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Naming the Gods of Others in the Septuagint: Lexical Analysis and Historical-Religious Implications

Anna Angelini

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Introduction

- 1 At a first sight, the *Septuagint* (LXX) does not seem to be particularly innovative in the way it refers to foreign gods, to the gods of the nations, or to any recipient of cults which Israelites must avoid. In most cases these gods are simply referred to in a way which we could define as “denotative”: they are called θεοί, i.e., without differentiation from the name of the god of Israelites, as both El and Yhwh can be rendered with θεός.¹ However, in several instances translators adopted a specific “connotative” vocabulary. I refer here to those passages in which foreign gods are qualified as δαιμόνια and/or as εἰδωλα. These qualifications deserve further exploration, as here it turns out that the LXX plays a crucial role in the semantic evolution of both the notions, of “demon” and “idol” respectively. In what follows, I will focus on some linguistic and cultural aspects which are methodologically relevant to appreciate the activity of the translators, on the one hand, and to understand the fashioning of the category of demon during Hellenistic times, on the other. Such aspects are the relationship of the LXX with its *Vorlage* or the extant Hebrew text (henceforward abbreviated as MT²), and the possible innovation brought by the LXX both on lexical and conceptual level; the interactions between the semantic field of δαιμόνιον and the semantic field of εἰδωλον, and, more

generally, the way in which the discourse on foreign cults can be (or not be) intertwined with a discourse on divine images; the possible patterns which can be detected in the use of these two categories within the LXX; the role of LXX witnesses vis-à-vis the larger Hellenistic religious and cultural context (Greco-Roman religion and philosophy on the one hand, Hellenistic Judaism and Second Temple literature on the other). I will first analyze the main contexts in which the category of δαιμόνιον is applied to foreign gods in the LXX and compare it with some uses of δαιμόνιον in classical and post-classical literature. I will then consider the relationship between δαιμόνια and εἰδωλα in the LXX and in other Hellenistic witnesses. Within this frame, I will specifically focus on the semantic value of εἰδωλα in two Pentateuchal passages which are relevant for my discussion, namely Exodus 20:4 and Deuteronomy 32:21, and I will suggest a new interpretation for the meaning of εἰδωλα in the decalogue, against the background of papyrological evidence. I will conclude by highlighting some wider implications of the present study.

The gods of the others as ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ in the LXX

- 2 Even a quick survey of the distribution of the word δαιμόνιον in the LXX makes clear that its main context is to be sought in the polemics against foreign gods, although the word is also used elsewhere in the LXX.³ The only Pentateuchal occurrence of the word δαιμόνια is found in *Deuteronomy* 32:17, where it is used in reference to the polemics against illegitimate deities. This passage is reproduced without variation in *Odes* 2:17. Two related passages, in which dependence on *Deut* 32 produced a very similar text are *Psalms* 105:37 (= 106:37 MT) and *Baruch* 4:7. In this context one should also include *Psalms* 95:5 (= 96:5 MT), as well as two out of the four occurrences of the word that are found in *Isaiah*, namely *Isaiah* 65:3 and 11. The Hebrew referent is *šedîm* in *Deut* 32 and *Ps* 105; the same word could have probably been found in a Hebrew *Vorlage* of *Bar* 4 (if this *Vorlage* ever existed).⁴ In *Ps* 95:5 the referent is *‘elîlîm*, a term to which I will return later. The two occurrences in *Isaiah* are somewhat different: *Isa* 65:3 is an expansion with no equivalent in the extant Hebrew text. In *Isa* 65:11 the equivalent is Gad, usually translated by “Fate” or “Fortune”, a deity which was very popular in the Hellenistic and Roman Near East.⁵ *Deut* 32:17 therefore emerges as the most influential passage, and thus as warranting a closer analysis. This text belongs to the so-called “Song of Moses”, which summarizes the history of Israel going back to its mythical origins. Typically of Israel’s history, the Israelites repay Yhwh’s blessings and gifts with infidelity. Their disloyalty is demonstrated, among other things, by their worshipping of δαιμόνια, which are described as “new” and “recent” gods both in the Hebrew and in the Greek text:⁶

16	They made me jealous with strange cults,
	with abominations they provoked me (<i>k's</i>)
17	They sacrificed to demons (<i>šedîm</i>), which are not God (<i>lo' 'Eloah</i>),
	deities which they did not know, new,
	the ones recently arrived, which their fathers did not fear.

Deut 32:16–17 (LXX):

16	παρώξυνάν με ἐπ' ἄλλοτρίοις ἐν βδελύγμασιν αὐτῶν ἐξέπικρανάν με
17	ἔθυσαν δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῶ θεοῖς οἷς οὐκ ᾔδεισαν καινοὶ πρόσφατοι ἤκασιν οὐς οὐκ ᾔδεισαν οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν

16	They provoked me with foreign cults,
	in their abominations they embittered me
17	they sacrificed to demons and not to God,
	to gods which they did not know.
	New, recent ones have arrived,
	which their fathers did not know.

- 3 The translation of *šedîm* with δαίμόνια is both literal and faithful. The Hebrew *šed* is usually considered as a loanword from the akkadian *šedu*,⁷ which can be either a protective spirit or a malevolent demon, especially when it is followed by the qualification “evil” (*lemnu*-HUG).⁸ *Šed* is attested in Qumran about 15 times, in the forms *šdym* and *šd’ym*, both in the Hebrew and in the Aramaic texts where it means “demon”.⁹ It appears quite frequently in Jewish Aramaic and Syriac, in the forms *šyd*, *šyd’*, *šydh* and *šydt’*, especially in the lists of demons and evil spirits found on amulets and incantation bowls of late antiquity.¹⁰ It is attested in the Targums,¹¹ and eventually serves as the generic name for “demon” in rabbinic and modern Hebrew.¹² The same meaning applies well to the context of *Deut* 32. From the perspective of a modern reader, then, the rendering of *šedîm* with δαίμόνια seems well-founded and no surprising choice, since we are used to deriving the modern idea of “demon” from the Greek δαίμων. From an ancient perspective, though, things are much more complex, as the Greek notion of δαίμων is much broader and more articulated than that of “demon”. The category of δαίμων has a wide semantic range, which varies from being a synonym for “god” (θεός), to “soul”, “spirit of the dead”, “destiny”, et cetera.¹³ While the δαίμων has almost no mythical background, it is a highly-operational concept in the context of Greek philosophy, from pre-Socratic times to late antiquity. The polysemic nature of this notion remains well attested during Hellenistic times. However, Giulia Sfameni Gasparro has pointed out in a number of studies how the notion of δαίμων as a somehow “intermediate being”, occupying a specific intermediate space within the cosmos, clearly distinguished from the gods and closer to the category of heroes, is a product of late classic and Hellenistic philosophy.¹⁴ Such a characterization is largely developed not only in the Platonic dialogues, where δαίμων is the mediator *par excellence* between humans and gods, but also among Pythagoreans. Pythagorean philosophical traditions are more difficult to date, as the history of their textual transmission is particularly complex. Although they are usually considered very ancient, the majority of our written witnesses do not predate the Hellenistic period. They seem therefore to draw upon previous beliefs and philosophical notions, which can evince significant differences. One interesting document is the so-called Pythagorean Commentaries or Memories, known from Alexander Polyhistor, via Diogenes Laertius:¹⁵

εἶναι τε πάντα τὸν ἀέρα ψυχῶν ἔμπλεων· καὶ ταύτας δαίμονας τε καὶ ἥρωας ὀνομάζεσθαι· καὶ ὑπὸ τούτων πέμπεσθαι ἀνθρώποις τοὺς τ’ ὀνείρους καὶ τὰ σημεῖα νόσους τε, καὶ οὐ μόνον ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ καὶ προβάτοις καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις κτήνεσιν· εἶς τε τούτους γίνεσθαι τοὺς τε καθαρμούς καὶ ἀποτροπιασμούς μαντικὴν τε πᾶσαν καὶ κληδόνας καὶ τὰ ὅμοια.

The whole air is full of souls. We call them *daimones* and *heroes*, and it is they who send dreams, signs and illnesses to men — and not only to men, but also to sheep

and other domestic animals. It is toward these *daimones* that we direct purifications and apotropaic rituals, all kinds of divination, kledonomanancy and other things of a similar kind.

- 4 It should be clear that such traditions do not arise suddenly in Hellenistic times. A distinction between gods and δαίμονες goes back to Hesiod,¹⁶ and a specific role attributed to δαίμονες in the oracular practice seems to be attested since the classical times in Dodona.¹⁷ However, during the Hellenistic period the number and the typology of sources which distinguished gods from δαίμονες, by attributing to the latter a more specific field of action, increases considerably. In the passage from Polyhistor, two aspects are particularly noteworthy for our purposes. First, δαίμονες are conceived as intangible and incorporeal beings, as they are explicitly defined ψυχαί which “fill the air”.¹⁸ The specific rituals addressed to them are also interesting in that they differ from ordinary sacrificial practice: they are apotropaic rituals, oracular practices and divination (dreams), as well as purification rituals. Both these aspects show some connection with the ideas expressed in *Deut* 32, on which I will return later.
- 5 If we now go back to the Greek text of *Deut* 32:16, one element which requires an explanation is the fact that here the form employed is the derivative δαιμόνιον, instead of δαίμων, and that in the rest of the LXX δαιμόνιον is always preferred (or almost always), over δαίμων.¹⁹ While as an adjective the word goes back to Homeric times, its use as a neutral substantive is relatively recent, finding its earliest occurrences in Euripides (where it denotes a generic divine power).²⁰ Overall, δαιμόνιον shares the semantic ambiguity of δαίμων, although the contexts in which the former is used are fewer and less differentiated than those of the latter. One of the most explicit witnesses which attests to the ambiguity of δαιμόνιον is the famous passage of the *Apology of Socrates*. Here, the distinction between δαίμονες and δαιμόνια is at the heart of both Socrates’ accusation and Socrates’ defense. The charge against Socrates brought by Meletus and his fellows refers to his “sign”, often qualified as δαιμόνιον. But the reference to δαιμόνια is used to discredit Socrates’ “new gods”, while δαίμονες suggests the substantial identification between these entities and θεοί. The new deities are referred to as δαιμόνια καινά: “Socrates, states (the accusation), is responsible for corrupting the youth and for not acknowledging the gods (θεούς) the state acknowledges, but other new divine entities (ἕτερα δὲ δαιμόνια καινά)”.²¹ The similarity between this expression and the LXX of *Deut* 32, where the new gods are also qualified as καινοί, has been occasionally noted. Indeed, it might appear quite striking at first sight. However, these similarities should not be overstated. The expression δαιμόνια καινά indicates divine powers, which do not conform to those officially worshipped by the city; they are, therefore, illegitimate. On the contrary, Socrates’ defence not only identifies these divine beings (δαιμόνια) with δαίμονες, but insists on the traditional identification between θεοί and δαίμονες. He therefore suggests the full divinity of δαίμονες, and by consequence the internal contradiction of Meletos’ charge:

[...] τοὺς δὴ δαίμονας οὐχὶ ἤτοι θεοὺς γε ἡγοῦμεθα ἢ θεῶν παῖδας; φῆς ἢ οὐ;

Πάνυ γε.

Οὐκοῦν εἴπερ δαίμονας ἡγοῦμαι, ὥς σὺ φῆς, εἰ μὲν θεοὶ τινές εἰσιν οἱ δαίμονες, τοῦτ’ ἂν εἴη ὃ ἐγὼ φημί σε αἰνίττεσθαι καὶ χαριεντίζεσθαι, θεοὺς οὐχ ἡγοῦμενον φάναί με θεοὺς αὖ ἡγεῖσθαι πάλιν, ἐπειδὴ περ γε δαίμονας ἡγοῦμαι[...]

Ὅπως δὲ σὺ τινα πείθοις ἂν καὶ μικρὸν νοῦν ἔχοντα ἀνθρώπων, ὥς οὐ τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἔστιν καὶ δαιμόνια καὶ θεῖα ἡγεῖσθαι, καὶ αὖ τοῦ αὐτοῦ μήτε δαίμονας μήτε θεοὺς μήτε ἥρωας, οὐδεμὶα μηχανή ἐστιν.

“But do we not think that *daimones* are gods or children of gods? Yes or no?”
 “Certainly yes.”

“Then, since I do believe in *daimones*, as you say, if the *daimones* are a kind of gods, this is what I mean when I say that you speak in riddles and in jokes, as you say that I do not believe in gods and then again that I do, since I believe in *daimones*. [...] In no way could you persuade anyone, even of small intelligence, that is possible for the same man to believe both in *demons* and gods, and on the other hand for the same man not to believe nor in *daimones*, nor in gods, nor in heroes.”

- 6 Despite the similarities in the expressions used by Plato and by the Greek translator of *Deuteronomy*, these passages belong to very different contexts and have very different conceptual backgrounds. In Plato there is no equivalent to the issue of “false gods” that is found in the biblical text. In the *Apology* the status of these entities is questioned only insofar they have not been officially integrated into the public cult, and therefore represent a danger to the city’s interests.²² In other words, in the Athenian context there is no “theological” conflict at stake, but mainly a procedural and practical issue. Therefore, these parallels do not necessarily reveal an influence of Platonic language or of Platonic theories on the work of the translator.²³ Instead, they attest only to the facts that, first, qualifying a cult or a god as “new” is a widespread and rather common strategy of delegitimization in antiquity; second, that the word δαιμόνια can be used, to a certain extent, in opposition to θεοί and to δαίμονες itself, with deprecatory force.
- 7 The use of δαιμόνια to polemicize against “false” gods or “non-gods” as it is found in the LXX of *Deuteronomy* 32 appears, in itself, as rather new and specific. However, a series of reasons may have led the translator to prefer δαιμόνιον over δαίμων. The first term has fewer connotations from the perspective of Greek religion and philosophy. Its semantic spectrum is not only more reduced, but also somehow distinctive: unlike δαίμων, δαιμόνιον is not a normal general term for “god” and is not frequently used as a synonym for θεός. At the same time, the word keeps a certain degree of ambiguity and lacks specification in defining divine power. These features prove useful to the translator of *Deuteronomy* but also to later translators, who adopt a more “free” style, as can be seen for example in the case of the translator of *Isaiah*.²⁴
- 8 The idea of demons as recipients of improper rituals will find further development in later texts, as for example *Ps* 105:37. Here, verses 35–39 are inserted in a context dealing with worship of idols, and δαιμόνια are the addressees of human sacrifices, described with an emphasis on the blood that is shed:

Ps 105:36–38 (= 106:36–38 MT)

36	καὶ ἐδούλευσαν τοῖς γλυπτοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐγενήθη αὐτοῖς εἰς σκάνδαλον
37	καὶ ἔθυσαν τοὺς υἱοὺς αὐτῶν καὶ τὰς θυγατέρας αὐτῶν τοῖς δαιμονίοις (ebr. <i>šedîm</i>)
38	καὶ ἐξέχεαν αἷμα ἄθωρον αἷμα υἱῶν αὐτῶν καὶ θυγατέρων ὧν ἔθυσαν τοῖς γλυπτοῖς Χανααν καὶ ἐφονοκτονήθη ἡ γῆ ἐν τοῖς αἵμασιν

36	And they served their idols (lit. carved images) and it became a trap for them,
37	they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons,
38	and they poured out innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan, and the land was defiled with the blood

- 9 Mention of δαιμόνια in a list of forbidden cults is also found in the LXX of *Isa* 65:3:

Λαὸς οὗτος ὁ παροξύνων με ἐναντίον ἐμοῦ διὰ παντός αὐτοὶ θυσιάζουσιν ἐν τοῖς κήποις καὶ θυμιῶσιν ἐπὶ ταῖς πλίνθοις τοῖς δαιμονίοις ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν [L: τοῖς οἰκουσιν /καὶ τοῖς οὐκ οὐσιν]

This people who provoke me, in front of me, continuously: they offer sacrifices in the gardens and burn incense on the bricks to the demons, which do not exist

- 10 This mention has no equivalent in the Hebrew text, which reads:

3	This people who provoke me (k's), to my face, continuously,
	they who offer sacrifices in the gardens, and make the smoke go up on the bricks (ûm ^e qat ^{er} im 'al-hall ^e bênîm),
4	They who squat (hayošbîm) in tombs and spend the night in secret places,
	who eat flesh of swine, and polluted broth in their vessels...

- 11 The Hebrew and the Greek expressions used to describe the offense towards Yhwh are similar to those employed in *Deut* 32 (see for example the verb *k's*/παροξύνω), and are quite typical of Deuteronomic language.²⁵ The practices described in the Hebrew text of v. 3–4 are not easy to identify precisely. However, the “sacrifices in gardens” could indicate a cult to Asherah, as the association between gardens and the sacred tree which is usually considered to represent the goddess appears in *Isa* 1:29.²⁶ Alternatively, it could refer to the god of vegetation Adonis-Tammuz, whose cult was already popular at the time of composition of this text, usually dated to the early Hellenistic period.²⁷ As for the rituals performed “on bricks”, the referent is even less clear. As was already suggested by Duhm, the Hebrew *l^ebenah* could be a derogatory description of an altar made of earth.²⁸ The ritual is often interpreted as an incense offering, according to the meaning usually assigned to the Piel form *qit^{er}*, from the root *qt^r*, literally “to smoke”, “to make the smoke go up”.²⁹ This interpretation is probable, although not certain, as the verb *qt^r* elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible refers more generally to the smoke produced by sacrifice.³⁰ The Greek text has θυμιάω, which is the usual equivalent for *qit^{er}* in the Septuagint. While θυμιάω, “to burn so as to produce smoke”, corresponds well to the literal meaning of *qit^{er}*, its specific use for incenses and perfumes is attested in Greek language. Moreover, the Greek translation specifies the recipients of this offering, namely the demons. In this regard, a text-critical issue has to be mentioned here, concerning the expression τοῖς δαιμονίοις ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν found at the end of verse 3. Some witnesses from the Lucianic tradition have the lection τοῖς οἰκουσιν, which could somehow render the Hebrew form *hayošbîm* at the beginning of verse 4, a word which remains untranslated in the Old Greek. However, other manuscripts from the same tradition have the reading καὶ τοῖς οὐκ οὐσιν, which is similar, at least in meaning, to ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν.³¹ I would therefore be more inclined to consider this last reading as belonging to the Old Greek, and τοῖς οἰκουσιν as a later correction aiming at reestablishing a text closer to the Hebrew.³² In any event, it remains clear that the insertion of τοῖς δαιμονίοις is imputable to the translator. By stressing the fact that these demons “do not exist” the translator associates with demons a motif which is proper to the wisdom discourse against idols: the fact that they are powerless. However, while polemics against idol worship insist for the most on their useless materiality, here the deficiency of demons is indicated by their lack of

substance.³³ Worshipping idols and demons are further connected in apocryphal traditions, as a late passage from the book of Enoch shows, where demons are paralleled to phantoms (φαντάσματα):³⁴

καὶ οἱ γλύφοντες εἰκόνα[ς ἀργυ]ρᾶς καὶ χρυσᾶς, ξυλίνας τε καὶ λιθίνας καὶ ὀστράκινας, καὶ λατρεύ[οντες φαν]τάσμασιν καὶ δαιμονίοι[ς καὶ βδελύγ]μασιν καὶ πνεύμασιν πονη[ροῖς καὶ πάσαις ταῖς πλάναις οὐ κατ' ἐπι[στήμην] καὶ πᾶν βοήθημα οὐ μὴ εὗρητε ἀπ' αὐτῶν

And those who carve images of silver and gold and wood and stone and clay, and worship phantoms and demons and abominations and evil spirits and all errors, not according to knowledge; no help whatsoever you will find from them.

- 12 Relevant parallels to the notion of δαιμόνιον as it is shaped in and through the Septuagint can be found in the dialogues of Plutarch. Here we find the idea of φαῦλα δαιμόνια, “bad demons”, as a class of malevolent demons clearly distinguished from and inferior to the gods, and which is also held responsible for human diseases or disturbances.³⁵ According to Plutarch, the belief that demons have a taste for human sacrifices and human blood is widespread but should not be given any credence. One passage from the life of Pelopidas is explicit in this regard. Here the author speaks of a vision in which Agesilaus, the chief of the Spartan army, was asked to sacrifice his daughter, as Agamemnon had done, in order to ensure the success of his expedition:³⁶

οἱ δὲ τοῦναντίον ἀπηγόρευον, ὥς οὐδενὶ τῶν κρείττονων καὶ ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς ἀρεστοῦν οὔσαν οὔτω βάρβαρον καὶ παράνομον θυσίαν [...] δαίμονας δὲ χαίροντας ἀνθρώπων αἵματι καὶ φόνῳ πιστεύειν μὲν ἴσως ἐστὶν ἀβέλτερον, ὄντων δὲ τοιούτων ἀμελητέον ὥς ἀδυνάτων·

Others, however, argued the contrary, declaring that such a lawless and barbarous sacrifice is not acceptable to any one of the superior beings above us [...] and the belief that demons enjoy human blood and slaughter is equally silly; although such beings should exist, they must be disregarded as ineffective.

- 13 Here we find two ideas which are equally present in the LXX: that sacrifices (and specifically human sacrifices) are offered to demons, and that demons have no effective power. Moreover, among Greek authors of this period it is not uncommon for foreign gods to be interpreted as “demons”: this is the case for Osiris in Plutarch, or for the gods of the Gauls in Strabo.³⁷ Again, I wish to stress that I am in no way imagining an influence of the LXX on these writings. Their contexts and their respective interests remain very different, even divergent. However, these parallels point to the fact that we find in the LXX the earliest attestations of a new understanding of a religious notion, which was later widespread in Hellenistic culture. Its language is thus an index of a shared cultural and religious sensibility, which can serve very different purposes. What is unique to the biblical discourse is the vigorous and emphatic way in which the polemic against foreign gods is used to shape identity, and to separate “us” from “others”.³⁸ This explains the strength of such a discourse, the violence of its tones, as well as the association between the discourse against foreign gods and that against “idols”, which is already advanced in the literary context of *Deut* 32. Verse 21 represents the core of such a polemic:

They made me jealous with a no-god (*lô 'el*),
They provoked me with their worthless practices (*behab'elêhem*),
And I will make them jealous with a no-people.

- 14 Here, in Hebrew, foreign gods are explicitly defined as *lô 'el* = no god, *habālîm*, “worthless”, parallel to the “no people”, the foolish nation that Yhwh is going to send against Israel as rightful punishment for their apostasy. The Greek text reads here:³⁹

αὐτοὶ παρεζήλωσάν με ἐπ' οὐ θεῶν
 παρώργισάν με ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτῶν
 κἀγὼ παραζηλώσω αὐτοὺς ἐπ' οὐκ ἔθνει
 ἐπ' ἔθνει ἄσυνέτῳ παροργιῶ αὐτούς
 They made me jealous with what is no god,
 provoked me with their idols.
 So I will make them jealous with what is no people,
 provoke them with a people lacking understanding

- 15 The repetition of *lo' el, lo' Eloha* (in Greek: οὐ θεός) at verses 17 and 21, and the reference to the act of provoking God's anger in both verses underline the connection between the two passages. Εἶδωλα at verse 21 seem therefore to perform the same function that δαιμόνια occupy at verses 16–17. As in verse 21 the Greek εἶδωλα translates the Hebrew *habālîm*, I will turn now to analyze in what ways these concepts are used in the context of the LXX.

The Gods of the others as Εἶδωλα and as ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙΑ

- 16 As has already been noted by scholars, the translation of *hebel* with εἶδωλον is not a literal render (the more literal and most frequent equivalent for *hebel* in the LXX being ματαιός). This could be defined as a target-language oriented choice, because here, as in the case of δαιμόνιον, the translators returned to an extremely dense, polysemic and operational Greek notion. A particular aspect of the broad semantic range of εἶδωλον could have guided the translator's choice here, namely its inconsistency. Since Homeric times, the word can be applied to anything which is capable of making present something which is elsewhere, or which is not real: an image of someone appearing in dreams (ὄναρ);⁴⁰ phantoms or ghosts coming back from the netherworld (ψυχή),⁴¹ or created *ad hoc* by a god (φάσμα);⁴² but also the shadow of the body (σκιά),⁴³ the image reflected in a mirror,⁴⁴ and so on. These uses stress the fact that the visual representation produced by the εἶδωλον does not reflect an actual reality. In some sources, this lack of reality is equated to a lack of body: Lucian defines the shadow of Heracles as an ἄσώματον εἶδωλον.⁴⁵ If we think of the original meaning of *hebel*, i.e. “vapour”, from which the idea of “vanity”, “uselessness” develops, the translation of *habalim* with εἶδωλα in *Deut* 32 seems therefore reflect the translator's consciousness that the word εἶδωλον can sometimes mean something unsubstantial. εἶδωλον can sometimes mean something unsubstantial.⁴⁶ Moreover, *hbl* and images coming from dreams are already associated in some biblical texts: Zechariah (10:2) condemns dreams as means of divination saying that they offer nothing but a worthless (*hebel*) comfort, and a difficult passage from *Qohelet* (5:6), equates *hē alômoth* (“dreams”) with *habalîm* (“vanities”).⁴⁷ This background could have enhanced the equivalence between εἶδωλον and *hebel* found in *Deuteronomy*.⁴⁸
- 17 Whatever the ultimate reason of the translator may have been, in the context of *Deut* 32:16–21 δαιμόνια and εἶδωλα come to be two close concepts, contiguous notions which share the feature of being unsubstantial entities. This idea finds parallels in the philosophical Hellenistic literature, as we saw for the representation of demons in Alexander Polyhistor. Plutarch again offers an interesting parallel in the life of the philosopher Dion, who had a vision of a phantom announcing his imminent death:⁴⁹

καίτοι λόγος τίς ἐστὶ τῶν ἀναιρούντων τὰ τοιαῦτα, μηδενὶ ἂν νοῦν ἔχοντι προσπεσεῖν φάντασμα δαίμονος μηδ' εἶδωλον, ἀλλὰ παιδάρια καὶ γυναῖκα καὶ παραφόρους δι' ἀσθένειαν ἀνθρώπους ἔν τινι πλάνῳ ψυχῆς ἢ δυσκρασίᾳ σώματος γενομένους, δόξας ἐφέλκεσθαι κενὰς καὶ ἄλλοκότους.

And yet there is the argument of those who refuse such things, (saying that) no man in his right mind was ever visited by a demonic apparition or a spectre, but that little children and women and men deranged by sickness, in some aberration of spirit or bad temperament of the body, have indulged in empty and strange opinions.

- 18 The formulation stresses again the proximity between these two notions. The extent to which these two concepts became interchangeable in the LXX is demonstrated by psalm 95 (= 96 in the Masoretic text) and by its rewriting in the first book of *Chronicles*, in Chapter 16 (= 1 *Paralipomena* 16 in the LXX). The psalm focuses on the celebration of Yhwh's royalty, which surpasses that of every other heavenly being. The sovereignty of Yhwh on the other gods is highlighted in various ways, already in the Hebrew version. On the one hand, his superior strength over all the other gods is explicitly affirmed; on the other, the text insists on the ineffectiveness and the vacuity of other divinities in comparison to Yhwh, by saying that "All the gods of the nations are *gods of nothing* (*elîlîm*), and Yhwh made the heavens".⁵⁰ The song attributed to David in 1 *Chronicles* 16 is a rewriting of several psalms, which are combined together in a new composition. Verse 26 quotes directly from Ps 95:5, and in Hebrew the two verses are strictly identical. The name *elîl* is worth of attention in these verses. This form, which appears almost always in the plural, is used in the Hebrew Bible with a pejorative meaning, and it may have been created intentionally for this purpose. The noun is reminiscent of the adjective *elîl*, which means "weak", "insignificant", and could polemically recall the form *el*, "god".⁵¹ In the Greek translation of psalm 96, *elîl* is rendered by δαιμόνια:⁵²

ὅτι μέγας κύριος καὶ αἰνετὸς σφόδρα φοβερός ἐστὶν ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς θεοὺς
ὅτι πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν δαιμόνια ὁ δὲ κύριος τοὺς οὐρανοὺς ἐποίησεν
As the great and much praiseworthy lord is terrible over all the gods
Because all the gods of the nations are demons, but the Lord made the heavens.

- 19 These "gods of nothing" of the nations can correspond well to demons, according to the logic already at work in *Deut* 32. However, in the Septuagint of 1 *Paral* 16:26 there is a difference, as the text reads:

ὅτι πάντες οἱ θεοὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰδῶλα καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν οὐρανὸν ἐποίησεν

- 20 The translator of *Chronicles* chooses here εἰδῶλα instead of δαιμόνια, while the Hebrew referent *elîl* remains the same (*elîl*). Such a difference is not surprising, as the term *elîlîm* is not translated consistently in the LXX. In fact, a different translation is provided for almost every occurrence. However, all the translations reflect the language of the polemic against idols: sometimes it is rendered by βδελύγματα ("disgusting things"), sometimes by χειροποίητα, ("things made by human hands").⁵³ Moreover, the choice made by the translator of *Chronicles* has an antecedent in *Lev* 19:4, where εἰδῶλα translates *e'lîlîm* (οὐκ ἐπακολουθήσετε εἰδώλοις καὶ θεοὺς χωνευτοὺς οὐ ποιήσετε ὑμῖν ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν), and may be ultimately influenced by the traditions of the Decalogue.⁵⁴ For our purposes, it is relevant to observe that the comparison between the Greek text of *Psalms* and that of *Chronicles* attests to a high contiguity between εἰδῶλα and δαιμόνια. As a matter of fact, the use of εἰδῶλα not only leads immediately to the larger context of the polemics against the "idols", but also to the interdiction of images, or divine images as it is stated in the Decalogue, and

to its ancient reception. Before turning to this last point, I would like to make some provisional remarks regarding the relationship between δαίμόνια and εἰδωλα in the LXX.

- 21 First, the translators selected one specific meaning among those which were inherent to the highly polysemic notions of δαίμων and εἰδωλον. The success of these equivalences contributed to that specific meanings for δαίμόνια and εἰδωλα become stable within the LXX itself, and this choice will have a considerable impact on the following traditions. The connection between δαίμόνια and εἰδωλα will be taken over and further developed both by Paul and by the author of *Revelation*.⁵⁵ The association between sacrifices to demons and sacrifices to idols will become a common *topos* in early Christian discourse.⁵⁶
- 22 Second, the appearance of δαίμόνιον in the LXX of *Deut* 32 is a source-based choice, based on the *šedîm* of the *Vorlage*. Yet the literary frame insists on the opposition between demons and gods, and facilitates a specific representation of δαίμόνια as potentially negative beings which do not belong to the “traditional pantheon” and which are clearly distinguished from the latter. Not only does this notion fit the context of Hellenistic literature, but the LXX constitutes, strictly speaking, the earliest evidence of the use of δαίμόνιον with this meaning.
- 23 Third, in constructing the polemics against foreign gods conceived as εἰδωλα, the Septuagint translators and later LXX authors exploited a meaning which can sometimes be associated to the Greek term: the idea of insubstantial form, or phantom, stressing the aspect of vacuity and vanity, which correspond to the Hebrew notions of *‘elîlîm*, *heḇalîm* etc. However, this choice implies an important shift in focus from the Greek notion of εἰδωλον. As the studies of Jean-Pierre Vernant have clearly shown,⁵⁷ the essential feature of the Greek εἰδωλον is not its unreliability, or its inconsistency as is underlined in the biblical texts. Instead, the εἰδωλον is characterized by the capacity to make present someone or something which is absent, i.e., by performing a representative function, and working as a functional equivalent to the person (and this fits only partially with our notion of “phantom”, which remains an improper translation). In this sense εἰδωλον belongs to the sphere of the “double” of an individual identity: it is a “substitute” for the person. The cultural category of “double” is profoundly inherent to the Greek culture, but foreign to the Jewish world.⁵⁸ From this perspective, the term belongs to the semantical field of image and visual representation and can be referred both to an insubstantial image, i.e. to an image that we would qualify as “appearance”, and to a concrete object. For example, the statue of Protesilaus (the first dead of the Trojan war) that was made by his wife Laodamia, and secretly loved and honored in her bedroom, functioned precisely as an εἰδωλον of the husband because it was capable of fulfilling the *pothos*, the longing deriving from the absence of the men.⁵⁹ Since the main property of the εἰδωλον is nor its unreality nor its physical similarity to what is represented, but rather its capacity to make visible a presence that inherently belongs to a different, separate, and invisible world, likeness is not an essential feature. For example, even the *kolossoi*, the rough stone blocks erected for the dead, can be considered as εἰδωλα in the Greek tradition.
- 24 In what follows, I will argue that this aspect did not escape some of the Septuagint translators, who were probably more aware of the polysemic nature of the εἰδωλον than is usually acknowledged.

Εἰδωλα, images, and idols

- 25 In the LXX εἰδωλα translates different Hebrew items, creating a sort of overarching internal category in which a varied and differentiated Hebrew lexicon is combined and applied to illicit gods and cultic objects. However, it should be clarified that the concept of idol is already operational within the Hebrew Bible, even though it is not labeled according to a single name or marker, as is the case in the Greek text. Here the so-called polemics against idols reveals a particular way of denigrating foreign gods by reducing them to mere images.⁶⁰ As is well known, these polemics are ultimately rooted in *Exodus* 20:4 and *Deut* 5:8 and their prohibition of making (divine?) images and serving them as if they were the deities themselves. It is precisely within this context that the Greek εἰδωλον occurs for the first time as a translation of *pesel*, both in *Exod* 20:4 and in *Deut* 5:8. However, in *Deut* 5:8 Alexandrinus and the Chester Beatty papyrus (963) preserve the more literal γλύπτον, “carved object”, a reading preferred by Wevers.⁶¹ Overall, εἰδωλον appears more or less 70 times in the Bible, twelve of which are found in the *Pentateuch*. It translates 15 Hebrew items almost exclusively related to foreign gods or cultic objects, with the exception of *teraphîm* in the book of Genesis.⁶² In *Deuteronomy* alone it translates two different items (or three, if we accept the reading of codex Vaticanus): *hebalim* in 32:21; *gyllulîm* in 29:16; *pesel* in *Deut* 5:8 in Vaticanus and other witnesses. A hypothesis, first proposed by F. Bütschel in the sixties, followed by F. Barnes Tatum,⁶³ and still accepted today, is that the introduction of εἰδωλον saw the translator reinterpret the commandment not as anti-iconic but as anti-idolic.⁶⁴ Understood in this way, the prohibition would therefore not concern any divine image, nor any image *tout-court*, but specifically images of foreign gods, already devalued and reduced to mere “idols”.⁶⁵
- 26 This hypothesis is based on two observations: first, the fact that the translation of *pesel* with εἰδωλον is unique to these two passages from the *Decalogue*; second, that the word does not usually designate divine statues or images in the Greek language outside Jewish and Christian writings. Moreover, the meaning of εἰδωλον as “false” and “deceptive” image is usually substantiated by the pejorative connotation assigned to the word in Platonic writings. In the Platonic theory of imitation and visual arts, Plato opposes the faithfulness of εἰκων to the deceiving character of εἰδωλον.⁶⁶
- 27 However, the interpretation proposed by Bütschel and Barnes Tatum risks reducing the uses of εἰδωλον in the Septuagint to one single logic, and to force all the translations to fit one semantic label. Moreover, the hypothesis does not prove entirely true on closer inspection. In a 2002 article (which unfortunately passed unnoticed among Old Testament scholars and historians of Greek religion), Terry Griffith collected a series of literary texts in which εἰδωλον clearly indicates a divine statue or a cultic object.⁶⁷ Other than a passage from Polybius, already known to scholars, he gathered additional evidence from Herodotus, Aesop, but especially from Hellenistic writers, such as Diodorus, Dionysius Halicarnassus, Plutarch and Dioscorides.
- 28 Furthermore, a glance at the evidence coming from papyri and inscriptions seems to confirm Griffith’s analysis and opens the possibility of taking it even further. A demotic Greek papyrus dating to 87 BCE and coming from Tebt contains a petition by a certain Armisios and his colleagues who work as ibis and hawk embalmers in the temple of

Hermes.⁶⁸ Armisios complains about someone who struck him and stole the precious garments of the gods while he was washing them. The expression used here is τῶν ἐν τῷ ἱερεῶν ἰδῶλων ἰβίων καὶ ἱεράκων (“of the images of ibis and hawks which are in the temple”), which is paralleled with τὰ βύσσινά ὀθόνια τῶν θεῶν (“the linen garments of the gods”) some lines further on. Εἶδωλα here indicates the divine statues of the ibis and hawks which are actually meant to represent the gods themselves:

	τῇ ἐ τῶν
	Ἐπαγομένων τοῦ [λ]α (ἔτους) τοῦ
	ἐνὸς ἡμῶν Ἀρμιύσιος πλύ-
	νοντος τὰ βύσσινά περὶ τῶν ἰβό-
10	λαια τῶν ἐν τῷ ἱερεῶν ἰδῶλων ⁶⁹
	ἰβίων καὶ ἱεράκων ἐπιπαραγενό-
	μενοι ὁ τοῦ Φανήσιος υἱὸς καὶ
	Σιουήρις Σιουήριος καὶ ὁ τοῦ-
	του υἱὸς καὶ δόντες αὐτῷ
15	πληγὰς πλείους ἀφείλοντο
	τὰ βύσσινά ὀθόνια τῶν θεῶν

in the fifth of the intercalary days of the year 31, while one of us, Harmiysis, was washing the linen garments of the sacred images of ibises and hawks which are in the temple, the son of Phanesis, Sioueris, son of Sioueris, and his son suddenly appeared, and after having hit him several times they stole the linen clothes of the gods.

- 29 Moreover, an ostrakon from the cemetery of sacred fish in Latopolis, dating to I-II AD, brings an oracular petition addressed to Athena from Ammonios and his colleagues, ram-embalmers, who have been unfairly accused.⁷⁰ The petition is addressed to the εἰδῶλοις Ἀθηνᾶς θεοῖς μεγίστοις, “the sacred images of Athena, the great gods”; and a similar expression is repeated a few lines later (ὕφ’ ὑμῶν τῶν κυρίων εἰδῶλων καὶ τῶν σὺν ὑμῖν ἀπάντων θεῶν, “from you, ruling images and from all the gods which are with you”):

	εἰδῶλοις Ἀθηνᾶς θεοῖς
	μεγίστοις παρὰ Ἀμμω-
	νίου Πετεήσιος καὶ τῶν σὺν
	αὐτῷ κριοτάφων κατὰ Πετορζ(μήθιος)
5	καὶ Φαουήριος Φμότιος καὶ Πετήσιος
	παντοπώλ(ου) ἀξιοῦμεν ἡμᾶς
	κρίνεσθαι μετ’ αὐτῶν καὶ βο-
	ηθεῖσθαι ὑφ’ ὑμῶν τῶν

	κυρίων εἰδώλων καὶ τῶν σὺν ὑμῖν ἅπαν-
10	των θεῶν ἐγκαλούμε(θα) ὑπὸ τούτων
	τῶν καταράτων καθ' ἡμέραν
	ὑμῶν

to the sacred images of Athena, (the) great gods, from Ammonius son of Peteesis and from his colleagues, the ram-embalmers, against Petormethis and Phaoueris, sons of Phmoitis and Petesis, the huckster. We ask you to be judged with them and to receive help from you, ruling images, and from all the gods which are with you. We are accused by these abominable people in your (sacred) day.

- 30 In the absence of more information concerning the context of this passage, it remains difficult to establish what exactly these εἶδωλα of Athena were. But the term must refer to some concrete object which represents the goddess in order for the petition to be effective. We know that in Latopolis the Egyptian goddess Neith was assimilated to Athena quite early on; the fish *latos* (*lates niloticus*) was considered sacred to her and a cult was devoted to the animal. It is therefore possible that the petition was addressed to the fish itself, which was considered a substitute for the goddess. Further support for this interpretation comes from another papyrus from Tebt, dating back to the first half of the 1st century AD.⁷¹ The text reports an oath by a corporation of fishermen who swear not to catch the oxyrynchus and the lepidotos, two fishes sacred to Osiris. What is interesting for our purposes is the formulation, which introduces the expression εἶδωλα θεῶν ὀξυρύγχων καὶ λεπιδωτῶν to underline the proximity between these fish and the gods themselves:

We [...] all thirteen being elders of the fishermen of the villages of Narmouthis and Berenicis Thesmophori, swear, all fourteen, to the agents of Sarapion son of Ptolemaeus, nomarch and superintendent of the revenues and the distribution of imposts of the Arsinoite nome, by Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus Imperator that we never have been or will be privy to fishing or dragging a net or casting a net to catch the images of the divine oxyrhynchi and lepidoti, in conformity with the public engagement signed by us and the other fishermen (μὴν μηδὲ ἐν συνεστορηκέναι μηδὲ συνιστορήσιν ἄ[λ]ιξοῦσι μηδὲ σαγηνηῖσι μηδὲ ἀμφιβολέουσι κυνηγούντες ἰδωλα θεῶν ὀξυρύγχων καὶ λεπιδωτῶν).⁷²

- 31 Finally, an inscription of the late 3rd or early 2nd century BCE, coming from a very different context, confirms that εἶδωλον can easily refer to a statue. In the Aretalogy of Sarapis from Delos, the Egyptian priest Apollonios thanks the god Sarapis for the victory over his enemies, specifically some Delian people who brought a lawsuit against him and tried to stop the installation of a temple for the god. The victory is attributed to the power of Sarapis, and is celebrated with a poem which imitates Homeric poetry. The conclusion of the poem describes how, on the day of the trial, Sarapis performed a miracle in which he paralyzed Apollonios' accusers at the trial and rendered them unable to speak.⁷³ The text says that they "stood like statues struck by the god or like stones" (θεοπληγέσσιν εἰκότας εἰδωλοῖσιν ἔμμεναι ἢ λάεσσιν). The language used here stresses the material dimension of the εἶδωλα, their immobility (θεοπληγέσσιν), together with the fact that they are lifeless, as they are paralleled with λάεσσιν.
- 32 Based on this evidence, we can reasonably argue that in Exod 20:4 εἶδωλον may not yet mean "idol" in some abstract or polemical way. Instead, it renders the idea of a

material object (image or statue) whose function is to work as a “substitute” for the deity.⁷⁴ In this sense, this choice points towards a specific reception of the second commandment, which was open to different interpretations still during Hellenistic and Roman times.⁷⁵ In the LXX formulation, the equivalence between *pesel* and εἶδωλον respects both the Hebrew text (source language) and the Greek language of the time (target language).

Conclusions

- 33 I would like to conclude by pointing to some of the implications of the present study, which concern the interpretation of the category of “demon” and “idol” within the *Septuagint* and in ancient Jewish traditions on the one hand, and the role of the *Septuagint* vis-à-vis Greek religion, on the other.
- 34 Regarding the notion of εἶδωλον, the evidence analyzed suggests that there was no one overarching semantics of εἶδωλον in all the books of LXX, but rather that the translators were aware of the multiple meanings and “nuances” of the word. The examples from *Exodus* and *Deuteronomy* show that the translators exploited these different connotations by selecting a specific meaning or aspect of meaning in specific instances, according to what they considered the best fit for that context.
- 35 As for the relationship between εἶδωλα and “idols”, it is undeniable that the LXX is the context in which a certain notion of “idol” was fashioned and passed on to the New Testament and early Christian literature. However, this religious construction operates more on the level of the development of the inner LXX tradition, as it is attested in later books such as *Isaiah* or *Daniel*, and especially in non-translated books, such as *Wisdom* or *Maccabees*. Therefore, the discussion of idols and the relationship between idols and images needs to be revised and reframed in several regards, both in relation to the Hebrew Bible and to the *Septuagint*. On the one hand, a common discourse against the idols seems to develop already in the Hebrew Bible itself, although without a single term yet emerging. On the other hand, Septuagint translators, and more specifically the translators of the Pentateuch seem to have been well aware of the broad semantic spectrum covered by εἶδωλον in Greek. In this regard, the specificity of the LXX and its originality seem to reside elsewhere: namely, in having joined together the polemic against idols and a polemic against demons and demon-sacrifices. In doing this, Greek translators played a considerable role in redefining the category of demon vis-à-vis the Greek world.
- 36 More generally, the relationship between εἶδωλα and divine images calls for a re-examination of the entire vocabulary of images in the LXX, and the relationship between divine (or cultic) and non-cultic images against the background of Hellenistic papyri. In this regard, the influence of Platonic theories has to be reconceived, or even downsized, not only when it comes to the LXX but, more generally, in the study of image-related vocabulary during Hellenistic times.
- 37 Finally, in the case of εἶδωλα, as in the case of δαιμόνια, the LXX turns out to be the earliest witness of a religious terminology that will become more widespread in several non-Jewish contexts. This demonstrates, once again, not only the contribution of the *Septuagint* and the Septuagint lexicography to the study of Jewish Hellenistic religion,

but also, on a larger scale, the interest of the *Septuagint* for a better understanding of the Hellenistic religious world.

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NOTES

1. For a list of occurrences, see BARBU (2016), p. 45.
2. “Masoretic text”.
3. The second major context where most of the occurrences of δαίμόνιον are concentrated is the book of *Tobit*, which constitutes under several regards a separate corpus. Other contexts of usage are represented by *Ps* 90:6 (= 91 MT), and two passages from *Isaiah* (*Isa* 13:21 and 14:34) which are discussed respectively in ANGELINI (2018) and (2017).
4. On the probability that the extant Greek text of Baruch was translated from a Hebrew version see ASSAN-DHOTE and MOATTI-FINE (2005), p. 55–56 and p. 69–71.
5. In some hexaplaric and lucianic traditions Gad is translated by τύχη, and the same translation is suggested by Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion: see ZIEGLER (1939), *apparatus*. Although an explicit equivalence between Gad and Tyche is found only in one bilingual inscription from Palmyra (*CIS II* 3927 = 0273 HILLERS AND CUSSINI [1996]), the proximity between these two deities during Hellenistic and Roman times is well demonstrated by KAIZER (1997) and (1998), p. 58–60. On the West-Semitic background of Gad see RIBICHINI (1999), p. 339–341.
6. *Deut* 32:16–17 (MT). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.
7. ZIMMERN (1917), p. 69; VON SODEN (1965–1974), vol. 3, p. 1208; KOEHLER-BAUMGARTNER (1994), s.v.; MANKOWSKI (2000), p. 138.
8. *CAD* 17/2, s.v. *šedu*; MARTI (2017), p. 46–48.

9. 4Q510 1:5–8; 4Q511 10:1–5 (DJD 7), 11Q11 (DJD 23); 4Q196 :14; 4Q197:4 (DJD 19). For a classification of the occurrences found in the Dead Sea Scrolls see STUCKENBRUCK (2013) [= 2014], p. 85–87.
10. NAVEH and SHAKED (1998): bowls n. 1; 2; 8; 5; 10; 13; amulets n. 7; 7b; 13. KOTANSKY, NAVEH and SHAKED (1992), l. 11, 13, 17, p. 8–9 (= SEG 42, 1582). Peshitta reads *šydh* in Lev 17:7 for the Hebrew *š'ym* (boucs).
11. E.g. *Targum Onqelos* on Lev 17:7; *Targum Onqelos* and *Neofiti* on Deut 32:17; *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* on Deut 32:10; *Targum Jonathan* on Isaiah 13:21.
12. JASTROW (1903), p. 1523–1524; EVEN SHOSHAN (1984), s.v.
13. The literature on δαίμων in various ancient corpora is vast. Among several publications one can refer to CHANTRAINE (1954), FRANÇOIS (1957), DETIENNE (1963), NOWAK (1960); BRENNK (1977) and (1986), PIRENNE-DELFORGE (1989), and, more recently: TIMOTIN (2012), GREENBAUM (2016), PACHOUMI (2017).
14. SFAMENI GASPARRO (1997), (2009), (2015).
15. *Pythagorean Commentaries*, ap. Alexander Polyhstor, in Diogenes Laertius 8.32 [ed. DELATTE, trad. SFAMENI GASPARRO (1997), slightly modified]; for a distinction between gods, *daimones* and humans attributed to Pythagoras see *ibid.* 8.23, and for a comment on this passage see DETIENNE (1963), p. 32–37.
16. *Works*, 112–123.
17. SDGI II 1582 A.
18. Some of these ideas might actually be more ancient. The association between δαίμονες and ψυχαί is attested in the Derveni Papyrus, col. VI, 3–4 (δαίμονες ἐμπο[δί]ζουσι/ ὥς ψ[υχ]αὶ τιμω]ροῖ, ed. PIANO [2016]). For the immateriality of the ψυχαί see e.g. Hippocrates, *On Diet*, 29 (Littré 6, p. 504–505); Plato, *Phaedon*, 114b–c.
19. On the possible exception represented by Isa 65:11 see *infra*, footnote 24.
20. For example, *Bacchae*, 894; *The Phoenician Women*, 352. See FRANÇOIS (1957), p. 53 and 313.
21. Plato, *Apology*, 24c.
22. See on this GARLAND (1992), p. 145–150.
23. The possibility of a Platonic influence on LXX translators and more specifically on the translators of the Pentateuch is a debated issue. While RÖSEL (1994) and DAFNI (2006) believe that some Pentateuchal translators actively engaged with platonic philosophical theories, others suggest more caution (see VAN DER LOUW [2007], p. 83–84; VAN DER MEER [2016]). Actually, there is some papyrological evidence for Plato's presence at the highest levels of education during late Hellenistic and Roman times (see DUPERTUIS [2007], p. 8–11). Moreover, a dialogue with platonic ideas is recognizable in the writings of Philo and of authors of later Septuagint books, like the book of *Wisdom*. A text like 2 *Maccabees* 6 shows an influence of the Socratic ideal of heroic death. However, the projection of direct engagement with Plato's *Apology* back to the translators who were active in the 3rd c. BCE remains doubtful. Despite the popularity of Socrates as a character in Hellenistic times, *The Apology of Socrates* was not a school text. On the “basic package” of Greek education in Greco-Roman Egypt, which included Homer, Hesiod, Euripides, Menander and few passages from Isocrates, see MORGAN (1998), p. 67–73; CRIBIÖRE (2001), p. 178–205.
24. A partly different case could be made for the LXX of Isa 65:11, where the text polemicizes against those who “prepare the table for the demon and fill a mixed drink for Tyche.” While Vaticanus and Alexandrinus have the dative form of δαίμόνιον (δαίμονιω) accent?, Sinaiticus and other witnesses from the Alexandrinus group have δαίμονι, derived from δαίμων. See ZIEGLER (1939), p. 361, *apparatus*. This reading is also preferred by Rahlfs. Here, as has been suggested by SEELIGMANN (1948), p. 99–100, and reaffirmed more recently by SCHAPER (2010), it is probable that the translator interpreted the sacrifices offered to Gad and Meni in the Hebrew text as a reference to the cult of “Good Fortune” and “Good demon” (*agathodaimon*), which were extremely

popular in Hellenistic and Roman times in Egypt and through the Levant. While remaining within the polemics against foreign gods, in this specific case the translator is not reducing them to “demons” as in the other passages. Instead, he is directly referring to the Hellenistic cults of Good demon and Good Fortune. Within this context, the form δαίμονι (i.e. from δαίμων) could therefore be original to the Old Greek.

25. See e.g. *Deut* 4:25; 9:18; 31:29, compare also *Psa* 78:58 (= 77:58 LXX).

26. So ACKERMAN (2001²) [1992], p. 165–212. Compare also *Isa* 66:17.

27. So EISSFELDT (1970), p. 19–20. Tammuz is already named in *Ezekiel* 8:14. See on this RIBICHINI (1999) (Adonis), p. 9. For other references to Adonis-Tammuz in the book of Isaiah, see DELCOR (1978) (*Isaiah* 17), BONNET (1987) (*Isaiah* 15).

28. DUHM (1892), p. 475; followed by WESTERMANN (1966), p. 318.

29. So WESTERMANN (1966), p. 318; WATTS (1987), p. 339; ACKERMAN (2001²) [1992], p. 169–174; KOOLE (2001), p. 414; BLENKINSOPP (2003), p. 266–267.

30. The sequence *zbl* + *qt*, which occurs often as a pair in the Hebrew Bible, is usual understood to refer to two different ritual actions (the sacrifice and the burning of incense). However, Diana Edelman has raised the possibility that these verbs indicate two subsequent phases of a same ritual, namely the slaughtering of the animal and the burning of the meat (see EDELMAN [1985]). According to R. Clements (TDOT 2004, s.v. *qt*) the root *qt* is specialized for “incense offering” in the Hiphil form, but in several cases, as in *Isa* 65:3, there is a Piel: therefore, his distinction does not seem to be so sharp. Moreover, in *Isa* 65:3, most commentators accept the meaning of “burning incense” based on a parallel with an inscription from Lachish, where *lbnt* would mean “incense altar”. Then, *l'bēnîm* in *Isa* 65:3 would not mean “brick”, but “incense altar” (ACKERMAN [2001², 1992], p. 179–184; BLEKINSOPP [2003], p. 271). But the meaning of *lbnt* as “incense altar” on the inscription is improbable (see NIELSEN [1986], p. 48 and, more recently, FREVEL and PSYCHNY [2014], p. 163–164). A better key to understand the meaning of *qt* is provided by comparative philology and semantics. First, in other Semitic languages the verb *qt* can have a specialized meaning of “burning incense” beside the more general meaning (See *qat* in Akkadian, VON SODEN [1966], vol. 2, p. 907). Second, the lexicalization of the root *qt* produced number of lexemes related to incense, as *muqt*, “frankincense”, *miqt*eret, “censer”, *m^cqat*eret and *miqt*ar, “incense-altar”, not only in Biblical Hebrew, but in other West-Semitic languages as Ugaritic and Punic (*qtr*, DNWSI 2, p. 1007), and in Jewish Aramaic (*qetarah/qetara*, see SOKOLOFF [2002] and [2017³], s.v.). It is therefore probable that both a general and a more specific meaning are attested in the Hebrew Bible in different contexts. For an analysis of the distribution of the verb in the Hebrew Bible and in ancient Aramaic translations see HEGER (1997), p. 24–47.

31. See ZIEGLER (1939), p. 360, *apparatus*.

32. Pace SEELIGMAN (1948). The expression is also marked with an obelus by Jerome, a sign which indicates its presence in the Old Greek text. The fluidity of this verse in antiquity is confirmed by a different and obscure reading preserved in one Qumran manuscript (1QIsa^a, see ULRICH and FLINT, DJD 32, vol. 2, p. 190).

33. So also VAN DER VORM-CROUGH (2014), p. 468–469. For corrections which go in the same direction in the LXX of *Isa* 55–65 see BAER (2001), p. 176–177. On the wisdom discourse against idols in the Bible see recently AMMANN (2015). For somehow closer parallels to *Isa* 65:3 see *Jeremiah* 10:15 (“They are worthless, works of mockery”); and the χώνευμα φαντασίαν in *Habakkuk* 2:18.

34. *1 En* 99:7 according to the Chester Beatty papyrus (trad. Nickelsburg, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2001, slightly modified).

35. See e.g. Plutarch, *The disappearance of oracles* (*Mor.* 417b).

36. Plutarch, *Pelopidas*, 21.5–6. Compare *The disappearance of oracles* (Mor. 417c–d). See GEORGIADOU (1997), p. 166–171. For a comment on the position of Plutarch himself towards these beliefs see BRENN (1977), p. 55 and (1998), p. 177.
37. Plutarch, *Isis*, 360a ff.; Strabo, 10.3.19.
38. On this topic, and on the way in which this discourse is taken over by ancient Christianity, see ANDERSON (2016); BARBU (2016), p. 40–88.
39. *Deut* 32:21.
40. Synesius of Cyrene, *On dreams*, 15.
41. *Odyssey* 11.471–476; 24.14; Herodotus, 5.92.
42. *Iliad* 5.449–453 ; *Odyssey* 4.796.
43. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 839.
44. Plutarch, *On the Pythian responses*, 404c 10.
45. Lucian, *Dialogues of the dead*, 11.5.
46. See the remarks of HAYWARD (2007), p. 44–45.
47. *Qohelet* 5:6.
48. See already HAWYARD (2007), p. 44–46.
49. Plut., *Dion*, 2.2–4. In this chapter the expression τὸ δαιμόνιον defines the “divine” when this is manifested through a negative apparition. Interestingly enough, Plutarch seems here to have changed his mind in comparison to what he claims in the so-called pythian dialogues.
50. *Ps* 96: 5 (= 95:5 LXX).
51. See on this PREUSS (1974).
52. *Ps* 95: 4–5 (= 96: 4–5 MT)
53. See for example the Septuagint of *Isaiah* 2:8; 2:18, 20; 10:11; 19:1; 31:7.
54. It is worth noting that in *Lev* 19:4 εἰδῶλα is paralleled with θεοὶ χωνευτοί (literally: “molten gods”). This expression insists on the artificial character and on the lifeless, inert materiality of the divine representation. It has close parallels in the LXX of *Exod* 32:4 (μόσχον χωνευτὸν, referred to the golden calf) and *Num* 33:52 (τὰ εἰδῶλα τὰ χωνευτὰ, paralleled with στήλαι). On this aspect of εἰδῶλον, see further below, part 3.
55. *1Corinthians* 10:19–21; *Revelation* 9:20.
56. For an analysis of this discourse see BARBU (2016).
57. VERNANT (1975), (1983) and (1990), in response to SAÏD (1987).
58. On this category, see the fundamental essay of VERNANT (1965); see also FRONTISI-DUCROUX (1980) and (1995); BETTINI (1991) and (1992). To the best of my knowledge, a comparative study of possible equivalent notions to express “identity” in Israelite and ancient Jewish culture is missing. It is my aim to explore more systematically this issue in a further study.
59. See on this episode BETTINI (1992), p. 12–16.
60. See on this LEVTOW (2008), p. 16–18; AMMANN (2015), p. 12–13.
61. See WEVERS (1977).
62. *Gen* 31:19, 34, 35.
63. BÜTSCHEL (1964); BARNES TATUM (1986).
64. BARNES TATUM (1986), p. 178–179.
65. The hypothesis is partially rejected by HAYWARD (2007), although he still considers εἰδῶλον in *Exod* 20:4 as meaning “idol”.
66. Plato, *Sophist*, 240a–b; *Republic* 7.516 ff.
67. GRIFFITH (2002).
68. *PStrasb.* 2.91 (ed. Preisigke 1920).
69. Restored by the editors as: ἱερῶι εἰδῶλων.
70. *P.Worp* 7 (= O. Garstand 1), ed. Boyaval 1980; Gallazzi 1985; Gasco 2008. On the oracular petitions as a genre see VERSNEL (1991).

71. PSI 8 901 (= *Sel. Pap.* 2.329).

72. Transl. Hunt and Edgar, *Sel. Pap.* 2.329, Loeb 1934.

73. *IG XI* 4, 1299, 88–90. See also ENGELMANN (1964) and LONGO (1969), n. 63, p. 106–116. More recently BRICAULT (2005), vol. I, no. 202/0101, p. 195–198. The translation of FURLEY (2012) with “ghosts” does not account for the material and rigid aspect of εἰδωλον on which this verse insists.

74. The proximity between the use of εἰδωλον in *Exod* 20:4 and in papyri did not escape the perceptive analysis of James Aitken, who observed that “the sense of εἰδωλον as ‘image’ would seem to be the simplest reading of the passage” (AITKEN [2014], p. 193). See also LE BOULLUEC and SANDEVOIR (1989), p. 205–206.

75. In this regard, one can compare for example the different interpretation of the second commandment provided by Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 3.91) and Philo (*Decalogue*, 51).

ABSTRACTS

This paper discusses the representation of foreign gods as demons found in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. It investigates the category of δαιμόνιον in some Septuagint texts against the background of the Hellenistic literature, and the relationship between the notion of demon and that of idol. In doing this, it shows the relevance of the *Septuagint* for a better understanding of religious notions emerging during the Hellenistic period. Moreover, focusing on some uses of εἰδωλον in the *Pentateuch*, the paper proposes a new interpretation for the word in the Greek version of the decalogue, in light of papyrological evidence.

Cette contribution analyse la représentation des dieux étrangers comme démons dans la traduction grecque de la Bible hébraïque. Elle porte notamment sur la notion de δαιμόνιον dans la *Septante*, approchée à partir d'autres témoignages hellénistiques, ainsi que sur la relation entre démons et idoles. Cette étude démontre également l'intérêt de la *Septante* pour une meilleure compréhension de l'émergence de nouvelles catégories religieuses à l'époque hellénistique. Enfin, en se focalisant sur des occurrences spécifiques d'εἰδωλον dans le *Pentateuque* et en les comparant avec la documentation papyrologique, elle propose une nouvelle interprétation du mot dans la version grecque du décalogue.

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