1 Demons and Disease

When one wants not only to take stock of the current state of research on the topic “Ancient Christianity and Medicine, Health, and Disability”, but also to enrich it with new contributions, it is perhaps useful first of all to keep in mind two basic methodological insights that by now can be considered to constitute a standard for any attempt to engage with this topic. After a short introduction into these methodological assumptions, I will examine a number of different kinds of ancient texts in order to address the question of how demons function in these texts as a basis for explaining disease and their cure. Then, I will consider to what extent pagan concepts of demons were transformed or adopted in these texts. In other words, I am concerned in particular with different types of text or genre in ancient literature. Of course, this narrowly defined avenue of enquiry means that we will only consider a very small excerpt of the sources that one could term – if one wanted to systematise them – “Christian demonology”. In his monograph on the relationship between the battle against demons and the emergence of monasticism, David Brakke wrote an important chapter in a future overall account of ancient Christian demonology, for which there exists some preliminary work in encyclopaedias and synopses.

1 Two fundamental methodological insights

I would like to explicate the first of these two fundamental methodological insights by taking as a not unproblematic example my own contribution to a previous Oxford patristic conference: in 2003 I spoke at the XIVth International Conference on Patristic Studies on pagan and Christian incubation and healing through healing sleep. My lecture traced not only the commonalities and divergences between pagan and Christian incubation but also posed the classic question of the “adoption” of the relevant healing method from pagan sources into Christian contexts at particular locations – at that time in Oxford three findings of possible cult continuities were a particular subject of discussion: the transformation of the Asclepius sanctuary at the foot of the Acropolis in Athens into one of the churches dedicated to the Ἀνάργυροι Cosmas and Damian; the conversion of a temple presumably dedicated to Asclepius or Apollo in Dor, to the north of the ancient provincial capital Caesarea in Palestine, into a church; and finally the conversion of the sanctuary of Κύρα Μενούθι, to Isis, in

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Menouthis, twenty-five kilometres east of Alexandria, into a church of the saints Cyril and John under Cyril of Alexandria. Considerable difficulties arise here however in trying to prove direct cult continuities: in Dor there is only clear archaeological evidence of a Hellenistic temple. There is no evidence of a temple from the imperial period. No excavations in Menouthis have yet been carried out. And only in Athens can it be shown that there was probably a continuation of the pagan cult into the fifth century and thus a direct cult continuity. Whether the double-naved hall, which in the Athenian sanctuary can be considered an incubation hall on account of the general building typology of such halls, was still used in Late Antiquity in the pagan sanctuary as it was at that time in reduced form in the Christian church, remains a more or less hypothetical consideration. To summarise the findings somewhat more pointedly than I did twelve years ago in Oxford: there, where we have literary reports on the practice of incubation in Christian churches and pilgrim sanctuaries, we cannot prove a cult continuity in these places either in the literary sources or the archaeological sources, but at the very most postulate with more or less good arguments. This example not only shows how difficult it is to make use of the classic paradigm of an adoption of pagan medicinal practices in Christianity in concrete cases. In my view, these findings show how problematic this paradigm is.

For this reason Sarah Coakley, who has in the meantime presented an instructive, interdisciplinary collection of contributions to the topic of the transformation of pain, spoke after my Oxford lecture in 2003 in general terms on the problems of the classic model of German religious history, which presupposes the reception or adoption of certain resources of knowledge and practices, which are conceived of as existing in blocks, from one religious system to another – just as is the case with the healing method of incubation. Several years ago, David Brakke and others published an anthology of a conference that had the title “The Reception of Antique Religion and Culture in Judaism and Christianity”. The anthology, owing to the debates that en-

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4 Cf. here the discussion of the lecture mentioned above and the contributions by Beat Brenk, Hugo Brandenburg and Tomas Lehmann. Thus in Marinus, *Vita Procli* 29 (24 Boissonade), we find the story of a woman called Ἀσκληπιγένεια who is healed following the prayers of Proclus in the temple of Asclepius at the foot of the Acropolis, nearby which the philosopher lived: ὅ δὲ Ἀρχάδας ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴ μοῦν τὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχουν τῷ γένος, ἣςχαλε καὶ ὀδυνηρώς διέκειτο, ὥσπερ ἢν εἰκός, ἀπογγυνακοντών δὲ τῶν ἱερῶν ἦλθεν, ὥσπερ εἰόθει ἐν τοῖς μεγίστοις, ἐπὶ τὴν ἐσχάτην ἄγκυραν, μᾶλλον δὲ ὡς ἐπὶ σωτήρα ἀγαθόν τὸν φιλόσοφον, καὶ λυπαρός αὐτὸν ἤζευγος σπεῦδοντα καὶ αὐτὸν εὐχεσθαι ὑπὲρ τῆς θυγατρός, ὅ δὲ παραλαβὼν τὸν μέγαν Περικλέα τὸν ἐκ τῆς Λυδίας, ἄνδρα μάλα καὶ αὐτὸν φιλόσοφον, ἀνήγει εἰς τὸ Ἀσκληπιεῖον προσευξόμενος τῷ θεῷ ὑπὲρ τῆς καμνούσης, καὶ γὰρ ἤτυχε τοῦτον ἢ πόλεις τότε καὶ εἶχεν ἐπὶ ἀπόρρισθον τὸ τοῦ Σωτήρος ἱερόν. εὐχομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀρχαίστερον τρόπον, ἀθρόα μεταβολή περὶ τὴν κόρην ἐφαίνετο καὶ ῥαστώνη ἐξαίρετης ἐγήγεντο· ἰεά γὰρ ὁ Σωτήρ, ὡστε θεός, ἴατο. συμπληρωθέντων δὲ τῶν ἱερῶν, πρὸς τὴν Ἀσκληπιεῖον ἐβάδιξε καὶ κατελάμβανεν αὐτήν ἄρτι μὲν τῶν περεπτώσιμων τὸ σῶμα λελυμένην παθῶν, ἐν γύνειῃ δὲ καταστάσει διάγουσαν. – Admittedly there is no mention here of an incubation cult and Christian measures against the sanctuary are already to be found (namely in the formulation ἐπὶ ἀπόρρισθον τοῦ Σωτήρος ἱερόν).


sued at the conference, has the programmatic title “Beyond Reception”; for indeed in our sources one cannot observe any block-like adoption of stable entities in dual constellations that one could describe as the reception of “Antiquity” in “Christianity”. The fact that you cannot find proof, either in the archaeological or literary sources of an “acquisition” of the pagan practice of incubation in the basic sense of a local verifiable cult continuity with the Christian practice of incubation, ought to have already made me pause for thought during the preparation of the Oxford seminar paper in 2003.

One could of course interpret these findings with regard to the incubation sanctuaries, which had already become well known in 2003, first of all in a religious history fashion. Then one would have to point out however, that, in modelling the competition between religions in Late Antiquity according to the principles of market economics, it becomes clear that religious offerings on the market of religions needed to differentiate themselves and not only be able to come along as pure adoptions of successful business models (as indeed the incubation). One can however make use of the lack of evidence for the continuity of incubation sanctuaries in the literary and archaeological evidence also to make a fundamental methodological insight into dealing with the topic “Ancient Christianity and Medicine, Health, and Disability”: the classic model of the adoption of pagan ancient medicine in Christianity should be replaced by a model of a transformation of knowledge bases where nothing is adopted in blocks, but rather something is reconstructed using the available elements. It is not therefore the case that something is simply received, but rather as part of the process of absorption, the reference area is also newly formed at the same time. The Berlin cultural scholar Hartmut Böhme coined the term “Allelopoiēse”, taken from the Greek words ἀλλήλων and ποίησις, for this dual transformation and argued that we should no longer speak of “reception” but rather of “transformation”.

I would like to suggest that this theoretical insight into the constitutional conditions of cultural change be also used as a basis for the topic of “Ancient Christianity and Medicine, Health, and Disability”. Adopting this paradigm of the “transformation of the ancient world”, I, together with Ulrike Bruchmüller, Eva Elm, Tomas Lehmann, Jannis Politis, Anna Rack-Teuteberg and Dorothea Zeppezauer have been researching the transformation of ancient healing cults in ancient Christianity in Berlin since 2004 as part of a special research area of the same name, “Transformationen der Antike”, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. I have furthermore examined the significance of corporality for healing processes and in recent years I have been involved in research on demons; what I am present-

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9 Böhme (2011).
ing here has also profited from conversations with these current and former Berlin colleagues.¹⁰

Now I would like to explicate the *second of the two basic methodological insights* even more briefly: if one examines recent scholarship in our topic, it is common to differentiate – as for example in the recent Freiburg habilitation dissertation by Gregor Emmenegger on the influence of ancient medicinal and natural philosophical theories on the development of the Christological dogma¹¹ – between temple medicine, Hippocratic-Galenic and so-called folk medicine.¹² It is clear from the highly antiquated term “folk medicine” however, that the assumed sociological differentiation in levels of education between healers themselves as well as between the healed is inadequate, because, as is well known, during the imperial period (for example in Pergamon) temple medicine was carried out thoroughly on a level that was scientific according to ancient standards. Similarly problematic seems to me the differentiation between “high medicine” and “low medicine” that John Riddle put forward a number of years ago.¹³ As Emmenegger observes, it is difficult to draw a clear line between the healing procedures of so-called folk medicine and those of “scholarly” medicine: amulets, incantations and other magical practices often belonged as a matter of course to the repertoire of a healer, regardless of his institutional home or his level of education.¹⁴ A suggestion by the Berlin historian of medicine Paul U. Unschuld has long convinced me, whereby, in addition to an institutional differentiation of temple or sanctuary, medicinal-philosophical school and free lanced healers, we also distinguish between a medicine that is scientific according to ancient standards and other ways of healing – although this sociology of education based binary is of course unclear.¹⁵ Ultimately it is a matter in each case of individual network structures of medicinal knowledge of entirely different kinds,¹⁶ knowledge that we today categorize as scientific, magical or indeed as folk medicine. These different kinds of knowledge are each hierarchised according to different criteria and can, in view of current medical classification of diseases, also be hierarchised differently once again.¹⁷ To put it more simply: in many cases it may well have depended simply on the individual instance, on the specific form of an illness, whether an ancient healer or doctor applied a bandage soaked in honey or spoke an incantation.¹⁸

There were of course attempts to differentiate between different kinds of healing

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¹¹ Emmenegger (2014).
¹² Emmenegger (2014), 16.
¹³ Riddle (1993).
¹⁶ Here I draw upon: Sarasin (2011).
methods and to differentiate between permitted and forbidden practices in individual schools, but these schools did not succeed in establishing a consensus across the empire.

We now come to the question of how in different ancient types of texts and literary genres demons serve as a basis for explaining the causes of diseases as well as their remedy and to what extent pagan as well as Jewish concepts of demons were changed or adopted.

2 Demons in ancient (Christian) magical amulets

In Late Antiquity, demons could be talked about at very different levels. I will begin my survey with that form of practised religion that becomes apparent from magical amulets and I will look at three quite different examples, the first one taking an extremely negative view of demons: an amulet on papyrus from the fourth century, which is kept in Vienna and is presumably from Arsinoe and was used against a whole range of maladies.

At the beginning of this text there is a formula in which a demon (Greek δαμόν) is invoked “which has the feet of a wolf, but the head of a frog”. Frogs were already described as impure spirits in the canonical Book of Revelations, where it is stated that they come forth from the mouth of the devil and live like demons in filth. In Antiquity, the wolf had a much more negative image than today and was seen as a greedy hunter, bloodthirsty and sexually deviant. Behind this formula is obviously the notion that the frog-headed and wolf-footed demon in question was responsible for prolonged fever. When the fever is ordered to leave the body in the name of the “four gospels of the son” and the “God of Israel”, then the demon also leaves the body at the same time. The fact that first the fever

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20 For the text cf. footnote 24 below.
21 Aproc. 16.13f.: Καὶ εἶδον ἑκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ δράκοντος καὶ ἑκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ θηρίου καὶ ἑκ τοῦ στόματος τοῦ ψευδοπροφήτου πνεύματα τρία ἀκάθαρτα ὡς βάτραχον. The wolf was already described as impure spirits in the canonical Book of Revelations, where it is stated that they come forth from the mouth of the devil and live like demons in filth. In Antiquity, the wolf had a much more negative image than today and was seen as a greedy hunter, bloodthirsty and sexually deviant.
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Fig. 1 P. Rain. 1 = P. Graec. 337 ÖNB, Wien = PGM 10
and then the demon are ordered to leave the body in the text of this amulet shows that the relationship between the fever and the demon is perceived to be so close that the actual order in which they were invoked did not particularly matter. Also notable is the extraordinary accumulation of power necessary to drive out such a demon. It is not enough to merely speak a simple invocation in the name of a saint, for example. The person calling out the invocation must make sure he has an accumulation of the highest authorities on his side against the frog-headed and wolf-footed demon. In the amulet in Vienna, the authorities called upon are the gospels of the Lord and the God of Israel, one after the other. In the Late Antique silver amulet with an exorcism – the “Tablette magique de Beyrouth” – which is kept in the Louvre in Paris, far more are called on: fifty angels as well as the God at the top of Mount Sinai, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the living God. The “Tablette magique de Beyrouth”, which was originally folded to the size of a small capsule, contains a formula (which, by the way, is also testified in modified form by the “Lamella Bernensis”, a Late Antique gold amulet stored in Bern) that is supposed to offer protection²⁵ “from every demon and from every compulsion of the demons and from demonic powers” as well as “from every demon, male and female, during the night and during the day”.²⁶

Worn attached to important parts of the body such as neck, arms, legs or the feet, worn day and night and made of precious materials like silver or gold, the amulet works – as it says on one papyrus in the British Museum – to protect the body from demons (σωματοφύλαξ) and as a seal (σφραγίς)²⁷ against them – demons that were felt to be an omnipresent threat. By 1924, Henri Leclercq had collected those amulets that were used against very specific diseases, against nose bleeds, problems with the gall bladder, gout, colics and other everyday, but still unpleasant complaints. However, neither the Greek term “demon” nor specific physical entities are described and no names are named;²⁸ obviously the order to exit the body and the power that came from naming divine authorities that an amulet of this kind contained or recited was sufficient.


²⁶ Lines 110–116 διαφυλάξει Ἀλεξάνδραν ἀπὸ παντὸς δεμονίου ἀρενικοῦ καὶ θηλυκοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ πάλης ὀχλήσεως δεμῶν νυκτηρινῶν (Gelzer/Lurje/Schäublin 1999, 56); Parallels to formulation and presentation ibid. 84 f.


Fig. 2 Tablette magique de Beyrouth (Musée du Louvre, Bj 88, Inv. M.N.D., 274) ©Copyright: bpk / RMN – Grand Palais / Hervé Lewandowski (70375634).
But apparently there existed also quite the opposite notion, that – very unlike the amulets I have mentioned so far – a demon could also be used in a positive way in order to heal diseases (a correspondingly ambivalent picture of the character of demons was still reported at the beginning of the 20th century, for example, in the devoutness of Palestinian Bedouins\(^{29}\)). There are also examples of this on magic papyri:

In Berlin, one (slightly damaged) papyrus that Adolf Erman dated in 1895 to the 7th or 8th century and which also comes probably from Arsinoe, contains an only superficially Christianised, originally clearly pagan healing spell.\(^{30}\)

\(^{29}\) Canaan (1914), 6–27.

\(^{30}\) P. Berolinensis 8313\(^{ext}\) (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz) ©Copyright Fig 3 and 4: bpk / Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, SMB / Sandra Steiß (70247682, 70247679).
According to statements by the trader, the papyrus was part of an entire bundle of documents that contained not only other healing spells, but also a love spell, invocations of the Archangel Michael as well as recipes for magic potions. Erman assumed that this bundle of papyri belonged to a Christian magus who was working in the early Islamic era, which is made clear by Arab characters on one of the texts. The papyrus from this bundle that we are interested in first of all describes how Horus tests several demons to see how fast they can reach his Mother Isis, who is far away, so that she can come in a hurry and heal his stomach ache:

“(Jesus!) Horus [the son of] Isis went upon a mountain in order to rest. ... He had pain, and the area around his navel [hurt him], and he wept with loud weeping, saying, ‘Today I am bringing my [mother] Isis to me. I want a demon so that I may send him to my mother Isis’.”

These demons, all of which bear the – still not really explained Greek name Agrippa come to Horus and speak with him. Horus chooses the demon that goes to Isis “in the time it takes you to draw breath through your mouth” and be back “by the time you breathe out through your nose”, that is, a very fast demon. Thus far the text comes across as a testament of purely pagan religiosity. However, at the beginning of the text, the name Jesus is placed before the name Horus and there is also a Christian invocation at the end of the text: “Every disease, every pain, every suffering that is in the body ..., cease immediately! It is me, the Lord Jesus who calls you, the one, who brings healing”.

One can therefore speak of a pagan survival in a Christian context or of the transformation of a pagan healing spell by means of appropriation (an existing reference is taken out of its original context and integrated into the culture of reception)

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31 P. 8324 as well as p. 8314, 8320 and 8325, all edited in *Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Koeniglichen Museen zu Berlin* (1904): No. 18, p. 16 and No. 33, p. 4; No. 2, p. 3; No. 4, p. 5. Translation by Kropp (1931) 21–22 (p. 8314); 23 – 24 (p. 8320); and 24 – 25 (p. 8325) as well as (Meyer/Smith), 1999, 159 – 160 (p. 8314); and 160 – 161 (p. 8325). Cf. also http://www.trismegistos.org/tm/detail.php?tm=92891 (Last access on 24.09.2019).

32 Vakaloudi (1999), 87 – 113.


34 P. Berolinensis 8313, Col. II recto 1 – 6 (after Erman): Εἰ διπροζηροη ην ο άρη εξ ρ ουτοο ενηκοτκ ... ην[κα]τε ιτενερεε [.........] έμεῃ ηε-ουοο ηήρνε xε:εξι ηνε ησε ησε [ήδα]γ έροι ηηνοο άδογαο-οοδινον ταξοουν άμοι τμακω αδεί άμοι άμοι άμοι-ποορτί άδαμεν ...


36 P. Berolinensis 8313, Col. II recto 17 – 19 (after Erman).

37 P. Berolinensis 8313, Col. II recto 1 – 6 (after Erman), as footnote 34 above.


and encapsulation (an object is handed down unchanged and integrated as a closed whole).  

If one looks again at these findings from the papyri and amulets, one cannot simply say that the term “demon”, which had good, neutral, ambivalent or negative connotations within the pagan context, had lost its wide range of use in Christian context and was reduced by Christians to the bad.  

This might apply for the official Christian religion as standardised by bishops and synods (“religion as prescribed”); as such, the Decretum Gelasianum de libris recipiendis et non recipiendis states that “all amulets must be treated as apocryphal”, ... “that were not written by the names of the angels, as believed, but far more by the names of the demons”.  

Lived Christian religion beyond such standards (“religion as practised”), as shown in the Berlin papyrus taken from the bundle of the magus, could certainly expect a

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42 Stander (1993).
demons to fulfill a positive function by healing illnesses such as stomach ache or colics. If, as this text testifies, the demons could also take on a positive function in a Christian prayer, then the pagan tradition of invisible companions, of daimones and genii, who were entrusted with the worries of mankind, are transformed – like elsewhere in ancient Christianity – into a Christian context. But here, the notion of an invisible protector, which one could describe along with Peter Brown as an “upwardly extension of the person” into a divine sphere, is not transformed into the worship of personal guardian angels and saints, but is rather received in a far more authentic way by maintaining the term “demon” or – to once again phrase it using the Berlin terminology – by encapsulating it.

As mentioned above, notions of demons of this kind were often categorized as “folk belief” and the use of the corresponding amulets and papyri for healing purposes was referred to using the term “folk medicine”, more in a derogatory than in an objective fashion. However, amulets were also used by highly educated medical practitioners who had been trained in the famous schools of the Antique. Alexander of Tralles, an educated physician in 6th century Rome, for example, used amulets and incantations in his work as a matter of course and he believed that they would help him to succeed: “The reasonable physician must disregard no means”. Even if very recently in the German-speaking region, a bold attempt was once again made to rescue at least the term “popular piety” for the academic analysis of Early Christianity, it seems to me that this term will be facing the same fate as the German terms “people’s baths” and “people’s library” – that is, it will disappear, because the underlying dual of popular piety and elite piety does not describe the historical situation. “Folk belief” and “folk medicine” were always accused of suffering from a deficit of rationality, as very recent critical de-

47 Gemeinhardt (2013).
48 Particularly pleasing in Schmidt-Clausing (1962), 1452: “Popular piety is an embellishment around the cultic-liturgical elements of a high religion” (“Volksfrömigkeit ist Rankenwerk um das Kultisch-Liturgische einer Hochreligion”); but also cf. already at this point the cautious distancing from paradigms: “calling popular piety [Volksfrömigkeit] ,superstition’ or ‘magic’, also ,primitive religion’, is not sufficient according to the results of today’s religious folklore, since these terms include an a priori censorship of the inferior” (“die Beurteilung der V. als Aberglaube oder Magie, auch als ’primitive Religion’ ist nach den Ergebnissen der heutigen religiösen Volkskunde nicht ausreichend, da diese Begriffe von vornherein die Zensur des Unterwertigen enthalten”) (ibid.).
49 Holzem (2002).
bates on the concept in medical history and in ethnology have held on to in particular.\textsuperscript{50}

It makes more sense, to my mind, when talking about such magic formulas that expect the help of demons, not just to maintain that they suffer from a deficit in rationality but rather to describe the specific rationality that can be observed here. Some time ago, Wolfgang Wischmeyer following Fritz Graf spoke of a “rationality sui generis” behind such magical medicine practised by healers: “Like the physicians, they assume the empirical. They see their observations as causal thinking”.\textsuperscript{51}

From an effect – a disease – they conclude a cause: demons. Somatic dysfunctions and a demonic function (even a malfunction) are immediately and causally linked. Wischmeyer concludes his considerations on a provocative note when he picks up on an observation by Graf: “The claim of philosophical and scientific thinking to be rational and plausible is similar to the claim of magical thinking”. If there were differences, then – as Graf states – these tended to be in the area of cosmology,\textsuperscript{52} depending on whether divine beings like demons or anatomical, geological and physiological interaction between the body, metabolism and climate were made responsible for the function or dysfunction of an organism. One could certainly take this provoking analogy formulated by Graf and Wischmeyer between Hippocratic-Galenic and magical-medical rationality a little bit further: both the philosophically and scientifically founded way of thinking and magical thinking strive in medicine for a ritualisation of knowledge. The Hippocratic-Galenic medicine strives to gain power over dysfunction through craftsmanship ritualised in the routine of treatments while magic medicine strives for the magical craftsmanship to gain power over demons and their function in the body.\textsuperscript{53}

In other words, the different knowledge systems in the Hippocratic-Galenic and the magic medicine integrated to some extent very similar pools of knowledge, but gave them a different hierarchy and only partially integrated the religious knowledge concerning demons into their respective knowledge systems. With respect to demons, secure and manageable knowledge was of particular importance to many people in Antiquity, because demons were thought to be very sensitive spirits who populated heaven and earth in great numbers. It was also thought that they lurked practically everywhere, got up to no good especially at noon\textsuperscript{54} and in the evenings, and could cause serious harm to people even in the case of the smallest wrongdoing.\textsuperscript{55} On the other hand, picking up on an anonymous author in the tradition of Plato by taking a closer look at his speech “On the Art of Healing” we could attempt to find out more precisely where the difference between the two rationalities – the Hippocratic-Galenic and the magic – lies. The anonymous

\textsuperscript{50} For examples see Badura (2004), 27f. Compare also Weissenrieder in this volume.


\textsuperscript{52} Graf (1996), 33f.

\textsuperscript{53} Wischmeyer (1998), 94.

\textsuperscript{54} On the relationship between the so-called midday demon and malaise cf. Crislip (2005).

\textsuperscript{55} Müller (1976), 761–797, in particular 772f with reference to Delatte/Josserand (1934).
author points out that “there is no craftsmanship (τέχνη) that does not exist. It would be absurd to think that something that does exist does not exist ... I don’t know why one can believe that those things that exist do not exist, although one is able to see them with the eyes and recognize them that they do exist”. 56 A real categorical difference between two rationalities exists when and only when, because of basic cosmological or metaphysical assumptions, it is denied that demons cause diseases and thus influencing demons with magic can have no influence on what course an illness takes. A categorical difference of this kind is behind Galen’s attempt to explain the effect of an amulet (on a child, and made of the root of the peony) when treating epilepsy without the involvement of a divine power. 57 However, one cannot take the metaphysical scepticism 58 of a single, albeit highly popular medical writer from imperial times with an excellent education in philosophy as pars pro toto for the entire school of thought. And one certainly cannot turn competitive struggles among different professions to gain patients and their financial means into ideological disputes of interpretation.

3 Demons in ancient (Christian) philosophical texts

Philosophical texts certainly did argue for the rationality of the causal relationship between demons and diseases. Plutarch, like Porphyry, had blamed the plague, hunger and war on evil demons, 59 and we find in the Chaldean Oracles at the latest the


57 Galenus, De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis et facultatibus libri III 10 (IX, 859,14–860,3 Kühn): καὶ οἶδα γέ ποτε παίδον οἰκτώ μησι μηδ’ ὄλως ἐπιληθέν εξ ὑπὸ τὴς ῥίξης ἐφόρει, ώς δ’ ἀπερρή πως ἀπὸ τοῦ τραχήλου τὸ περιάπτων, εὐθὺς ἐπελήφθη, καὶ αὐθ’ τι περιαφθείνος ἐτέρου πάλιν ἀμέτως εἰσεύθ. ἔδοξε δὲ μοι κάλλιον εἶναι καὶ αὐθ’ ἀρείλειν αὐτὸ πεῖρας ἕνεκα, καὶ οὕτω πράξαντες, ἐπειδή πάλιν ἔστασε, μέγα τε καὶ πρόσφατον μέρος τῆς ῥίξης ἐξηρήθησαμεν αὐτοῦ τοῦ τραχήλου, καντέεθε τῇ δι τοῦ λουποῦ τελέως ὑγίες ἐγένετο ὁ παῖς καὶ οὐκέτ’ ἐπελήφθη.


59 Plutarchus, Moralia 26 De defectu oraculorum 14 417 D/E (BiTeu III, 76,18–77,1 Pohlenz/Sieveking): ἂλλ’ ὡσπερ Ἑρακλῆς Οὐραλίαν ἐπολύρκει διὰ παρθένων, οὕτω πολλάκις ἑσυχοῖς καὶ βιαῖοι δαί- μονες ἐξαίταπους ψυχήν ἀνθρωπίνην περιεχομένην σώματι λοιμοὺς τε πόλεμοι καὶ γῆς ἀφορίς ἐπά- γους καὶ πολέμους καὶ στάσεις παράττοισιν, ἀρχὰ τε λάβωσι καὶ τύχουσιν ὃν ἔρωσιν καὶ Porphyrius, De abstinencia II 40 (BiTeu 169,10–170,6 Nauck = CUFr II, 106 f. Bouffartigue/Patillon); in particularly the beginning of the section: ἦν γὰρ δὴ καὶ τούτο τῆς μεγίστης βλάβης τῆς ἀπὸ τῶν κακοεργῶν δαι-
notion that evil demons are responsible for diseases: The Byzantine author Michael Psellus (or a later Byzantine Anonymous) relays a passage to this effect, which can probably be traced back to the commentary of the pagan philosopher Proclus on the Oracles. The reflections of Christian scholarly authors refer to such pagan approaches towards a philosophical demonology. Two examples: The rhetorician, legal expert and philosopher Aeneas von Gaza propagates in his dialogue Theophrastus in detail about the fact that evil, material demons imitate human souls, but can also take on human form, so that they can act and speak. These might be different at different times, may divide to enter different persons and also unite again, tell the truth but also lie. Their materiality is that of airy entities that can imitate both a

μόνων θετέων, ὦτι αὐτοί αἴτιοι γιγνόμενοι τῶν περὶ τὴν γήν παθημάτων, οὖν λοιμῶν, ἀφροιών, σειριών, αἰχμῶν καὶ τῶν ὁμοίων, ἀναπείθον γίμας, ὡς ἂν τούτων αἴτιοι εἰσὶν ὀπερ καὶ τῶν ἐναντιωτάτων [τουτεστὶν τῶν εὐφορίων], ἑαυτοῖς ἐξαιροῦντες τῆς αἴτιας καὶ αὐτὸ τούτο πραγματευόμενον πρῶτον, τὸ λανθάνειν ἀδικοῦντες (169,10 – 18); on this also cf. Zintzen (1976), 646f. = ibid. (2000), (105 – 125) 110 and for Plutarch Brek (1986), 2117–2130. 60 (Ps.–?)Psellus, Dialogus de operatione daemonum 11 (PG 122, 844 B – 845 B = Gautier (1980), [105 – 194] 153,184–155,302): εἰτε οὖν συμβεῖ ἄνευ ἔχων, εἰτ’ ἔτερως, εἰς ἕκεινος ἀπρόβασις (i.e. a monk by the name of Marcus, possibly also from the commentary by Proclus on the Oracula Chaldaica) γέγονεν καὶ πρῶτον μὲ, τῇ ἐπιγραφῇ φωνῇ, βαρβαρίκως ὤνωμαξε τελεύτητος, σημαίνοντος τοῦ ὀνόματος τὸ διάπρυσμαν. Τούτο δὲ περὶ τὸν ὑπὲρθεν ἡμῶν ἀέρα περιπελεῖν· τῶν γὰρ περὶ σελήνης τούτων, ὡς εἰς ἱεροῦ τι βέβηλον (Mss. βλαβερον), ἀπελεύσατο δαιμόνιον πάντες δεύτερον δὲ, τό περὶ τὸν προσεχέστατον ἢμῖν ἀέρα πλαζόμενον, δὲ καὶ καλείσθα ρα παρὰ πολλοὶς ἰδίως ἀέριον· τρίτον δὲ ἐπὶ τούτου τὸν χονδρὸν τέταρτον, τὸ ὑδαῖον τε καὶ ἔναλιον· πέπτον, τὸ ὑποχόνδιον· ἐσχάτον δὲ τὸ μισοφαξ καὶ δυσαίσθητον· εἰνὲ πάντα ταῦτα δαίμονιν γένη ἐμομοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπως πολέμησιμον. πλῆν εἶναι καὶ κακοῦ φασι, κάκιον· τὸ γάρ υδαῖον τε καὶ ὑποχόνδιον, ἐτε δὲ καὶ τὸ μισοφάς, ἐσχάτως ἑπιχαιρέρακα καὶ ὠλεόμα. Ταῦτα γὰρ μὴ φαντασίας καὶ λογικολογίας τὰς ψυχὰς ἔρι χακονένει, ἀλλὰ ἐναλλομενε, καθάπερ τῶν θηρίων τὰ ἀγριωτάτα, τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπισταῖ ενόνον τὸν ὀδηγόν· τὸ μὲν υδαῖονν ἀποστίλον τούς πλαζόμενους ἐν θατατι δὲ ὕποχόνδιον καὶ τὸ μισοφάς, ἐντός, εἰ συνχρονοῦνται, προσχρωνοῦνται τῶν σπλάγχνων, καὶ δύναι ἐν τῇ κατασχοντα, κατάχοντα, καὶ ἑπιλήπτους καὶ ἔκφρονοις ἐχραμένεν· τοῖς δὲ ἀείριοις τε καὶ χονδρικοῦς τῆς περιπετείας καὶ περιπετείας εἰσέβαταν τὰς τῶν ἀνθρώπων γνώμας, καὶ πρὸς πᾶθη καθέλκειν ἄτοπα καὶ παράομα· – Cf. here Psellus, Summaria et brevis dogmatum Chaldaicorum expositio (= Philosofica minora 39): Ἐπτὰ φασὶ σωματικοὺς κόσμον, ἐμπύρων ἑκατέρως, καὶ τρεῖς μετ’ αὐτῶν αἰθέριος, ἐπείτα τρεῖς ὑλικοῖς, ὅν ἐσχάτος κόσμος εἰρηνικά καὶ μισερίας, ὅστις εὐστείον ὑπὸ σελήνης τούτος, ἔχουν ἐν εὔστω καὶ τὴν ἑλεύσιν ἡ καλούσιν θυβήν (Bïteu II, 146,9 – 11 O’Meara). In detail on the reconstruction of Chaldean teaching Zintzen (1976), 651f. = 112f. and on the tradition see Svoroda (1927), 7–28 and Greenfield (1988). 61 Aeneas Gazeus, Theophrastus (53,19 – 54,10; Euxitheus is speaking): Ὑστεροφορίας οὐκ ὁ Ζήμος, ἀλλ’ ὁ ῶῆδος, μέλλων ψυχομονεῖται παραδοῦναι, τίνες οἱ καλούσιν τὸ πρῶτον ἐπιμείζητε, πότερον θεόν ή δαίμονες ή τούτων ἀπόρροιας καὶ πότερον δαίμονες εἰς, ἄλλοτε ἄλοιπος εἶναι δοκοῦ, ή πολλοὶ καὶ αφὸν αὐτῶν διαφέροντες, οἱ μὲν ἡμεροί, οἱ δὲ ἄγριοι καὶ οἱ μὲν ἐνιστέ τάλθη λέγοντες, οἱ δ’ ὅλως κιβδηλοί, καὶ πολλὴν τῶν παλαιών καὶ τῶν ἔστερον ταραχὴν ὑπογράφων, τέλος προτείνεται δαίμονος ἀπόρροιαν εἶναι τὸ φάσμα.
soul and a body. None of these views are in any way original, but can be found – argued at different levels of detail and philosophically different – already in Porphyry. Demons that consist of pneumatic substance can incorporate matter and thus become visible. The idea, which also came from Porphyry, that demons can take on multiple outward appearances, still held among the Palestinian Bedouins into the 20th century.

My second example of transformation of pagan philosophical demonology in scholarly Christian texts can be found in a commentary on the Platonic dialogue *Timaeus*, which the Platonic Philosopher Calcidius probably wrote in Northern Italy, perhaps Milan in the late 4th century or at the beginning of the 5th century. Calcidius was presumably a Christian and dedicated his work according to the introductory letter to a certain Osius. It is highly likely that Calcidius – as later manuscripts note – served as archdeacon to the Spanish bishop Osius of Cordoba and dedicated the work to the man he served, as Jan Hendrik Waszink and others have shown; the early dating of the text to the beginning of the 4th century is nevertheless still accepted by some. Its partial translation by Timaeus into Latin (only a little less than the first half is translated: 17 A to 53 C) with an extensive commentary had very strong after-effects in the Middle Ages, perhaps also because it is the only fully preserved Platon commentary in Latin from Antiquity. In his commentary, Calcidius gives a kind of brief systematic excursus on demonology (*de natura daemonum*), which contains remarks about its nature, position and function in the cosmos. This excursus was provoked by the formulation in the Platonic dialogue stating that, in following Plato will not speak “about the other gods” (περὶ δὲ τῶν άλλων δαμαώνων or *at ... uero invisibilibum diuinaram potestatum quaæ daemones nuncupantur*) other than the Creator of the World. Calcidius now explains this term that was not explained in the Platonic dialogue: In his opinion there are intermediate beings situated in between God and man. This term includes the good angels on the one hand and the evil demons on the other. Calcidius separated both groups of intermediate beings in the

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62 Aeneas Gazeus, *Theophrastus* (53,14–17; Theophrastus is speaking): Ἐσκε μὲν ἄτοπα τούτα εἶναι καὶ οὐδὲν ἔχεις ἀνέλεγκτον. Ἀλλ’ ἀκούεις οία τὰ περὶ τὰ μνήματα σκοειδῆ φαντάσματα; Ταῦτα ἐστι τὰ ἀερόδη τῶν ψυχῆς σώματα, ἃ δὴ εἰδώλα καλεῖται.
64 Porphyry, *De abstinentia* II 38f. (BTeu 167,3–169,10 Nauck = CUFr II, 104–106 Bouffartigue/Patillon).
66 Since the magisterial edition by Jan Hendrik Waszink (Waszink 1962), two further editions have been published, by Claudio Moreschini (Mailand 2003) and Béatrice Bakhouche (Paris 2011).
67 Waszink, *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentarioque instructus*, Xf.
68 Madec (1998), literature on the early dating on p. 358.
69 *Timaeus* 40 D bzw. Calcidius p. 34,13f. Waszink.
same way that the usual Christian use of language does, although he does mention that both groups are called “demons” in the classic Greek-pagan language and that this common generic term is not a problem for him as a Christian.\(^{70}\) The one group is made up of God’s servants, the other of the “associates of the enemy power”, as one might loosely translate the Latin aduersae potestatis satellites.\(^{71}\) Interestingly, this description of demons as “associates of the enemy power” can now be traced back to the pagan Platonist Porphyry, out of whose Timaeus commentary (which is almost completely lost except for a few fragments) Calcidius very likely took a great deal for his own commentary.\(^{72}\) In Porphyry it is literally the same words as οἱ τῆς ἐναντίας δύναμεως, “the beings of the enemy power”.\(^{73}\) Of course, such similarly sounding expressions like aduersae potestatis satellites and οἱ τῆς ἐναντίας δύναμεως in both Late Antiquity Platonists mean something very different: Porphyry says that the demons, like the “beings of the enemy power”, are invisible and thus repeats the notion testified to by Iamblichus, that demons are invisible to the human eye despite a certain materiality, unlike the gods who are “beyond comprehension and understanding”.\(^{74}\) “Enemy power”, or perhaps better “enemy force” – ἡ ἐναντία δύναμις – is of course in Porphyry a specialist term used in magic and means precisely those invisible forces that the magus binds using his own, positive energy. By comparison, with the Christian Calcidius, it is highly unlikely that the expression aduersae potestatis satellites refers simply to such enemy forces that work against the


\(^{71}\) Calcidius, Commentarius in Platonis Timaeum II 133 (174,14–175,3 Waszink): Nec nos terreat nomen promisce bonis et improbis positum, quoniam nec angelorum quidem terret, cum angeli partim dei sint ministri – qui ita sunt, sancti uocantur -, partim aduersae potestatis satellites, ut optime nositi. Igitur iuxta usurpatam penes Graecos loquendi consuetudinem tam sancti sunt daemones quam polluti et infecti. De quibus mox erit aptior disputandi locus; nunc de eo genere sit sermo quod ait Plato admirabili quadam esse prudentia memoriaque et docilitate felici, quod omnia sciat cogitationes que hominum introspection et bonis quidem eximie delectetur, improbus oderit contingente se tristitia quae nascitur ex odio displicentis – solus quippe deus, utpote plenae perfectaeque diuinitatis, neque tristitia neque uoluptate contingitur.

\(^{72}\) Gersh (1986), 421–434; cf. also Köckert (2009), 229–232.

\(^{73}\) Porphyryus, De abstinentia II 39 (Bίτεο 168,5–7 Nauck = CUFr II, 105 Bouffartigue/Patillon): δ’, ἂν εἰκότως λέγοντο, καὶ εἰπὼν οἱ σύμπαντες οὕτωι τε καὶ οἱ τῆς ἐναντίας δύναμεως ἀδρατοὶ τε καὶ τελεως ἀναλυθήσεις αἰσθήσεων ἀνθρωπίνας.

\(^{74}\) Iamblichus, De mysteriis I 20 (CUFr 46,23–47,1 Saffrey/Segonds): οἱ μὲν γὰρ δαίμονες ἀδρατοὶ τέ εἰσι καὶ οὐδαμός αἰσθήσεις περιληπτοί, οἱ δὲ καὶ λόγου γνώσεως καὶ νοησεως ἐνύλου προέχουσιν. On the background cf. also Dillon (2004), 140.
positive energy of the magus. In his case, the “enemy force” is to be identified as the *adversarius* testified to in the Bible, namely the Devil.⁷⁵

What speaks in favour of interpreting the expression in Calcidius in this way is not only the fact that Tertullian and Cyprian had already used the substantive expression and the identical-sounding adjective in this sense and in reference to Psalm 73/74⁷⁶ (“How long will the enemy mock you, God?”⁷⁷). In fact, liturgical sources that were certainly more widely disseminated than these early Latin authors bear witness to a certain interpretation, for example, the *Missale Gothicum*. This is a collection compiled between 690 and 710 AD which presumably originates from France, more precisely, Burgundy and likely represents a Gallican formula of the church of Autun from the 7th century.⁷⁸ In a baptismal exorcism prayer from the so-called *Missale Gothicum* it says: “I banish you, you creature of the water, I banish you, all armies of the Devil, all power of the adversary, all shadows of the demons”.⁷⁹

As it had been long established in the Latin tradition, Calcidius presented demons in his commentary on a Platonic dialogue as devilish powers, as forces of the adversary. Of course, this interpretation of the demons as “forces of the adversary” among Christian commentators of Late Antiquity is not original, but typical; Franz Josef Dölger had already dealt in detail with these correlations in his book about exorcism as did Klaus Thraede in the “Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum”.⁸⁰ What interests us at this point is not the history of the tradition of these exorcism prayers dealt with in Dölger and Thraede, but ultimately the type of transformation that becomes recognisable through the recoining of the expression *ἡ ἐναντία δύναμις* the wording of which is generally maintained throughout in Porphyry into the expression *aduersae potestatae satellites* used in Calcidius. In Berlin we refer to this form of transformation in which a semantic shift takes place as reinterpretation or inversion.⁸¹

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⁷⁵ Thus also Dillon (2004), 140.
⁷⁶ Cf. the evidence in Blaise, *Dictionnaire*, 52.
⁷⁷ PsG/H 73.10 ... *initiat adversarius nomen tuum in finem*; cf. Greek ἐως πότε ὁ θεός ὀνειδεῖ ὁ ἐχθρός παροξυνεῖ ὁ ὑπεναντίος τῷ δόνοµα σου εἰς τέλος.
⁷⁸ Vogel (1986), 107 f. – The name *Gothicum* comes from a late inscription on the top right edge of the manuscript Vaticanus Reginus Latinus 317 (likewise from the late seventh or early eighth century); the manuscript of the fifth century is objectively incorrect, since the text in question is a missal, which is to be attributed to the so-called Gallican liturgical family.
4 Concluding Remarks

The reference to the so-called Missale Gothicum makes clear that, in addition to magical sources and the philosophical texts we certainly must also look at liturgical sources as well as sermons, if our survey has to be complete to some degree, at least in terms of the literary genres. I would love, for example, to take a look in more detail at the later and late exorcism books that Klaus Thraede most recently compiled again and which are pseudonymously attributed to the church authorities of imperial times and Late Antiquity. What images of demons and their influence can be found in these texts? Does the fact that the scarce stories about possession by demons and healing found on amulets could be taken up by the liturgical texts without many changes show that here no great difference existed in terms of form or content between the different types of text? Does this impression deceive? With a view to the liturgical texts, there continue to be – similarly as for the amulets – exciting discoveries or reinterpretations of already known texts in the light of new discoveries. I name just one example: In a private letter many years ago, the late Berlin papyrologist Kurt Treu suggested interpreting a papyrus from Yale dated at around the 3rd or 4th century, not as a Christian magic text, but as an early exorcism prayer. It would be worth looking at the question here as to whether there are predecessors of the exorcism books we have today.

The papyrus also possibly shows how close texts of privately used magical amulets and prayers used in the church were, both in content and form. But more about that at another place and time. Here I have tried, taking the subject area “Demons

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82 Kotansky (1994), 60 f. shows how a historiola on the origin of the headache and how to get rid of it can show up on an amulet from Carnuntum (Amulet 13, p. 58–60), as well as on other amulets as and in a prayer from the prayer collection of Cod. Marcianus graec. app. II 163 (Pradel (1907), 267,22–268,10 = 15,22–16,10), each in slightly modified form. As a final example, Kotansky names a text from a Euchologion from the Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: Ms. 973 (p. 63), translated and annotated by Arnould (1913), 292–304.
83 Thraede (1969), 109 f.
85 Cf. footnote 83 above.
86 Proulx/O’Callaghan (1974); I refer here to the commentary that Treu attached in his personal copy, which is in my possession.
and Disease” to take stock of the state of research and to move forward on some points. To do so, I started by remembering two basic methodological insights and, following that, I proceeded to go through the different sources arranged according to their literary genres, taking a look at the question concerning how demons function in these texts as a basis for explaining diseases and their healing. With the help of the Berlin terminology of transformation, we have ultimately attempted to describe to what extent pagan concepts of demons transformed or were adopted – a similar reconnaissance mission could be performed for the acquired Judean ideas.⁸⁸ In the process, it became clear, time and again, how little the available source material has been made use of to date and what rich rewards are promised if the traps of certain classic dualisms are avoided and newer research paradigms are resolutely used. The inescapable conclusion that in the ancient world explanations of the causes of diseases were dependent on textual types and literary genres may be generalised without hesitation: This conclusion is valid even today, although so much has changed since the ancient world, and not only with regard to medicine.

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