not inherently evil: what happens is that matter does not have the capacity to receive in an appropriate manner the powers emanated from the gods.²⁴

¹⁸ Cf. I.18.53,6-7.

¹⁹ Cf. II.18.53,11-54,1.

²⁰ Cf. I.18.54,1-5.

²¹ Cf. I.18.54, 6-11.

²² Cf. I.18.55, 3-6: “For there would never have been any such thing as participation in the first place, if the participant had not some divergent element in it as well. And if it receives what is participated in as something other and different, it is just this element (the one that is other) that, in the terrestrial realm, is evil and disordered.”

²³ Cf. I.18.55,10-56,1: “...since the feebleness of the material and earthly realm is not able fully to take in the unsullied power and pure life-force of aetherial entities, it transfers its own vulnerability to the primary causes”. It is, says Iamblichus, “as if a sick person, who was not able to bear the lifegiving heat of the sun, dared falsely to accuse it, because of his personal problems, of not being useful for health or life” (*De Myst.*, I.18.56,2-4).

²⁴ In Book IV (8-9), Iamblichus further discuss the problem of justice and evil and reiterates this conclusion.

After explaining the cause of evil, Iamblichus elaborates further on daemons. Differently from the all-embracing powers of the gods, daemons possess “only a partial form of essence and power”, being “to some extent of the same nature as, and inseparable from, those things that they administer.”²⁵ Accordingly, their influence is restricted to the portions of the cosmos that they administer.²⁶ In spite of all this, Iamblichus points to the fact that their concern with bodies “does not result in any diminution in status.”²⁷

Book I seems, therefore, to advocate for the impossibility of daemons being or becoming evil in any way whatsoever. Matter's flawed receptivity of divine powers causes no influence on daemons since they are separate from and anterior to it. There is, nonetheless, one last piece of information in Book I that compels scholars to speculate that Iamblichus is inconsistently conveying an ontological condition for daemons to be subject to passions and consequently to become evil:²⁸ when affirmed that daemons are not entirely pure from “powers which incline towards generation.”²⁹ However, since what Iamblichus immediately does is to, once more, vehemently reaffirm that daemons (and any higher class of being) are “impassible (ἀπαθής)”,³⁰ we can be sure in our understanding that πάθος is not the reason of this “impurity.” Even though Iamblichus leaves this as an open issue in Book I, throughout the following investigation we will keep track of a solution for this issue. As I argue later, there is strong evidence leading to a solution for daemons to remain impassible and subject to these powers.

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Book II is mainly dedicated to describing the characteristic features of the superior classes. In what concerns the daemons, Iamblichus begins by defining them and distinguishing their nature, power and activity,³¹ in a very coherent way with what has been exposed about

²⁵ Cf. I.20.63,5-9.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁷ Cf. I.20.63,11-13.

²⁸ E.g.: Finamore (1985) 50-51, (2010) 126-127; O'Neil (2018) 181.

²⁹ Cf. I.20.64,6-10: Τοιγαροῦν οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ῥεπουσῶν εἰς τὴν γένεσιν δυνάμεων εἰσὶν ἀπηλλαγμένοι· δαίμονες δὲ τούτων οὐ πάντη καθαρεύουσιν.

³⁰ Cf. *De Myst.*, I.21.

³¹ Cf. II.1-2.

them so far. Daemons are defined as “the generative and creative powers of the gods in the furthest extremity of their emanations and in its last stages of division.”³² Therefore, their nature is to exercise “oversight on each thing coming into existence.”³³ Hence, it follows that their activities “extend further into the cosmos, and have greater sway over the things accomplished by them.”³⁴ Moreover, their nature is also said to be “fit for finishing and completing encosmic natures”³⁵ and, accordingly, their productive powers “oversee nature and the bond uniting souls to bodies.”³⁶

Thus, given that daemons are, in fact, the creative powers of the gods in its furthest stages of division, their manifestations are adequately described³⁷ as having “varied (ποικιλώτερα)”³⁸ and “unstable (ἄστατόν)”³⁹ appearances; glowing with “smouldering fire (θολῶδες διαφαίνουσι τὸ πῦρ)”;⁴⁰ shedding a very fractionated and unequal light;⁴¹ displaying, therefore, “obscure (ἀμυδρά)” images of themselves.⁴² Likewise, by the description of their nature, power and activity, we can recall not only the accounts in Book I about the struggle and self-contradictory conflicts of the divine powers when getting in contact with matter, but we can also compare with Plato’s *Timaeus* (45a5-b1) description about the entrance of the soul into the body as a violent process that causes opposed affections and phenomena.⁴³ Bearing all this in mind, there should be no astonishment to read that manifestations of daemons are “frightening

³² *De Myst.*, II.1.67,3-5.

³³ *De Myst.*, II.1.67,10-11.

³⁴ *De Myst.*, II.2.68,3-5.

³⁵ *De Myst.*, II.1.67,9-10.

³⁶ *De Myst.*, II.1.67,12-68,1.

³⁷ In contrast to an increasing degree of stability and clarity of higher beings.

³⁸ *De Myst.*, II.3.71,6.

³⁹ *De Myst.*, II.4.79,2.

⁴⁰ *De Myst.*, II.4.77,10.

⁴¹ Cf. II.4.76,1-2.

⁴² *De Myst.*, II.4.77,4.

⁴³ Love mixed with pleasure, fear, rage, pain, plus the resultant phenomena from all of them with their natural contraries. As notes Francisco Lisi (2007) 113, n. 19: “Commentaries and translations usually overlook that here *Timaeus* is not speaking of sense perception in general, but of a unique sensation produced by the violent entrance of the soul into the body.”

(ἡμερώτερα)⁴⁴ and “draw down the soul towards nature”;⁴⁵ or that it presents oppositions such as: at the same time that their visions “possess beauty (ἔχει τὸ κάλλος)”,⁴⁶ it is accompanied by “tumult and disorder (ταραχὴ δὲ καὶ ἀταξία).”⁴⁷ In like manner, their manifestations provide a harmonious organization of matter⁴⁸ and concurrently “weighs down the body, and afflicts it with diseases”,⁴⁹ conferring goods of the body “only when the order of the cosmos permits”, but never goods of the soul.⁵⁰ I suggest, therefore, that the conflicting nature of the manifestations of daemons is an intrinsic characteristic of their realm, where divine powers associate with matter.

Moving forward, in II.7, when answering Porphyry's question about “what is the sign of the presence of a god, an angel, an archangel, a daemon, or of some archon or a soul”,⁵¹ one distinction Iamblichus explains is that: in ritualistic visions, demonstrations are generated by which it is possible to verify the hierarchical order (τάξις) of the entity manifested.⁵² At this point, he distinguishes three types of daemons:

good daemons presenting for contemplation their own productions, and the goods which they bestow; punitive daemons displaying their forms of punishment; the others who are wicked in whatsoever way surrounded by harmful beasts, greedy for blood and savage (τῶν δ' ἀγαθῶν δαιμόνων τὰ σφέτερα δημιουργήματα καὶ ἀγαθὰ, ἃ δωροῦνται, συνθεωρεῖσθαι παρεχόντων, τῶν δὲ τιμωρῶν δαιμόνων τὰ εἶδη τῶν τιμωριῶν ἐμφαινόντων, τῶν δ' ἄλλων ὅπως οὖν πονηρῶν θηρία τινὰ βλαβερὰ καὶ αἰμοβόρα καὶ ἄγρια περικειμένων).
De Myst., II.7.83,13-84,3

⁴⁴ *De Myst.*, II.3.71,12.

⁴⁵ *De Myst.*, II.5.79,7; cf. II.1.67,13-68.1.

⁴⁶ Cf. II.3.73,11-14.

⁴⁷ *De Myst.*, II.3.72,13.

⁴⁸ *De Myst.*, II.5.81,1-2.

⁴⁹ *De Myst.*, II.6.86,7-8.

⁵⁰ Cf. II.9.89,8-10.

⁵¹ *De Myst.*, II.3.70,7-9.

⁵² *De Myst.*, II.7.

I agree with Seamus O’Neil that punitive daemons (τιμωρός δαίμων) cannot be considered evil, since this activity has a just and necessary role in Iamblichus’ psycho-cosmological scheme.⁵³ I also do not dispute the unanimous reading among scholars that these “others who are wicked in whatsoever way” are evil daemons (πονηρός δαίμων).⁵⁴ Thus, in Book II, we see Iamblichus acknowledging the possibility of evil daemons within a context that deals with the practical experience of ritualistic epiphanies. Given that this comes after Book I — where he had theorized on the truth about these superior beings in an incompatible way with his reasonings about evil —, it seems plausible to suppose that Iamblichus is assuming that, in the practical experience of a ritual, one can have epiphanies of evil daemons that in theory are impossible. Thus, we have our main problem established without any further explanations about evil daemons in Book II. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind the contrast settled here between theory and practice, for, as I argue in conclusion, this is precisely the dialect Iamblichus is elaborating for the scrutiny of the issue about the existence of evil daemons.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that late in Book II, Iamblichus clarifies that deceitful epiphanies, which are themselves deceitful or the cause of any deceitfulness, are “any of the real and existing classes of being.”⁵⁵ “Deceitfulness”, he explains, is a result of errors in the theurgic technique (θεουργική τέχνη), summoning “inferior kinds” which are not even beings and belong to the “realm of deceptive and aberrant.”⁵⁶ Further explanation on these deceitful inferior kinds and their discrimination from daemons is given in Book III, as I suggest in what follows.

Book III is mainly dedicated to the scrutiny of divine possession (ἐνθουσιασμός), and divination (μαντεία). On what concerns divine possession, Iamblichus clarifies that inspiration (ἐπίπνοια) generated

⁵³ See O’Neil (2018) 182-183.

⁵⁴ One can speculate if these “others (ἄλλα)” are a new kind added by Iamblichus to the original inquiry of Porphyry, as he does elsewhere with heroes, in this manner they would not necessarily be daemons. Nonetheless, in the case of heroes, Iamblichus explicitly justifies their addition (*De Myst.*, II.3.71,9-12), what makes the lack of justification in the case of the “others” indicative that he is actually admitting the epiphanies of evil daemons.

⁵⁵ Cf. II.10.93,13-34-1.

⁵⁶ Cf. II.10.91,6-92-5.

from the gods are the cause of true possession and not daemons.⁵⁷ In the context of divination, in a discussion about the ritual process of standing on characters, Iamblichus explains that there is a vulgar kind of this practice that employs “falsehood and deceit of an intolerable nature” since it manifests “an indistinct and phantom-like appearance (εἰδωλικὴν ἔμφασιν) which (...) is likely to be disturbed by evil daemonic *pneumas*.”⁵⁸ Here, Iamblichus seems to admit that evil daemons have an overpowering influence over this phantasmic appearance resultant from these kinds of poorly executed rituals; but, besides that, nothing else is said about evil daemons.

Moving forward, late in Book III (22-30), Iamblichus deals with Porphyry's claim that human beings, by means of the inherent powers of its soul, are capable of creating daemons from material substances,⁵⁹ and strongly disapproves what he calls “wonder-working of phantasms (τῶν φαντασμάτων θαυματουργία).”⁶⁰ He explains that there is a εἰδωλοποιητικὴ τέχνη⁶¹ but the φαντάσματα it produces are nothing more than a simulacrum (εἶδωλον): “lifeless images, infused only by an outward appearance of life, being held together externally by a contrived and many-shaped harmony, and wholly ephemeral things.”⁶² They are not real beings⁶³ and must not be mistaken for daemons. For daemons “exist prior to both soul and bodily powers” and no “particular sensible bodies engender daemons; far rather are these [*eidola*] both generated and watched over by daemons.”⁶⁴ Iamblichus also explains that “the nature of daemons is one thing, that of *eidola* another; the rank of each of them (in the universe) is also very widely different.”⁶⁵ Eidolons can only bring evil and deception,⁶⁶ he alerts.

⁵⁷ Cf. III.7.114,7-8.

⁵⁸ Cf. III.13.130,3-5.

⁵⁹ Cf. III.22.152,6-9.

⁶⁰ *De Myst.*, III.29.173,5-6.

⁶¹ *De Myst.*, III.28.168,10.

⁶² *De Myst.*, III.29.171,5-8. At III.29.172,4-7, Iamblichus gives the comparable example of images formed by incense vapors, easily dispersible. In a similar manner, in II.10.93,7-94,5, Iamblichus compare eidolons to apparitions in water or in mirrors.

⁶³ Cf. III.29.171,8-172,7.

⁶⁴ *De Myst.*, III.30.174,5-6.

⁶⁵ *De Myst.*, III.30.175,4-6. Iamblichus further adds that “the choral leader of the *eidola* is different from the great leader of the daemons” (Ibid.; Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell (2004) translation slightly modified).

All these descriptions give us a better comprehension of the “deceptive inferior kinds” that can result from errors in the theurgic technique, which Iamblichus spoke of in Book II,⁶⁷ as well as the “phantasmic appearance (εἰδωλικὴν ἔμφρασινα)” disturbed by evil daemons, mentioned above (III.13).⁶⁸

From this line of reasoning, it follows that there is no use of this kind of artificial entity in a sacred action or foreknowledge of the future.⁶⁹ However, in respect to divination, daemons are of no direct use either. For even though daemons cannot be generated from the powers in bodies, “while preceding and existing before them, they are moved along with them through specific similarity.”⁷⁰ According to this opinion, daemons are mounted on matter of living beings and therefore are sympathetically (συμπαθῶς) drawn to it.⁷¹ On these

⁶⁶ Cf. III.29.172,8-173,6.

⁶⁷ Cf. n.55 and 56 above.

⁶⁸ Athanassiadi (1993) 122-123, *contra* Dodds (1951) 294 and n.94, reads III.28-30 as Iamblichus condemning the process of statue-animation. I agree with Emma Clarke (2001) 26 and n.55 *ad loc.*, that in *De Mysteriis* “this phenomenon is, in fact, conspicuous by its absence”. Moreover, as noted above in n.62, Iamblichus seems to refer to eidolons as materialized ghostly appearances. For Clarke (2001) 102-104, however, these *eidola* are only false visionary epiphanies. Given the lack of a systematic clarification on this subject in what we have of Iamblichus’ works, I would go further and consider the possibility of different kinds of eidolons, ranging from materialized ghostly appearances to false visionary epiphanies.

⁶⁹ Cf. *De Myst.*, II.30.175,9-11: “Of what worth, then, would be a sacred action or foreknowledge of the future, which has absolutely no share of a god or of a daemon? Hence, it is necessary to know the nature of this wonder-making, but to make no use of it nor hold it true.”

⁷⁰ *De Myst.*, III.22.154,6-8.

⁷¹ Cf. III.22.154,4-6. While some scholars interpret this passage as having an ironic tone and, therefore, not as something that Iamblichus believes himself, I do not see any reason to assume that this is the case. In contrast to all the other theories that Iamblichus expressly refutes and rejects in the previous paragraph (III.22.152,6-153-13), we see him approaching this hypothesis in a very different way. On initial reading, he goes so far as to say that, even if you were to concede that daemons are subject to the influence of sympathy, Porphyry’s reasoning is still invalid (cf. III.22.154,8-10). He neither agrees nor disagrees with the idea and does not question whether it is true or not. All we can say is that he leaves it as an open possibility. Nonetheless, Iamblichus’ favorable stance on the subject becomes apparent when he uses this opinion, that daemons are subject to the influence of sympathy, to conclusively refute Porphyry: “For foreknowledge and

terms, Iamblichus concludes that since “they are ever so subject to the influence of sympathy”, foreknowledge and forecasting are not their province.⁷² True divination, “belongs to the gods”,⁷³ “a power that is freed from all these [sympathetic influence or of something enmeshed in matter and held fast in a specific place and body]”⁷⁴ and “we should not believe that this is sown by nature.”⁷⁵

From the conclusions discussed above, assuming the possibility that daemons are indeed subjected to the influence of *συμπαθεια*, it is worth recalling that by the end of Book I an interrogation was left open about how daemons were not subject to passions but at the same time were not completely pure from “powers which incline towards matter.”⁷⁶ Despite the lack of a firm ground to yet conclusively affirm that *συμπαθεια* is the way by which daemons are not completely pure from these powers which incline towards matter, it is here where this possibility is first raised in the dialogue. As we will see in the analysis of books IV and V, this is an important assumption to keep in mind.

Taking stock of all that has been said, lastly in Book III, Iamblichus rejects as unworthy of discussion the opinion of the Christians⁷⁷ that “all divination is accomplished by the evil daemon.”⁷⁸ Instead, he offers the accounts of the Chaldaean prophets about these matters⁷⁹ as an opinion much more worthy to be discussed than the previous one of the Christians, as it seems.⁸⁰ In sum, he explains that, according to the

forecasting are not the province of a power exerting sympathetic influence or of something enmeshed in matter and held fast in a specific place and body, but, on the contrary it is characteristic of a power that is freed from all these. And let that be a corrective to this opinion of yours.” (*De Myst.*, III.22.154,10-13) If Iamblichus did not believe that daemons are subject to sympathy, he would be shooting himself in the foot in his corrective to Porphyry. Moreover, as we will see further in IV.10 and V.10, he appropriates the theory for his own argument.

⁷² Cf. III.22.154,8-11.

⁷³ *De Myst.*, III.27.166,7.

⁷⁴ *De Myst.*, III.22.154,11-12.

⁷⁵ *De Myst.*, III.27.166,8.

⁷⁶ Cf. n.29 above.

⁷⁷ Whom Iamblichus calls “the atheists”; see Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell (2004) 201 n.246.

⁷⁸ *De Myst.*, III.31.179,9-10.

⁷⁹ *De Myst.*, III.31.176,1-2.

⁸⁰ Here, it is worth mentioning a “mode of exposition” explained in the beginning of the work, at I.2, in which Iamblichus proposes to present both the doctrine of

Chaldaean prophets, if someone involved in mantic “assault the divine in a lawless and disorderly manner”, “full of passion and evil”, as consequence they will “draw evil spirits to themselves because of kinship”, being “excited by them toward every vice”. That is what causes “evil daemons to enter [into the sacred works] instead of gods.”⁸¹ So they who associate with evil daemons “are obviously in conflict with the theurgists”, adds Iamblichus. It is important to note that Iamblichus is careful to point out that what he is calling “evil daemons”, the Chaldaeans actually call “anti-gods.”⁸² This seems to indicate that this association is something Iamblichus himself is taking the liberty to make.⁸³ If that is so, even though it is not his own opinion being exposed in the passage, the “evil daemons” is Iamblichus’ own interpretation of the Chaldean “anti-gods”; most probably with his own understanding of evil daemons that he seems to be admitting since Book II.

Book IV starts by addressing a very troubling doubt for Porphyry about how gods are invoked as our superiors, but then men give them orders as if they were our inferiors.⁸⁴ In this regard, Iamblichus explains that, although the theurgist is a man, by the control of divine symbols (σύμβολα-συνθήματα⁸⁵), he assumes “the mantle of the

the Chaldaeans and his own opinion on the subject. Cf. I.2.5,7-11. See also Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell (2004) 9, n. 11 and 12. Concerning their note 11, I am choosing to excise τὴν γνώμην. What is clear, therefore, is that, in III.31, Iamblichus puts himself aside from the opinion he is about to narrate.

⁸¹ Cf. *De Myst.*, III.31.177,13.

⁸² *De Myst.*, III.31.177,14.

⁸³ See Timotin (2012) 225-228 on how this account is analogous to Porphyry’s and Plutarch’s approach. Nonetheless, Timotin, by not recognizing the detachment of Iamblichus from the accounts of the Chaldaean prophets (cf. n.79 above), assumes a different interpretation than ours and qualifies this passage as an “*appendice chaldéenne*” (228) that “*brouille le schéma théologique élaboré dans les chapitres précédents*” (226).

⁸⁴ *De Myst.*, IV.1.

⁸⁵ On σύμβολα-συνθήματα in Iamblichus see Shaw (1995) *passim*; Addey (2014) 30-32; Moreira (2019b). See also Struck (2004) for a comprehensive study on the notion of “symbol” from Homer to the theurgic practices of late antiquity in Iamblichus and Proclus.

gods.”⁸⁶ By these means, the invoker can give orders to a certain class of daemons that is alogical and acritical (ἀλόγιστον καὶ ἄκριτον γένος).⁸⁷ This kind of daemon, says Iamblichus, “has just one power” and is “naturally adapted to perform only that role to which they are assigned”, just like “the role of a knife is to cut, and it does nothing else but this.”⁸⁸

Later, in IV.6-7, dealing with the issue of injustices resulting from invocations, Iamblichus commits himself to starting a search for “the number and nature of the causes which from time to time give rise to evils.”⁸⁹ Anticipating a conflict of evidence, he remarks that their doubts in this matter must not dissociate them “from the truly clear conception of the gods”, i.e., that they are essentially good and causes only of good, therefore, “free of responsibility for any evil”, since “they commit no injustice.”⁹⁰

Iamblichus then begins by conditionally assuming that in his previous answers two causes of evil have already been established: idolons and evil daemons.⁹¹ Next (IV.8-10), he elaborates another cause, explaining that certain people, in their invocations, by their audacity (τόλμα)⁹² and intention (κατὰ προαίρεσις),⁹³ “make use of physical or corporeal powers of the universe” and the sympathy (συμπαθεια) it sets in motion, “contrary to justice, towards

⁸⁶ *De Myst.*, IV.2.184,6. Iamblichus explains next that the theurgic τέχνη “both naturally invokes the powers from the universe as superiors, inasmuch as the invoker is a man, and yet on the other hand gives them orders, since it invests itself, by virtue of the ineffable symbols, with the hieratic role of the gods.” (*De Myst.* IV.184,7-10) However, Iamblichus warns that if someone uses this power to commit injustices “the harm resulting from that wicked act will appropriately recoil upon him” (IV.1.182,11-13).

⁸⁷ *De Myst.*, II.1.182,2. Cf. II.2.183,2-3: “For these commands are addressed to spirits that have no reason or principle of judgement of their own.”

⁸⁸ Cf. II.1.182,2-5.

⁸⁹ *De Myst.*, IV.7.190,4-5.

⁹⁰ Cf. IV.6.

⁹¹ Cf. IV.7.190,7-10: “For if we were speaking truly just now about idolons and evil daemons, who assume the appearance of gods and of good daemons, a great profusion of maleficence will evidently flow from that.” Clarke, Dillon, and Hershbell (2004) translation slightly modified.

⁹² *De Myst.*, IV.10.194,5.

⁹³ *De Myst.*, IV.10.194,1.

wickedness.”⁹⁴ Here, if we recall the possibility previously raised in Book III, that daemons are sympathetically moved along with the powers in bodies,⁹⁵ it is reasonable to assume from that interpretation that by the misuse of these powers human beings might be able to instrumentalize daemons for the accomplishment of wicked deeds. In this case, differently from what Iamblichus affirmed about the possibility of directly commanding the alogical and acritical class, what happens is an indirect instrumentalization of daemons by way of *συμπαθεια*. Also, in IV.8 (191,14-192,3), adding to our reading of *συμπαθεια* as a possible cause of the “impurity” of the daemons inclining them towards generation, Iamblichus explains that the descent of multiform productive acts (*πολυειδής ποιήσις*) from the whole to the parts is determined both by *συμπαθεια* and *ἐπιτηδειότης*. Given that we already learned that daemons are the furthest divine generative and creative powers with oversight responsibility on each thing coming into existence, we can thus assume that their role towards generation is given according to a similarity of powers with the physical or corporeal powers of the universe and the suitability of agent for patient. Acknowledging that so far these are conjectures not explicitly stated by Iamblichus, it is, nonetheless, important to bear them in mind as we proceed. In any case, as Iamblichus concludes: “it has been clearly demonstrated that the divine is free from blame for evils and injustices.”⁹⁶

Later, in IV.11-12, Iamblichus explains further that there is a force of cohesion in the universe (*τό συναγωγόν ὄλον δύναμαι*) that human beings can technically manipulate.⁹⁷ This force is implanted in nature and distributed through it, divided in many forms.⁹⁸ In and of itself this force “is good and a cause of fulfilment, co-ordinates community and union and symmetry, and by its unity introduces an indissoluble principle of love, dominating all things both that exist (eternally) and that come into being.”⁹⁹ However, by means of a certain human technique (*ἐκ τέχνης τινὸς ἀνθρωπίνης*) it is possible to draw this force

⁹⁴ Cf. IV.10.

⁹⁵ See notes 29 and 71 above.

⁹⁶ *De Myst.*, IV.10.194,12-13.

⁹⁷ Cf. IV.12.195,12-196,3.

⁹⁸ Cf. IV.12.196,11-13.

⁹⁹ *De Myst.*, IV.12.196,3-6.

in various ways and to channel it,¹⁰⁰ artificially arousing and intensifying it.¹⁰¹ By doing so, this technique “transfers the noble end associated with unity to another unseemly sort of fulfilment, a vulgar one, a union of disparate elements brought together somehow under the guidance of passion.”¹⁰² There are clues suggesting that this force of cohesion refers to universal friendship and love (ἡ φιλία τοῦ παντός καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ).¹⁰³ In any case, being a τό ὄλον δύναμαι, it operates as activity (ἐνέργεια) at the totality (ἐν τῷ παντί) but becomes πάθος at the level of particulars (καθ' ἕκαστα) due to the particulars' involvement with matter.¹⁰⁴ In view of what we just learned, we can further elaborate our conjecture about the possibility of an indirect instrumentalization of daemons by adding the knowledge that the power of cohesion that unites “all things both that exist (eternally) and that come into being” can, in fact, be technically manipulated by humans at the level of the individual parts, where it is accompanied by passion. Respectively, at the level of the whole, it might also affect daemons, according to συμπαθεια and ἐπιτηδειότης, as ἐνέργεια, without πάθος. This is still just a hypothesis to bear in mind.

Lastly, in IV.13, for the first time in the work, Iamblichus directly addresses the problem of evil daemons, declaring that, as “has previously been agreed”, there is a tribe of evil daemons with great power in the realm of generation and in respect of human affairs.¹⁰⁵ This happens to be introduced while he is explaining that natural powers must not be attributed to the actions of higher powers. To clarify what these powers are, he offers examples “such as either to destroy or, conversely, to put together generated things” like “a stone, say, or a plant may often possess.”¹⁰⁶ His point is, therefore, to dismiss the possibility of evil daemons being causes of such powers. He states

¹⁰⁰ Cf. IV.12.196,13-14.

¹⁰¹ Cf. IV.12.196,2-3.

¹⁰² *De Myst.*, IV.12.197,1-3

¹⁰³ When τό συναγωγὸν ὄλον δύναμαι is explained as ἔρωτός τε ἀδιάλυτον ἀρχὴν ἐντιθησι τῇ ἐνώσει (*De Myst.*, IV.12.195.12-196,6), it alludes to ἡ φιλία τοῦ παντός καὶ ὁ ἔρωσ of IV.9.192,14-15. There is also a possible interrelation with φιλία in V.10.211,12-14, as we will see.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. IV.9. As we had anticipated in n.23, there is, here, consonance with the theory of evil presented in Book I as the feebleness of the material realm being the cause of πάθος.

¹⁰⁵ *De Myst.*, IV.13.198,2-4.

¹⁰⁶ *De Myst.*, IV.13.197,10-12.

that ignorance of ethical virtues leads people to mistake what in fact are natural powers of material objects as being activities of evil daemons.¹⁰⁷ Iamblichus further points out that if “certain powers of the individual soul are adduced in these cases [of natural powers’ deeds] as contributing to the achievement of a given result”,¹⁰⁸ these powers are in fact from disembodied wandering human souls, trapped in the realm of generation, attached to a “murky and damp pneumatic-vehicle.”¹⁰⁹

Far from imputing blame to the superior classes of being, Book IV gives an explanation to our problem concerning Iamblichus’ deliberation on evil daemons. Not only does the philosopher explicitly state that he had previously accepted evil daemons in the text, but he also explains that what he establishes as being the truth about daemons does not entail attributing evil to them.¹¹⁰ Recognizing this conflict, he even proposes that it is better to declare ignorance than to go against the truth:

...for it is far better to admit that we are ignorant, by reason of the inadequacy of our intellectual faculties, of how these unjust actions come about, than to subscribe to an impossible falsehood about the gods, about which all Greeks and barbarians have come to an opposite and true conclusion. *De Myst.* IV.6.189,12-190,3

Thus, resolutely denying the possibility of daemons being or becoming evil, he offered so far three alternatives as causes of evil resulting from invocations:

¹⁰⁷ *De Myst.*, IV.13.198,5-9.

¹⁰⁸ *De Myst.*, IV.13.198,9-11.

¹⁰⁹ *De Myst.*, IV.13.198,9-13: “a soul, that is, which is held in a body after the manner of one which has left behind the shell-like and earthy body, but which still wanders about in the realms of generation mounted upon a murky and damp pneumatic vehicle”. By this postulation, we can read again the passage referred in n.58 above and better understand what are the evil daemons that can influence eidolons. Plato’s Socrates, at *Phaed.*, 80e-81d, posits the existence of souls forced to remain attached to corporeality even after death in continuity of their excessive attachment to the body. Proclus also alludes to these wandering souls in *Comm. Resp.*, 1.119,18-21; cf. *ET*, prop. 210.

¹¹⁰ Cf. IV.6.

- 1- Eidolons as artificial phantasms: ephemeral deceitful simulacrum intentionally created by human beings from material substances or accidentally resultant from errors in ritual;
- 2- Human *téchne* or wandering disembodied human souls attached to their polluted *pneumas* making use of natural powers;
- 3- Instrumentalized daemons: consisting of a very limited and specialized class of daemons that human beings can deceitfully manipulate by means of divine symbols.

In the first two cases, what Iamblichus actually does is to discriminate different entities that cause evil and are commonly misconceived as daemons. Nonetheless, in the third case, even when a daemon is executing some evil, the cause is not the daemon itself but a human being.

The remaining books consistently sustain what has been elucidated above, presenting brief further details on the issue only in the following books V and VI.¹¹¹ As we shall see next, in them, Iamblichus emphatically reaffirms how daemons are entirely immaterial, impassive, incorruptible and unalterable by matter, and gives further details on how it is possible to exert influence over the daemons.

The main theme in Book V is the efficacy of sacrifices. One particular issue that Iamblichus seeks to clarify is the unreasonable assumption (*ἄτοπον ὑπονοίαν*) that vapours of sacrifices, especially of animals, ensnare daemons or even the gods.¹¹² For Iamblichus, to advocate this is “to overturn the whole order of nature, so as to place us in a higher rank, and make us more powerful (than the daemons).”¹¹³ It is a miscomprehension of the dominance and superiority of the universal over the particular, of the higher beings to

¹¹¹ In IX.7.282,3-4, there is a commonly mistranslated sentence that leads interpreters to assume that it contains a reference to evil daemons: οὐδαμοῦ τῶν κακῶν ἡγεμονικὴν ἐχόντων λῆξι. Translations that assume τῶν κακῶν as meaning evil daemons do not respect the use of the genitive absolute, no noun is mentioned. In this way, the sentence means that evil, in general, has no administrative role in the universe. Something along the lines of “nowhere evil possesses an administrative role”.

¹¹² Cf. V.4.205,3-9; V.10.212,1-3 and *passim*.

¹¹³ *De Myst.*, V.10.213,7-8.

human beings, and that of wholes to parts.¹¹⁴ For, as he explains, “it is impossible that we are the originating causes of daemons, by the same reasoning we are not responsible for their nourishment.”¹¹⁵ Likewise, “it would seem, if we through laziness or some other pretext were to neglect such contributions, the bodies of daemons would suffer deprivation, and would experience disequilibrium and disorder.”¹¹⁶ Amidst this whole elaboration, Iamblichus educates Porphyry about the aetherial body that envelopes daemons: “[it] is unchangeable and impassible, luminous and free from needs, so that nothing flows out from it, nor does it require any influx from outside.”¹¹⁷ Therewith, Iamblichus reassures that all the superior classes are impassive¹¹⁸ and in no way nourished by sacrifices.¹¹⁹

As Iamblichus describes, the efficacy of sacrifices is enabled by the principles of οἰκείωσις, φιλία and the numerous relationships that bind together creators with their creations and generators with their offspring.¹²⁰

When therefore, under the guidance of this common principle, we comprehend that some animal or plant growing in the earth simply and purely preserves the intention of its maker, then, through this intermediary, we set in motion, in an appropriate manner, the creative cause which, without in any way

¹¹⁴ Cf. V.2.

¹¹⁵ *De Myst.*, V.10.214,1-3.

¹¹⁶ *De Myst.*, V.10.213,4-6.

¹¹⁷ *De Myst.*, IV.10.212,4-6. Cf. V.10.212,9-12: “what flows in is not going to compensate in any symmetrical manner for what flows out from them, in such a way that no excess should obtain nor deficiency should ever arise, to ensure that daemonic bodies should enjoy unvarying equilibrium and uniformity.” Cf. also with V.4.202-10-203,1, on the aetherial body of the gods: “For it is agreed that the aetherial body is exempt from all contrariety, and is free from all variation, completely purified from any capacity for changing into anything else, and utterly liberated from any tendency towards the centre or away from the centre, because it is free of tendency, or rather is borne round in a circle.” All these explanations confront directly Porphyry’s theories on the difference between good and evil daemons (as exposed in *de Abst.* 2.38.2; 2.38.4; 2.39-53). On the doctrine of the *ochema-pneuma* in Iamblichus, see esp. Finamore (1985). For a more comprehensive study on the development of the doctrine in Neoplatonism, from Plotinus to Proclus, see Di Pasquale Barbanti (1998).

¹¹⁸ Cf. V.11.214,14.

¹¹⁹ Cf. V.2-4;10-13.

¹²⁰ Cf. V.9.209,9-11,15; V.10.211,11-14; IV.3.184,14-185,1.

compromising its purity, presides over this entity (Ὅταν οὖν ταύτης προηγουμένης τῆς κοινῆς ἀρχῆς λάβωμέν τι ζῶον ἢ τῶν φυομένων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀκραιφνῶς καὶ καθαρῶς διασῶζον τὸ βούλημα τοῦ πεποιηκότος, τότε διὰ τοῦ τοιούτου τὴν ἐπιβεβηκυῖαν ἀχράντως ἐπ' αὐτοῦ δημιουργικὴν αἰτίαν οἰκείως κινουῦμεν.). *De Myst.*, V.9.209,11-14

Thus, the rationale behind the efficacy of sacrifices rests on an ineffable communion of beings on the level of nature, with the level of daemons and terrestrial or encosmic divine powers, which, for their part, are linked to the demiurgic and supremely perfect powers.¹²¹ From this standpoint, Iamblichus explicates that “all these levels of cause are activated by the performance of perfect sacrifice. (...) If, on the other hand, the sacrifice is imperfect, its influence proceeds to a certain level, but it cannot progress beyond that.”¹²² Since a few lines ahead he states that the level of daemons and terrestrial or encosmic divine powers are “our most immediate superior in rank”,¹²³ we can rightly understand that the imperfect sacrifice is able to influence daemons, “without in any way compromising its purity.”¹²⁴

In V.10, Iamblichus proceeds to explain that the perfect sacrifice activates (συγκινέω) the gods in order for them to concede benefits by their own will (βούλημα). This is put into effect by the principles of οἰχείωσις and φιλία, which sustain a bond of communion that embraces the totality of beings.¹²⁵ By the same principles, from the demiurgic and supremely perfect powers a common benefit descends to the whole realm of generation. As Iamblichus explains: since the demiurgic and supremely perfect powers “embrace within themselves all other causes of whatever sort, we declare that in conjunction with these are set in motion at once all others such as have any creative power.”¹²⁶ Yet, we are also told that both beings on the level of nature

¹²¹ Cf. V.23.232,8-V.24.

¹²² *De Myst.*, V.9.210,3-5.

¹²³ *De Myst.*, V.10.211,1-3.

¹²⁴ This affirmation, extracted from the passage previously quoted (V.9.209,11-14), is in full conformity with all the insistent and consistent elaborations has been presented since Book I, about how daemons are entirely immaterial, incorruptible and unalterable by matter and, therefore, *apathés*. Cf. also IV.9 for a similar proposition where entities on the level of the whole remain *apathés*.

¹²⁵ Cf. V.10.211,5-14.

¹²⁶ *De Myst.*, V.10.211,5-7.

and the level of daemons and terrestrial or encosmic divine powers “are mutually stimulated to motion, as if parts of a single living thing, by virtue of aptitude, sympathy, and antipathy (κατ’ ἐπιτηδειότητα ἢ συμπάθειαν ἢ ἀντιπάθειαν).”¹²⁷ Thus the efficacy of the imperfect sacrifice: once knowing that “some animal or plant growing in the earth simply and purely preserves the intention of its maker, then,” due to ἐπιτηδειότης and συμπάθεια-ἀντιπάθεια, it is possible to technically use these particulars in nature that contain in themselves the pure divine will and to set in motion “the creative cause which, without in any way compromising its purity, presides over this entity.”

I argue, therefore, that the imperfect sacrifice is correlated to an indirect instrumentalization of daemons we have been conjecturing since Book IV, adding the specificity now learned: that humans can make use of the divine βούλησις, which necessarily needs to be purely contained and preserved in material entities, to influence a daemon without having to activate the gods in order for them to concede benefits by their own βούλημα – like how it is supposed to happen in the case of the perfect sacrifice.¹²⁸ Iamblichus, nevertheless, does not offer any further details about the imperfect sacrifice. From V.10 onwards, Iamblichus assumes only the perfect sacrifice to proceed with his clarifications of Porphyry’s doubts and considerations about sacrifices.¹²⁹ I suggest that Iamblichus deliberately chose not to elucidate the imperfect sacrifice, but to leave it in obscurity. His main concern is to stablish theurgic rites as the means of “purification from passions and freedom from the toils of generation and unification with the divine first principle”¹³⁰ and this is enabled by the perfect sacrifice but not the imperfect, whose influence cannot progress beyond the level of daemons. The truth of the matter is that Book V leaves us wondering more about the imperfect sacrifice, with unaddressed

¹²⁷ *De Myst.*, V.10.210,11-13. This adds and reinforces our suggestion of ἐπιτηδειότης and συμπάθεια(-ἀντιπάθεια) as the means by which daemons are kept not completely pure from the powers which incline them towards generation.

¹²⁸ It is important to remember that in Book IV Iamblichus also presented another possibility that what is misconstrued as evil daemons are in fact humans’ technical usage of natural powers without any involvement of a daemon. One crucial difference between these two cases is that the natural entities used for the imperfect sacrifice purely preserves the divine will.

¹²⁹ Cf. V.10.210,11 ff.: Ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντα προσιέμεθα...

¹³⁰ *De Myst.* I.12.41,13-42,1. For the perfect sacrifice enabling the achievement of these goals, see V.11.214,11-12.216,6. Cf. also V.17.

questions, such as what its range of efficiency or influence would be.¹³¹ We can expect, nonetheless, that if someone makes use of the imperfect sacrifice to commit injustices “the harm resulting from that wicked act will appropriately recoil upon him.”¹³²

In the very first aporia of Book VI, Iamblichus is consistent and straightforwardly emphatic when explaining to Porphyry that in no way will a daemon receive any imprint of corruption into itself from the corpse of animals that are used in rituals for theagogy, given that a daemon is entirely incorporeal and necessarily transcends (ὑπερέχειν ἀνάγκη) the corruptible body.¹³³

To shed light on Porphyry's difficulty comprehending some practices that involve threats to the sun and the moon or any of the celestial gods, at VI.5-7, Iamblichus clarifies that the threats are uttered, in fact, not towards the gods but towards the acritical and alogical kind of daemon. Reminding the reader of how it is possible to give direct verbal commands to these daemons, Iamblichus develops further that threats can be used in combination,¹³⁴ either to instruct these daemons of how much, how great and what sort of power the priest holds through his unification with the gods that is conferred by the knowledge of the ineffable symbols; or to blackmail them with suggestions of alteration or desecration of the part of the totality over which they each preside. In addition, Iamblichus identifies aerial and terrestrial daemons as being of the acritical and alogical kind.¹³⁵

¹³¹ There is definitely room for further elaboration and discussion on the possibilities and details of this indirect instrumentalization of daemons by means of the imperfect sacrifice, but the attempt of a complete examination of this theme is beyond the scope of this article.

¹³² *De Myst.*, IV.1.182,11-13.

¹³³ *De Myst.*, VI.2.

¹³⁴ As it used to be practiced among the Egyptians, according to Iamblichus (see *De Myst.*, VI.7.249,5-6).

¹³⁵ Cf. *De Myst.*, VI.6.247,5-12: “such daemons are allotted partial administrative power, and guard the parts of the universe; they are attentive to the part over which they each preside to the extent that they cannot allow a word said against it, and their concern is to preserve the eternal permanence of the things unchanging in the world. Moreover, they have taken on the task of maintaining this changelessness because the order of the gods remains immovably the same. Held as they are in this state, then, the aerial and terrestrial daemons cannot endure even to hear threats against it.” For terrestrial daemons as an acritical and alogical kind, see also VI.7.248,11-249,2.

Thus, Book VI concludes our research in a concordant way with what has been previously uncovered in this paper regarding Iamblichus' dialectics on evil daemons. It, once again, reinforced that daemons are incorruptible by matter, and also reinforced that humans can use divine symbols to manipulate them. Here, in Book VI, Iamblichus offers further details about the use of verbal commands that in combination with the power of divine symbols deceitfully manipulate the acritical and alogical kind of daemons that he identified as being the aerial and terrestrial daemons.

By following the thread of Iamblichus' daemonological exposition in *De Mysteriis*, we could observe the dialectic he sewed on the matter of evil daemons. First, in Book I he establishes the philosophical truth about the superior beings and the cause of evil, both in a way that a daemon cannot be or become evil. Nonetheless, in Book II, Iamblichus introduces evil daemons to his explanations, acknowledging epiphanies of evil daemons in a ritual practice. With that, in the following two Books, Iamblichus proceeds to separate the chaff from the wheat by discerning different kinds of manifestations that are mistakenly attributed as being evil daemons. We then learned about eidolons and instrumentalized daemons. Ultimately, by the end of Book IV, he explicitly states that, in fact, evil daemons have been previously considered; however, according to the philosophical truths established in Book I, they are an impossibility. Thereby completely dismissing the possibility of a daemon to be or to become evil, he introduces a last discrimination of what is often considered as being evil daemons: human *téchne* or polluted disembodied human souls making use of natural powers. In Book V we are told in passing about a more obscure way to instrumentalize a daemon: "the imperfect sacrifice". Although this subject still needs further study, for many unaddressed questions remain unexplored, here, in its first exposition, we learned that, differently from directly commanding daemons, this is an indirect technical manipulation that depends on the suitability (*ἐπιτηδειότης*) and sympathetic-antipathetic (*συμπάθεια-ἀντιπάθεια*) correspondences of a particular natural entity that purely preserves the divine will and the daemon. Lastly, Book VI elucidated that the instrumentalizable acritical and alogical kind of daemons are the aerial and terrestrial daemons.

Thus, we have all the alternatives offered by Iamblichus misconstrued as evil daemons:

- 1- Eidolons as artificial phantasms that were artificially created by humans or derived from errors in ritual practices;
- 2- Human *téchne* or wandering disembodied human souls attached to their polluted *pneumas* making use of natural powers;
- 3- Directly or indirectly instrumentalized daemons that were deceitfully manipulated by humans; the first by means of divine symbols and verbal commands; the second, by the imperfect sacrifice.

What Iamblichus offered with his dialectics was an illustration of the relation and interdependence of theurgy and philosophy, showing how paramount it is to have and to apply the proper philosophical grounding to what is experienced in ritual practices — for even someone like Porphyry who has lived such a virtuous philosophical life¹³⁶ is susceptible to miscomprehending what truly happened.

In sum, Iamblichus does not accept the existence of daemons that are evil *per se*; it is actually human souls (embodied or not) that are the cause of all evil attributed to these divine beings.

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¹³⁶ On the life of Porphyry see Sodano (1993). On Porphyry's formalization of a systematized scale of virtues see his *Sententiae*, 26. See also Fideler's introduction in Zimmern's translation of *Porphyry's Letter to his wife Marcella* (1986) 29-32; Simmons (2015) 115-125; Goldin (2001). Cf. Finamore (2012) and Moreira (2014) for Iamblichus' grades of virtue and its relationships with theurgy.

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