

# The Influence of the Daimōn in Ancient Philosophy upon Contemporary Psychology

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the relevance of the Hellenic *daimōn* as the root meaning of the Latin *genius* or the English 'genius', with its influence upon contemporary psychology in the context of a wider philosophical quest to '*know thy Self*'. Sufficient evidence has emerged from multiple bodies of work by various thinkers to suggest that past and present intellectual lineages should be adequately interconnected as mutually informing outlooks. Additionally, this article points out that scholarship alone is insufficient and that it needs the practical application of philosophy in order to render more accurate perspectives on knowledge. As our predecessors have shown, appropriate educational and legal systems need to be in place to encourage and to effectively support philosophy with its interdisciplinary vision towards a new paradigm for human excellence.

**Key-words:** ancient philosophy; psychology; interdisciplinarity; daimōn; genius; self-knowledge; new paradigm;

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## Introduction

We are all on a quest. But do we know what we are searching? The *Eleusinian Mysteries* in the Hellenic period were rites set in place to mirror the cycle of an eternal quest expressed in the temporal space in three phases: the 'search', the 'ascent' and the 'descent'. This is a way to purify ignorance and to attain wisdom. In other words, a seeker on such path unweaves fate to create a new destiny. This is a heroic act. From ancient mythology, we learn that sometime in the course of life, a hero or heroine may be called forth into an unknown. In this brief article, we broadly explore the role of the Greek δαίμων (*daimōn*), translated as *genius* in Latin, adapted as 'genius' in English, with its influence upon contemporary psychology in the context of the philosophical quest to '*know thy Self*'.

In 1964, Victor and Mildred Goertzel published *Cradles of Eminence*, a study of common childhood experiences that lead to the development of 'genius' in eminent individuals. Alice Miller's work, including *The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self* (1979) speaks of an 'inner gift'. She claims that the gift has a tendency to be suppressed or oppressed when unrecognized by the individual or by one's immediate family members. James Hillman's, *The Soul's Code* (1997) adds another aspect to these studies by articulating a 'calling' of the soul to undertake an extraordinary journey to discover one's vocation. This paper suggests that it is the *daimōn* to which all these thinkers were alluding to, and that its true purpose is to inspire individuals on a path to know the Self. Moreover, I argue that the Greek *daimōn* exceeds the qualities of its Latinized form in the *genius* or its English form 'genius', which appealed to analytical psychology.

In ancient Rome, the *genius* (plural in Latin *genii*) became the guiding spirit or tutelary deity of a person, a family (*gens*), or place (*genius loci*). The noun is related to the Latin verbs "gignere" (to beget) and "generare" (to generate) and derives from the Indo-European stem: "ǵenh" (to give birth). The *genius* was thought to have a localized knowledge and soul-animating power. In the semantic lineage of the term 'genius' we trace that the Roman Stoic philosophers translated the word δαίμων, but in this process many of its true connotations were lost and further diminished in the English version. In conclusion, we will inquire into retrieving the original ideal of the *daimōn* for our own times in the continued search to

know the Self. Leonardo Da Vinci (1452–1519) is widely known as a polymath genius. Yet, if we take the Greek version of the term, can it be said that Leonardo followed the *daimōn* to know himself or the Self? As you can see, it is worth to rediscover the initial meaning of the *daimōn* and to recover its profound significance that can be reinstated for our own times. In Western philosophy, Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713) was aware that the ancients thought that “we have each of us a *daemon*, *genius*, angel or guardian spirit, to whom we are strictly joined and committed from our earliest dawn of reason, or moment of our birth” (1727, 168). Again, the Romans called this *genius* and the Greeks a ‘δαίμων’. In the Christian West the *daimōn* or *genius* becomes the guardian angel. Shaftesbury also linked this tradition of the *daemon* or the *genius* to the Delphic Oracle and the inscription ‘*know thyself*’ in the form of ‘*recognize your-self*’ (Ibid, 170).

Shaftesbury drew on the concept of the *genius* to bridge being with nature, the conscious with the unconscious, which also makes distinctions between a subjective and an objective intelligibility that nevertheless permeates multiple layers of reality. David Hume (1711–1776) regarded the *genius* as a quality that differentiates an individual from society at large. In the *Critique of Judgment*, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) argued that the presence of the *genius* remarks itself by the distinct characteristics of non-imitative “originality”, which was well received by the 18<sup>th</sup> century Romantics. Thomas Taylor (1758-1835), an English Platonist, wrote:

*Genius sublime! once bound in mortal ties,  
A dæmon now and more than mortals wise.* (1787, 175)

The work of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), *The World as Will and Representation* indicates that the ancient *genius*, unlike the contemporary views of ‘genius’ operates in freedom of constraint and that it sees the unseen. Francis Galton (1822–1911), influenced by the work of his older half-cousin, Charles Darwin (1809–1882), and James McKeen Cattell correlated ‘genius’ with intelligence measured by neurophysiological efficiency. In empirical psychology, especially in the work of Carl Rogers (1902–1987), ‘genius’ is defined as a strong intuition in a given field.

The ‘genius’, for the modern, has become a shadow, a superficial interpretation and misrepresentation of its former predecessors. From historical evidence, the notion of the *genius* steadily diminished to the ‘genius’, while the *daimōn* almost entirely disappeared from our awareness. Hans Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) in one of the most influential works for European philosophy, *Truth and Method*, attacks the tradition of the *genius* in 18<sup>th</sup> century aesthetics through the philosophy of Kant. Gadamer believed that the *genius* was a subjective appropriation of Kant’s aesthetics.

You can see here, that the polemical disputes concerning subjective and objective worldviews had sprung forth in this time, which caused further separation and disconnection from ancient lineages. After the introduction, we will look at the classical sources for the δαίμων followed by references of the *genius* in the development of depth psychology. We will conclude that the *genius* is incomplete without the *daimōn* and that the past and the present should be adequately interconnected in mutually informing outlooks. According to Plato’s *Republic*, philosophy is a practice and a lifelong study of the love of wisdom. Here, we learn that with the help of the δαίμων, philosophy turns the soul from a day, which is like night, to a true day, and uplifts it to behold the Self that imparts Light to all (540a). In doing so, the soul must separate as far as possible from the body, to reach ‘the One’ and then to return to a new kind of life. The reborn philosopher must examine and understand the unseen causes and relations of reality.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) reiterates this cycle for “the man or woman who has been able to battle past personal and local historical limitations”, who “dies” as a modern and is reborn as a hero or heroine, an eternal being connected with a universal purpose (2004, 18). The goddess Ananke, Necessity, impels the transformed hero or heroine to return to the world to impart their newfound knowledge and elixir of life. Campbell emphasizes the dangers of this journey, overseen by a god. Campbell universalizes the quest across cultures:

*And where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god; and where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to*

*the center of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world. (2004, 23)*

While Campbell draws on C.G. Jung's *The Integration of the Personality* (1939) and the *Collected Works* (1945) to synthesize the 'hero's journey', it may be prudent to say that he points towards its mythological origins, yet he does not explain its philosophical underpinnings. For example, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8 CE), long inherited and expounded the process of a transformative cycle for the soul 'gone through again and again'. Importantly, the great deed of the hero or heroine is to come to the knowledge of reality and of the Self and to make it known, which is missing in Campbell's work. Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), a Romanian historian of religion, notes that C.G. Jung and Joseph Campbell explored the development of the psyche, from the realm of the 'collective unconscious' based in the function of myth.

The hero (ἥρωας) has roots in pre-Homeric Greek mythology further explored in Platonic philosophy. In the *Cratylus* (398d), Plato says that the hero was born because a god fell in love with a mortal woman or a mortal man with a goddess and that love, Eros (ἔρως)--is the source from which the heroes' spring. The reason why they are called heroes is because these individuals endeavor to ask courageous questions (ἔρωτᾶν) and to self-examine in their pursuit of wisdom. One such question is: what are the implications of a philosophical quest on the Self?

In 1990, Maureen Murdock envisions 'the heroine's journey' with later additions by Victoria Lynn Schmidt (2001), thus reminding women, who have historically been discouraged or prohibited, to take the quest in philosophy. They emphasize that the hero/heroine's journey must be rooted in a lived experience of the systematic stages towards Self-knowledge. There are some scholars, however, who use their craft to proffer interpretations of these notions without a basis in personally validated understanding. Yet, as this article conveys, scholarship alone is insufficient if it forgoes philosophy. Nietzsche perceptively inquired into the limitation of human imagination when he asked: "who alone has any reason for living his way out of reality?" to which he responded: "only the man who suffers under it" (1923, 15).

We now turn to look at the strands of ancient wisdom traditions to discover the 'Logos of the Self' (ὁ αὐτὸς λόγος) (*Parm.* 136b), which is the

voice of the *daimōn*, that assists the hero or heroine on the quest to ‘*know thySelf*’.

## **Hellenic Philosophy**

The epic works of Homer, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, were conceived c. 1260–1180 BCE and have been studied and pondered since, not only for their finely woven literary threads but for their depth and insight into human nature. In these works, human beings and the divine interchangeably seek to know the mystery of their interwoven existence. Homer’s myths utilize analogies to convey complex aspects in the human condition and its psychology. In Homer’s *Iliad*, book 18, Achilles, the hero of the epic, reflects on himself and on the roles that he actively plays in his family and with his friends. In the midst of his crisis in battle he begins to distinguish his failure due to having been blinded to the truth of his life. Achilles must turn his mind around to free himself from the ignorance that had previously possessed him. He comes to see the fateful consequences of his beliefs that motivated his choices so far and realizes that he must reject them all. Achilles says: “I must reject this life, my heart tells me, reject the world of men” (1974, 438). He expresses grief and regret for the tragedy that had ruled his soul, “Here I sat, my weight a useless burden to the earth” (Ibid). Through Achilles, Homer displays awareness of the struggle to attain excellence. Achilles experiences a *metanoia* (μετάνοια), a transformative change of heart and of mind at a critical junction on the hero’s path.

Achilles admits that he used to enjoy the “anger that envenoms even the wise and is far sweeter than slow-dripping honey, clouding the hearts of men like smoke” (Ibid, 439). From these lines, we note that ignorance can hide under feelings of pain and of pleasure. Achilles’ state of mind shifts to understanding how anger masked his true self now that he is “sore at heart” (Ibid). Achilles’ pain deepens as he finally confronts “the dark drear spirit of death” (Ibid). He desperately wants to untie his fate. In his epiphany, goddess Athena “bound his head with golden cloud, and made his very body blaze with fiery light”, “so the baleful radiance from Achilles lit the sky” (Ibid. 442). In other words, with the help of a god (dess) Achilles achieved enlightenment. We read that his transfiguration was so bright that it illuminated the sun filled day. And, as it concerns his inner and outer

journey, after his ultimate encounter, and after his victory in battle, the hero returns home, where he must face another test: of peace beside his beloved. “Achilles slept deep in his palisaded lodge. Beside him, lovely in her youth, Briséis lay” (Ibid, 590). While in the *Iliad* we are presented with the highest vision for the hero, from the *Odyssey* we learn the highest vision for the heroine:

*Penélopê, Ikários' faithful daughter!*  
*The very gods themselves will sing her story*  
*for men on earth—mistress of her own heart,*  
*Penélopê!* (Homer 1974, 585)

In Homer's works we witness the heroic culmination for the masculine and for the feminine and their union as One. But the characters do not always possess philosophical reasoning to explain their experiences. Philosophy after Homer becomes an active practice of self-examination for the purpose of progressing from ignorance to wisdom, which is the true heroic journey that we should aim for. Socrates (470-399 BCE) was described by some as a “rational mystic” (Bussanich 1999, 30) for his dialectical methods to midwife the soul. Plato's (423-347 BCE) dialogues underwrite the transformative effect of philosophy. In his *Seventh Letter* (340a-341e) Plato testifies to the philosophical ‘journey’, which he sees as a consistent effort to attain and to maintain excellence. He mentions the spirit guide, the *daimōn*, that leads the soul up “suddenly” to “a light that is kindled by a leaping spark and thereafter it nourishes itself” (1966, 341c-d).

Clearly, this kind of ancient philosophy is heroic in the way of virtue. The unwritten instructions are to examine oneself in stages through different levels: ignorance, belief, understanding, knowledge, and to finally attain wisdom. Pierre Grimes describes these stages as delineated “cognitive functions” (2016, 1753), adapted from the ‘divided line’ in the *Republic* (509d). He argues that Kant's ‘categories’ and C.G. Jung's psychic processes only touched upon the discovery of consciousness in a modern sense, without linking it to the ancient sources. And yet, in Plato we are taught that the tripartite soul can systematically proceed from appearances to reality. Plato's *Parmenides* outlines nine (or more) hypotheses to know the One Self, according to the *Logos*. This work is an

intense, self-renewing study that could last a lifetime. Nevertheless, many are still puzzled by its structural hierarchy, set up to deliver the mind to clarity in reasoning about the layers of reality and their origins. Plato acknowledges Homer in *Ion* (531c-d) for his foresight into the mingling of the gods into human affairs, but he attempts to add to the lineage by widening the philosophic quest across multiple disciplines and ways of seeing.

Accounts of the *daimōn* (δαίμων), the voice of the Logos of Self that assists the philosophic hero are to be found in Plato's *Apology* (31d, 40a-b), *Euthyphro* (3b), *Alcibiades I* (103a, 105a), *Euthydemus* (272e), *Republic* (496c), *Phaedrus* (242b), *Symposium* (202d-e) and *Theaetetus* (151a). In the *Phaedrus*, the phrase 'πρὶν ἄν ἀφοσιώσομαι' attributes a hortatory power to Socrates' own *daimōn*. In the *Apology* (40a), the *daimōn* is unmistakably prophetic and providential in the way of future, yet unknown knowledge. In *Republic* (354c) it is stated that whomever possesses self is of "*eudaīmon*".

In Plato's *Symposium*, Diotima of Mantinea (c. 440 BCE) reluctantly teaches an inquisitive Socrates about the "great *daemon*", eros, love. She is skeptical that Socrates will be able to understand the spirit of philosophy that mediates a mortal life with the immortal. She doubts that, like Achilles, he could endure the pain of shedding a former, ignorant existence in favor of a new, illuminated one. She explains that one has to die to an old, stale way of mere being and to be re-born, "thus becoming a new person" in one lifetime (207d). Diotima plays the role of a messenger. She uses the means of analogy to exemplify the function of the *daimōn*. Her pedagogical tactics draws up the potentiality in Socrates' soul, so that he may begin to see.

*Socrates: What then, I asked, can love be? A mortal?*

*Diotima: Anything but that.*

*S: Well, what?*

*D: As I previously suggested, between a mortal and an immortal.*

*S: And what is that, Diotima?*

*D: A great daimōn, Socrates: for the whole of the spiritual is between divine and mortal.*

*S: Possessing what power? I asked.*

*D: Translating and transporting human things to the gods and divine things to men; entreaties and sacrifices from below, and ordinances*



*and requitals from above: being midway between, it makes each to supplement the other, so that the whole is combined in one. [...] Many and multifarious are these spirits, and one of them is love. (Symp. 202d-e)*

But, did Diotima guide Socrates to understand his experiences in a series connected with the cause in the Self? She indicated that through the *daimōn*, the personal self is linked with a metaphysical Self, but Socrates must notice the inference and to inquire further. Notably, in the *Timaeus* (90a-d), Plato says:

*God has given to each of us, a daemon, that kind of soul which is housed in the top of our body and which raises us [...] if so be that one lays hold on truth, and in so far as it is possible for human nature to partake of immortality, one must fall short thereof in no degree; and inasmuch as one is forever tending the divine part and duly magnifying that daemon who dwells along within, that one must be supremely blessed. [...] and for the divine part within us the congenial motions are the intellections and revolutions of the Universe.*

And yet, it is only with Parmenides that Socrates begins to learn that it is possible to navigate all the levels in a hierarchy of being. The guidance of the *daimōn* is vital for the philosopher, for besides inspiring him or her to know the Self, it also protects “from sheer ill-fortune” and saves a wound “from proving fatal” according to the *Laws* (Plato, 1967, 877a). In the *Alcibiades 1* (103a), Socrates speaks of a ‘non-human opposition’ that informs him of a ‘right timing’ in his decisions and actions. And perhaps there is no greater testimony of the *daimōn*’s influence than in the *Apology* (31c-d), when Socrates faces a trial that condemned him to death for following a wise voice different from other spirits.

*Perhaps it may seem strange that I go about and interfere in other people's affairs to give this advice in private, but do not venture to come before your assembly and advise the state. But the reason for this, as you have heard me say at many times and places, is that something divine and spiritual comes to me, the very thing which Meletus ridiculed in his indictment. I have had this from my childhood;*

*it is a sort of voice that comes to me, and when it comes it always holds me back from what I am thinking of doing, but never urges me forward.*

In the same text, he continues to explain that a calling has been bestowed on him by a god for “examining myself and others, which is the greatest good to man, and that the unexamined life is not worth living” (38a). Socrates’ crisis is the human crisis when some inescapable injustice befalls its condition. He admits that, at the moment when “the greatest of evils had come upon me”, the prophetic *daemon* (μαντική ἢ τοῦ δαιμονίου) did not oppose (40a-c). If it helps the reader to further reflect on this striking episode with Socrates, Plato points to courage (ἀνδρεία) in the *Republic* (429c) as the preservative power of the Self (ὄντα διασώζεσθαι αὐτήν) to reject the ‘true lie’ (ἀληθῶς ψεῦδος) about reality (382a-b). The path to Self-knowledge can be treacherous for the gods have placed sweat, blood and tears in front of the long and uphill road leading to virtue. However, this true way to the Self (ἀλλὰ περὶ τὴν ἐντός, ὡς ἀληθῶς περὶ ἑαυτὸν) (*Rep.* 443c-d) reiterates Diotima’s advice:

*[...] to give birth, not to images of virtue, insofar as it has not grasped images, but to the truth, insofar as it has grasped the real truth. Then by having given birth to real virtue, and nurtured it, will it not be granted then for that soul to become friends with the divine, and immortal, if any one ever is? (*Symp.* 212a)*

The Self is the obvious, not so obvious secret that remains almost undetectable to most. Why? In the *Parmenides* (128d), we read:

*Truly then, this writing, contradicts the advocates of the many, and opposes this and many other such opinions; being desirous to show that the hypothesis that asserts that many is, will be affected with even more absurd consequences, than that which asserts that the One is; if anyone of them is sufficiently gone through in detail. Therefore, it has escaped your notice, o Socrates, that this discourse, which was composed by me when I was a youth, through such a thing indeed as the love of contention, and the writing itself was stolen by someone,*

*so that I was not able to consult whether the Self should be brought forth into the light of becoming, or not.*

From this passage, we get that what may not be accessible to the many, it is available only the philosopher who has undertaken the entirety of the quest to *'know thy Self'*. Human excellence and *eudaīmonia* (εὐδαίμονα) (*Alcb.* 133c-134e) is an embodied achievement. The *daimōn* guards the thread of life, which is allotted and measured by Lachesis overseen by Necessity (goddess *Ananke*) (*Rep.* 617e). As it pertains the overall theme of this paper, the *daimōn* is or should be the essence of the *genius*.

*[...] as the guardian of his life and the fulfiller of his choice, the daimōn that he had chosen, and this divinity led the soul first to Clotho, under her hand and her turning of the spindle to ratify the destiny of his lot and choice; and after contact with her the daimōn again led the soul to the spinning of Atropos to make the web of its destiny irreversible, and then without a backward look it passed beneath the throne of Necessity. (Rep. 620e)*

Plutarch's treatise, *De Genio Socratis* begins with a Pythagorean waiting at a grave for a divine sign. The dialogue gives the example of Socrates' *genius*. The speaker, Theocritus, emphasizes that Socrates' *genius* is a guide (προποδηγόν), a δαίμων, bestowed on him from his earliest years. Some compared the *daimōn* with a supernal symbol for the Self: "For you are I and I am you; your name is mine and my name is yours; for I am your symbol." (Dietrich 1910, 97). The *daimōn* guides one life at a time to the impulse of philosophy. The true philosopher, however, has a reputation to be an unpopular, often times an undetected hero or heroine in the social sphere. And then there are a large number of professed philosophers that are fakes, or at best, sophists, since they avoid self-examination.

As Plato and his successors observed, once corruption sets in, it can lead to temptations and misconduct. These are indications for forgetting the Self that can further decay into hostility against the Self. How often do we meet certain persons who become offended or triggered when asked about their selves? Many times, the subject of the Self does not come up for discussion even though we all strive or we think we strive for self-

development. One must possess a strength of character to remain loyal to the principles of philosophy. An appropriate educational and legal system is necessary in our own times to sustain philosophy as a practical application and a lifelong study. In anticipation, the ancients made a case for the need of extra facilities and for setting up multiple avenues to develop this study accordingly. Philosophy, like any other discipline, is irreconcilable with poverty-- which is a grave injustice against humanity. The lack of proper philosophical training as it was set forth by the ancients is a tragedy for human nature.

Plato's story of *Atlantis*, the appendix to the *Timaeus*, serves as a forewarning to impending disasters if philosophy continues to elude us. The ongoing absence of a multifaceted philosophy in the educational system and in our daily lives, led to forgetting the One Self and to the fragmentation of society without access to a common vision or ideal. As mentioned previously, the task of the philosopher-hero is to release his or her shackles from the cave of ignorance in the mind, to climb upwards to behold the light of Self-knowledge and to discover its cause. As discussed, the philosopher must then return to everyday world to teach and to help the lives of others. He or she becomes like a *daimōn* to another.

### **Contemporary Psychology**

We shall further explore the leitmotif of the hero or heroine's journey and the influence of the god, δαίμων, or *genius*, in analytical psychology. Above the doorway of his house in Küsnacht, Switzerland, Carl Gustav Jung (1875 – 1961) had these words inscribed: '*Vocatus Atque Non Vocatus, Deus Aderit*' (*Called or not called, [the] God will be present*). This might succinctly express the difference between Jung and Freud. Whereas Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) may have explored dreams as material from a primarily personal-subjective unconscious, Jung viewed dreams as myths informed from a "collective unconscious" (1953, 263-292). With the *vocatus deus* quotation, Jung referred to the ancient *daimōn*.

In a letter, on November 19<sup>th</sup> 1960, Jung writes that one needs to keep the door open to the visitation of the god. In his *Letters 1951-1961*, Jung links this idea to the Delphic Oracle and the imperative '*know thyself*'. Ovid's tale of *Baucis and Philemon* carries the symbolism of the *daimōn* for Jung. An elderly couple welcome Zeus and Hermes as poor strangers. The

gods reward the couple for their generosity. After their cottage was destroyed by a flood, the gods turned it into a beautiful temple. The couple wished to remain united and to guard the temple into eternity. Their wish was granted and upon death they became an intertwining pair of trees, one oak and one linden, woven together, forever.

Jung's idea of the 'self' is not merely opposed to the rational controlling 'cogito' of someone like Descartes or the 'Ich' of Freud, both of which Jung viewed as reductive interpretations concerning the psyche. For Jung, the Self is the totality of conscious and unconscious elements. He says: "it is not I who create myself but, I happen to myself" (1969, 391). The rational, conscious ego is subordinate to the Self, and the journey of life should bring about a personal transformation, which he calls "individuation". Jung drew from Eastern thought, having enjoyed tales of Brahmā, Śiva and Viṣṇu as a child. As an adult he visited India and Sri Lanka. He also was interested in Buddhism. His works, *Symbols of Transformation* (1912) and *Psychological Types* (1921) touched upon Indic, Buddhist and Taoist ideas, and he utilized comparative parallels with Eastern philosophy.

Part of the explanation of Jung's interest in Eastern thought was the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer appropriated elements from Oriental Renaissance and used Vedānta and Buddhism, albeit idiosyncratically, in his own philosophy. Almost all German universities had a chair of Sanskrit by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Jung was aware of this strand of Indic views and culture. Personal contacts also played a role in Jung's interest and further research in Indic philosophy with its notions of devas, like the guardian spirit in the West, and he peripherally explored the Self. He met the German philosopher Hermann Keyserling. The latter was the founder of the School of Wisdom at Darmstadt. In Darmstadt, Jung met Richard Wilhelm, a sinologist and theologian, who translated *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, which exerted a profound influence upon Jung. Jung is said to have learned more from him than any other man (1966, 62).

Another friendship of great significance was that with Indologist, Heinrich Zimmer. Jung met some of these thinkers at the Casa Eranos conferences (from 1933 onwards), in Ascona by Lago Maggiore in Switzerland. There you can find a stone sculpture with the inscription '*genio loci ignoto*': to the unknown *genius* of the place. Even more so, Jung

was aware that “there was a *daimōn* in me, and in the end its presence proved decisive” (1961, 426). The attitude of Jung to religion is puzzling. His father, Paul Achilles Jung, was a Protestant pastor. Jung rejected the Reformed theology of his youth; however, the influence ran deep. His mother’s family was also clerical. Jung’s theological roots played an important role. Throughout his career Jung had a profound appreciation of mythology. The role of the δαίμων in his writings is evident:

*Who has vocation hears the voice of the inner man; he is called. And so, it is the legendary belief that he possesses a private daemon who counsels him and whose mandates he must execute.* (1964, 165)

This ancient idea, revived by Jung, has found resonance with a few other thinkers including Marie Louise von Franz and James Hillman:

*Sooner or later, something seems to call us onto a particular path. You may remember this ‘something’ as a signal calling in childhood when an urge out of nowhere, a fascination, a peculiar turn of events struck like an annunciation: This is what I must do, this is what I’ve got to have. This is who I am.* (Hillman 1996, 14)

Our work on the δαίμων or *genius* and its reception in Jung might serve as a critique of a conventional misunderstanding of Jung’s approach to religion. J.B. Lang was a friend of Jung who encouraged him to be more overt about the religious aspect of his thought. The conventional view is that Jung thought of religious experiences as aids to the process of individuation. On such a model, the individual is on a spiritual path to know the Self. From this perspective, Jung looks like a paradigmatic harbinger of modernity for the autonomy of the individual agent in a larger psychic field. In our view, however, we present other spiritual guides that inform individuals from without, as it were. The agent must negotiate between the tensions of inner unconscious factors with outer ones that affect the psyche.

Sigmund Freud was aware of the Pandora’s Box that he was opening with the work on the unconscious. In 1926 on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, Freud wrote: “The poets and the philosophers before me discovered the unconscious. What I discovered was the scientific method by which the

unconscious can be studied” (Fenichel 2019). Jung takes the stands that the modern individual is in search of soul and defends himself against accusations of Gnosticism or mere esotericism, while also being ambivalent about his role as a philosopher. He does call himself an empiricist. Notwithstanding, Jung does hold himself responsible for emphasizing the psychic value of religious experiences. He says that these experiences can be validated by empirically verifiable analysis that can be subjected to observational scientific methods. A lot of Jung’s thought unfolds unsystematically and this is why it can be difficult to accurately describe it or to define it. We may wonder if relativism subscribed his undertakings ?

*The Red Book* (2009) plays a significant role in Jung’s thought. Unpublished during his lifetime, this book contains many of Jung’s theological experiences and reflections which he was wary about publishing, due to prejudice and misperceptions. As expected, there are different views and interpretations of *The Red Book*, but it is plausible to see this work as offering a distinctive insight in Jung’s own psychology. As an example, in this work, he repeatedly recounts meetings with the figure of Philemon, who acted as Jung’s wise spirit guide. Jung recounts that he first encountered Philemon in a dream, in which he saw him flying in the sky with kingfisher wings. Apparently, shortly after this dream, Jung found a dead kingfisher in his garden. The kingfisher is a symbol of peace and love, sometimes known as the ‘halcyon bird’ (2009, 43). His observations in *The Red Book* show his reasoning to having arrived at discovering acausal connections, which he named “synchronicities” that further accounted for clues to a unified reality.

Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464) referred to the *unus mundus* or the *coincidentia oppositorum*-- principles and terms adopted by Jung. The source of this unified realm of opposites, however, is of transcendental origins (Jung 1963, para. 767-769). It would have been productive for Jung to engage in a study of *Parmenides*’ hypotheses at this point, for it would have provided him a systematic reasoning across gradient levels of reality with the origins in One Self. In the ‘metaphysical’ phase of his research Jung wrote a letter to Erich Neumann (10 March 1959) mentioning his observations of the workings of this intelligible background in which he noted “miraculous syntheses out of pure chance”. As you can see, dialoguing with a friend about ideas in your work can elevate or diminish

your discoveries, depending on the nature of the interaction between people and on the perceptions of the persons through which the subject at hand may be filtered. Jung was clearly not given appropriate feedback from Neumann at the time, which left him wondering about the obvious. It can be quite easy, and it often happens, to be persuaded into a lower version of reality or a lower goal for one self that remains unexamined and yet it may dominate in one's life, as it happened to Achilles or to the meaning of the *daimōn* as 'genius' in our own period.

Jung suspected that ancient ideas have a lingering presence and are more applicable in contemporary thought than frequently imagined. The *daimōn*, understood by Jung as a wise spirit decidedly entered in his psychology. To our earlier points, he also understands that *genius* is not just an etymological relic to be only strictly associated with the faculty of 'intelligence'. The *daimōn* cannot simply be 'secularised' or 'demythologised' to fit a modern intellect disconnected from its past. If our reflections are correct, the *daimōn* persistently functions as an intermediary link that re-animates ancient wisdom in the present. Jung presents a psychology of the human being as more than nature and nurture, but he still needed to reconnect it more fully with the classical tradition and with the philosophical heroic quest to know the Self.

Anthony Storr explains that in Jungian psychology we all start life as helpless children but that as we develop, we need to strive for emancipation (1973, 37). The process includes a casting off falseness in the soul and the projections of others that misrepresent "what a person is in reality" (Ibid). According to Storr, Jung considers analysis itself like a "spiritual quest or journey" (1973, 89) to uncover one's own myth. But, as we determined, psychology without philosophy render an incomplete search. It is interesting to note, though, that Jung, as reported by Storr, writes next to nothing about the effect of analysis upon a person's life or upon their personal relationships. While, a profound shift and transformation must ensue in the psyche of the patient, along with a great disturbance in their lifestyles, Jung says nothing about all this (1973, 90). Our critique of Jung is that he did not employ a systematic philosophical dialectic to address causes and relations, as described by Plato in the *Parmenides*, nor did he assist the person to understand how his or her levels of reality had shifted.



Proclus Lycius (410-485) says that “if the whole art of dialectic is abolished, then we do not admit the existence of truly existent reasons and sources in souls and lack the power of discoursing about realities” (2018, 982.6). Moreover, even though Jung appreciated the *daimōn*, his craft rarely makes use of it in the premises of its therapeutic practice. It is not to say that Jung does not appropriate unusual elements of alchemy, for example, in his approaches, but even this is a reduced version of knowledge inherited from ancient philosophers. Jung recognizes that an awareness of the psychic domain is “a sign of advance, a widening of consciousness” (1967, 9). Like in alchemy or in the hero’s journey, the point is to progress from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge, which is “the central mystery of alchemy (*lux et veritas*)” (Ibid, 126). In other words, a hero or heroine does not shrink from the task of confronting illusions in order to attain knowledge, and especially Self-knowledge. It is our argument that, with the guidance of the *genius* in its root form, the *daimōn*, one can access the “age-old past of life” and the “ultimate undivided unity” (Ibid, 28, 38). Evidence suggests the *daimōn* is like the “*philosophico dicatum*”, the messenger and revealer of supernal secrets (Ibid, 230).

The hero or heroine philosopher have a close relationship with the *daimōn* or *genius*, and they are aware that their individual construction mirrors that of the cosmos. Their self-discovery is a cosmic discovery. In Jungian terms, ignorance is an undifferentiated manifestation of the unconscious and expresses itself in irrational mood swings or behavior. Yet, some human emotions or involuntary sudden changes can be infused with a providential quality of the *daemon* (Dillon 1996, 216) like in the case of Socrates. Most often however, violent emotions, irritability, arrogance, feelings of inferiority or superiority, depressions, outbursts of rage coupled with self-criticism and misjudgments may be clues to personally held delusions, whose causes remain obscure. Like with Achilles, these states of mind indicate a struggle with a dualistic psychic split within oneself and a loss of touch with reality. In these conditions, personal experience can become ruthless, arrogant, and tyrannical. The aim of confrontation with ignorance and with personally held deceptions is to uncover and heal the dissociations and dissonances caused by them. Jung emphasizes:

*I am aware and hope I have also made it clear to the reader, that merely intellectual understanding is not sufficient for the process occurs in the living experience as applied to ourselves. We would do well to harbor no illusions in this respect: no understanding by means of words and no imitation can replace actual experience. (1967, 349)*

It is then through the analysis of the experiences that we can discover ‘why’, ‘what’ and ‘how’ things actually occurred and took shape. Jung speaks of a new “psychological era, when one would wonder how such ancient truths could have ever been forgotten. But, of course, it is much simpler to suppose that what we do not understand does not exist” (1966, 8, 9). Indeed, ancient philosophy and contemporary psychology should arise mutually. Freud was said to be “a man possessed by a *daemon*, a man who had been vouchsafed an overwhelming revelation that took possession of his soul and never let him go” (Ibid, 48). A numinous encounter with Charcot’s ideas awakened in him the calling of a *daemon* that sought knowledge through dreams. Perhaps, Charcot was for Freud, what Diotima was for Socrates. What would it be like if more teachers acted like the *daimōn*? What if students were reminded more often that: “You have that something within, the higher Self”? (Ibid, 126)

Anthony Stevens thinks that Jung suggests a co-participation with the metaphysical Self (1993, 3). In the language of psychology, the ancient ideas become “much more comprehensible” for the modern (1956, 7). As it concerns the transformation that occurs in the process of knowing the Self, the individual can expect what others described as no less than “a change from night to day” (Wilhelm 1931, 101). Jung identifies the qualities of feminine wisdom that play a key role in the passage to rebirth to a new life (1956, 296). These perspectives are inferred from ancient wisdom traditions, including Hellenic philosophy, since, as we may remember, Diotima taught Socrates about love, the *daimōn* that calls one to the full transformation of the self to realize One Self. Jung similarly taught that “the Self, is a symbol of wholeness, a *coincidentia oppositorum*, and therefore contains light and darkness simultaneously” (Ibid, 368). It may be safe to state, that the treasure which the hero reaches, beyond darkness, is the source of life: the Self. The unknown becomes known. The messenger of the Self is its *genius*, the *daimōn*, whose calling is to destiny beyond fate.

## Conclusion

German-Swiss poet and novelist, Hermann Hesse (1877–1962), in a sense, took the heroic quest through the characters in his work. He said that he wished to live and to create in accord with the promptings of his true self. But this, he felt, was almost impossible. Hesse described the process at first made visible by a ‘sign’ to undertake a passageway to a “death, and death tastes bitter-for it is birth pangs, fear and dread before some terrible renewal” (1919, 21, 32). He writes about a “a voice [...] that knew everything better and more clearly than myself” (Ibid, 43). Hesse is another example of a thinker, in the Hellenic-Jungian lineage, who led his readers to reflect on life as a quest to the Self.

Nonetheless, it might still be difficult for the modern intellectual to entirely concede that ancient wisdom, including the myth of ‘hero’s journey’, has significance today. But there are many authors now, who have documented and have verified a vast lore of ancient ideas that apply to our contemporary concerns and improve our multiple fields of research. Though the intellectuals differ among themselves, they work in tandem, albeit sometimes separately, to discover and to piece together an underlying structure of common principles. In a way, they are trying to resolve the ‘one -many’ problem and to unify its message. Adding to that mission, this thesis attempted to show the relevance of the *daimōn* as the root of the Latin *genius* or the English ‘genius’ that is best seen in the context of a perennial quest to ‘*know thySelf*’, which is the task of philosophy. The δαίμων, as evidenced in Platonic thought, guides by the voice of the Logos of Self (Proclus 2018, 993, 17).

According to Proclus, “the final cause of that which exists reveals the source in that which exists both through the self and of itself according to which the beings themselves that exist in relation to the Self attain their proper end” (2018, 983,7). As it was shown, philosophy is the practice that turns the mind back on itself to discover the knowledge of the Self, in the process of overcoming the limitations of ignorance and belief. As Heraclitus pointed out (ἦθος ἀνθρώπω δαίμων), our choices determine our destiny. And as other heroes before us discovered, when we follow the truth, we may also set in motion powerful forces against us, yet the spark of wisdom, a sign from the *daimōn*, will appear to guide us through the

passageway of darkness to the source of the eternal light of Being. The ideal, after having realized that ineffable state, is to return to the world and to a life of virtue.

*If by the gods' grace age at least is kind,  
we have that promise—trials will end in peace.* (Homer 1974, 578)

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