II. GODS

Rather surprisingly, gods have not been at the centre of modern discussions of Greek religion until very recently. Although they usually appear relatively late in twentieth-century histories of Greek religion,[1] the situation has changed dramatically in the last decade or so.[2] And rightly so, given the importance of the gods within Greek religion. There are several questions worth asking: what is a god? What did the Greeks see as important differences between themselves and the gods, and between gods and heroes? Which factors helped to define the identity of individual gods (§1)? How should we study the pantheon (§2)? What did the Greeks consider to be the sphere of influence of individual gods? What was the nature of the divine hierarchy? And, last but not least, were the gods persons or powers – or both (§3)?

1. God, gods, and heroes

At an early stage of their history, the Greeks replaced the Indo-European word **deiwos* (Latin *deus*) with *theos*, cognates of which have been recognized in Armenian and Phrygian. The new term semantically developed from 'to put, to place' to 'what has been characterized by what has been put/built in a sacred place, by the divine, by the sacred'.[3] Sometimes, however, the Greeks used a different term. Whenever the presence of the divine remained vague enough not to be pinned upon one of the major deities, or when the Greeks felt that a god intervened for a short period directly and concretely in their lives, they spoke of *daimôn*, which acquired its unfavourable meaning mainly in later time.[4]

[1] See Nilsson 1967: 383–603; Burkert 1985: 119–89; Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel 1992: 176–214; Rudhardt 1992: 55–111.

[2] Grassinger, de Oliveira Pinto, and Scholl 2008; Bremmer and Erskine 2010; Versnel 2011; Clauss, Cuypers, and Kahane 2016; Pironti and Bonnet 2017; Gagné and Herrero de Jáuregui 2019. From the older literature, Sissa and Detienne 2000 (first published 1989) remains valuable. Historiographical surveys: Konaris 2016; Henrichs 2019: 255–98. Note also the lemmata for the different gods in van den Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst 1999; *Der neue Pauly*; and *LIMC*.

[3] De Meyer 2016.

[4] De Jong 2004: 158, 239–40; Bremmer 2019a. For major deities, note the exceptions of *Il.* 3.420 and *Od.* 3.166.

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Greek gods resembled and differed from the Christian God in important aspects.[5] Like Him, they had agency and were mostly invisible, anthropomorphic, and immortal,[6] but they seem to have had their own language,[7] and were not loving (Chapter I, §2), almighty, or omnipresent; moreover, they were 'envious and disorderly' (Hdt. 1.32.1), their presence could be uncanny, sometimes horrific, and, occasionally at least, they were frivolously amoral.[8] In particular, the divine sense of justice in Homer is problematic, but we reach a better understanding when we consider the relationships between gods and mortals as analogous to those between princes and commoners. Although gods did uphold the rules of justice, their obligations to kin and friends had priority. This attitude reflects the absence in Homeric society of a developed legal system, and it is only natural that in a more regulated period such a lack of a divine sense of justice came to be questioned.[9] Divine uncanniness comes to the fore in tragedy, as for example in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, where Poseidon despatches a bull from the sea in order to kill Hippolytus. This darkness of divinity is typical of tragedy, but its prominence in this particular genre should not lead us to make it the starting point of generalizations: approaching the gods from their role in comedy would lead to completely different results.[10] Rather, it is typical of Greek religion that it combined this polarization and radicalization of experiencing the divine.

The gods' frivolous behaviour accentuates mortal plodding and is typical of their outspoken anthropomorphism, which is Homer's greatest contribution to Greek religion.[11] Even Greek onomastics shows its success: names indicating the gift of a specific deity, like Athenodorus or Apollodorus, appear only after Homer.[12] However, the resemblance between gods and humans is only relative. As the appearance of Demeter in her *Homeric Hymn* (275–80) illustrates, divine epiphanies show the gods as tall, beautiful, sweet-smelling,

[5] For how to define a (Greek) god, see Thomassen 2016; Henrichs 2019: 361–82. Good observations on the nature of the Greek gods also in Jost 1992: 1–34; Parker 2011: 64–102.
[6] Baratz 2015.
[7] Bader 1989; M. West 2007: 160–2; Willi 2009: 247–9; Viti 2017.
[8] Griffin 1980: 144–204 (the gods' serious side); Burkert 2001–11: ii.96–118.
[9] See van Wees 1992: 142–9, but, in contrast, Lloyd-Jones 1983; Parker 2011: 4, 34f.
[10] On tragedy, see Mikalson 1991: 17–68; Parker 1997. Comedy is insufficiently considered by Gould 2001: 203–34.
[11] Burkert 2001–11: i.80–94.
[12] For such names, see Parker 2000c.

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awe-inspiring – in short, as 'superpersons'.[13] Precisely because of divine anthropomorphism, it was necessary to stress the immortal–mortal boundary. In several Greek myths, gods are being tested: Ariadne challenging Athena's weaving skill or Marsyas questioning Apollo's flute-playing genius. The stories invariably end badly for mortals, as do love affairs with gods: Semele was burned to ashes, when she begged Zeus to appear in full glory. The message of these myths is clear: the gap between gods and humans is unbridgeable,[14] as Pindar noted: 'for the one race is nothing, whereas the bronze heaven remains a secure abode forever' (*Nem.* 6.3–4, trans. Race 1997).

The success of Homeric anthropomorphism should not make us forget that the gods were also regularly associated with animals. Whereas Christian theologians thought long and wrote much about the body of God,[15] it is not so easy to discover what the Greeks thought about the body of their divinities,[16] let alone about their theriomorphism. However, we should not forget that some Greek gods were closely connected with animals or even (partially) identified with these, such as Pan with his goat's legs or Dionysos appearing as a bull. In a way, the theriomorphic body of these divinities puts them in opposition to the anthropomorphic ones and is a signifier of their alterity, which is confirmed and supported by the non-standard rituals connected with them.[17] An older layer of Greek religion even imagined gods in the shapes of stones or trees.[18] Yet such representations continued to coexist with the anthropomorphic shapes well into late antiquity. Surely, all Greek divinities were different, but some were clearly more different than others.

Anthropomorphism made the gods vulnerable to criticism,[19] which Xenophanes (*c.* 500 BC) was the first to state publicly. Subsequent generations of intellectuals took these criticisms seriously and tried to counter them through the strategies of allegory and rationalization.[20] Others would be more daring, and Herodotus' allusion (2.53.1) to

[13] Platt 2011; Petridou 2015; Henrichs 2019: 427–64. Note that Vernant 1994: 41 speaks of a 'superbody'.
[14] On tests, see Weiler 1974: 37–128. For affairs, see Piccaluga 1974: 9–35.
[15] Markschies 2019.
[16] Cf. Vernant 1991: 27–49; Osborne 2011: 185–215 (on 'godsbodies').
[17] For this under-explored aspect of the gods, see Aston 2011; Kindt 2019; Bremmer 2020d.
[18] See Gaifman 2012, 2017: 335–52.
[19] See Wifstrand Schiebe 2020.
[20] For Xenophanes, see Trépanier 2010: 276–81; Versnel 2011: 244–66; Tor 2017. For subsequent generations, see Feeney 1991: 5–33.

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Protagoras' famous statement 'Concerning the gods I am unable to discover whether they exist or not, or what they are like in form' (B4 Diels/Kranz) shows to what extent fifth-century intellectuals were already questioning the traditional picture of the gods (Chapter VII, §3).

If the gods differed from humans, they also differed from another category of supernatural beings: the heroes, who occupied a kind of intermediate position between gods and humans. Although the origin of this supernatural category is still unclear, hero cult as such developed relatively late, not before the middle of the sixth century BC, and should not be retrojected into earlier centuries. In that period we have tomb cults, cults of ancestors, and cults of founders of cities, but it is only from the late archaic age onwards that we start to have hero cults in the technical sense of the word. Before that time, the term 'hero' simply does not occur in a religious sense.[21]

In the end, 'hero' seems to have become a kind of lowest common denominator for mythological grandees like Heracles, faded divinities like Helen (Chapter V, §2; Chapter VI, §1), mythological culture heroes like Prometheus, and important historical figures like Brasidas, a Spartan general who was killed in action in 422 BC (Chapter VII, §3). Usually, heroes were benevolent and played an important role in guarding oaths and protecting cities, but they could also be malicious and send all kinds of diseases. In a fragment published only in 1967, the chorus of Aristophanes' *Heroes* says: 'we are the guardians of good things and ill; we watch out for the unjust, for robbers and footpads, and send them diseases – spleen, coughs, dropsy, catarrh, scab, gout, madness, lichens, swellings, ague, fever. That's what we give to thieves.'[22] Even though gods and heroes regularly overlapped in function, and heroes were sometimes called 'gods', the heroes' radius was usually more limited and their cult concentrated on a tomb. Yet the boundaries between gods and heroes were often fluid, and conceptions of the hero varied widely in the Greek world.[23]

What established the identity of an individual god? The question is not easy to answer, as local manifestations of gods could vary widely even within a single city. Yet a number of factors contributed to a

[21] Bremmer 2019e: 85–93, accepted by Gordon 2013, unpersuasively contested by Parker 2011: 287–92.

[22] Ar. fr. 322, translated and commented upon by Parker 1983: 243f.

[23] Kearns 1989; Larson 1995; Lyons 1997; Hägg 1999; Pirenne-Delforge and Suárez de la Torre 2000; Ekroth 2002; Hägg and Alroth 2005; Jones 2010. Brelich 1956 is still valuable.

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recognizable core. Most important was the name of the divinity, although its meaning was usually, like that of heroes, opaque: their awesomeness forbade a straightforward approach.[24] The name was often further specified by an epithet denoting function or origin, like Hermes Agoraios, 'Of the market', or Demeter Eleusinia, 'From Eleusis' (Chapter VII, §1). The significance of these divine epithets is not always clear, and recent research has only partially succeeded in satisfactorily explaining their sense and function. Robert Parker notes two main functions: to distinguish the worship of the same god in different places, such as Athena Polias and Athena Nike in Athens, and to stress a particular power or function of a divinity. It remains unclear, though, if the ordinary Greek saw these epithets as referring, eventually, to one god, or simply considered, say, Artemis Agrotera as a goddess different from Artemis Lochia. Or was the same name sufficient in evoking a kind of general picture of a divinity?[25]

However that may be, a divinity's name was given substance by myth (Chapter V), which related his or her family and deeds. Family ties were means of establishing connections or indicating related functions among divinities: we cannot separate Leto's motherhood of Apollo and Artemis from the connection of all three divinities with initiation.[26] Deeds helped to define and reflect on divine functions. The *Homeric Hymns*, for example, show Hermes as thief, Aphrodite as seductress, and Demeter as founder of the Eleusinian Mysteries. The *Hymns* also relate divine appearances: Dionysos looked 'like a young man on the brink of adolescence' and Apollo like a 'vigorous youth on the brink of manhood'. Art equally reflected on and contributed to the mental image that the Greeks made of their gods. Vases and mirrors frequently display gods with fixed attributes: Poseidon with a trident, Athena with an owl (Figure 1), Zeus with a thunderbolt, Aphrodite with doves (Figure 2).[27] These attributes must have helped to identify individual gods, just as in dreams gods appeared in a shape familiar from the

[24] Graf 1996a; Parker 2017a: 1–9 (a wide-ranging review).

[25] Most recently, see Graf 2010: 67–74; García Ramón 2013; Hornblower 2014; Marcos Macedo 2017; Parker 2017a and 2017b: 9–31. For a new database, see Bonnet and Lebreton 2019.

[26] Bremmer 1990b: 263; on Leto's connection with initiation in Chios, see Graf 1985: 60f.

[27] On Poseidon, see Bérard 1983: 15–20. On Athena, see Shapiro 1994a; Kreuzer 2010a and 2010b. On Zeus, see Arafat 1990: 166 (who notes that Zeus's thunderbolt is almost completely absent from the later fifth century onwards); Marcos Macedo 2017. On doves, see Robert 1990: 159–83.

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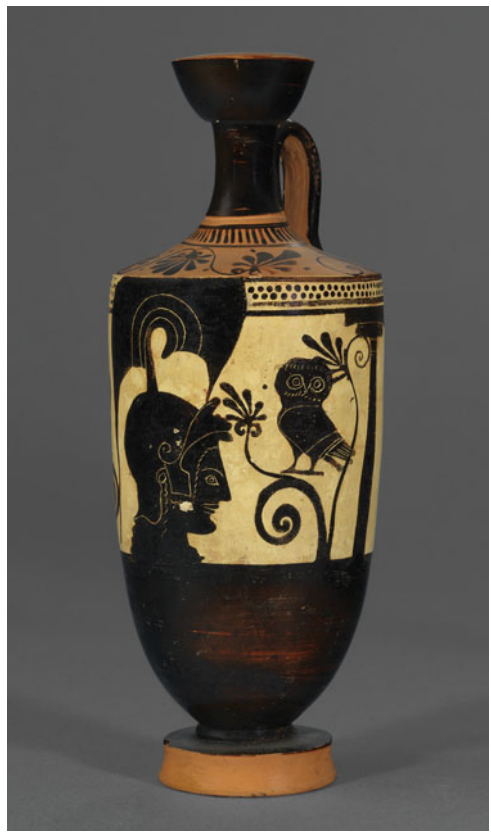


Figure 1. Athena with her owl. Attic black-figure lekythos, Athena Painter, *c.* 490 BC.

(often local) painted and sculptured representations.[28] A final determining factor was cult. The place in the calendar, prominent or not (Chapter IV, §3); the location of a sanctuary, be it in town or country (Chapter III, §2); the nature of the sacrificial victim, normal or 'abnormal' (Chapter IV, §2); the mode of ritual, supportive of or undermining the social order (Chapter IV, §3): all these elements contributed to a specific perception of individual gods and helped to reinforce their image for their worshippers.

[28] See van Straten 1976: 14–16.

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Figure 2. Greek bronze mirror with Aphrodite and doves, *c.* 470 BC. In Greece, doves were a typical lovers' gift.

2. The pantheon

Before we discuss individual gods, we must first look at the Greek pantheon as a whole. The main gods were a group of twelve who resided on Mount Olympos. The number goes back at least to about 600 BC, when Alcaeus uses the expression 'one of the twelve' (fr. 349e Voigt/Liberman) in his poem about the entry of Dionysos into Olympos with the help of Hephaistos. This shows that around 600 BC the idea of a Dodekatheon was already prevalent on Lesbos, an island where Hittite influence is in evidence. The latter suggests the role of the twelve gods in Hittite religion via the twelve Titans, who were almost certainly derived from the Hittites.[29] However, it was not until the

[29] Near Eastern influence seems more likely than that of the twelve months, *contra* Parker 2011: 71. For possible ties between Hittite and Greek religion, see Rutherford 2020.

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late sixth century that the younger Pisistratus dedicated an altar to the Twelve Gods in the Athenian agora (*c.* 520 BC: Thuc. 6.54.6). The reduction to a main group of twelve gods coincides with the rise of the category of heroes and the distinction of a god from his or her statue (Chapter III, §1). For reasons still unclear, it seems that the pantheon was rationalized to some extent in the later sixth century.[30]

How do we find order in the ragbag of Greek gods which, in addition to the major ones, comprised many minor divinities, such as Pan and the Nymphs (Chapter VII, §3), but also rivers and the winds?[31] A popular approach has long been to distinguish between Olympian and Chthonian gods (that is, those of the earth and of the underworld). This view originated during the Romantic period and was already prevalent in the early 1800s. Following a notice in Porphyry's *The Grotto of the Nymphs* (6), Olympians were claimed to have temples and high, square altars for food sacrifices, whereas Chthonians and heroes had only low, circular altars for burnt offerings (Chapter III, §1). In fact, modern archaeology has proved that this distinction has no general validity for the classical period. Even though some gods have connections with the dead and the underworld, there is no clear-cut distinction to be made on these grounds in the Greek pantheon.[32]

More recently, Jean-Pierre Vernant (1914–2007) and his school have stressed that the pantheon is a system whose structures we should study instead of concentrating on divinities as individuals.[33] Which gods are paired and which are opposed to each other? What is the precise mode of intervention? What logic governs their being? In addition to these questions, we should try to search for the, often hidden, hierarchies within the pantheon. Here new possibilities have been opened up by a study of divine representations. A fine example is a black-figured cauldron of the painter Sophilos (*c.* 580 BC) with the wedding procession of Thetis and Peleus moving towards the house of Peleus: we see Hestia and Demeter, Chariclo and Leto, Dionysos, Hebe, Cheiron, Themis, and three Nymphs; Hera and Zeus on a cart followed by three females (the accompanying inscription has been lost); Amphitrite and Poseidon on a cart followed by three Charites; Aphrodite and Ares on a cart

[30] See Georgoudi 2001: 346–54; Dowden 2007; Rutherford 2010; Bremmer 2019e: 9 (Alcaeus). The Near Eastern evidence has been overlooked by Versnel 2011: 507–15. For local panthea, see Pirenne-Delforge 1998.

[31] Bremmer 2019d; Eidinow 2019.

[32] Parker 2011: 80–4, 283–6.

[33] For a balanced assessment of the structuralist approach, see also Parker 2011: 84–97.

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followed by five Muses; Apollo and Hermes on a cart followed by three Muses; Athena and Artemis on a cart followed by three Moirai, Okeanos, and two Eileithyiai (Chapter III, §2). The procession is concluded by Hephaistos on the back of a donkey; naturally, Hades had no place in this festive happening. The images show not only the pairing of certain gods but also a clear hierarchy: some gods go by cart, others on foot. Following this approach, I will now discuss the major gods and conclude by analysing the structures and hierarchies within the Greek pantheon, and the problem of whether the Greek gods were persons or powers – or perhaps both.[34]

3. Gods orderly and disorderly

The main divinity of the Greek pantheon was Zeus, whose development from a weather god worshipped on mountaintops to the supreme god shows influences from Anatolia, which was also the source of the succession myths relating his coming to power (see Appendix). However, Zeus never reached the same position in Greece as Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome: his festivals were not important, and only a few cities named months after him. Instead, he became the protector of the social and moral order.[35] Zeus's first wife was probably Dione, whose name is attested in Linear B, but who 'survived' only in outlying Dodona and, as Diwia, in faraway Pamphylia;[36] by Mycenaean times she had already been replaced by Hera, whose name may mean 'Mistress'. Hera was the goddess who 'holds the keys of marriage' (Ar. *Thesm*. 973), and in this function her cult was Panhellenic but not prominent.[37] On Samos, she received votives in the shape of ships, and it is typical of the plasticity of Greek polytheism that the importance of the sea for Samos could add this local aspect to her cult.[38]

If Zeus was the 'chief' of the pantheon, Athena and Apollo had the greatest number of main *polis* sanctuaries (Chapter III, §2). Athena's temple is attested on many *acropoleis* throughout the Greek world; her

[34] Vernant 1974: 103–20; Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel 1992: 183–6; Laurens and Lissarrague 1990 (Sophilos).
[35] In general, see Arafat 1990; Dowden 2006; Kreutz 2007.
[36] Bremmer 2019e: 34.
[37] De la Genière 1997; García Ramón 2016; Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016.
[38] Baumbach 2004; Casadio 2004; Frielinghaus 2017.

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statuette, the Palladium, functioned as a *polis* talisman, and she frequently received the epithet Polias or Poliouchos. As a city goddess she also watched over the new generation. In Athens, youths were integrated into the *phratries* (the primary civic community for most people, with hereditary membership and usually fixed locality[39]) during her and Zeus's Apatouria festival, and during the Arrhephoria young girls, the Arrhephoroi, ended their participation in weaving the new peplos for the Panathenaea (Chapter IV, §2) via a secret ritual that confronted them with sexuality, thus preparing them for adult life (Chapter VI, §1). Although this initiatory function was not entirely absent elsewhere, it was prominent in Athena's special city: one more testimony to the fluidity of Greek polytheism.[40]

Athena's protecting function was reflected in her armed appearance, which was probably influenced by the popular armed goddesses of the Orient. In war, Athena especially functioned as an adviser to warriors – witness her close relationship with Achilles and Odysseus in Homer. She displayed the same intelligence as Athena Ergane, the supervisor of spinning and weaving, two of the main tasks of Greek women: many sanctuaries of Athena contain dedications of distaffs and loom weights. However, Athena's intelligence connected her not only with women's crafts but also with artisans (and thus with Hephaistos), with carpenters in building the Argo and the Trojan Horse, and with knights in mastering horses. In all these cases Athena represents civilization and cleverness against nature and brute force.[41]

The name of Apollo, the other central *polis* god, has been thought to derive from the yearly Doric assembly, the *apellai*, where the youths were incorporated into the community of the adults. Yet the etymology remains disputed (and was so even in antiquity),[42] and we can hardly say more than that the god possibly derives from Anatolia, where his mother, Leto, and sister, Artemis, also originated.[43] In any case, Apollo is clearly situated between adolescence and adulthood. It is this aspect which made him not only the supervisor of initiatory rites,

[39] Humphreys 2018: ii.569–625.

[40] On talismans, see Faraone 1992. For Polias/Poliouchos, see Graf 1985: 44, 181–2, 209 (archives). On Athena and initiation, see Calame 1997: 128–34; Graf 2000a; Parker 2005: 458–61 (Apatouria). For Athena in Athens, see Meyer 2017.

[41] For Athena Ergane, see Graf 1985: 211–12; Villing 1998. On intelligence against force, see the seminal discussion in Detienne and Vernant 1978: 187–213.

[42] Hunter and Laemmle 2020.

[43] Oettinger 2015.

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but also the centre of political institutions of the *polis*, especially when worshipped with the epithets Delphinios and Lykeios. From this function it also becomes understandable why Apollo was closely connected with music and dance, given that Greek youths had to be able to sing and dance, and it explains why he was the god of Greek colonization: the position of groups of colonists often resembled that of the initiands outside civilization. The incorporation of ephebes also meant a fresh start for society. Apollo embodies this aspect of renewal by being closely associated with purification, which often separates the new from the old, culture from nature, and the pure from the impure. This 'purificatory' aspect perhaps explains his 'divinatory' function as god of seers and 'owner' of the Delphic oracle: just as he separated the pure from the impure, so he separated the certain from the uncertain in the present, past, and future – even though his utterances often remained, to humans, opaque.[44]

Apollo's sister, Artemis, goes back to an age in which hunting was still of prime importance, witness her title 'Mistress of the Animals' (*Il.* 21.470) and the corresponding iconography. Ethnology shows that such ladies/lords of the animals were often initiatory gods, and this may explain why Artemis supervised the transition of girls into womanhood and in some cities even boys' initiation. The initiatory role is reflected in myth, which often pictures Artemis and her nymphs hunting in the wild.[45] According to Vernant, Artemis manages 'the necessary passages between savagery and civilization…strictly maintaining the boundaries at the very moment they have been crossed'.[46] Indeed, she represents the incursion of disorder in festivals of reversal (Chapter IV, §3), and she marks the boundaries of normality by receiving sacrifices before and after battle.

Like Apollo, Artemis played a role in the life of the state in her manifestations as Phosphoros ('Light-bringer') and Soteira ('Saviour'). 'Light' often means 'life' or 'salvation' in Greek, and many a legend related the intervention of Artemis in a difficult situation for the community: a beam of light showed Thrasybulus and his band the way in their successful attempt at restoring democracy in Athens in 403 BC,

[44] On Apollo and initiation, see Graf 1985: 56–7 (Delphinios), 220–7 (Lykeios); Versnel 1993: 289–334; Jameson 2014: 41–61 (Lykeios). On music, see Sarti 1992. In general, see Graf 2009.

[45] On Artemis and initiation, see Graf 1985: 52 (boys), 237–8 (girls), 243–9 (disorder/order), 414–15 (boys); Dowden 1989; Calame 1997 (≈ Calame 2019); Viscardi 2015. On boundaries see Vernant 1991: 195–206.

[46] Vernant 1991: 204.

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and the Byzantines were saved from Philip II and his tunnel-digging Macedonians through clouds of fire sent by Artemis Phosphoros. As with 'purificatory' Apollo, this 'saving' aspect can be understood from Artemis' initiatory role, which saved the community from extinction through the access of new members.[47]

If Zeus, Athena, and Apollo especially stood in the centre of the *polis*, the position of some other gods was more 'off centre'. Poseidon was connected with the sea, horses, and men's associations. Homer pictures him as driving his chariot over the waves, while the monsters of the deep play beneath him: 'they know their lord' (*Il.* 13.28). Poseidon also controlled the power of the earth: earthquakes were ascribed to his anger, and many cities, especially on the earthquake-prone western coast of Turkey, worshipped him as Asphaleios ('Immovable'). In addition to ruling the powers of nature, the god was widely associated with horse racing and breeding, as his epithet Hippios illustrates. Finally, Poseidon was the ancestor of various tribes, such as the Boeotians and Aeolians, the god of alliances of cities, such as the pan-Ionic league, and the supervisor of boys' maturation. Not surprisingly, women were forbidden entry into some of the sanctuaries of this macho god. In short, Poseidon is the god of chaos in nature and brute force in men and animals.[48]

Various myths describe Poseidon's defeat by other gods, in particular Apollo and Athena, as is well illustrated by a famous Athenian myth. When Athena and Poseidon struggled for supremacy over Attica, he brought forth a salt sea, traces of which were said to be visible on the Acropolis, whereas she planted the first olive tree: in the ensuing trial, Athena prevailed. In Delphi, it was related that Apollo had obtained the city from Poseidon in exchange for the oracle of Taenarum; according to another version, Poseidon had ceded Delphi to Apollo in return for Kalaureia. The message of these myths is clear. Even though his power was inescapable, there was no place for Poseidon in the ordered society of the Greek city-state or its most famous oracle.[49]

In many places Poseidon was closely connected with Demeter. According to Arcadian myth, he even turned himself into a stallion

[47] Graf 1985: 228–43 (Phosphoros, Soteira); Vernant 1985; Cole 2004: 178–230.
[48] Mylonopoulos 2003; Doyen 2011; Bremmer 2019e: 21–7.
[49] For Poseidon and Athena, see Rambach 2011; Jubier-Galinier 2012; Meyer 2017: 377–415. For Poseidon and Apollo, see Mylonopoulos 2003: 404f.

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when Demeter fled from him in the shape of a mare, thus begetting the first horse – a type of myth with clear Indo-European parallels.[50] The nature of the association is obscure but strongly suggests that Demeter was perceived as a goddess whose relationship to the social order was problematic. This impression is confirmed by the extramural location of many of her sanctuaries (Chapter III, §2) and the fact that her favourite sacrificial victim was the 'abnormal' pig (Chapter IV, §2). More positively, the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* movingly relates how Demeter searched for her kidnapped daughter, Persephone – her motherliness is an important difference from Hera[51] – and on her return instituted the Eleusinian Mysteries (Chapter VII, §1); later times, drawing on Demeter's connection with fertility (Chapter VI, §3), added the gift of agriculture. In various places the goddess was even closely associated with political power – witness her cult among the ruling Sicilian family of the Deinomenids and the royal family of Ephesus.[52] Demeter's festival, the Thesmophoria, was the great women's festival, when men were excluded from sex and sometimes, if only symbolically, from power (Chapter VI, §3). It is surely this aspect of the goddess, not her agricultural function, which made her position 'eccentric' in the male-dominated social and religious order.

Finally, Dionysos, the god most discussed in modern times,[53] as his elusive nature well fitted both the Romantics and our own postmodern times. It was long thought that he was a latecomer among the gods until a Linear B tablet from Cretan Khania firmly established his presence in the Mycenaean pantheon.[54] Vernant and his school paid much attention to Dionysos, defining him as the Other who is at the same time male and female, young and old, near and far, and so forth, but the polar opposites on which this view is based are mostly neither attested very early nor always persuasive: the effeminate Dionysos seems to have a background in initiation, when boys were temporarily dressed as girls (Chapter IV, §3).[55]

[50] Burkert 1979: 127–8; Doniger O'Flaherty 1980: 166–212 (interesting parallels, improbable interpretations).

[51] The differences between the two goddesses are well analysed in Klöckner 2008.

[52] Farnell 1907: 68–75. Also Hdt. 7.153 (Deinomenids); Strabo 14.1.3 (Ephesus); and her epithet 'Patroie' in Thasos (*SEG* 29.766).

[53] Historiography: Henrichs 1984a, 1993, and 2013.

[54] See Bernabé 2013.

[55] For the lateness of the polarities, see Henrichs 1984a: 235 n. 85. On Vernant, see Henrichs 1993: 31–9. On Dionysos as effeminate, see Bremmer 1999c; Jameson 2014: 62–80.

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Methodologically, this approach also takes the wrong turn, because our point of departure should be the god's festivals. These are the oldest testimonies to his sphere of action and speak a clear language: although they abounded with merrymaking, the festivals also displayed characteristics of a break-up of the social order, such as the split of society into its two gender halves during the widespread Agrionia; the equality of slaves during the Anthesteria (Chapter IV, §3); or the prominence of the phallus during the Dionysia. Perhaps the performance of plays at the god's festivals would be another example of a temporary dissolution of the normal order.[56] At times, this 'anti-order' aspect could make these festivals unpleasantly ambiguous: on Chios, armed forces occupied the streets leading to the agora, where, presumably, the sacrifice for Dionysos took place during the Dionysia. In a few neighbouring islands, the 'dangerous' side of Dionysos also came to the fore in some of his epithets: on Chios he was called Omadios ('Raw'), on Lesbos Omestes ('Eater of raw meat'), and on Tenedos Anthroporrhaistes ('Destroyer of man'). Myth stressed this negative side by letting Dionysos arrive from a barbarous country, Thrace, as it did with Ares, another problematic god (Chapter IV, §3).[57]

Similar ambiguities came to the fore among the satyrs and maenads, Dionysos' mythical followers. Satyric drama and vases often show us the happy side of the Dionysiac world through the satyrs: buffoonery, drinking, and all kinds of sexual activities (Figures 3 and 4). Yet some of the last, such as masturbating and coupling with animals, were definitely not socially acceptable, although the god himself was also sometimes associated with the mule, a very randy animal (Figure 5).[58] And tragedy and vase-paintings showed his female followers, the maenads, both resting in serene peace and committing the most gruesome murders in their ecstasy (Chapter VI, §3), as Euripides' *Bacchae* well illustrates; in fact, Dionysos frequently received the epithet Bakchos (or one of its variants), the Greek term par excellence for ecstasy and madness.[59]

Dionysos' divine relationships similarly display this tension between order and 'anti-order'. He was sometimes, understandably, connected

[56] For Dionysos and Attic dramatic festivals, see Wilson 2018.

[57] On the Agrionia, see Bremmer 2019e: 37–41. On 'dangerous' Dionysos, see Graf 1985: 74–96; also *POxy.* 53.3711 (local explanation of the epithet Omestes).

[58] Carpenter 1986; Lissarrague 1990; Hedreen 1992; Schlesier and Schwarzmaier 2008; Heinemann 2016.

[59] Jiménez San Cristóbal 2009; Santamaria 2013.

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Figure 3. Dionysos with *cantharus* and satyr with erect member. One side of Attic black-figure eye-cup, *c*. 530 BC.

to Aphrodite: in antiquity, too, wine and love went together. He was also connected with Artemis and it fits in with her marking of the boundaries of normality (see above) that she more than once supervised the restoration of order after Dionysiac disorder, as when she cured the madness of Proitos' daughters (Chapter VI, §2). It is rather surprising that he was even associated with Apollo, most clearly in Delphi where Dionysos 'ruled' three months in the winter and Apollo the rest of the year. Yet this relationship perhaps sums up best Dionysos' position in Greek society: society cannot live without a temporary relaxation of the social order, but order has to be restored.[60]

If I had more space, I would also have analysed Hermes (but see below), Hephaistos, Aphrodite, and Ares (Chapter IV, §3), personifications like Eirene ('Peace') (Chapter VII, §3) and Thanatos ('Death'),[61]

[60] For Aphrodite, see Dodds 1960: 123. For Artemis, see Graf 1985: 242f. For Apollo, see Burkert 1983: 123–5; Calame 2018: 364–9. For Dionysos in general, see especially Henrichs 1982; Versnel 1990: 96–205; Schlesier 2011; Bernabé *et al.* 2013.

[61] For Hermes, see Jaillard 2007; Versnel 2011: 309–77. For Hephaistos, see Bremmer 2019e: 47–60. On Aphrodite, see Pirenne-Delforge 1994; Pironti 2007; this volume, Chapter IV, §3. For Ares, see Wathelet 1992; Nicgorski 2004. On personifications, see Shapiro 1993; Stafford 2000; Borg 2002. For Thanatos, see E. Giudice 2015: 35–56.

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Figure 4. Satyrs treading grapes, while a monkey sits under the table. Attic black-figure oinochoe, Gela Painter, *c.* 500–490 BC.

or even a very small god, despite his oversized member, such as Priapus.[62] However, the discussion so far is sufficient to draw some conclusions: first, Vernant and his school were clearly right to draw attention to connections and relationships of similarity and difference between gods. It is important to see that both Athena and Poseidon are connected with horses in rather different ways, that Apollo and Athena always defeat Poseidon, that Apollo and Dionysos are opposites but both still necessary for the city. On the other hand, these connections do not replace a study of the sphere of action of the individual gods. Athena and Apollo are both more than the sum of their connections: the Greek pantheon was not the product of an ancient logician.

Second, when we now return to Sophilos' vase, we see that those at the centre of the social order went by cart: Zeus, Athena, Apollo, and Artemis. Considering the disruptive effects of male power and sex, it may surprise that they were joined by Poseidon, Ares, and Aphrodite, but male force always remained necessary for the survival of the *polis*,

[62] See Parker 2020.

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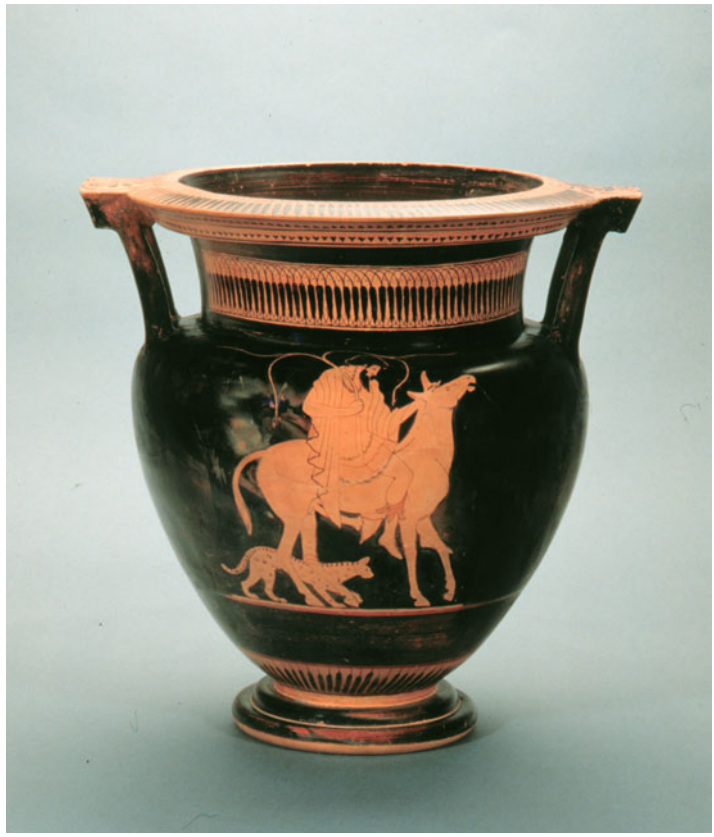


Figure 5. Dionysos on a mule with his panther. Attic red-figure krater, Flying Angel Painter, *c.* 570 BC.

while sexual pleasure was necessary for its reproduction.[63] However, the location of Poseidon's sanctuaries (Chapter III, §2) and the deviant nature of the sacrificial victims of Ares and Aphrodite (Chapter IV, §2) show that these last three gods clearly were considered to be more at the margin of the social order.[64] On the other hand, the great gods who went on foot, Demeter and Dionysos, are those with festivals in which the normal social order was temporarily dissolved, whether by the dominance of women or by the prominence of wine

[63] For this ambiguous character of some Greek gods, see also Oudemans and Lardinois 1987: 95f.

[64] Versnel 2011: 145 n. 433 misrepresents my argument here.

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and the phallus. Since both gods are (virtually) absent in Homer and both are *the* gods of Greek mystery cults (Chapter VII, §§1–2), both were evidently seen as different and occupying an 'eccentric' position in the pantheon. The position of gods on other Attic vases confirms this picture:[65] a central place for Zeus and Apollo but an eccentric position for Ares, Hermes (the god of thieves, merchants, and ephebes – in short, of socially marginal groups), Poseidon, and Dionysos.[66] Evidently, a divinity's relationship to the social order was an important consideration for the Greeks in the (conscious or unconscious) construction of their pantheon.

Yet we cannot speak of a Greek divine hierarchy without two important qualifications. The picture I have sketched is, perhaps inevitably, too static. The pantheon was not a fixed entity but was subject to constant negotiation and repositioning. Worshippers of Pan and the Nymphs gained much in prominence in the course of the classical period (Chapter VII, §3), and in 340/339 BC a Delphic hymn to Dionysos proclaimed that the god should be worshipped the whole year round – not only during the winter as had been usual.[67] The picture also insufficiently takes into account the fact that each city had its own pantheon, in which particular gods could be more prominent than in other cities. For example, Demeter was especially popular in Sicily and she, naturally, was the most important divinity in Eleusis (Chapter VII, §1), whereas on Chios Dionysos enjoyed a particular popularity – reputedly, the first settler of the island was his son Oinopion.[68] In short, the picture is basically a Panhellenic model, from which we should not automatically extrapolate to individual cities and moments in time.

Third and finally, whereas Burkert approached the Greek gods as persons, Vernant and other francophone scholars prefer to see them as powers.[69] Indeed, to a certain extent Greek gods did personify specific powers and qualities. This appears clearly from the oppositions between gods (above, §2): when Poseidon and Aphrodite are contrasted

[65] However, we should always beware of claiming a straightforward relationship between the nature of gods and their representations. From the late fifth century onwards, both Aphrodite and Asclepius became very popular, but the goddess figures on many vases, whereas the god does not. In addition, the popularity of Aphrodite seems to be more a question of fashion, whereas that of Asclepius is one of religion (Chapter VII, §3).

[66] Arafat 1990: 177–8 (Zeus); Laurens and Lissarrague 1990; Bruneau 1984: 491 (Ares). For Hermes, see Siebert 1990; Durand 1992; Miguel 1992.

[67] Käppel 1992: 206–84; Furley and Bremer 2001: i.121–8, ii.52–84.

[68] Graf 1985: 74–97, 125f.

[69] See Pirenne-Delforge and Scheid 2017.

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in ritual (Chapter IV, §3), the opposition can hardly be separated from their respective embodiments of 'brute power' and 'love'. Similarly, when Athena defeats Poseidon, many a Greek would not have failed to notice that 'intelligence' defeats 'brute power'. The distinction I have posited between 'orderly' and 'disorderly' gods in the Greek pantheon would, if correct, be an additional illustration of this side of the Greek gods. Moreover, the growing allegorization and euhemerization of the Greek gods in the course of the fifth century (Chapter VII) could hardly have taken off without this quality. On the other hand, art, cult, and literature incessantly impressed upon the Greeks the personal aspect of their gods. 'Power' and 'person' are two sides of the Greek gods which could both come to the fore at different times and in different contexts. Poets stressed the personal side, whereas philosophers started to promote the 'power' aspect of the divinities. The two approaches coexisted for a long time and the tension between them reflects an essential quality of the ancient Greek gods.[70]

[70] Similarly Parker 2011: 94f.

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