Dämonen. A satisfactory definition of the term demons and a consistent delimitation of what it meant in Egypt can hardly be given, since our idea of demons is not without ambiguity, and the word does not correspond to one specific Egyptian name. In this article demons will be taken as representatives of chaos. Just as the Egyptians had no term for the general concept 'animal', but named each kind individually, so their world included various beings that we should call demons: the gigantic snake *Apophis that is repulsed by the sun-god and his helpers, Ammit (*ʿm mwt* – *Fresserin), the hybrid monster composed of crocodile, lion and hippopotamus that devours the condemned at the judgment of the dead (*Jenseitsgericht), and Nebedj (*nbḏ*),[1] who has been called a personification of death,[2] and who may appear as Apophis against *Re or as the demonic god *Seth against *Osiris or as guardian of the gate in the netherworld[3]. In the texts, Nebedj is not only named in the singular but also in the plural, and besides the single Ammit there are many voracious demons whose names are composed with *ʿm* (to devour).[4] Usually the term for demons was a plural: *ꜣḫw* (spirits), *ʿwꜣjw* (robbers), *wpwtjw* (messengers), *wrjt* (monsters), *mtw* (the damned), *nḫtw* (the strong), *nsjw* and *ḥjw* (incubi), *ḥꜣjtjw* (ghosts of the night), *ḫftjw* (enemies), *ḥtmjw* (destroyers), *sḫrjw* (the banished), *sšrw* (the vanquished), *šmꜣjw* (wandering spirits) etc. Countless names of demons are mentioned, particularly in the funerary[5] and the so-called magical[6] literature. In descriptions of Egyptian religion the term demon, derived like so many terms of religious history from the Greek language and religion, was used by turns in the sense of evil spirits or lesser gods. Sometimes even the *ba and the *ka were included in that term.[7] Hans Bonnet[8] called demons "Wesen . . ., die zwischen Göttern und Menschen stehen und die mit einer Macht begabt sind, die den ihnen Begegnenden nützlich oder schädlich werden kann", remarking that they fall under the

general concept of gods, but belong more precisely to the class of the akhu (*Achu). Apart from the addition of power, which stems from the earlier dynamistic phenomenology of religion, this is the well-known description given by Plato (Symposium 202E: everything demonic is intermediate between god and mortal). Yet not only lesser gods who are sometimes called demons in the literature, such as *Bes, *Thoëris, *Hit and *Bebon, but also greater gods and even animals, statues and the pharaoh may function as intermediary (*Mittler). Also, when Greek philosophy says that demons are "mortal" and "created",[9] this applies to Egyptian gods (*ntrw*) in general unless they are "*Urgötter", as more recent research has shown.[10]

If it is desired to confine the term demon to evil spirits[11], it must be remarked that in the Egyptian world-view the pair of ontological concepts "being" and "non-being" is more fundamental than the ethical pair of good and evil. Gods have a more central place in the world of being, and are worshipped as such. Demons on the other hand play a peripheral part. Precisely because that which they represent is not accepted, they are evil or at any rate amoral, and are not worshipped. They do not dwell in a divine land of light or in temples built by man, but subsist in a hellish no-man's-land where created being is lost in infinite space and time: desert,[12] foreign places,[13] water,[14] night and darkness,[15] epagomenal days (*Epagomene)[16] and the space and time between the world and the realm of the dead.[17] Thus one might call demons representatives of chaos, or beings pertaining to non-being or at least to a form of being different from that of created being.[18] They are not illuminated by the sun, but are blind or have the evil eye. They are not masters of language as the gods are, but utter incomprehensible howling while they cannot hear. They are not fragrant gods or men, but they stink.[19] They feed on impurities such as excrements[20]. They are characterized by the exorbitance of uncreated and unordered reality and disturb ordered creation by causing sickness,[21] possession[22], premature death, the "plague of the year"[23] and other disasters.

The iconography of demons is extremely sober in Egypt in comparison with many other cultures, because Egyptian art has no place for unbounded excess. The representatives of chaos are indicated by symbols borrowed from being. The forms of certain animals prove suitable: snake (*Schlange), crocodile (*Krokodil), ass (*Esel), jackal, dog (*Hund), hare (*Hase), Seth-animal (*Sethtier), bull (*Stier), tom-cat (*Katze), ram (*Widder), monkey (*Affe), hog (*Schwein), *hippopotamus.[24] Sometimes demons are shown as figures of human shape, brandishing knives (*Messer) and with animal heads.[25] Their names are seldom written with so-called determinatives of divinity. As a rule, the determinative used is the knife, the snake or one of the other animals named above, the bound or dying man. The dying man[26] is explained in an Egyptian text[27] as a being that strikes himself, a suicide. He is an opponent (*ḥftj*) not only of the order of creation, but also of himself. Demons, indeed, are also at war among themselves.[28]

As in many languages, the word for enemy or opponent (*ḥftj*) in Egyptian also means demon (cf. fiend, fr. Old Engl. fēond, enemy). The *ḥftjw*[29] are under the delusion that they can disturb *mꜣꜥt*[30] (*Götterfeind). In principle demons are uncreated, non-existent beings, but they may also have been gods (*Seth) or men who have lapsed into non-being. A chaotic manner of life as a rebel or a chaotic mode of death through the so-called "schlimmer *Tod" (drowning [*Ertrinken],[31] the bite of a crocodile or a snake[32] and so on) may have stamped them as enemies of the order of creation. The word *mtw* should be translated rather as the condemned[33] or demons[34] than as the dead (*Toten). Most spells against demons in the magical texts are directed against the *mtw*. It is widely held, also in other countries than Egypt, that the dead who are not admitted into the kingdom of the dead become demons.[35]

The *ꜣḫw* (*Achu) have been glorified in the accepted manner, but as soon as their continued existence is endangered by neglect or some other cause, so that they no longer have an ordered place, they may take to demonic courses and require to be exorcized. For the Copts, who no longer observed the traditional cult of the dead, *jḫ* is the ordinary word for demon.

Like the *ꜣḫw* and the *mtw*, the *šmꜣjw* and *ḫꜣjtjw* are especially known as causing illness (*Krankheit), and their names have been related to words meaning disease[36]. The most acceptable translation seems to be, however, wandering spirits[37] and ghosts of the night[38] (*ḫꜣwj* is night). The *nsjw* and *ḥjw* are incubi and cause possession.[39] The *wrjt*[40] seem to be dreaded spirits of nature, residing in ponds and pools. "Even the small stream has a demon (*sšr*)."[41]

Among the demons we must also count the gang (*smꜣwt*) of Seth "Rebels of night and day,

hooded ones with red coats, rebels in the midst of fighting, enemies, makers of noise, originators of warfare, plotters of turmoil."[42] They seem to be a special group of the condemned dead.[43] Other gods than Seth also had their demonic avenging angels, sometimes generally termed followers (*jmjw ḫt*) or bearing special names as *ḫ3jtjw* 'or *šm3jw*, but usually called messengers (*wpwtjw*)[44] (*Götterboten). Especially feared were the messengers of *Sachmet. The peripheral situation of the demons then becomes a subordinate role. The so-called 42 judges of the dead are such messengers. At the judgment of the dead even the *nḥ3-ḥr* (*Apophis) proves to be a subordinate messenger of *Osiris[45]. In this way the demons become personifications of the destructive aspects of the gods. For the warding off of demons see *Apotropaika.

[1] Selim Hassan, Hymnes religieux du Moyen Empire, Kairo 1928, 117–119; Assmann, Liturgische Lieder, 69–70. – [2] Thausing, in: AÄA 1, 1939, 217 sqq. – [3] *Nbḏw* as lords of the gates CT VII, 304b. 315a. – [4] Erik Hornung, Altägyptische Höllenvorstellungen, ASAW 59,3, 1960, 31. – [5] Jan Zandee, Death as an Enemy, Leiden 1968, 200–208. – [6] Joris F. Borghouts, The Magical Texts of Pap. Leiden I 348, OMRO 51, 1971, 135, n. 314. – [7] Foucard, in: Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics IV, Edinburg 1911, 584–590, demons and spirits (Egyptian). – [8] RÄRG, 146. – [9] Alcib. I, cap. 5, cf. Theodor Hopfner, Plutarch. Über Isis und Osiris II, Prag 1941, 112 sqq.: „Die dämonologische Deutung der Sage." – [10] Erik Hornung, Der Eine und die Vielen, Darmstadt 1971, passim. – [11] Edward Langton, Good and Evil Spirits, London 1942, 49. – [12] Keimer, in: BIE 26, 1944, 135–147. – [13] Edwards, in: JEA 54, 1958, 158; Adhemar Massart, The Leiden Magical Papyrus 343 + 345, OMRO 34, Suppl., 1954, 60; Mutter u. Kind, rt II, 7–9; pInsinger, XXVIII, 5. – [14] pHier. BM (Edwards) I, XXII. – [15] Kees, in: ZÄS 59, 1924, 59–60. – Erik Hornung, Nacht und Finsternis im Weltbild der alten Ägypter, Diss. Tübingen 1956, 66–72; Westendorf, in: ZÄS 96, 1970, 145. – [16] Stricker, in: OMRO 29, 1948, 55–70. – [17] Hornung, Amduat. – [18] For this and the following Hornung, Höllenvorstellungen, 32,14. – [19] CT VI, 2930; Hornung, o.c., 16. – [20] Edwards, in: JEA 54, 1958, 158. – [21] Grundriß der Medizin III, 33 sqq.; IX, 29 (s.v. Krankheitsdämonen). – [22] Sauneron, in: BIFAO 60, 1960, 114: l'épilepsie était en effet la principale manifestation maladive où les anciens pouvaient voir l'intervention d'un démon . . . – [23] Admonitions, 25; Posener, Litérature et Politique, 94, n. 2; Caminos, in: JEA 58, 1972, 215. – [24] Sauneron, in: JNES, 19, 1960, 269–287. – [25] Blackman-Fairman, in: JEA 29, 1943, 21, n. 6. – [26] Gardiner, EG, Signlist A 14. – [27] pJumilhac XVI, 20. – [28] Hornung, o.c., 11–12. – [29] Zandee, o.c., 217–224; Hornung, o.c., 34. – [30] CT VI, 278d. – [31] Thompson, in: JEA 26, 1940, 70. – [32] pEdwin Smith, XIX, 6–9. – [33] Hornung, o.c., 35. – [34] Goedicke, in: JEA 58, 1972, 95. – [35] Adolf E. Jensen, Mythus und Kult bei Naturvölkern, Wiesbaden 1951, 383. – [36] pEdwin Smith, 475. 384, cf. pJumilhac, 203; pHier. BM (Edwards) I, 6, n. 36. 37. – [37] Etienne Drioton, Le Texte dramatique d'Edfou, CASAE 11, 1948, 82; Wolfhart Westendorf, Papyrus Edwin Smith, Bern und Stuttgart 1966, 95. 102 et passim „landfremde Dämonen". – [38] Raymond O. Faulkner, The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts, Oxford 1969; Hornung, Nacht und Finsternis, 12. – [39] Westendorf, in: ZÄS 90, 1970, 147; Sauneron, in: Kêmi 20, 1972, 11. – [40] pHier. BM (Edwards) I, XXII; Hughes, in: JEA 34, 1948, 179. – [41] pInsinger, 24,11. – [42] pRam. (Gardiner), 13. IX, 2,1–5. – [43] Caminos, in: JEA 58, 1972, 213. – [44] Suys, in: Egyptian Religion 2, New York 1934, 123–139; Firchow, in: ÄS 1955, 85–93; Sauneron, in: BIE 45, 1968, 45–52 and in: JNES 19, 1960, 282 n. 81. – [45] Charles Maystre, Déclarations d'innocence, RAPH 8, 1937, 69.

Lit.: Dimitri Meeks, Genies, anges, démons en Egypte, SourcesOr 8, 1971, 18–84; esp. 44–50 (les génies émissaires). H. te V.