

DEMONS

ETYMOLOGY OF THE WORD

The term demon is derived from the Greek word *daimōn*, which means a “supernatural being” or “spirit.”

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The horrifying aspects of demons have been represented in the woodcuts of medieval and Reformation artists and in the masks of shamans, medicine men, and priests of nonliterate religions.



ORIGINAL MEANING

Though it has commonly been associated with an evil or malevolent spirit, the term originally meant a spiritual being that influenced a person’s character.

FALLEN ANGELS

Like the demons and evil spirits of nature in nonliterate religions, the fallen angels were viewed as the agents of famine, disease, war, earthquakes, accidental deaths, and various mental or emotional disorders.



THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Some medieval scholars of demonology ascribed to a hierarchy of seven archdemons the seven deadly sins: Lucifer (Pride); Mammon (Avarice); Asmodeus (Lechery); Satan (Anger); Beelzebub (Gluttony); Leviathan (Envy); and Belphegor (Sloth).

AGATHOS DAIMŌN

An *agathos daimōn* (“good spirit”), was benevolent in its relationship to humans. The Greek philosopher Socrates, for example, spoke of his *daimōn* as a spirit that inspired him to seek and speak the truth.



Bibliography

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