

Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical by Walter Burkert

Summary Book Report

By Nancy Castille

Survey of Scholarship on Ancient Greek Religion

- Awareness of Greek religion has been kept alive in three ways:
 - Ancient literature
 - Polemics of the Church Fathers
 - Neoplatonic philosophy (in symbolic guise)
- Attempts to reconcile Christian religion with pagan roots
 - The allegorical method of exposition continued to have appeal
 - Friedrich Creuzer's *Symbolik* is the last largescale effort of this kind
- There also existed construction of pagan counter-positions to Christianity
 - Renaissance - Schiller's poem "Die Gotter Griechenlands" (1788)
 - Goethe's "Braut von Korinth" (1797)
 - Friedrich Nietzsche and Walter F. Otto
 - The Romantic movement:
 - Myths were seen as witnesses to a specific Volksgeist
 - Greek 'sagas' tracing back to the individual Greek tribes and their history

Developments in the Study of Ethnology

- Along with the rise of Sanskrit studies, there was interest in the reconstruction of an Indo-European religion and mythology
- The study of folklore and ethnology brought about a decisive change in perspective
 - Set European peasant customs alongside their ancient counterparts
 - Customs of antiquity, the rituals, were brought into focus beside the myths
- Developments in Britain
 - Reports of savage peoples and especially of their religions were flowing in from all parts of the colonial empire; interest in religion was not entirely surprising since the ethnologists were almost all missionaries.
 - Whatever was alien was understood as primitive, as the 'not - yet ' of a beginning which contrasted with the Englishman's own self-conscious progressiveness.

Religious Studies: the Cambridge School and New Developments

- The Cambridge School
 - Developments in the empire provided stimulus to study of religions of antiquity
 - Jane E. Harrison (*Prolegomena to Greek Religion*) and James George Frazer (*The Golden Bough*)
 - Gained wide influence through its tracing of myths to rituals, still a rallying cry today
 - James Frazer *The Golden Bough*
 - Frazer compared concepts of a dying god, Adonis–Attis–Osiris and sacral kingship
 - Influence and reputation of ‘Golden Bough anthropology’ fell sharply after time
 - But in Anglo-American literature and criticism the Frazer–Harrison tradition is still alive.
 - Beholden to them for their work and influence on current learning and scholarship
- New Schools of Thought in the Study of Religion at the turn of the century
 - Transformed intellectual life and self-awareness and had consequences for religious study
 - Emile Durkheim developed a radically sociological viewpoint
 - Sigmund Freud founded psychoanalysis

The Sources: How Do We Know What We Know About Greek Religion?

- Writers provide a detailed picture of Greek rituals
 - Hesiod
 - Apollodorus
 - Strabo
 - Pausanias
 - Plutarch
- The monuments of Greek art, the temples, statues, and vase paintings, bear spectacular witness to Greek religion
- Cult monuments, altars, and ritual vessels provide information on the rituals performed in these places
- Deposits of votive gifts are especially instructive: these gifts often bear votive inscriptions which have yielded a vast corpus of divine names and epithets

Introduction/Scope of the Study: 1200 BC – 393 AD

- Olympic Games and the Eleusinian Mysteries continued until the proscription of all pagan cults by the Emperor Theodosius in AD 393.
- In spite of emphasis on local or sectarian peculiarities, the Greeks themselves regarded the various manifestations of their religious life as essentially compatible, as a diversity of practice in devotion to the same gods, within the framework of a single world.
- Myths are often used in connection with sacred rituals, providing a reason underlying the ritual.

Prehistory and the Minoan-Mycenaean Age: The Neolithic and Early Bronze Age

- With the destructions and migrations around 1200 BC a caesura occurred; the term Greek will be used only for the civilization which starts on this side of that boundary
- Continuous Greek settlements commence with the Early Neolithic in the 7th millennium
 - At the beginning of this period, pottery was still unknown
 - Settlements mark the decisive transition from a hunting / gathering society to an agrarian / livestock-raising society
 - This agrarian culture, the earliest in Europe, came from the East, perhaps southern Anatolia
 - 6th millennium on, peasant cultures were also developing to the north in the fertile Danube valley beyond the Balkan mountains

Neolithic Archaeological Discoveries

- Fertility Goddess Figurines and Wall Reliefs:
 - Finds with a religious significance are the typical figurines, also found in Neolithic Asia, Africa and Europe:
 - Small terracotta or stone figures which mostly represent naked women, often with an exaggerated emphasis on the belly, buttocks, and sexual organs
 - For example, Çatal Hüyük
 - Wall reliefs of a Great Goddess with uplifted arms and straddled legs – clearly the birth-giving mother of the animals and of life itself
 - Kourotrophos-type figures showing a seated woman holding a child
- Peasant culture and customs help maintain continuity of religion on Greek soil
 - The customary sacrificial animals of the Greeks are sheep, ox, goat and pig.
- Sherd attributed to the Dimini ceramics shows human figure with hands raised in epiphany gesture as in Minoan–Mycenaean art and also very much earlier in Çatal Hüyük
- The Thesmophoria give an impression of extraordinary antiquity; they have been proclaimed a Stone Age festival. Pig sacrifices are a special feature of these festivals, and terracotta votive pigs are frequently found in Demeter shrines.

Evidence from Early Helladic Sacrificial Cults

- The culture of the mainland, now called Early Helladic, shows evidence of a sacrificial cult
 - Double axe and Vessel in the shape of a bull, rhyton, a drinking vessel having the form of an animal's head or horn with a hole at the bottom for drinking
 - Evidence of animal sacrifices accompanied with libations
 - This may justly be termed a sanctuary, though there are no specific signs of gods
- The Cycladic culture of the Bronze Age
 - Founded on agriculture and craftsmanship combined with maritime trade; in contact with East and West, small flourishing communities developed a style of their own
 - The principal type represents naked woman, upright though unable to stand on her downward pointing feet, rigid arms clasped beneath her breast, and face, barely outlined pointing upwards
 - Are they representations of a Great Goddess, the mother of life and death, or are they goddesses, or nymphs, or gifts to the dead man intended to serve him in another world? All attempts at interpretation must remain conjecture
- Indo-European / Greek immigrants discovered and took over fully developed cults from Minoan-Mycenean religion. However, certain Neolithic/Helladic features remain present.
 - Animal sacrifice with fire, ithyphallic representations, and masks
 - Greek mythology had both Helladic and Mycenaean roots.

Indo-European Influence on Greek Religion

- Historians understood Greek religion as a synthesis of an indigenous substratum and Indo-European superimposition. There is no single origin of Greek religion. Greek religion bears the stamp of its prehistory, but is based on a complex network of relations
- Greek is related to a common proto-language, Indo-European, down to details of phonetics, inflection, and word-formation
 - The Greek language is first encountered in the 14th century in the Linear B text.
 - Indo-European migrations have broad influence in Greece and Anatolia
 - It's easy to say all Greek language / culture derived from a proto-Indo European invasion. But there were undoubtedly local traditions that influenced it strongly
- There is evidence for a developed Indo-European religion cult of the gods which also included poetry telling of the gods
 - Veneration of the sacred through sacrifice and prayer
 - Indo-European poetry, with measured lines with fixed poetic flourishes, appears in identical form in Vedic and Greek.
 - Key Components of the religion:
 - A word for the heavenly gods is formed from the same root, Old Indic devah, Latin deus; in Greek, this word is displaced by the word theos.
 - Sky Father, Helios, the sun god, and Eos - Aurora, the goddess of dawn, are of impeccable Indo-European lineage both in etymology and in their status as gods

Minoan-Mycenean Religion: Historical Survey

- Minoan Civilization (Crete)
 - 1900 - Arthur Evans opened up Great Palace at Knossos on Crete - discovered Minoan civilization which lay behind the Mycenaean
 - Economic conditions affecting Minoan cultural ascendancy:
 - Advances in 3rd millennium due to intensified cultivation of olives and grapes
 - The art of metal-working arrived from the East
 - Innovations demanded and strengthened central organization of exchange & supply
 - The Role of the Palace in Society
 - The great royal palace as the center of economic and political administration
 - The most important of these palaces is Knossos
 - A hieroglyphic script appears

Mycenean Civilization

- The Rise and Fall of Mycenaean civilization
 - The decline of Crete after 1500 accompanied by expansion of Mycenaean Greeks
 - Hegemony moved to the Greek mainland
 - The last palace at Knossos -seized by Greek conquerors between 1500 - 1375
 - The warrior element is much more prominent on the mainland than on Crete
 - Mycenae and Pylos had their heyday in the thirteenth century until an all-embracing catastrophe about 1200 caused the entire eastern Mediterranean civilization including Anatolia, to collapse in chaos.
 - The economic / social system collapsed - kingship, centralized administration, far-flung trade, craftsmanship, art, and literacy
- Continuing Minoan/Cretan Influence on Mycenaean Culture
 - The vaulted tombs follow Cretan models
 - Greek language developed in the final phase of the Minoan–Mycenaean world
 - Minoan script was recast as Linear B and used to keep records in Greek at Knossos

The Sources: How Do We Know What We Know?

- Shrines - Votive gifts left at shrines take on a sacral interpretation
- Rings depicting cultic or mythical scenes; worn as amulets and placed in graves of nobles
- Ritual vessels
- Painted clay sarcophagi

Sources: How We Know What We Know

- Depictions of the Gods in Art
 - Epiphany Gesture is depicted with 2 upraised hands and open palms - figure stands at the center towards whom all eyes are directed: epiphany gesture of the goddess
 - Rigid, bell-shaped idols in the attitude of the epiphany gesture
 - Ancient myths connected with Crete:
 - the god as bull – Zeus and Europa
 - Pasiphae who yields to the bull and gives birth to the Minotaur
 - the birth and death of a god – the Zeus child in the Idaean cave and the infamous Grave of Zeus near Knossos
 - agrarian mysteries with a sacred marriage – Demeter's union with Iasion on a thrice-ploughed corn-field.

The Cult Places: Caves and Sanctuaries

- Caves
 - man's earliest habitation - retained as burial place and conceived of as house of the gods
 - The cave sanctuaries are a peculiarity of Minoan Crete
 - impressive votive gifts have been found in caves
- Peak Sanctuaries
 - No less characteristic than the cult caves are the peak sanctuaries
 - They are marked by accumulations of votive terracottas of many kinds
- Tree Sanctuaries
 - Large, imposing tree, almost always enclosed by a wall, and so set apart as sacred
 - Important part of religious life enacted outdoors, far from everyday existence; processions make their way to places where deity appears in dance under the tree
- House Sanctuaries
 - Instead of temples, there were small cult chambers in palaces and houses, identified by votive gift, cult implements, and symbols such as the horns and double axe
 - Another characteristic of the house cult is the representations of snakes

Cult Places: Temples

- It used to be generally agreed that in the Minoan – Mycenaean world there were no temples
 - However, at Ayia Irini on Keos, a temple has been identified in a large building
 - Twenty terracotta statues, some life sized, all women, breasts bared and hands resting lightly on their hips. Are they goddesses? Or priestly dancing girls?
- Building at Malthi in Messenia - called ruler's reception room or sanctuary predates Minoan influence; notable features are central column and semicircular hearth containing charred wood, broken bones, fragments of large vessels, stone axe, hammer-shaped stone which may have been an idol. Probable that this was the site of a sacrificial cult.
- At the cult center of Mycenae, is House Γ, now called the temple
 - Front room of the temple is dominated by a big horseshoe - shaped clay altar with traces of burning and a stone block beside it, which is interpreted as a slaughtering stone.
- Painted limestone tablet which has long been famous, the Shield Goddess - a goddess wearing a boar's tusk helmet and carrying a griffin on her arm
- Subterranean House of the Idols
 - clay figures of coiled snakes
 - The idols are up to sixty cm. tall, male and female; faces painted in terrifyingly ugly mask-like manner. Hollowed out underneath - could be carried around on poles in processions

Cult Places: Graves

- Tombs of Crete - Late Mycenaean period - tholos tombs of Crete are imitated on the mainland giving rise to unprecedented monumentality
 - The Treasury of Atreus at Mycenae - impressive architectural monument - royal tomb from the Minoan–Mycenaean age – 14th century BCE
 - Evidence for ritual animal sacrifice
 - Evans' Temple Tomb in Gypsades near Knossos - remarkable 2-story building from the Minoan golden age
 - In the Cretan Palace Period, the importance of the graves seems to diminish as new ritual centers develop in connection with the peak cult
- Tholoi, Large circular stone buildings for the dead were ancient practice
 - Lavish outlays for the dead had been in place for centuries
 - Paved dancing places laid out next to the tombs indicate that they were also cult centers for the whole community

Fire and Sacrifice in Early Religion

- Early evidence of religion in man shows that Fire and Sacrifice were important symbols
- Ancients pictured the spirit rising in death like a flame
- Ashes and animal bones found above shaft graves in Mycenae
- A magnificent burial ceremony may be imagined: the dromos is excavated for the funeral procession and the door to the underworld is opened; the tholos is purified with fires and sacrifices; the remains of earlier burials are swept carelessly aside; animal sacrifices follow, doubtless with a sacrificial banquet; and finally, the earth closes once more over the dead and their belongings

Rituals and Symbols in Minoan-Mycenaean Religion

- Votive Statuettes
 - How man in Minoan/Mycenaean cult encounters the sacred is shown by votive statuettes
 - Men and women, erect and taut, with eyes directed upwards and hands clasped across the chest, or with the right hand raised in greeting, often placed on forehead
- Dance
 - The importance of dance in Crete is intimated by the fact that the Iliad still speaks of a dancing place in Knossos which was built by Daedalus for Ariadne
 - But men dance too: a clay model from Kamilari near Phaistos represents four naked men with pointed caps dancing a ring dance between cult horns
- Images on Gold Rings:
 - To her left a man reaches upwards into the boughs of a sacred tree
 - The figure, usually male, who stretches up with both hands towards the inclining tree is a familiar motif on the rings

Rituals and Symbols in Minoan Mycenean Religion

- Ritual Acts
 - Seen, on wall paintings and seal images, always engaged in some ritual activity: they carry libation jugs and pour libations over stones and over cult horns; they bring animals or parts of animals to sacrifice
- Gift Exchange
 - The bond between man and the sacred is consummated in the continuous exchange of gift for gift
- Libations
 - animal head rhyta, vessels in the shape of animal heads
 - libation ritual
 - sacral relationships might be produced in an intricate ceremony involving the correct placing and sequence of diverse libations

Portrayal of Sacrifice

- Sacrifice portrayed in the Ayia Triada sarcophagus.
 - Elements of the later Greek sacrificial ritual are present:
 - procession
 - altar
 - preparatory offerings
 - flute accompaniment
 - the catching of the blood
 - Double axe on which a bird perches beside a tree sanctuary
 - In front, there stands an altar which a priestess, ritually attired in an animal's hide, is touching with both hands as if to bless it
 - Above are a libation jug and basket with fruits or breads, indicating preparatory offerings brought to the altar
 - Behind the priestess a newly slaughtered ox lies on a table with blood running from its throat into a vessel
 - A flute player accompanies on his shrill instrument
 - Behind is a procession of five women in ceremonial posture

Role of Symbols of Horns and Double Axe

- Most renowned and ever recurrent signs of the sacral in Minoan-Mycenaean cult
- Shrine of the Double Axes - 2 sets of sacral horns
- Axe was used for the sacrifice of oxen; in the shape of the double axe practical efficacy is joined to an impressive ornamental form which doubtless assumed a symbolic function at a very early date
 - Geometric stylization and elaboration of the symbol
- Frequent image of the double axe standing between the horns on a bull's skull points to its original function
- The double axe is a symbol of power, the power to kill
- The bucrania and the cult horns, recall the overpowering of the bull

Discoveries of Minoan Deities and Religion

- Early Viewpoints
 - Discoveries at ancient Minoan sites coincided with the rise of the Cambridge School
 - Saw Minoan civilization as the antithesis of the Olympian, anthropomorphic, and polytheistic world of Homer's gods
 - Portrayed as having a predominance of chthonic powers, matriarchy, and non-anthropomorphic deities, or a single divine figure in place of a pantheon.
 - Sir Arthur Evans
 - Came forward with a thesis about the Minoan Tree and Pillar Cult
 - The tree marks a sanctuary and is surrounded by a sacral enclosure
- Stones and Columns
 - Pile of stones, where daimons make libation, is marker of a sacred center, not a god.
 - Column appears as a centerpiece between two heraldically grouped animals
 - Most famously on the Lion Gate at Mycenae
 - Master and Mistress of the Animals also appear in this same position

Discoveries of Minoan Deities and Religion

- Evidence of a Bull Cult
 - Greek myths seemed to point to a Cretan bull cult
 - Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the animal was named and worshipped as a god; neither the adoration gesture nor a cultic procession is ever directed towards a bull, nor are the sacral symbols of the double axe, the cult horns, and the libation jug ever connected with it
- Birds as Epiphanies of Gods
 - Birds are seen to perch on the double axes at the sacrifice on the Ayia Triada sarcophagus
 - On the columns from the Shrine of the Dove Goddess

Depictions of Dance and Female Figures in Minoan Religion

- Dance and Epiphany Gesture
 - Minoan experience of the divine is depicted as the epiphany of the deity from above in the dance
 - Gold ring from Isopata with Dancing Women
 - Four women in festal attire are performing a dance in changing patterns between blossoming flowers, inclining their heads or raising their hands
 - Amid the whirling dance of the votaries, the goddess appears. Similar small floating figures also appear in other scenes, always compelling interpretation as the epiphany of a god.

Depictions of Dance and Female Figures

- Depiction of Female Figures in Minoan Religion
 - The predominance of female figures is a very ancient heritage
 - Fresco fragments from Knossos, Pylos, and Mycenae can be reconstructed and interpreted as images of a goddess; however, they may simply be part of a royal display of splendor
 - Women and Animals
 - In seal images is female figure carrying sword or spear, accompanied by a lion
 - The Snake Goddess who belongs in the house shrines
 - Master of the Animals
 - Plate from the Palace of Phaistos with image of divine epiphany
 - Two female forms dance on either side of a similar, but armless and legless, figure who seems to grow out of the ground
 - She is bordered by snake lines which give her a vegetable-like appearance

Mycenean Gods

- Potnia and the Role of Female Deities
 - The pre-eminence of the female element in the Minoan religion
 - The appearance of a whole series of goddesses bearing the title Potnia, Mistress, confirms the special role of female deities already intimated in the iconography. Potnia is the title of the goddess of the principal sanctuary in Pylos, Pakijane.
 - In Knossos the titles 'Potnia of At(h)ana ' and 'Potnia of the Labyrinth' exist
- The epiphany of the god in dance and song has its roots here
 - Agrees with what may be surmised from Minoan iconography
 - Among the Greeks, Paeon signifies a dance and hymn with a specific rhythm which is endowed with an absolving and healing power, as well as a god present in the hymn who is equated with Apollo

The Mycenaean Gods and Linear B

- Clay tablets hardened and preserved by fires in palaces
 - The fires which finally destroyed the Minoan and Mycenaean palaces - Knossos about 1375, Thebes 1250, Mycenae 1230, and Pylos 1200
- Inscriptions show certain gods were shared with later Greeks
 - Only Zeus and Poseidon and the general title Potnia, Mistress are shared
 - From the palace archive at Pylos
 - ‘for Poseidaon’
 - ‘for Eleuthia, one amphora of honey’
 - ‘to Erinys, the Priestess of the Winds’
 - Poseidon is much more prominent even than Zeus in Pylos
 - A special ceremony is ordered for Poseidon, a ‘spreading of the bed’ (reketoroterijo , Lechestroterion), at which oil for libations is used.

Greek religion - rooted in Minoan-Mycenaean Age

- The economic importance of a sanctuary such as Pakijane
 - Depicts great accumulation of wealth, with many priests and slaves
 - In Pylos over 100 male and female slaves of the god are shown
 - Slaves always mentioned by name, have their own land, and treated legally like freemen
- Other Evidence of Rituals and Characteristics Similar to Greece
 - Oil and honey are offered, robes are anointed, and perfumes are used
 - In Pylos a sacrificial ritual which agrees with later Greek cultic precepts was performed
 - first a preparatory offering of grain – corn or cakes
 - then a libation
 - then the animal sacrifice
 - then additional bloodless offerings
 - Religious Proscriptions
 - characteristic Greek expression for a religious proscription, ou themis, appears

Greek Monotheism and Polytheism

- The world of gods is richer than the iconography would lead us to suppose, providing support for the conjecture that the Minoan religion also embraced a polytheism and not a quasi-monotheism of the Great Goddess.
- The world of the Pylian gods seems structured by various overlapping relationships. There are at least the beginnings of a mythical family of the gods: Zeus, Hera, and Drimios the son of Zeus; a Mother of the Gods.
- The goddesses who share the common title Potnia are not differentiated by name but by their sphere of activity.

The Dark Age and the Problem of Continuity

- Collapse of Civilizations
 - Collapse precipitated by raids of Sea Peoples c. 1200 caused Greece and Crete to revert for more than 400 years to illiteracy and so to a prehistoric level.
 - All large-scale stone building ceased, as did the pictorial and plastic arts; even simple clay figures disappear.
- At beginning of the dark age, Dorian migration, the advance of northwest Greek tribal groups into central Greece and Peloponnese - they rose to become masters over the settled population
 - the new unmistakably Greek culture begins with the Proto-geometric Style around 1050 from Athens, the very city which had withstood the external upheavals.
 - The continuity of population in the Greek area, in spite of all vehement changes, is assured by language if by nothing else
 - Many place-names also retained their identity; names such as Knossos, Phaistos, Pylos, Corinth and Thebes already appear in Linear B texts
 - the names of the gods are evidence for the continuance of a living cult

Mycenaean Art and Culture Continues On

- Mycenaean iconography - continued in the plastic arts which reappear in the 8th century: earliest pieces show gods with their hands raised in the epiphany gesture
- The classical temple is architecturally a continuation of the megaron of the Mycenaean palaces: the rectangular hall with the entrance on the narrow side, and the vestibule with two columns
- Minoan – Mycenaean tradition is recalled in many aspects of the cults on the Acropolis:
 - the ‘house-guarding snake’ - offered honey cakes
 - the enclosed olive tree in the precinct of the Dew Goddess Pandrosos
 - 2 young girls who serve in the temple as Arrhephoroi

Sanctuary Design and Animal Sacrifice

- The normal Greek sanctuary from the 8th century onwards is distinguished by:
 - demarcation of a temenos (sacred enclosure or piece of ground surrounding temple)
 - the altar for burnt offerings
 - temple oriented towards the altar and housing a cult image
- Major Role of Animal Sacrifice
 - In Near East both temple with cult image and altar for burnt offerings was customary.
 - Burnt offering is a specialty of the West Semitic area
 - The sequence of whole offering and sacral meal, food offering, libation, burning of parts of the slaughtered animal connects Old Testament and Greek sacrificial practice
 - Rectangular stone altar with the Mycenaean horn symbol combined with altar for burnt offerings at Kition
 - Shrines at Enkomi; most remarkable are the masks made from bull skulls and worn by the priests at the sacrifice

Interaction with the East and Sacrificial Ritual

- Increased Interaction with the East
 - Noteworthy impulses from the East, or more precisely from the Hittite / North Syrian area, which must be registered
 - it was precisely during the dark age, the time of confusion and debilitation, that the gates to an Oriental influence were opened
- The Greek Sacrificial Ritual
 - The peculiar form of the Greek sacrificial ritual is of very great antiquity and post-Mycenaean at the same time
 - in eating the sacrifice, it affirms life in its conditionality: it is the solidarity of mortals in the face of the immortals
 - Amounts to a negation of the Mycenaean organization: no king stands higher than all others, no priest can appropriate the sacral portions for himself. From the corporate beginning of the equality of men in contrast to the divine

Ritual and Sanctuary: Importance of ritual

- 19th century scholarship: rituals are more important and more instructive for the understanding of the ancient religions than are myths, which are more changeable
- function - group formation, solidarity creation, negotiation of understanding among members
- Ritual's social function - Interplay between power and the sacred
- experience of the sacred - intense interplay of mysterium tremendum, fascinans and augustum
 - This interplay is shown by the juxtaposition of things threatening and alluring
 - fire, blood, and weapons
 - food and sexuality
 - gestures of submissiveness alongside imposing displays of power
 - alterations of darkness / light, masking / unmasking, rigidity / movement, sound / silence
- Signals and creates situations of anxiety in order to overcome them
 - leads from primal fear of abandonment to solidarity/reinforcement of status
 - helps overcome real situations of crisis by substituting activity for apathy and inertia
 - lays claim to the highest seriousness, to the absolute

Working Sacred Things: Animal Sacrifice - Description and Interpretation

- The fundamental structure of the ritual of animal: slaughter followed by a meat meal
- Procession arrives at sacred spot and a circle is marked out
- Water is poured from the jug over the hands of each participant
- The Sacrificial Cry
 - Marks the emotional climax of the ritual
 - As the fatal blow falls, the women cry out in high, shrill tones
 - Life screams over death
- Blood and Butchering
 - The animal is skinned and butchered
 - To stain the altar with blood (haimassein) is a pious duty
 - To taste the entrails immediately is privilege and duty of innermost circle of participants
 - Inner organs, especially heart and liver (splanchna), are roasted on fire on the altar first

Sacrifice and Blood Rituals

- Psychology of sacrifice
 - The shock of the terrors of death present in the warm flowing blood strikes home
 - And yet in the subsequent feast, encounter with death is transformed into life-affirming enjoyment
 - Anxieties of Neolithic animal husbandry create new conflicts and anxieties
 - We live with these animals and respect them and yet we kill them and eat them
 - Domestic animals, possessions and companions, must nevertheless be slaughtered and eaten creates new conflicts and anxieties resolved in the ritual
- Blood Rituals
 - Animal sacrifice is the shedding of blood; that the altars become bloody (haimassesthai) is a characteristic of the sacrificial act as such
 - They are found primarily in two extreme situations, before battle and at the burial of the dead; the other context in which they occur is at purifications
 - No altar is set up, but a pit is dug in the ground (bothros), into which the blood flows

Fire Rituals

- The significance of Fire
 - Fire is present in almost every cult act of the Greeks
 - It gives warmth and light, and yet is always grievous and dangerous, the very epitome of destruction
 - Things great, fixed, and solid dissolve in smoke and ashes
- Role of the Hearth
 - An early form of the temple is the hearth house
 - Temple of Apollo at Delphi which always had its inner hestia
- Nocturnal processions with torches
 - Never fail to impress
 - above all they have their place in Dionysos festivals
 - Nocturnal festivals in which 'at the sinking of the sun's light the flame rising celebrates unceasing through the night, kicking upwards to the aether with fatty smoke'
- Use of distinctive burned fragrances
 - The sacred is experienced as an atmosphere of divine fragrance
 - import of specialized incense wares, primarily frankincense and myrrh, commenced about 700

Fire Rituals

- The festivals which are wholly defined by the destructive power of fire are extravagantly costly
- Fire Rituals in Other Cultures
 - Connections with the Minoan peak cults, and perhaps even with the Semitic and Anatolian fire festivals
 - Fire sacrifices in which animals or even men are burned are characteristic of the religion of the West Semites, the Jews, and Phoenicians.

Animal and God

- It was not surprising that animals worshipped as gods, animal gods, and totem animals were sought and found behind the gods of the Greeks
- Burkert is cautious in asserting whether or not gods were worshipped as animals in a totemic way
- Theriomorphic Gods – Gods having animal form
 - The concept of the theriomorphic god and especially of the bull god may all too easily efface the very important distinctions between:
 - a god named, described, represented, and worshipped in animal form
 - a real animal worshipped as a god
 - animal symbols and animal masks in the cult
 - the consecrated animal destined for sacrifice
 - Myth toys with animal metamorphoses but this does not prove animal worship or totemism
 - we are evolving to an anthropomorphic phase of religious humanity

Bull God

- The Bull God
 - Pasiphae and fathered the Minotaur
 - Io, Hera's Cow
 - Io, Hera's priestess in Argos, is watched over as a cow
 - Nevertheless, the Greeks avoid calling Zeus or Hera bull or cow even metaphorically
 - God and animal are intimately associated In the iconography:
 - the bull appears with Zeus,
 - the bull or horse with Poseidon
 - the ram or he - goat with Hermes
 - the stag or roe with Apollo and Artemis
 - The iconographical tradition, has a life of its own, especially as it needs to differentiate gods by means of attributes

Animals as Sacrificial Victims

- Many of these figures represent in turn the favored sacrificial victims of the god:
 - bulls for Zeus and Poseidon
 - stags and goats for Artemis and Apollo, rams and he - goats for Hermes
 - and doves for Aphrodite
- Animal sacrifice is the underlying reality. In sacrifice, the power and presence of the Stronger One, the god, are experienced.
 - the primitive craves the power of the god as the stronger one
- Bucrania
 - a custom which stretches back to Çatal Hüyük and beyond, horns, especially bull skulls with horns, bucrania , are raised up and preserved in the sanctuary
 - The Horn Altar of Artemis on Delos, which was made from goat horns, was famed as one of the wonders of the world.

Animal Masks

- Wearing of animal masks is often found in the context of sacrifice
- These figures are not directly representing a bull god, but are priests, as is evident from the accompanying myth of the Horned Ones, the Kerastai, who made gruesome human sacrifices
- The sacrificer conceals himself by assimilating himself to the victim, and at the same time he seems to bring to life again the creature killed earlier
- May surmise that goat sacrifice, masked Pan, and the goat god Pan belong together in a similar way, and that for this reason the satyr play follows the tragedy, as the goat lamented by the goat singers is resurrected in a droll manner in the shape of a man masked in its skin.

Animal and Man in Sacrifice

- The animal in Greek sacrifice is associated with man. Myth relates how an animal sacrifice takes the place of a human sacrifice or, conversely, how an animal sacrifice is transformed into a human sacrifice; one is mirrored in the other.
- A certain equivalence of animal and man is doubtless inherited from the hunter tradition and is also quite natural to the cattle breeder. To both belong eyes, face, eating, drinking, breathing, movement, and excitement in attack and flight. The slaughter then reveals the warm blood, flesh, skin and bones and also the splanchna which have always had the same names in both animal and man – heart, lung, kidneys, liver, and gall-bladder, and finally the form and function of the genitals.
- To the god it stands in a relation of polarity: through the death which it dies, it confirms e contrario the superior power of the wholly other, deathless, everlasting god.
- Sacrifice confirms the superiority and strength of god
 - we are looking for something stronger than us we weak humans
 - what we want in a god a god that is strong

First Fruit Offerings and Votive Offerings

- First Fruit Offerings
 - If the gods are the Stronger Ones and also the Givers of Good, then they have a claim to gifts
 - Primitival or first fruit offering, the surrender of firstlings of food whether won by hunting, fishing, gathering, or agriculture
 - The act of renunciation recognizes a higher order beyond the desire to fill one's belly
 - About 420 the sanctuary of Eleusis proclaimed its title to collect first fruit offerings for the corn goddess Demeter throughout Greece
 - The altar was used as table of offerings
- Votive Offerings
 - The votive offering, the gift made to the god due to a vow
 - pervades all ancient civilizations and plays an essential part in defining the relation between men and gods as established in the exchange of gifts
 - In distress and danger man seeks to find deliverance through a voluntary act of renunciation
 - Any situation of anxiety may present the occasion for a vow
 - The vow is made aloud, ceremonially, and before as many witnesses as possible
 - Extravagant form of connected with vows and first-fruit offerings is occasioned by war
 - Later, a fixed proportion of the booty won in war, usually a tithe (dekate), was taken out for the god before the distribution of the spoils began
 - all Greek sanctuaries were resplendent with weapons captured in war, especially shields

Libations

- The outpouring of liquids, libation, used to be one of the most common sacral acts in prehistoric times, especially in the civilizations of the Bronze Age
- Rules of Libation
 - The type of vessel employed and how to manipulate it is specified
 - the sponde is made from the hand-held jug or bowl and the pouring is controlled; the choe involves the complete tipping and emptying of a larger vessel which may be held or may stand on the ground.
 - The sponde is performed whenever wine is drunk. Before drinking one's fill, a libation is poured
 - The cry sponde!, sponde! may introduce any sacrificial act
 - When embarking on a voyage, wine is mixed in kraters and then emptied into the sea from the stern of the ship, amid prayers and vows

Conclusion and Meaning of Libation Rituals

- To conclude the ritual, wine is poured over the flames on the altar. A sacrificer with libation bowl above the flaming altar became a favorite iconographical motif
- The Meaning of Libations
 - What is important is not that the libation reaches its destination, but that the offerer surrenders to a higher will in the act of serene wastefulness. The libations to the dead therefore signal a recognition of the power of the dead.
 - Irretrievability: what is spilled cannot be brought back. The libation is therefore the purest and highest form of renunciation.
- Oil is specified along with wine and honey for spondai.
- Libations in the Eleusinian Mysteries
 - To conclude the Eleusinian Mysteries two vessels of a special form were filled and then overturned, one towards the west and one towards the east, while to the heavens one cried 'rain!' and to the earth 'conceive!'

Prayers And Use of speech in rituals

- Libation, sacrifice, first fruit offerings are acts which define piety but they must be attended by the right word.
- Good speech, euphemia, of the participants consists in holy silence.
- The usual word for to pray is euchesthai
- Shouts and cries
 - A more elementary invocation is touched by traditional, linguistically meaningless, word-sounds which accompany specific dances or processions each of which is associated with a particular god.
 - Dionysian revellings recognized by wild shouts, especially the cry “euhoi.”
 - “lakch ’ o lakche” - shout accompanies the procession to Eleusis
 - Dithyrambos was also used as an epithet of Dionysos. The collective scream leads to the brink of ecstasy.

Prayer gestures and Vocalizations

- Prayer Gestures
 - Kneeling down to pray is unusual
 - The gesture of entreaty is outstretched arms.
 - To invoke the heavenly gods, both hands are raised to the sky with upturned palms
 - to call on the gods of the sea, the arms are extended out to the sea
 - the hands are also stretched towards the cult image
- Divine Vocalizations
 - Simple apostrophes invoking the gods punctuate everyday life. in excitement, fear, amazement, or anger, the gods names are invoked.
 - especially Heracles, the averter of all that is evil; Herakleis – mehercule in Latin – is almost as overworn as the exclamation , ‘ Jesus ! ’

Purification

- Function and Methods
 - Purification is a social process. To belong to a group is to conform to its standard of purity.
 - The Greek word for to purify, kathairein
- The Sacred and the Pure
 - Draws attention to the boundary separating sacred from the profane
 - The Indo-European word for sacred, hagnos, is defined and narrowed down in Greek through its opposition to defilement, mysos, miasma
 - Use of water for purification
 - Washing hands, chernips, before libation / sacrifice
 - Vessels containing water, perirranteria - set up at entrances to sanctuaries, like holy water in Catholic churches; dip hand and sprinkle yourself with water

Bathing and Sexual Purity

- Bathing
 - Before Eleusinian initiation the mystai bathe together in the sea
 - Followed by a purification with torches
 - Purification through elements: water, fire, wind. Also by earth, wiping off with earth.
 - Demeter thrusts the Eleusinian child Demophon onto the hearth fire in order 'to purge him of all mortality'
- Hagnos: Virgins and Celibacy
 - Hagnos applies to whoever shuns contact with blood and death, especially the virgin
 - Virgins play leading roles in cults. Priestesses often observe chastity at least for the period of their office.
 - Priests and temple servers too must on occasion attain a certain degree of hagneia
 - May avoid sexual intercourse and contact with women in childbirth and households in mourning
 - Also observing dietary prohibitions

Death, Illness, and Madness

- Death predominantly affects relatives
 - Considered impure - excluded for a time from normal life
 - At the end of a prescribed period, they purify themselves with a bath by pouring water over their heads
 - The house must be purified – sprayed with sea water, smeared with earth, and swept out
- Role of Apollo
 - Apollo is the god of such purification and healing
 - Drove out the plague by swinging bay branches and sprinkling the people with them while chanting a mysterious, incomprehensible hymn
- Mental Illness and Madness
 - Special preserve of purifying priests is mental illness, madness, regarded as sent by a god
 - The purification is to conduct the abnormal over into normality

Purification through Madness and Music

- The Korybantic madness to which Plato repeatedly alludes was regarded as a special kind of possession
- At the sound of one specific tune each will lose consciousness and be driven to a delirious dance under the power of the Phrygian music. When the dancer is finally overcome with exhaustion, he feels release not only from his madness, but from everything which had previously oppressed him.
- Purification through music was later to play a prominent role in the discussions about the cathartic effect of tragedy

Blood Purification

- Agos and Murder
 - The act of murder gives rise to a pollution, agos, in which the murderer is ensnared
 - The community is obliged to drive out the agos
 - A purification of this kind is a rite of passage. The murderer has set himself outside the community, and his reincorporation at a new level is therefore an act of initiation.
- Blood counteracts blood
 - Essential aspect is that the person defiled by blood should come into contact with blood
- Pharmakos purification rituals
 - A person already condemned to death sacrificed for ritual purification
 - Scapegoat ritual
 - The encircling, also found in purifications with water and with blood, includes all the pure community; the outcast is then called the one wiped off all around, peripsema
 - The outcast is then also the savior to whom all are most deeply indebted
 - Cleansing of miasma or pollution through katharmos

The Sanctuary and Temenos

- Traditional Fixed Locations and Sanctuaries
 - Places of worship fixed in tradition and cannot be moved
 - often preserved and tended through catastrophes, revolution, and changes in population
 - Christians erected chapels where sanctuaries were or transforming temples into churches
- Marking Sacred Sites
 - Must be marked unmistakably
 - The simple marking with rock and tree is usually sufficient.
 - At the center of the Eleusinian sanctuary stood an unhewn rock that was left open to view
 - In Delphi the stone worked in the characteristic form of the navel was regarded as the center not only of the sanctuary, but also of the world
- Boundaries in sacred space
 - Marked by inscribed boundary stones or by a massive stone wall, usually the height of a man
 - Mostly only one entrance is allowed; there the water basins for purification are set up
 - Within the sanctuary everything is forbidden which would produce a miasma – sexual intercourse, birth, and death.

Trees and Sacred Space

- Use of Trees in Marking Sacred Locations
 - Tree is more important than the stone in marking the sanctuary
 - Often a tract of woodland belongs to the sanctuary
 - The grove is reserved for sacral use
 - The shade-giving tree epitomizes both beauty and continuity across the generations
 - Most sanctuaries have their special tree
- Trees in mythology
 - On Delos the palm tree was shown against which Leto had leaned at the birth of the twin gods Artemis and Apollo
 - In Didyma there stood the laurel tree of Apollo
 - Particularly old and sacred was the oak (phegos) of Dodona which imparted the oracle with the rustling of its branches
 - The tree is closely associated with the goddess
 - Many sanctuaries have springs and fountains especially the Demeter sanctuaries

Altar

- The temenos is set apart for the sacred work, for sacrifice; its most essential element, more essential than the cult stone, tree, and spring, is the altar, bomos, on which the fire is kindled
- According to literary sources, the celebrants stand around the altar; the water vessel is carried around everyone in a circle at the beginning
- A temenos need not be reserved for one god alone, but may include several sacrificial sites, several altars
- Frequent is the antithesis of offering pit or ground level hearth and raised stone altar, corresponding to a Chthonic and an Olympian sacrifice

Temple and Cult Image

- The Importance of temples in Greek culture
 - In temples, Greek architecture and art found its fulfilment
 - Sanctuary places probably preceded temple locations
 - The temple is the dwelling place, naos, of the deity; houses anthropomorphic cult image
- Cult statues
 - Temple as house of the cult statue (similar to medieval cathedrals)
 - Statuettes in sanctuaries
 - Early sanctuaries
 - statuettes found mostly in groups
 - usually not a unique cult statue representing one god that was lord of that sanctuary
 - Later sanctuaries
 - Came to be associated with a particular god
 - In early temples, there are always cult statues or figurines included
 - Hera, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, and then Demeter; Poseidon and Zeus temples later

Cult Images and Sculptures

- Cults often utilized small, movable figures – wood or bronze
 - Xoanon, carved figure, is the usual word for statuette
 - True cult images were xoana, carved from wood
 - Ovid describes the cave of the Mother Goddess – many wooden images of the gods
 - Small bronze statuettes
- Styles of cult statue in temples
 - Epiphany gesture – recalls Minoan-Mycenaean (8th century)
 - Warrior style starts to develop – large-scale, powerful sculptures of war-like gods
- Image of the seated goddess
 - image of Hera of Tiryns, which was later housed in the Argive Heraion and regarded as one of the oldest images in existence

Agalmata

- Agalma – cult-statue, object of worship, something in which one takes delight
- Not the same as “eikon”, which implies likeness
- Plato says the created cosmos is a shrine brought into being for the everlasting gods. Ton aidion theon gegonos agalma – Timaeus
- The agalma is endowed by the with soul and intelligence by the noetic father. [Emperor Julian]

Temple Architecture

- From the sixth century on, we find a universal acceptance of fixed conventions for columns, entablature, frieze, and pediment
- Dominated the architecture of the Mediterranean for more than 700 years
- Great Temple Architecture and Art
 - Temple architecture attained its acme and a certain finality in the Temple of the Olympian Zeus (about 460) and in the
 - Parthenon on the Athenian Acropolis (consecrated in 438)
 - Great Greek Religious Art
 - Two chryselephantine images by Pheidias
 - Athena Parthenos on the Acropolis
 - Zeus of Olympia

Cult Images and Civic Life

- Palladion – greatly cherished cult image upon which the safety of the city rested
 - The Aeneid: Wooden statue (xoanon) of Pallas Athena that Odysseus and Diomedes stole from the citadel of Troy and was later taken to the future site of Rome by Aeneas
- Processions with images of gods
 - Image cleaned and decked out in the festal rite, it was presented with a new robe (peplos) and dressed for ceremonies

Anathemata and Agalmata

- Dedicatory gifts offered to gods
 - The object, *anathema*, is a lasting, visible gift
 - A witness to one's relationship to the deity
 - Devotional objects
 - Understood as giving permanence to the sacrificial act
 - Popular sanctuaries inevitably became quite overwhelmed with votive gifts
- Goat Horn Altars
 - In sanctuaries dedicated to Artemis and Apollo goat horns accumulate
 - on Delos the great Horn Altar of Artemis, viewed as one of the wonders of the world - constructed from goat horns
- Tripod cauldron
 - the most representative votive gift of Greek sanctuaries
 - tripod cauldron, which was used as a cooking utensil for boiling the meat
 - Also had intrinsic value as metal
- Using Agalmata (figurines) as Anathemata (offerings)
 - Agalmata primitive greek statue of a god
 - cult image or votive offering

Priests, Priestesses, and Religious Leadership

- Greek religion – can be said to be a religion without priests
 - Priests are usually temporary positions used to execute ritual proceedings
 - No priestly caste as a closed group with fixed tradition, education, initiation, and hierarchy
 - Even in permanently established cults there is no disciplina, but only usage, nomos
- Sacrifice Administration
 - Among the Greeks, sacrifice can be performed by anyone possessed of desire and means, including housewives and slaves
 - This ritual officiant
 - assumes the leadership, who begins, speaks the prayer, and makes the libation
 - Prerequisite for this role is a certain authority and economic power
 - The sacrificer is the head of the house, family, or village, the president of the council, the elected chief magistrate of the city
- Ritual during major festivals
 - Panathenaia and the Dionysia
 - major festivals organized in the sixth century

Functions of Priesthood and Temple Administration

- Temple Positions
 - Priest (*hiereus* or *hiereia*) ensures everything is done in proper order
 - To organize the sacrifices, from the purchase of the animals to the sale of the skins, sacrifice executors, *hieropoioi*, are appointed; and more important still are state commissions to oversee the finances of the sanctuaries, *epimeletai*, *hierotamiai*.
- Priests
 - In Greece the priesthood is not a way of life, but a part-time and honorary office; it may involve expense, but it brings great prestige.
 - The priest is consecrated (*hieromenos*). His hair is usually long and he wears a head-band (strophion), a garland, costly robes of white or purple, and a special waistband; he carries a staff in his hand.
- Priestesses
 - At Pellene the priestess of Athena appears with helmet and shield
 - in Athens the priestess of Athena wanders through the streets wearing the aegis
 - A priestess very commonly officiates for goddesses and a priest for gods, but there are important exceptions and complications.

Temple Rituals, Purity, and Consecration

- Consecration of boys and girls for a period of temple service.
- They start the work of weaving the peplos for Athena and tend the sacred olive tree; at the end of the year they are discharged in a mysterious nocturnal ceremony.
- As a common denominator of what is required of a priest there remains the purity, *hagneia*, befitting the sacred. This involves eschewing contact with death and with women in childbed, and a negatively charged relationship to sexuality.
- Otherwise, in contrast to more responsible positions, it is true that anyone can become a priest.

Pompe or Procession

- Festival ceremony begins with a procession
 - As the sanctuary articulates space, so the festival articulates time.
 - set off from the everyday
 - Contrast with normality expressed in mirth and joy, adornment, beauty, or in menace / terror
- Pathway and Procession
 - The centre to which sacred action is drawn is a sanctuary where sacrifices take place
 - The pathway is also important and sacred
 - At the Eleusinian festival the Sacred Way runs from the same gateway through thirty kilometres of countryside
 - The sacred objects are first brought along this pathway to Athens by the epheboi and then returned at the head of the great procession of mystai for the nocturnal celebrations.
- Ceremonial participants
 - Pompe means escort
 - basket bearer, water bearer, fire bearer, bowl bearer, and bough bearer

Ritual and Procession

- Carrying of the Kiste
 - In the Demeter and Dionysos cult covered containers whose contents are known only to the initiate are carried around in connection with the Mysteries – the round wickerwork basket with a lid, kiste,
 - kistephoroi
- Ritual Decoration
 - The participants show special status with festal garments and garlands, woollen fillets, and twigs which they hold in their hands
- Parthenon Frieze - monument giving the fullest idea of a great *pompe*

Panathenaea

- The Carrying of the Peplos
 - Beginning of year - Panathenaic procession presents the goddess with a new robe (*peplos*)
 - the robe had been carried through the city on a ship chariot
 - The procession moves along both sides of the temple towards this centre
- Ritual participants
 - Citizenry present themselves in their essential groupings in the greatest pompe of the year
 - Basket bearers and victims for Athena (four oxen and four sheep on one side)
 - Bowl bearers and water bearers (to carry these vessels was the special privilege and duty of the metics)
 - musicians and venerable old men
 - warrior youths, some armed with shields and some on horseback.
 - War chariots with warriors practicing the special sport associated with the festival -- jumping down from a hurtling chariot
 - Civic officials
 - Virgins and women who have made the peplos

Daphnephoria – Apollo Cult

- A characteristic form of the Apollo cult is the bay bearing, the Daphnephoria festival
- Apollo himself is called bay bearer, Daphnephoros, and myth tells how the god himself brought the purifying bay to Delphi after slaying the dragon.
- In the Hymn to Apollo the poet has the god himself leading the procession to Delphi with lyre in hand and playing sweetly.

Agermos – Temples Collect Gifts and Donations

- Processions collecting gifts are widespread and still survive in some places in European popular culture. In ancient Greece customs of this kind make only a marginal appearance, but they certainly exist
- The priestess of Athena Polias went through the city collecting on certain days. On such occasions she wore the aegis of the goddess

Dancing and Hymns

- Importance of Dance in Religion
 - Rhythmically repeated movement, performed together as a group, is ritual in its purest form
 - To belong to a traditional group means to learn their dances
 - Dancing and music are inseparable.
- Ancient Greek Dance traditions
 - Group of dancers and the dancing place - both called *choros*
 - Labyrinth Dance
 - On Delos, boys and girls dance the Crane Dance (*geranos*) with tortuous, labyrinthian movements: Theseus and young people from Athens invented dance after escaping from the labyrinth
 - Pyrriche
 - Athena leapt in full armor from the head of Zeus, brandished shield and lance in a war-dance; in imitation of this origin, the war-dance, pyrrhiche, is performed at her festival, especially the Panathenaia

Paeon and Dithryamb

- The names *Paeon* and *Dithyrambos* refer equally to the god, Dionysus, his hymn, and his dance
- The literary genre of choral lyric develops from the practice of the cult and culminates in 5th century work of Pindar
- The invocation of the gods, the enunciation of wishes and entreaties, is interwoven ever more artfully with mythical narratives and topical allusions to the festival and chorus.

Masks, Phalloi, Aischrologia – Vulgarities in ritual

- Masks - ancient means of surrendering one's identity and assuming a new extraordinary identity
- Some festivals emphasized a world of absurdity and aggressive obscenity
 - But even in the Artemis cult there were girls who appeared in phallic attire
- Thesmophoria
 - Ugly sayings, aischrologia
 - Obscene exposures in women's festivals, especially at the Thesmophoria
 - women celebrate on their own at the expense of the men, the antagonism between the sexes finds release in lampoonery and exchange of abuse between the sexes
- Rituals of Mocking
 - Mocking songs - lambos
 - lambe – maid/mythical figure who cheered up Demeter after her sorrow and fasting
 - Mocking choruses
 - At Dionysian festivals wagons drove through the streets carrying masked figures who shouted abuse at everyone they passed in a proverbially coarse manner
- Conscious vulgarity
 - Conscious descent to the lower classes and the lower parts of the anatomy
 - By plumbing the extremes the just mean is meant to emerge

Agon – the spirit of the contest

- The number of things which the Greeks can turn into a contest is astounding
- The agonal spirit is one of the characteristic traits and driving forces of Greek culture - Nietzsche
- in Athens, dithyrambs, comedies, and tragedies are staged competitively at the Dionysia, while at the Panathenaia, rhapsodes vie with one another in the recitation of Homer
- Sporting events are not profane festivals
- Funerary rites
 - Funerals are a major occasion for games
 - Evidenced by the epic description of the funeral games for Patroclus
 - Geometric vase paintings and later inscriptions
 - The *epitaphios agon* persists into Classical times.
 - Prize contest proceeds from the grief and rage of those affected by the death
- Recognized Panhellenic Festivals including contests during 6th century
 - the Olympia,
 - the Pythia at Delphi
 - the Nemeios in honour of Zeus
 - Isthmia for Poseidon near Corinth

The Banquet of the Gods

- The natural and straightforward aim of a festival is feasting – eating and drinking. In Greek sacral practice this element is always present
- The real guests at the entertaining of gods, *theoxenia*, are the Dioskouroi
- The rite of theoxenia (θεοξενια) "god-entertaining" was particularly associated with Castor and Pollux. The two deities were summoned to a table laid with food, whether at individuals' homes or in the public hearths or equivalent places controlled by states

Sacred Marriage

- Especial curiosity has always been aroused by a number of allusions to the secret climax of a festival in sexual union, a sacred marriage, *hieros gamos*. In fact, as far as Greece is concerned, the evidence is scanty and unclear
- To what extent such a sacred marriage was not just a way of viewing nature, but an act expressed or hinted at in ritual is difficult to say.
- In Athens the marriage of Zeus and Hera was celebrated
- In the domain of Dionysos the sexuality is less veiled ; in some forms of Dionysos initiations at least, just as in later Gnostic sects, real sexual intercourse seems to have taken place, in particular pederasty at the initiation of mystai; primitive initiation rituals, the introduction of adolescents to sexuality, may lie in the background.

Ecstasy and Enthousiasmos

- Since the sacred, the divine, always appears as out of the ordinary and wholly other, the overwhelming experiences of a changed and extended consciousness are, if not the sole origin, at least one of the most essential supports of religion
- it is said that a god seizes or carries a person, that he holds him in his power, *katechei*, which gives in translation the term possession.
- Stepping out, *ekstasis*, is spoken of just as much, not in the sense that the soul leaves the body, but that the person has abandoned his normal ways and his good sense
 - The most common term is mania, frenzy, madness.
 - Frenzy is described as a pathological outburst provoked by the anger of a god.
 - The aim, in reality and in myth, is to bring madness back to sense, a process which requires purification and the purifying priest .
- Perhaps some vestige of the epiphany of the deity in dance, as inferred for the Minoan religion, is preserved here

The Art of the Seer

- Performed by an esteemed specialist, the seer, *mantis*, a prototype of the wise man
- The aid to decision-making, the gain in self-confidence, is more important than real foreknowledge
- Any occurrence may become a sign: a sudden sneeze, a stumble, a twitch; a chance encounter or the sound of a name caught in passing; celestial phenomena such as lightning, comets, shooting stars, eclipses of sun and moon, even a drop of rain
- *Oionos*, the bird of omen, is pre-eminently the bird of prey: whether one or several appear, and whether from right or left, is always of significance
- Sacrifice, the execution of the sacred work, is followed with heightened attention; here everything is a sign
- Whether the credit for a victory was due to the commanding general or the mantis was therefore a matter which was certainly open to dispute; at all events, to have a good seer was of the utmost importance

Oracles

- Places where the god offers a service, *chresmos* to those in search of counsel; the Greeks called a place of this kind *chresterion* or *manteion*, the Romans *oraculum*
- The most spectacular mode, that in which the god speaks directly from a medium who enters the state of *enthousiasmos*
- Dodona, the sanctuary of Zeus in Epirus, boasted of being the oldest oracle
- Odysseus and oracles
 - alleges he has gone to Dodona ‘in order to learn the plan of Zeus from the oak of lofty foliage’;
 - the Hesiodic Catalogues perhaps already spoke of three doves which dwell in the oak tree
- Dream oracles
 - are more straightforward. After preparatory sacrifices, the inquirer spends the night in the sanctuary;
 - priests are at hand to assist in the interpretation of the dreams
 - This incubation later flourished above all in the domain of the healing gods, in the Amphiarraion at Oropos and in the Asklepieia.

Oracular Sites

- Oracle at Klaros near Colophon.
 - This oracle persisted through a number of crises and destructions into the Imperial Age, when it enjoyed its greatest renown
 - In the Imperial building a vault led beneath the temple to the sacred spring which, according to mythology, had gushed from the tears of Teiresias' daughter Manto
- Didyma
 - A sacred spring also existed in the other great Apollo oracle of Asia Minor at Didyma near Miletos
 - Here it was a priestess who entered a state of ecstasy while holding the laurel wand of the god in her hand, wetting her feet with the water, and breathing in its vapours

Pythia

- At times three Pythiai held office at once. The Pythia is a woman dedicated to the service of the god for life
- Pythian Ritual
 - After a bath in the Castalian spring and after the preliminary sacrifice of a goat, she enters the temple, which is fumigated with barley meal and laurel leaves on the ever-burning hestia, and descends into the adyton, the sunken area at the end of the temple interior. This is where the Omphalos stands and where, over a round, well-like opening in the ground, the tripod cauldron is set up; the cauldron is closed with a lid and it is on this that the Pythia takes her seat. Seated over the chasm, enveloped by the rising vapours, and shaking a freshly cut bay branch, she falls into a trance.
 - the ecstasy is self - induced.

Sibyls

- Frenzied women from whose lips the god speaks are recorded very much earlier in the Near East
- there is the tradition about the sibyls, individual prophesying women of early times who admittedly are known only through legend.
- The most famous sibyl was connected with Erythrai, but a sibyl is also supposed to have reached Delphi; it is interesting that a Babylonian sibyl is also mentioned.
- The sibyl of Kyme – Cumae became most important by virtue of her influence on Rome
- Cities began to make official collections of oracles. Most long - lasting was the influence of the libri Sibyllini – written in Greek – in Rome.

The Gods and The Spell of Homer

- Impossible to write the history of any single god
 - Wide variety - Established local cult with its ritual programme and unique atmosphere
 - the divine name
 - the myths told about the named being
 - iconography, especially the cult image
 - various elements of images and stories are continually separated from one another and reformed in new combinations
- Hesiod and Homer
 - The poetry of Hesiod and Homer create order in a confusion of traditions
 - The spiritual unity of the Greeks was founded and upheld by poetry – a poetry which could still draw on living oral tradition to produce a felicitous union of freedom and form, spontaneity and discipline.
 - To be a Greek was to be educated, and the foundation of all education was Homer
 - Beside Homer stands Hesiod, an original and tangible poetic figure. In the Theogony he created a basic textbook of Greek religion
 - Homer - attached to collection of hymns, (Prooimion), epic poems as introduction to the epic recitation at festivals

The Homeric Imprint

- Influence of Homer
 - The personal lyric poetry which appears to us in the second half of the seventh century with Archilochus, and about 600 with Alcaeus and Sappho, already bears the Homeric imprint
 - For the later poets also, the Homeric vision always remains the point of reference, even when it is criticized. Such was the extent to which the Homeric prevailed as a standard of excellence.

Standardization in Mythology: Symbols / Animals

- Symbols
 - Apollo and Artemis carry a bow
 - Apollo may alternatively carry a lyre, and Hera holds the sceptre
 - Athena appears fully armed with helmet, shield, lance, and aegis;
 - Hermes, the messenger of the gods, carries the herald's staff with two entwined snakes and wears winged shoes
- Gods are often accompanied by their animals:
 - Apollo and Artemis love the stag or roe
 - Zeus loves the eagle
 - Athena the owl
 - Poseidon holds a fish
 - The bull may accompany either Zeus, Poseidon, or Dionysos
 - He-goat may appear beside Hermes, Dionysos, or Aphrodite

Standardization in Mythology: Plants

- Gods also have their favourite plants :
 - the bay for Apollo
 - the olive for Athena
 - poppies and corn for Demeter
 - the vine and ivy for Dionysos
 - myrtle for Aphrodite; myrtle wreaths, however, are also found in connection with Demeter, and there are also olive wreaths in Olympia

Individual Gods

Zeus

- Ancient Indo-European Roots of Zeus
 - is the only name of a Greek god which is entirely transparent etymologically
 - long been paraded as a model case in Indo-European philology
 - Already in Mycenaean times Zeus was one of the most important gods
- Zeus' Character and Attributes
 - According to his Homeric epithet - the cloud gatherer, the dark-clouded, the thunderer on high, and the hurler of thunderbolts
 - Zeus dwells on the mountains where storm clouds gather
 - The thunderbolt is the weapon of Zeus which he alone commands; it is irresistible, even gods tremble before it
 - Zeus is the strongest of the gods
 - The widespread name Olympus came to be fixed on the highest mountain in northern Thessaly

Zeus' History

- Zeus was saved from being eaten by his father due to the cunning of his mother Rhea
- Rhea gave Kronos a stone to swallow instead.
- Once Zeus had come of age, he led the gods in war against the Titans: sky, earth, sea, and underworld were all convulsed in the battle, but Zeus emerged victorious thanks to his invincible thunderbolts
- The fact that Zeus overthrew his own father always looms ominously in the background. Every usurper is threatened with the same fate. Zeus, too, is imperilled by women destined to bear a son who is greater than his father.
- According to Hesiod, Metis, Wisdom, was one such woman, and so, after their marriage, Zeus promptly swallowed her; since then he has carried Wisdom within himself; the only child of this union is Pallas Athena

Zeus and War with the Titans and beyond – Monsters and Giants

- Monsters who are left rebel against the rule of Zeus.
 - Typhoeus, the son of Earth and Tartaros, a hybrid creature in human and serpent form, usually portrayed with serpent feet; this flame-breathing monster sought to establish himself as ruler of the world, but Zeus destroyed him with his thunderbolt and hurled him into Tartaros
 - The Gigantes, the giant, armed children of Earth, staged a rebellion against the Olympian gods as a whole
 - gods employ their various special weapons – Poseidon his trident, Apollo his bow, and Hephaistos his fire. Zeus decides the day with his thunderbolt

Sexuality and Zeus

- Power of the strongest gods is manifest in battle, victory, and inexhaustible sexual potency
- The many children sired by Zeus and the stream of goddesses and mortal women who shared his bed is astonishing. Late mythographers counted one hundred and fifteen women.
- Zeus - only god who has great and powerful gods as children: Apollo and Artemis by Leto, Hermes by Maia, Persephone by Demeter, Dionysos by Semele or Persephone, and Athena by Metis (in an unorthodox way); the ill-favoured Ares is the child of his legitimate spouse Hera
- The children of Zeus born to mortal women are generally mortal – Helen and Polydeuces are the exceptions – but all are extraordinary and powerful : Heracles by Alcmene , Helen and the Dioskouroi by Leda , Perseus by Danae , Minos and Rhadamanthys by Europa , Aiakos by Aigina , Arkas by Kallisto , Zethos and Amphion (the founders of Thebes) by Antiope , and Epaphos , the tribal ancestor of the Danaoi , by Io .
- Why Zeus? Sought to establish their descent from the Sky Father. In the archaic world this divine promiscuity meets with no moralizing criticism, even though Hera's jealousy is well understood and painted in the most terrible colours
- For all that, Zeus is father, father of men and gods

The Meaning of Zeus

- Zeus swallowed Metis - signifies union of power and wisdom
- Homer describes the planning mind, *noos*, of Zeus
 - Zeus has his goal and will attain it
- Zeus as judge and source of law and justice
 - Homer describes Zeus holding golden scales
 - Moira, *aisa* means portion
 - the world is apportioned, that boundaries are drawn in space and time
 - For man, the most important and most painful boundary is death: this is his limited portion
- All law comes from Zeus:
 - Justice is of Zeus, *Dios dika*
 - the men who administer justice receive their ordinances from Zeus
 - Hesiod enthrones Dike, Justice, alongside Zeus her father
 - the fact that a planning father holds power makes justice among men possible
 - Zeus stands above all faction

Zeus and Hospitality

- Hospitality
 - Zeus has a special concern for the relations which bind strangers to one another
 - Zeus resolved to destroy the city because Paris violated the laws of hospitality
 - Zeus is therefore uniquely qualified to be the god of all Greeks, of the Panhellenes

Festivals and Zeus in Greek Culture and Philosophy

- The greatest unifying force the Zeus festival of Olympia - the sacrifice and *agon* at Olympia
 - To participate in this festival at Olympia was to be a Hellene
- Zeus was the only god who could become an all-embracing god of the universe
- with predicates of universality: all-powerful, all-accomplisher, and cause of all; 'ruler of rulers, most blessed of the blessed, of the perfected most perfect power, happy Zeus'
- Stoics find their beginnings in the idea of Zeus representing the world as a whole, and especially the thinking fire which pervades everything, forms everything, and holds everything in limits

Hera

- Hera - worshipped far and wide as a Great Goddess
 - In her cult image she wears the high crown of the goddess, the Polos
 - also worn by Meter, Artemis, and other goddesses
- Wife of Zeus
 - As wedded wife of Zeus, she is model of jealousy and marital strife – not connubial affection
 - violates the incest taboo but at the same time underlines her unique equality of birth
 - Strong, wilful personality
 - Hera is everywhere the goddess of weddings and marriage – while seduction and carnal pleasure remain the responsibility of Aphrodite
 - Consummation of her marriage in the Iliad depicts deception of Zeus and her triumph. Embroidered girdle borrowed from Aphrodite, she succeeds in making the father of gods and men forget his supervision of the Trojan War: ‘as he saw her, so desire enveloped his strong mind,’ he takes her in his arms, the earth sprouts forth grass and flowers, and a golden cloud descends over everything; so they embrace on the peak of Mount Ida in the sacred precinct

Hera Festivals

- In Olympia the women celebrate their Hera festival every four years
- Wherever we learn any details about Hera festivals we discover that it is never simply a joyful wedding feast, but a deep crisis in which the established order breaks down and the goddess herself threatens to disappear
- it is a time of reversed order which establishes the thesmos, the order of normal life, all the more securely when the goddess is then returned, purified, to her ancient house

The Rage of Hera

- Hera is dangerous, malicious, and implacable in her rage
- persecutes Dionysos even before he is born, contriving to have Semele consumed in Zeus' thunderbolt
- her priestess at Argos, Io, on whom Zeus had cast his eye, is driven frenzied across the world in the shape of a cow
- intrigues against Heracles
- by herself she bore Typhaon, the monster who was supposed to overthrow Zeus
- Hephaistos, the misshapen smith god, was also borne by Hera unsired

Poseidon

- Kronos had three sons: Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades
 - Zeus was allotted the sky
 - Poseidon the sea
 - Hades the underworld
 - Earth and Mount Olympus were to be held in common by all three
- God of the Sea
 - As god of the sea Poseidon enjoys a natural popularity among Greeks
 - Poseidon is master and helper of fishermen.
 - Painters show him with a fish, often a dolphin, in his hand
- The Earth Shaker
- Father of the Horse
 - Ancient, uncensored myths make Poseidon the direct father of the horse
 - Even the birth of the horse is associated with water

Poseidon's Character and Role

- In the Homeric poems, he is great and powerful, yet of a certain gravity; always decidedly a member of the older generation and solicitous in an avuncular kind of way
- Poseidon remains an embodiment of elemental force; sea storm and earthquake are the most violent forms of energy directly encountered by man, while the horse was the strongest energy which man could then control
- One can grapple with such power and one must always take account of it, but clarity and illumination does not proceed from it – this must come from Athena or Apollo

Athena

- Goddess of Athens
 - Belongs most intimately by both name and sphere of influence to Athens
 - Probably takes her name from the city
 - Athens is still dominated today by her Maidens' Apartment, the Parthenon, which has come to epitomize all Greek art
 - For the Athenians, she was quite simply the goddess, *he theos*
 - Athena is everywhere the pre-eminent citadel and city goddess; often this is also expressed by her epithets, Polias, Poliouchos
- Armed goddesses are also found in the Near East:

Palladion and Athena

- Palladion
 - Wooden statue ([xoanon](#)) of Pallas Athena
 - Myth tells how the fate of Troy hung on its Palladion: only after Odysseus and Diomedes had entered Troy by night and stolen the Palladion could the city fall
 - So in the wild noise of war and in the extreme pitch of excitement the warrior believes he perceives the goddess herself
 - stirred up courage in their hearts

Domains of Athena

- The Aegis
 - The emblem and armour of Athena is the aegis
 - whenever she raises up the aegis her enemies are overtaken by panic and soon are lost
 - Myth recounts how a goat / monster, a gorgo, which Athena herself killed and skinned; pictorial art turned the animal head into a Gorgon head and bordered the aegis with snakes
- Goddess of handicrafts
 - Ferocity balanced by concern for peaceful handicrafts, especially women at spindle and loom
 - Women of Athens weave her the peplos which is handed over at the Panathenaia festival
 - Athena is also the goddess of carpenters:
 - Invented the chariot as well as the horse bridle
 - Built the first ship
 - Helped construct the Wooden Horse
- Goddess of the Olive Tree
 - The olive tree is sacred to her, in particular that olive tree on the Athenian Acropolis which seemed to embody the continuity of the city
 - Together with Zeus she watches over olive trees in general from which the oil is collected that serves as a prize to the victors at her festival, the Panathenaia .

Athena and Civilization

- What unites these spheres of competence is the force of civilization: the just division of roles among women, craftsmen, and warriors and the organizational wisdom which achieves this.
 - Poseidon violently sires the horse, Athena bridles it and builds the chariot
 - Poseidon excites the waves, Athena builds the ship
 - Hermes multiplies flocks, Athena teaches the use of wool
 - Ares cultivates derring-do of war –Athena cultivates the war - dance, tactics, and discipline
- Athena's Style
 - More than any deity, Athena is always near her proteges
 - Her grace and assistance remain ever subtle and almost playful
 - The metope from Olympia shows her lightly supporting the sky which weighs on the shoulders of Heracles - one of the most beautiful images of her intervention
 - Athena embodies self-control
 - Her most characteristic manifestation is to Achilles: as he grasps for his sword in his quarrel with Agamemnon, Athena stands behind him and catches him by the hair; to the others she remains invisible, but Achilles recognizes the goddess

Athena and Polis

- Athena as daughter of Metis and Zeus
 - According to Hesiod, Metis, Wisdom, is Athena's mother; this admittedly is wisdom of a peculiar kind, which includes deviousness, scheming, and tricks
 - Zeus himself performed a subtle trick in his union with Metis when he promptly swallowed her. Athena therefore had to be born from the head of Zeus
 - At the same time, the absence of a mother is the virgin's denial of her womanhood as such: she has not even had contact with a woman's womb. The wisdom of civilization is cut off from the very ground of life
- Athena did raise Erechtheus, founder of the polis of Athens, in her temple – son of Gaia and Hephaestus whom Athena
- Temple to Athena
 - In the 5th century magnificent temple was raised up for the sublime, untouchable Maiden. Pheidias made the gold and ivory image of the victorious goddess, standing, with helmet and shield, and carrying the winged goddess of victory, Nike, in her right hand

Apollo

- Apollo as acme of physical development
 - The youth, *kouros*, was raised to its ideal, giving Greek culture its peculiar character
 - The kouros was purified and elevated, this ideal is manifest in the divine god Apollo
- Geographic Centers for Apollo
 - Has two supra-regional centers which exert a missionary influence: Delos and Pytho-Delphi
 - sufferings of the mother who wandered through the world finding no resting place until she chanced on the tiny island of Delos. There, by the date palm, Leto gave birth
- Apollo's Bow and Arrow
 - Why Apollo appears with a bow and arrow but is not a god of hunters, also associated with the stag or roe and even has a lion in his train.
 - In the Iliad, arrows of Apollo signify pestilence: the god of healing is also the god of plague
 - The banishment of disease in song and dance, and the image of the arrow-bearing Guardian God are brought together in one vision
 - Serpent Python, a son of Earth and Lord of Delphi until killed by the arrows of Apollo. The Pythian agon was regarded as a celebration of this victory.

Apollo and Music

- Apollo's cult hymn is the paeon
- But on Mount Olympus in the company of the gods, Apollo himself plays the 'all-beautiful phorminx, the stringed instrument, and the Muses sing with beautiful voices
- The plague god is at the same time master of healing hymn
- The Pythian festival always involved a musical agon, a competition for voice and lyre, voice and flute, and solo flute, even though popular interest later centered on sporting events, especially horse races. The victor was presented with a laurel wreath.

Apollo as God of Healing and Oracle

- Apollo as god of healing remains a central trait in his worship – from the mythical foundation of Didyma when Branchos, ancestor of the priestly line, the Branchidai, banished a plague
- Asklepios is always the son of Apollo who is himself accorded the epithet Doctor, Iatros
- The god of purifications is also an oracle god
 - Indirect and veiled revelation belongs especially to Apollo
 - For this reason he is called Loxias, the Oblique
 - Through cultic prescriptions from Delphi, the outlines of a universal morality overriding tradition and group interests may be discerned for the first time among the Greeks
 - In the sixth century the temple at Delphi was engraved with sayings – later attributed to the Seven Wise Men.
 - Two of these sayings in particular express the spirit of Apollo, wisdom and morality: *meden agan*, nothing in excess, and *gnothi sauton*, know yourself; (know that you are not a god)

Apollo, God of Afar

- Apollo remains the 'God of Afar'; man knows himself in his distance from the god
- in the Iliad, Poseidon meets Apollo in the battle of the gods
- gesture of infinite superiority the god turns away from mankind
- Men who are mindful of this god in awareness of their own misery venture forth on something higher and absolute
- when you are aware of the limit you venture forth on something higher

Artemis

- Roots of the Artemis Cult
 - One of the most widespread cults
 - One of the most individual and oldest deities
 - Close connections with Asia Minor
 - The eastern motif beloved by archaic art shows a goddess associated with Artemis – often has wings and is standing between symmetrically arranged wild animals
 - Goes back to the Palaeolithic
- Potnia Theron – Mistress of the Animals
 - In the Iliad, Artemis is called Mistress of the Animals
 - This Potnia Theron is a Mistress of the whole of wild nature -- fish, birds, lions and stags, goats and hares
 - She is wild and uncanny and is even shown with a Gorgon head.
 - Though she is gracious and kind to the suckling young of every wild creature, she is also the huntress who triumphantly slays her prey with bow and arrow

Depictions of Artemis

- Artemis the Hunter
 - Pictured with swarms of nymphs, hunting, dancing, playing on mountains and meadows - goddess of the open countryside
 - Loves the bow and to kill wild beasts in mountains, the lyre and dancing and piercing, triumphal cries and shady groves
- Goddess of Young Girls
 - Girls of marriageable age form dancing groups, especially festivals in honor of the goddess
 - Important opportunity for young men to meet girls
 - the dedication of young girls at Brauron is in atonement for a bear sacred to Artemis, killed by Attic youths; for this reason girls are called she-bears, *arktoi*
- The Birth Goddess
 - Just as plague god Apollo is also the healing god, so the virgin is also the birth goddess
 - Merges with Eileithyia
- Artemis and Sacrifice
 - Mistress of sacrifices, especially cruel and bloody sacrifices
 - The ritual cruelty brings the harshness of pre-civilized life into civilization of the polis

Aphrodite

- Aphrodite's Domain
 - Joyous consummation of sexuality
 - Aphrodisia, *aphrodisiazein* as a verb, denotes the act of love
 - The god Eros is the son of Aphrodite
 - Moves across the slopes of Ida followed by fawning grey wolves, lions, bears, and panthers; delights in her retinue and casts the yearning of love into their breasts: two by two they couple in their shady dens
 - Aphrodite can also be a terrible goddess
- Roots of Aphrodite
 - Behind Aphrodite there stands the ancient Semitic goddess of love, Ishtar - Astarte, divine consort of the king, queen of heaven, and hetaera in one
 - Eastern tradition lies in the background with the all-embracing power of Ishtar
 - This Semitic, or more precisely Phoenician, origin is already asserted by Herodotus
 - Ishtar is also a warrior goddess, and Aphrodite may be armed and bestow victory
 - frontal representations of naked goddess are found on small ornamental objects and gold pendants

Tales of Aphrodite

- Judgement of Paris, The Iliad
 - The story of how Aphrodite outdid Athena and Hera in the Judgement of Paris and how this led to the abduction of Helen and to the outbreak of the Trojan War is undoubtedly an ancient legendary motif
 - in the Iliad when the poet describes how Aphrodite swept Paris away from his defeat at the hands of Menelaus to his nuptial bedchamber in Troy and brought Helen to him
- Aphrodite in Homer
 - Intervention in battle is less successful when she tries to protect her son Aeneas from Diomedes: Diomedes wounds her in the hand, and as divine blood flows, Diomedes scoffs, shouting that she should keep away from war
 - The great seductress finally falls victim to her own wiles: She is married to Hephaistos, but is having a secret affair with Ares. Hephaistos catches them both in flagranti, while the gods gather round to laugh at them.
- Mother of Aeneas:
 - She sought out the herdsman Anchises on Mount Ida to become mother of Aeneas

Aphrodite's Genesis

- Myth of Origin
 - Ouranos, the sky, husband of Gaia, refused to allow his children to emerge into the light, and so, as Ouranos lay embracing Gaia, Kronos his son lopped off his father's genitals with a sickle and threw them backwards into the sea.
 - As the sea swept them away, a white foam gathered about them and in it there grew a maiden; she was carried on the waves to Cythera and then to Cyprus where she stepped ashore – an awesome and beautiful goddess, foam-born Aphrodite
 - At the very first cosmic differentiation, the separation of heaven and earth, the power of union also emerged. Aphrodite is thereby caught up in a tradition of cosmogonic speculation - begetting and the mingling of love is what drives the world onwards
 - A curious votive terracotta from the seventh century shows a bearded Aphrodite emerging from a scrotal sac

Aphrodite as Symbol

- Worship of Aphrodite finds a personal and most complete expression in the poems of Sappho
- In the fourth century we find Aphrodite separated into two aspects:
 - higher, celestial love, Aphrodite Ourania
 - the love of the whole people, Aphrodite Pandemos, who is responsible for lower sexual life and in particular for prostitution
- Around 340, the statue of a naked Aphrodite preparing to take a bath was created for the sanctuary in Cnidos by Praxiteles; this figure remained the most renowned representation of the goddess of love, the embodiment of all womanly charms

Hermes

- Origin of the term
 - *Herma* is a heap of stones, a monument set up as an elementary form of demarcation. Everyone who passes by adds a stone to the pile and so announces his presence.
 - Another form of territorial demarcation older than man himself, is phallic display, which is then symbolically replaced by erected stones or stakes. To this extent, stone cairn and apotropaic phallos have always gone together.
 - a square pillar with a membrum virile – usually erect – and a bearded head
 - A monument of this kind was called simply Hermes, whence the English, herm
 - Astounding that a monument of this kind could be transformed into an Olympian god
- Hermes combines two motifs:
 - mythical figure of the trickster who is responsible for founding civilization
 - the epic role of the messenger of the gods

Stories and Legends About Hermes

- Hermes and the theft of Apollo's cattle
 - In the myth of the cattle theft Hermes' nature appears at its lightest and most carefree
 - Furtiveness and thieving are already Hermes' domain in the Iliad
 - Myth of Hermes stealing the cattle of far-shooting Apollo.
 - The first sacrifice of flesh to the gods – Hermes sacrifices two of the herd
 - If there is to be sacrifice, then the taboo on the sacred herd of Apollo must be broken: the trickster breaks the taboo.
 - As a token of reconciliation, Hermes gives Apollo the lyre
- Myth of Argeiphontes
 - Hermes first sent sleep into the many eyes of Argos and then slew him with the cast of a stone.
 - This again breaks a taboo and inaugurates the festival of licence.

Myths about Hermes

- Crossing boundaries
 - Between living and dead
 - In the Hymn to Demeter he fetches Kore back from Hades, a scene depicted on vases
 - As god of boundaries and of the transgression or crossing of boundaries, Hermes is therefore the patron of herdsman, thieves, graves, and heralds
- Chthonic Hermes
 - Elaborated in the myth of the escort of souls, psychopompos
 - Hermes is invoked at libations to the dead, and graves are placed in his care
- Hermes' Staff and symbols
 - As messenger of the gods, s carries the herald's staff, the kerykeion, which is really the image of copulating snakes taken over from ancient Near Eastern tradition .
 - Every lucky find is a hermaion
- God of Interpretation
 - Successful communication with enemies and strangers is the work of Hermes, and the interpreter, hermeneus, owes his name to the god

Demeter

- Earth Goddess
 - With her connections with the underworld, Demeter is not simply goddess of the earth
 - Nevertheless, corn is at the center of her power and favor
- Persephone Disappears
 - As the girl bends down to pick a beautiful flower, the earth opens up and the god of the underworld charges out with horses and chariot, grabs Persephone and carries her away
 - Demeter hears the cry as she is dragged away, sets out in search of her daughter, wandering through the whole world. Wanderings are described with ritual detail: fasting, with hair untied, carrying flaming torches, she speeds over land and sea, propelled by pain and anger.
 - While in the underworld she tasted pomegranate and so is bound to the world of the dead by a blood sacrament
 - Following the Homeric Hymn, her advent in Eleusis and institution of the Mysteries became the most important version of the story

Persephone and Culture

- Allegory of Kore
 - Since antiquity, this myth has been understood as a transparent nature allegory: Kore is the corn which must descend into the earth so that from seeming death new fruit may germinate
 - What the myth finds is a double existence between the upper world and the underworld: a dimension of death is introduced into life, and a dimension of life is introduced into death.
- Demeter Festivals
 - Demeter's festivals are widespread and very ancient
 - Intimately connected with the life of women
 - Particularly, the Thesmophoria, the festival of the society of women with the peculiar sacrifice in which pigs are sunk in underground pits

Dionysos

- Intoxication and Mania
 - Intoxication as a change in consciousness is interpreted as the irruption of something divine
 - Madness becomes an end in itself
 - Mania, the Greek word, denotes frenzy, not as the ravings of delusion, but as experience of intensified mental power
- Roots of the cultic of Dionysus
 - Cultic continuity from the 15th century to Greek times
 - Worship probably predates the Ionian migration
 - A Minoan–Mycenaean origin for the name Dionysos and for central aspects of this cult must therefore be given very serious consideration
 - Identification of god and ecstatic hymn in the *dithyrambos* - ancient elements
 - Furthermore, in the period after 660, the increasing influence of the Egyptian Osiris religion must be taken into account, something which can perhaps already be discerned in the ship processions of the sixth century

Dionysus Festivals

- Anthesteria festival in the Ionic – Attic area
 - Very directly concerned with wine - drinking
- The Dionysia
 - goat sacrifices and a phallos procession
 - advent of Dionysos from the sea, Katagogia, the Great Dionysia, introduced in Athens in the sixth century
 - The intoxicated time of licence seems common to all the rites and festivals
 - He stills all cares and brings sleep and oblivion of daily ills; 'the soul grows great, overcome by the arrow of the vine.

Stories about Dionysus

- Zeus loves Semele
 - Daughter of Kadmos, hero and first king of Thebes
 - Zeus consumes her with his thunderbolt when she begs to see him in his divine form, lethal for a human
 - The rescued child completes its period of gestation in Zeus' thigh, a male womb, and is born a second time from the thigh.
 - Hermes carries the divine infant to the nymphs or maenads in mysterious, far-off Nysa where Dionysos grows up, later returns to Thebes filled with divine power
- Dionysos in the Homeric Hymns
 - As Dionysos journeys back to Thebes, he appears on the shore in the shape of a youth, whereupon Tyrrhenian pirates arrive and attempt to carry him off
 - But his bonds fall away, vines grow up and spread about the mast and sail, and ivy twines around the mast.
 - The pirates dive into the sea and are transformed into dolphins.

Depictions of Dionysus

- The wine god became exceedingly popular in sixth - century Attic vase painting for the decoration of wine vessels

Symbols of Dionysus

- The presence of Dionysos is announced by vine and ivy tendrils and by the *thyrsos*, a springy wand (narthex) with a bundle of ivy leaves fastened to the top, which can also be understood as pine cones
- His retinue is composed of female maenads and male satyrs.
 - The maenads, who are always clothed, often with a fawn-skin (nebris) over the shoulder, dance in a trance, with heads bowed or thrown far back.
 - Satyrs - mixture of human and animal features - understood as a form of masking
 - a loin cloth holds the very often erect leather phallos and the horse tail
 - The significance of the phallos is not procreative - it is arousal for its own sake

Hephaistos

- Ancient origins
 - His city, Hephaistias, was the capital of the island of Lemnos, where an independent, non-Greek population held out down to the sixth century
 - The Greeks called them Tyrsenoi, thus identifying them with the Italian Etruscans
 - Importance of the smith's craft in Bronze/early Iron Ages led to its involvement with political/religious organizations
- Hephaistos and special importance in mythology and cult
 - Crippled feet make him an outsider among the perfect Olympians
 - Encounter with Athena
 - Encounter with Athena - overcome with desire for her, tried to rape her, but only ended up shedding semen on her thigh, which she wiped off with a rag and cast onto the earth. From this, a child named Erichthonius was born, part serpent, part man.
 - Erichthonius became king of Athens and eventually founded the Panathenaia Festival

Marriage to Aphrodite and Other Associations

- Marriage to Aphrodite
 - Outburst of Homeric laughter in the Odyssey is at his expense and yet is his triumph when he catches his unfaithful wife Aphrodite and Ares in his net
- Associations
 - Intimate association with his element, fire
 - Association with volcanoes is secondary
 - Hephaistos himself works at his bellows and anvil, black with soot and covered with sweat, but glorious works of art come from his hands
 - The location of his smithy is beneath Mount Etna

Ares

- Ares - an ancient abstract noun meaning throng of battle or war
- Armies waging war naturally sacrificed to Ares from time to time, but Ares was worshipped with a temple cult in only a very few places
- Ares Character
 - Ares is an armoured, brazen warrior whose war chariot is harnessed by Fear and Terror, Phobos and Deimos;
 - He is overwhelming, insatiable in battle, destructive, and man - slaughtering
- Conflict with Athena and Zeus
 - Frquent conflict with Athena, usually to his disadvantage; sides with the Trojans, losing side
 - Zeus addresses him angrily: 'You are the most hateful to me of all the gods who hold Olympus; forever strife is dear to you and wars and slaughter.'
 - Ares embodies everything hateful in war; the splendor of victory, Nike, reserved for Athena
 - Ares ' home is accordingly located in the wild, barbarous land of Thrace

Lesser Gods: Hestia and Eileithyia

- The choice of the great, Panhellenic gods was decided primarily by epic, the principal force for Panhellenic culture. There remains a considerable number of deities who never achieved anything more than local importance
- Hestia:
 - The power worshipped in the hearth never fully developed into a person; since the hearth is immovable Hestia is unable to take part even in the procession of the gods
- Eileithyia:
 - The birth goddess, worshipped already in Mycenaean times in the cave at Amnisos, is indispensable in every family
 - Naturally it is primarily women who worship her. She is closely associated with Artemis and Hera, but develops no character of her own

Lesser Gods: Hecate

- Hecate:
 - A goddess of more independent character - often equated with Artemis from the fifth century onwards
 - Hecate is the goddess of pathways, Enodia, especially of cross-roads and of the offerings laid down there;
 - The triple-form figure of Hecate arose from the three masks which were hung at the meeting of three pathways
 - The pathways of Hecate are pathways of the night - accompanied by barking dogs, she leads a ghostly retinue
 - Hecate is also goddess of the moon and of the moon - conjuring witches of Thessaly, such as the dreaded sorceress Medea

Lesser Gods: Prometheus

- Prometheus
 - Son of the Titan, Iapetus
 - Hero of one of the best known and most frequently interpreted Greek myths
 - Created men, stole fire from heaven for them, and arranged sacrifice to their advantage. His adversary Zeus replied by punishing men with the first woman, Pandora, and her jar of evil, chaining Prometheus to the Caucasus, and sending an eagle to devour his liver until Heracles released him
 - Two authoritative accounts on Prometheus:
 - Hesiod
 - The Aeschylus drama, which links the defiance of the friend of mankind towards Zeus with the problem of culture

Lesser Gods: Leto and Thetis

- Leto
 - Leto's Importance
 - Leto in Dorian, the mother of Apollo and Artemis
 - Enjoys a cult of her own in many places, especially on Crete
 - in Phaistos she appears in connection with an initiation myth
 - Mostly, her role is defined simply as mother of the divine twins.
- Thetis and ocean nymphs
 - As the nymphs surround Artemis, so the Nereides surround Thetis
 - Leukothea, the White Goddess, is another mermaid worshipped throughout the Mediterranean
 - the Mother and Mistress of the sea creatures which were such an important source of food

Lesser Gods: Pan

- Pan
 - The goat-god Pan stands at the boundary of the polis culture and of humanity itself; he is portrayed with goat feet and large goat horns, and very often as ithyphallic.
 - He dwells in caves where sacrificial banquets take place in his honor; his cave at Marathon is perhaps a very ancient sanctuary.
 - Pan embodies the uncivilized power of procreation which nevertheless remains indispensable and fascinating for civilized life

Collective Deities

- Collective Deities
 - A class of divine beings whose nature is to appear as a collective and who are designated by the plural
 - Instead of gods, theoi, these societies are also occasionally termed daimones or attendants, amphipoloi, and forerunners, propoloi, of a deity.
 - Mirror real cult association, thiasoi, especially in the emphasis on music and dancing
 - Examples of Collective Deities
 - Maenads
 - Thyiades
 - Satyrs
 - Kouretes
 - Nymphs
 - The Gorgons
 - The Charites, the Muses, the Nereides, and Oceanides are choruses of young girls

Societies of Gods and Association of Gods with Nature

- Human *thiasoi*, followers or adherents of a deity, imitate their prototypes
- Masked societies
 - Ancient and fundamental
 - Cultic reality
- Original association of gods with nature
 - Gods of mythology had originally been natural phenomena
 - Such deities eventually became overshadowed by divine figures defined through poetry and cult

Nature Deities of Water and Wind

- Gods of rivers and springs
 - That rivers are gods and springs divine nymphs is deeply rooted in poetry, belief and ritual
 - Each city worships its river or spring. The river is accorded a temenos and sometimes a temple
 - In customary religion, the role of Gaia is modest; develops from the practice of pouring libations, most notably the ceremonial carrying of water to a cleft in the ground
- Cult of the Winds
 - The cult of the winds receives much more attention
 - The effect from sacrifices was magical. The aim is defined precisely: a specific, individually named wind that determines the weather and affects harvest prospects, or the general mood of the people

Foreign Gods

- Epic art created a fixed group of Greek Gods. The flowering of epic art in the 8th century marks a boundary line where most of the established gods were already fixed. Whatever arrived after that date was never fully assimilated and always retained an aura of foreignness
- The cult of the dying god Adonis
 - Identified with the spread of the Mesopotamian Dumuzi-Tammuz cult
 - Adonis cult: confined to women and celebrated on flat roof-tops on which sherds sown with quickly germinating green salad are placed, Adonis gardens. The festival is infused with the sweet aromas of incense, and the climax is loud lamentation for the dead god. The dead Adonis was then laid out on his bier in the form of a statuette and borne to his grave: the effigy and the little garden were thrown into the sea.
 - The special function of the Adonis cult is as an opportunity for the unbridled expression of emotion in the strictly circumscribed life of women
- Meter, Mother of the Mountain
 - Among Greeks, the goddess is called simply Meter, or Meter oreie, Mother of the Mountain
 - The Meter celebrated with a cult, however, is mother of all gods and all men, and doubtless mother of the animals and of all life as well. Procreation is therefore under her sway.
 - Meter is celebrated with wild, rousing music which can lead even to ecstasy

Nature Deities of the Sun and Moon

- Helios
 - Helios, the sun, is a god everywhere
 - But the island of Rhodes is almost the only place where Helios enjoys an important cult
 - The largest Greek statue in bronze, the Colossus of Rhodes, is a representation of Helios
 - The myth of Phaethon and the crashing of the chariot of the sun may be connected with such customs
- Selene
 - the moon, appears in a number of myths, such as the myth of her love for the sleeping Endymion

Daimon

- What is a daimon:
 - A daimon or spirit that watches over each individual, obtained at birth by lot
 - This idea is found in Plato, undoubtedly from earlier tradition
 - Does not designate a specific class of divine beings, but a peculiar mode of activity
 - Occult power, a force that drives man forward where no agent can be named
 - Veiled countenance of divine activity
 - Something like fate, but without any person who plans and ordains being visible
- How Daimon affects life
 - Whether he is happy or not does not lie in man's control
 - The happy man has a good daimon, eudaimon, in contrast to the unhappy man, the kakodaimon, dysdaimon
- Belief in spirits and prevalence of belief in a daimon
 - A general belief in spirits is not expressed by the term daimon until the fifth century
 - Hesiod refers to great and powerful figures being honored after death as a daimon
 - Later in Hellenistic grave inscriptions the dead person was often described as a daimon

The Character of Greek Anthropomorphism

- Divine Names start out being associated with abstract concepts; the boundary between name and concept is fluid.
- Fixing the names of gods and Homerization
 - In established cult there are fixed, proven names, but still there are other epithets
 - Archaic Greek personifications come to assume their distinctive character in mediating between the individual gods and the spheres of reality
- How gods communicate to humans
 - In order to speak to humans, a god will usually assume the shape of some friend; only through the eventual outcome does one learn that it is a Stronger One that has been at work. Occasionally the gods will reveal themselves by some token.
 - Demeter betrays her divinity when she comes to Eleusis in the shape of an old servant woman; as she crosses the threshold, her head reaches the roof of the palace and she fills the doorway with divine radiance; only later that she reveals her true form, casting aside old age: beauty wafts about her, sweet fragrance spreads from her, light shines from her body, and the whole house is filled with a brightness as if by a flash of lightning.
 - The gods exist, but they cannot be harnessed to the ends of man; they seem familiar in their humanity, they can even be laughed at, but still they remain distant.

Creation and Relationship of Man and Gods

- Creation of Man by gods
 - That myth of the creation of man by the gods is largely looked over in Greek mythology
 - Hesiod's Theogony passes over the creation of man
 - Only sub-literary fables which tell of the activities of Prometheus
- Relation of Man to gods
 - There is no devil in the ancient religions, but each god has his dark and dangerous side
 - It is expected that ritual will produce certain effects, but the Homeric gods can still always say no without giving any reason
 - There is no obedience to god, just as there are scarcely any divine commands; there is no divine court which sits in judgement over men
 - The gods are and remain the Stronger Ones.

Burial and Death Rituals

- Burials provide earliest evidences of human culture
 - Burials presuppose funerary rituals - Single burial comes to be the general rule
 - Usually a strict separation of settlement and grave precinct
- Greek death rituals
 - Dead must be carried out - graves accumulate along the main routes out of the city
 - The laying out of the corpse, prothesis, the carrying out, ekphora, and the funeral proper with sacrifices and a banquet are the basis of a continuing grave cult
 - The lament is the duty of the women to perform
 - Men's graves will often be given weapons, knives, or other trappings of their trade; women are accorded jewellery, clothing, and distaffs
 - The deceased is presented with a small coin - known as the ferrying fee for Charon
 - On the 30th day a communal feast is held to mark the end of the mourning period

Gravestones and Communal Celebration

- Gravesites
 - As from prehistoric times, figures of various types are frequently placed in the grave
 - Slaughter of animal victims at the graveside was standard
 - The grave is always a place for libations
 - In Geometric times, food was cooked and eaten graveside
 - In the early period, burial of an important figure was followed by an agon.
- Gravestones and Markers
 - The grave is marked with a stone, the sign, sema that proclaims the deceased to all eternity
 - From roughly hewn oblong stones used in the dark centuries, there develops from the 8th century on the carefully worked grave stele, provided with an inscription and relief or painting. The inscription records the name of the deceased, often with a verse epigram.
 - The sign, also understood as a mysterious guardian of the dead person; thus lion and sphinx are found as grave markers.

Death and Burial

- Communal Celebration of Death
 - General celebrations with which the city honors its dead every year
 - Days of the dead, *nekysia*, or days of the forefathers, *genesia*
- The deceased is present at the burial
 - The deceased is present and active at the place of burial, in the grave beneath the earth.
 - The dead drink the pourings and indeed the blood – they are invited to come to the banquet
- Death snake
 - It is a general belief that the deceased may appear in the form of a snake
 - The death snake is, in iconography, a convenient and therefore almost omnipresent motif.

Funereal Ritual

- Funereal Ritual
 - The altar for the gods is built from stones; for the dead there is a ground-level hearth, eschara, or a pit, bothros, which points into the depths.
 - Victims slaughtered for the subterranean powers the blood flows directly into the bothros.
 - fitting time for sacrifice is the evening or night; the festival for the gods begins at sunrise.
 - an offering-pit may have a round building, a tholos, built around it .
- Sacrifice, Libations and Ritual
 - To sacrifice to the gods is to consecrate, hieruein, and to fumigate, thuein, since the fatty smoke rises to the sky; but to sacrifice to the dead is to devote, to taboo, enagizein, or else to cut into the fire, entemnein.
 - The libations for subterranean powers are called choai; spondai are poured to the gods

The Dead, Heroes, Chthonic Gods: Afterlife

- Olympic versus chthonic
 - Cults of the dead and the gods have similar rituals and psychological/social functions
 - *Cthonioi* belong to the earth while Olympian gods belong to heaven
- Death in Homer
 - In The Iliad, the appearance of the dead Patroclus in a dream, and in the Odyssey, the journey to Hades
 - In Homer, the psyche leaves man at death and enters the house of Ais, also known as Aides, Aidoneus and in Attic as Hades. Psyche means breath just as psychein is the verb to breathe; arrested breathing is the simplest outward sign of death.
- Death, Psyche and Breath
 - From the moment it leaves the man it is also termed an eidolon, a phantom image
 - Forms in which the dead appear are identified with the breath that has left the body
 - From 6th century onwards, vase paintings show the psychai as small winged figures
 - poetry may speak of nekys, the dead one, instead of the words psyche or eidolon

Mythology and Death

- Mythological Figures
 - House of Ais - Aides / Hades is a personal god, brother of Zeus – hence known also as the other Zeus, the subterranean Zeus
 - Sometimes, as in the Odyssey, the kingdom of the dead is located far away at the edge of the world beyond the Oceanos, and sometimes, as in the Iliad, it lies directly beneath the earth.
 - Hermes is the escort of the dead who calls up the souls of the murdered suitors and leads them on to the meadow of Asphodelos
 - The psyche has crossed the rivers, passed through the gates of Hades, and is united with the dead
- Radical separation of the dead from the living
 - There is no comfort and no hope
 - In the dreary monotony everything becomes a matter of indifference
 - Gilgamesh epic, the way in which the dead Enkidu appears like a puff of wind before his friend Gilgamesh is strikingly reminiscent of the scene between Patroclus and Achilles towards the end of the Iliad .

Death in Mythology

- Tartaros
 - fearful pit, the Tartaros, 'as far beneath the earth as the sky is above the earth'
 - Enemies of the gods, the Titan , were plunged into its depths, and it awaits further victims
 - Iliad plainly invokes those 'who beneath the earth punish dead men, whoever has sworn a false oath;' these powers are called Erinyes.
- Elysian Fields
 - At the other extreme is the mention of the Elysian Fields in the fourth book of the Odyssey.
 - That field at the edge of the earth, the abode of Rhadamanthys
 - Most favourable climate, the 'easiest life' awaits him
 - Motif of miraculous transportation to a pure and far-off island goes back to Sumerian flood story
- Heracles
 - Lives as a god on Olympus
 - The figure of Heracles, unique in myth, was to become the prototype for the most daring hopes for an afterlife

Soul and the Hopes for an Afterlife

- Ideas about death and afterlife
 - Secret cults, mysteries, appeared that promised initiates blessedness in the afterlife
 - the pious and just man had a claim to blessedness while the evil man should meet with punishment
- Metempsychosis and Soul
 - Soul, psyche, as the bearer of personal identity, separate from the body, acquired a strikingly new and important status. In the early philosophy of nature, the idea emerged that the soul is somehow akin to the stars and the sky, while the divine enters into more and more direct relations with the cosmos
 - Sophists made the soul, psyche, the center of feeling, thinking, and decision-making
 - In Plato's synthesis, the concept of the soul was able to become the foundation of philosophy and religion
 - Created those myths of the afterlife that were to exert lasting influence

Earth, Death and Life

- Demeter and Death
 - For as long as the land has been tilled, it has been known that food and hence life grows from the depths of the earth: 'the corn comes from the dead.'
 - Demeter festival is called simply Chthonia
 - Secret rites in the ancient stone circle. The corn-giving goddess makes death lose its terror.
- Chthonic epithets
 - Chthonic Dionysos, the son of Persephone
 - Chthonic is also found as an epithet of Hecate, the goddess of nocturnal sorcery who is able to enter the underworld; also an epithet of Hermes, the escort of souls who crosses the boundary with the underworld.
 - The god who is mentioned most frequently is the chthonic Zeus, the other Zeus, a subterranean counterpart to the sky father.
 - The gods are the immortals, *athanatoi*; the epithet becomes a definition.
 - Cultic reality, however, remained a rich conglomerate of Olympian and Chthonic elements in which many more subtle gradations were possible.
 - The opposition between Olympian and Chthonic constitutes a polarity in which one pole cannot exist without the other and in which each pole only receives its full meaning from the other. Above and below, heaven and earth together form the universe.

Demi Gods and Heroes

- Demi Gods and Heroes
 - Existence of a class of 'heroes' or 'demi-gods' is a peculiarity of Greek mythology and religion
 - Hero worship from the 8th century onwards derived from the influence of epic poetry
 - When gods and men were still living together, there arose from their intermingling
- Hero Cults
 - The rise of the hero cult has significance and function in evolution of the Greek polis
 - Hero cult, in fact, is not an ancestor cult at all; its concern is with effective presence
 - The wall which separates them is impermeable: no god is a hero, and no hero becomes a god; only Dionysos and Heracles were able to defy this principle.
 - that a hero is always confined to a specific locality
 - Great gods are no longer born, but new heroes can always be raised up from the army of the dead whenever a family, cult association, or city passes an appropriate resolution to accord heroic honors.
- Ghosts and Snakes
 - belief in ghosts
 - snake, always a terrifying creature , may be taken as the manifestation of a hero .
 - The gods are remote, the heroes are near at hand .

Heracles Crosses Chthonic-Olympian Boundary:

- Heracles Popularity
 - Most popular of these figures is Heracles . Heracles, the mightiest son of Zeus.
 - First and foremost Heracles has to do with animals: he slays the most dangerous, the lion and the serpent, and he captures the others, those which can be eaten, to bring them to men.
- Oriental motifs and the migration of the lion image
 - Documented archaeologically
 - About 600, the figure of Heracles in the lion skin, which is pulled over his head like a cowl, comes to prevail in the iconography .
- Heracles Cults
 - Heracles cults are spread throughout almost the entire Greek world
 - Heracles is particularly suited to the gymnasia and the epheboi, for there is something forever youthful about the hero who is always wandering, fighting, and nowhere at home.

The Dioskouroi and Warrior Society

- Castor and Pollux

- Divine twins Castor and Polydeuces (Pollux in Latin), the brothers of Helen, the youths of Zeus, Dios kouroi.
- The Dioskouroi are a reflection of the body of young men capable of bearing arms. They invent the war dances, and as mounted warriors they ride out in search of adventure
- The Theban twins Zethos and Amphion are almost doubles of the Dioskouroi. They too are sons of Zeus and horsemen – known as the white horses of Zeus
- Rescue their sister Helen when captured by Theseus - as the riders with white horses, leukopoi
- Castor, the mortal brother, falls in this encounter, but Polydeuces, who is immortal, survives, and yet the twins remain unseparated. This paradox of a life in which immortality and death are no longer in opposition is circumscribed in a variety of ways. In the *Odyssey* it is said that ‘the corn giving earth holds both living; ... now they are living, day and day about, now they are dead.’

Warrior Society and Sailors

- Warrior Society
 - The Spartan cult of the Dioskouroi is found in the context of a warrior society
 - The Dioskouroi are above all saviours, soteres. Not least, they prove their worth in battle
 - The Dioskouroi became even more popular as rescuers from personal distress, especially from danger at sea.
- Protection from the Dangers of Sailing
 - St. Elmo's fire, the electric discharge from the ship's mast during a thunderstorm, was regarded as the corporeal epiphany of the Dioskouroi. These sparks were called Dioskouroi, but were also compared to stars, and so the Dioskouroi themselves were called stars and represented with stars as an attribute.
 - Guiding lights for those hoping to break out of the mortal sphere into the realm of the gods.

Asklepios

- Asklepios owes his status and popularity to one single, but immensely important, function, the healing of sickness.
- Rescues the unborn child, Asklepios, who grows up with the Centaur Cheiron and becomes the best physician.
- The actual method of cure was sleeping in the sanctuary, incubation; the god is expected to give instructions in a dream or else to effect a direct cure. The whole process is placed in the context of a sacrificial ritual, from the introductory piglet sacrifice on the eve of the incubation to the fulfilment of the vowed thank offering.

Pairs of Gods

- Apollo and Artemis are peculiarly closely associated in the Greek mind
- Hephaistos and Athena are named together in Homer as the gods of handicrafts
- Ares and Aphrodite are linked in a famous farcical episode in the Odyssey which portrays them as an adulterous couple caught in flagranti and exposed to the inextinguishable laughter of the gods.
- The coming together of Hermes and Aphrodite appears not as an opposition but as a natural complement: the phallos figure and the naked goddess.
 - The bisexuality of the Near - Eastern Aphrodite - Astarte lies in the background. Thus Hermes and Aphrodite could even be fused into the bisexual figure of Hermaphroditos
- Athena and Poseidon belong together through their connection with the horse
- Bellerophon, the first horseman, sacrifices a bull to Poseidon and sets up an altar to Athena Hippia
- In Athens Poseidon and Athena are the principal deities;
- The relationship of Athena and Artemis - Hecate to Demeter is of a similar kind.
- Hecate carrying a torch, accompanies Demeter on the search for her daughter, and later she greets the returning Kore and becomes her constant attendant .

Dionysos and Apollo

- Opposition between Apollo and Dionysos
 - Antithesis between Apollo and Dionysos proclaimed by Friedrich Nietzsche
 - the key to both the intellectual history of Greece and the essence of art
 - form and definition versus dissolution and destruction
 - these symbols have taken on a significance and life of their own and have become almost independent of their origin in Greek religion
- Musical Opposition
 - An opposition between Apollo and Dionysos was first sensed in music:
 - Cult hymns, the paeon and the dithyrambos, are incompatible in harmony, rhythm and ethos

Delphi and the Story of the Bassarids

- Apollo and Dionysus at Delphi
 - An place where Apollo and Dionysos come to counterbalance one another is Delphi
 - East pediment of the 4th c. temple showed Apollo with the Muses - west pediment showed Dionysos with the Thyiades
 - Dionysos lay buried in the temple of Apollo at Delphi beside the sacred tripod and Omphalos
 - Dionysos is the dark, chthonic counterpart to Apollo
 - The oldest and most authoritative literary presentation of a conflict between Apollo and Dionysos goes back to Aeschylus
- Tragedy The Bassarids
 - Orpheus scorns Dionysos and at sunrise prays from the mountain top to the sun god alone, whom he calls Apollo.
 - Dionysos sends a swarm of maenads, the Bassaridai, who tear Orpheus limb from limb; the Muses of Apollo gather the remains and bury them

The Rhythm of the Festivals and the Calendar

- All major gods lent their names to months:
 - Dios, Heraios, Athenaios, Poseidonios, Apollonios, Artamitios, Aphrodisios, Damatrios, Dionysios, Hermaios, Areios, and Hephaistios are recorded and also Herakleios, Hestiaio, Latoios, and Pantheios.
 - Best known is the Attic calendar. It was established in this form as part of Solon's law-code
- Calendar
 - The calendar takes account of the natural rhythm of the agricultural year: there is no month of sowing or harvest and no grape-gathering month; the names are taken from the artificial festivals of the polis

Year Ending and New Year Festivals

- Two times for celebration of new year: in the spring or after the corn harvest. In Athens, the year begins with the Panathenaic festival in the month Hekatombaion, around July.
- 2 months before Panathenaia, purification of sanctuary of Athena Polias starts, beautifying / washing
- Arrhephoria
 - The following month, the mysterious nocturnal festival, the Arrhephoria, takes place where two young girls, the Arrhephoroi, who have lived for almost a year on the Acropolis, conclude their term of priestly service. They place on their heads what the priestess of Athena gives them to carry, but neither the priestess knows what it is she is giving them, nor do the girls who carry it.
 - What was carried down in the closed baskets (kistai), and what was brought up wrapped in a veil, can only be guessed at; Arrhephoros means dew carrier, with dew symbolizing both impregnation and new offspring.
 - Aglauros and Herse opened the container and saw Erichthonios, the mysterious child of Hephaistos, but at the same time one or two snakes darted out of the basket causing the girls to fall in terror over the north face of the Acropolis to their death.
 - almost year-long service of the Arrhephoroi who weave the peplos for the Panathenaia
 - Athena used wool to wipe Hephaistos' semen from her thigh, and threw it on the earth, and the earth gave birth to Erichthonios. Where the hidden child within the virginal precinct comes from, neither the priestess of Athena nor the young girls must know –

Panathenaia

- The Panathenaia
 - At last, comes the birthday festival of the city , the Panathenaia
 - From the year 566 the Great Panathenaia were celebrated every four years as a Panhellenic agon; but the essential elements of the festival, the sacrificial procession and the agon, are also found at the 'small' annual panathenaia.
 - More than a hundred sheep and cows are slaughtered at the Great Altar, and the meat is distributed to the whole populace in the market place
- According to tradition, the inventor of charioteering in battle attire is Erichthonio , the founder of the Panathenaia. How the child in the kiste has grown to be a man is grandly passed over by mythology
- From the secrets of the Arrhephoria night has come the glorious dominion of the day. This is the New Year festival of the polis of Athens and its Goddess.

Karneia

- The Karneia are the most important annual festival of the Dorians
- Dances by youths and young girls are particularly characteristic of this festival
- From 676 the Karneia in Sparta were developed into a major musical agon which played a central role in the development of Greek music and poetry

Anthesteria

- The name of the Anthesteria festival was associated by the Greeks with the blossoming of spring
- In Athens the festival was also referred to as the Older Dionysia
- A small sanctuary of Dionysos in the marshes, en limnais, was opened only once a year especially for this festival on the 12th day of Anthesterion
- The festival extends over three days, Jar-opening, Wine Jugs and Pots, Pithoigia, Choes, and Chytroi, named after the simple necessities for wine drinking and a meal of pottage. Strict custom dictated that the wine pressed in autumn could not be broached until spring
- The beginning of the new vintage, the first fruit offering, is set in the sanctuary opened at sunset
- Then, as the jars are broken open, the god is honored with the first libations
- On the day of the Wine Jugs, the drinking of the new wine turns into a contest
- To the sanctuary in the marshes belong 14 women called simply the Venerable Ones, gerairai
- The 'queen' is given as wife to the god himself.
- Nowhere else does Greek literature speak so clearly of a sacred marriage ritual
- She administered oath to the Venerable Ones who attend the sacred acts, she was given to Dionysos as wife, she conducted for the city the ancestral secret practices towards the gods
- Normal life is suspended amid doors gleaming with pitch, masked mummers, ghostly spirits, wild insults, and general drunkenness; the gods of the city are excluded, only Dionysos and Hermes are present. Participation in the time of licence creates community

Thesmophoria

- Description
 - The Thesmophoria - the most widespread Greek festival and the principal form of the Demeter cult. To honor the goddess of agriculture, the women of the community celebrate.
 - The distinctive feature is the pig sacrifice: pig bones, votive pigs, and terracottas, which show a votary or the goddess herself holding the piglet in her arms, are the archaeological signs of Demeter sanctuaries everywhere.
 - For women, the Thesmophoria is an opportunity to leave family and home, all day, and night
 - Every husband is obliged to send his wife to the goddesses and to meet the costs
- Ceremony
 - The piglets are thrown into the chasms of Demeter and of Kore.
 - Snakes below in the chasm eat most of what is thrown down
 - Unspeakable sacred things are made of dough and carried up, models of snakes and male membra, they also take pine branches
 - This is thrown into the so-called 'Megara', as are the piglets
 - Common to both is the basic action of sinking sacrifices into the depths of the earth.
 - The women thus enter into contact with the subterranean, with death and decay, while at the same time phalloi, snakes, and fir-cones, sexuality and fertility are present.

Myth Behind Thesmophoria

- Story Behind it
 - When Demeter's daughter sank into the earth, the pigs of the swineherd Eubouleus were swallowed up as well. So Demeter on her search for her daughter instituted the Thesmophoria.
 - What is laid down may be called thesmos in Greek; these remains are carried by the women from the pits to the altars,

Sequence of the Thesmophoria

- Description
 - Thesmophoria are represented by a woman who carries a closed basket on her head.
 - The 2nd, middle day is called nesteia, fasting. Women stay in seclusion with the goddess; without tables and chairs, they make a bed on the ground from withies and plants that have an anaphrodisiac effect. Mood is gloomy, corresponding to Demeter's grief after Kore's rape.
 - Sacrifices and a great meat banquet on the third day
 - These are obscenity and blood. The women indulge in indecent speech, aischrologia; they may split into groups and abuse one another.
- Obscenity
 - The iambos as a mocking poem has its origin here; Baubo, who makes the goddess laugh by exposing herself, belongs to the Thesmophoria. According to a late source, the women worship a model of the female pudenda .
 - The dough phalloi at the piglet sacrifice
 - The obscenities are fitting for the irritated state of fasting;
 - In reality the women at the Thesmophoria eat pomegranate pips whose deep red juice is always associated with blood; if a pip falls on the ground it belongs to the dead. Thus the women are occupied with blood and death

Demeter and Corn

- Demeter, too, is associated not only with passive grief, but with active rage which demands sacrifices .
- Ancient tradition - findings from the Early Neolithic Age already point to a connection between corn and pig
- The polis festival emphasizes more the creation of solidarity in the role of the woman
- For the separation which is presided over by the mourning, raging Demeter is not an end in itself, but a time of passage.
- The dark pits which were opened are closed again, the beautiful birth points with hope to the future; the prospect of a good harvest is part of the expectation which arises from the festival.
- The Greeks finally interpreted Demeter thesmophoros as the bringer of order, the order of marriage, civilization, and of life itself

Social Functions of the Cult: Gods Between Amorality and Law

- The Oath
 - In a culture without writing or legal documents, oath is of unique importance. In the ancient high civilizations, the written word made only slow progress against the oath
 - The oath consists in the invocation of extra-human witnesses, mostly gods, and in a ritual which is stamped with an irrevocable character and often imprints an unforgettable experience of terror. The ritual may involve grasping and casting away a staff or a stone.
 - Generally the oath is accompanied by an animal sacrifice and libation; the libation comes very much to the fore in the case of the armistice and the peace treaty which set an end to bloodshed
 - The oath is only one special instance of the more general fact that through ritual and the invocation of the gods a basis for mutual understanding and trust is created

The Creation of Solidarity in the Playing and Interplay of Roles

- Creation of Community
 - Plato seeks at the very founding of his state to assign to each district its god, daimon, or hero along with sacred precincts
 - People meet in friendship at sacrifices and become acquainted
 - The festivals are the prime opportunity for meeting
 - All are involved, all take barley groats in their hands, and eat sacrificial meat
- Centrality of sacrifice in establishing community
 - Sacrificial community is a model of Greek society.
 - In horror of bloodshed and renunciation expressed in sacrifices and libations, the tensions within the group are released; individuals separated from and opposed to one another are joined together, oriented towards the divine.
 - This begins with the family, for which Greek has no special word: one speaks of house and hearth, thus consciously designating the domestic sacrificial site.

Role of Family

- Family
 - The other cult center of the family is the graves to which the family members bring their offerings on the appointed days.
 - genos, the extended family, has further gods in whose cult the members meet
 - It is the family union, the phratria, that controls access to civic rights
 - The father has to introduce his child first at the age of three, and again as a grown-up ephebos; and the husband has to present his newly married wife . The new entrant is led to the altars, and a sacrifice is due in each case, meion, koureion, gamelion, for minor, lad, and marriage
- Family Festivals
 - three-day festival Apatouria once a year, when the phrateres meet for a sacrificial banquet
 - Prove their full citizenship not only by naming their parents and grand - parents but also by stating 'where they have their Zeus Herkeios and their Apollo Patroos and their family graves
 - imagine a big annual festival for those in your phratres where you prove membership by stating the names of your grandparents

Festivals and Community

- Festivals
 - Festivals frame the end and the beginning of the year, with the Mysteries in autumn, and the Great Dionysia in spring being the other major events in the course of the year .
 - The increasing power of the polis is expressed in the fact that it began to lay claim to a monopoly of cults.
 - Larger federations of individual cities as well as tribal organizations are also centered on specific sanctuaries with their appropriate annual festivals .
- Amphictyony
 - Pylaeon Amphictyony
 - no Amphictyonic city should have its water supply cut off or be destroyed in war

Role of Religion in Society

- That religion is a means to maintain authority and domination was stated by ancient authors from the fifth century onwards as a self-evident state of affairs .
- The position of ruler always entails priestly functions; status is dramatized and thus confirmed by ritual.
- The established and sanctified program of actions gives a feeling of security to everyone, rulers and ruled alike. Every paterfamilias has the certainty of his position while pouring out the libation at the hearth.
- Tyrants in turn strove for cultic confirmation of their dominion.
- It would be one-sided to regard ritual only from the point of view of power and its demonstration and manipulation.
- The roles of the sexes are differentiated. Women are excluded from certain cults, but in return they have their own festivals to which men have no access, such as Skira, Thesmophoria, Adonia.

Parenting and Initiation

- Religion acts as powerful educational force - owes power to education and parental example
- The formation of the rising generation is the principal function of religion, where ritual concentrates on the introduction of adolescents into the world of adults. Initiations of boys and girls are a well-known feature of primitive civilizations.
- Crete is also the place where myth localizes the Kouretes, who by their name are just the young warriors. This reflects a cult association of young warriors meeting at the grotto of Mount Ida, and brandishing their shields in war dances to which the bronze tympana and votive shields of Orientalizing style give early testimony.
- Birth, the cave, the death of a child, and war dances, are all clear initiation motifs.

Initiation Ritual

- admission to the phratria during the Apatouria festival , ceremonial cutting of the hair
- At the same time ephebic service includes an introduction to the cults of the polis: for all major festivals the epheboi provide the most important contingent.
- In Brauron girls had to spend some time as she-bears, arktoi, cut off from the world in the lonely sanctuary of Artemis, performing dances, running races, and making sacrifice.
- The names of the gods concerned vary a great deal: but whether it be Artemis , Athena, Aphrodite, or Poseidon, the image of the virgin, the father, or sexual union, these are all signposts on the crisis-strewn path that leads to adult life .
- this aspect of Greek culture has a certain realism to it

Engaging God for help

- Religion plays a big role in the human capacity for endurance, beyond anything comparable for animals
- The traditional means are sacrifice and prayer, especially in the form of vows. One engages the appropriate god for help.
- Magical manipulations in the full sense are relatively rare in Greek ritual. It is the rhythm of the sacrifice from the encounter with death to the affirmation of life, and the tension of the vow stretched between renunciation and fulfilment which strengthens and sustains faith and helps men to endure adversities in public solidarity

Role of Sacrificial festivals in crisis management

- Agricultural year of the Greeks accompanied by sacrificial festivals – such as the pre-ploughing festival Proerosia which is announced at Eleusis by the hierophant and the herald
- First there is a first symbolic sacred ploughing. Shortly afterwards the women celebrate the Thesmophoria festival where decayed remains are mixed with seed corn.
- During this time, people sacrifice and feast and a pregnant cow is sacrificed to the earth in the fields, the growing seed and embryonic life being related according to the paradoxical logic of sacrifice that one has to kill the one in order to promote the other.
- Also a procession with a bull sacrifice for Poseidon. Then the women meet in Eleusis for a secret nocturnal festival; they bring along imitation phalloi and engage in unabashed, indecent conversations, while the tables are laid with all kinds of food, especially cakes in the shape of genitals, Pomegranates, apples, hens, eggs are prohibited.
- In Ionia and Athens, the first corn is carried in procession as a boiled dish in the form of bread, called thargelos.

Magical Practices and Sacrifice

One might have the impression based on James Frazer and his type that the ancient Greeks were predominantly a fertility magic culture.

The fact remains that they were very much of a warrior nobility that did not live directly on the produce from the fields for domination. These ideas cannot be derived from agriculture.

The more fundamental way of life, inherited from the Neolithic, is the way of life of hunting. The hunter is in need of some fertility magic since he is dependent upon the animals' reproducing. However, life gained from hunting is based on the paradox that life comes from killing. As such, sacrifice continues to play a stronger role in Greek religion than magic, per se.

Even the peasant as he sows turns to sacrifice for support

War and Seafaring

- Seafaring was a risky business back then
- Magic is used to banish harmful winds and bring about rain. Seafaring with its incalculable risks often resorted to magical practices.
- Genuine magical practices occur in connection with rain and wind, though the normal forms of sacrifice and prayer are prominent.
- Ancient sailors were superstitious and prone to trusting in magical protection. The vow and sacrifice appear most often.
- War is even more dangerous than sailing, and as such, it is accompanied by vows and sacrifices.
- Warriors would erect a tropaion on the spot where a particular battle turned around, hanging helmets, shields and weapons on an oak post. The tropaion is an image of Zeus, the lord of victory.

Religion and Healing

- Illness is a most oppressive for individuals. Apollo had always had special powers to send and banish sickness. He is the god of pestilence and healing, who is identical with the healing song, the paeon.
- Apollo's son Asklepios proved his competence in healing and overshadowed other healing gods and heroes. Rituals include purity and abstinence from sexual intercourses, offerings and sacrifices, the sacrifice of a piglet to Asklepios on his altar, the offering of cakes to Tyche, Mnemosyne, and Themis. The sick person keeps on a laurel wreath during the entire period and leaves it behind in his bed when he is cured.
- The Asklepios ritual and the Eleusinian mysteries are similar in that they both employ the use of a form of drink made from wheat, honey, and oil, reminiscent of the kykeon of Eleusis.
- It was found unthinkable to try to overcome any crisis without religion.

Sacred in Greek: hieros, hosios and hagnos/hagnos

- Hieros
 - Hieros is a decisive concept in demarcating the sphere in religion in ancient Greece. The sacred is the sacrificial animal, the sanctuary, and the altar
 - Hieros belongs to a god or sanctuary in an irrevocable way
 - The hieron, the holy place, is surrounded by prohibitions. There is often a part of the sanctuary not to be entered. The hieros logos not to be spoken, arrheton, to normal people
- Hosios
 - Hosios is understood in contrast to hieros. If the festival days bring duties and prohibitions, the normal days are hosiai.
 - Hosios designates the desacralization after sacralization. Hosion means the sacred lies behind. Hieros draws boundaries but hosios recognizes those boundaries from outside. It is presupposed that the sacred does not constitute the entire world.
 - Hosion and dikaion designate the duties of man towards the gods in their civil aspect
- Hagnos
 - Hagnos is used less frequently than hieros. It points more to an attitude and feeling of looking upward in awe and fascination.
 - The hagnon are rites and festivals, temple, temenos and sacred grove, fire and light. The opposite is miaros, that which is defiled, abominable, and should be repudiated.
 - Hagnos creates a field of forces that demands reverence and distance. Thus it is in a state of hagnotes that a man can fearlessly transcend the limits of the hieron.

Theos

- Religion is theon timai, honoring of the gods
- The Greeks seem to have preferred the word “theos” to the Indo-European “deus”, designating a being that is present.
- The word “entheos” connotes an ecstatic state in which the god is present.
- The word “theos” has a special relation to divine revelation through oracles and seers
- Theos may also be used in a periphrastic sense to reserve the name of the god for direct dealings with him or her.
- Theos connotes an absolute point of reference with permanence whereas the word “daimon” connotes indistinct influences which affect man directly.

Eusebeia

- Religion has a deep connection with human anxiety. The root “seb” appears, designating a sense of awe, reverence, and admiration that spreads from the gods.
- “Sebesthai” are all the things that accompany reverence of the gods, manners, speech, and behavior. However, the act of sebesthai connotes only those acts that are subject to the criterion of the good and that descend from the wisdom of the ancestors. This is when the act of sebesthai is subject to the nomos or cultural norms and traditions, when “sebesthai” becomes “eusebeia”.
- Hesiod emphasized that each person demonstrates eusebeia according to his or her individual means and that eusebeia avoids extravagance and excess.
- Outward eusebeia is guided by nomos and civic duty.
- Greek religion is turned towards outward realities, a world in which the polis and human solidarity is more important than the exaltations of faith.
- The nomos is seen as an unchanging order, an integration with an apportioned, limited world.
- The world of eusebeia guarantees the integration of an individual with the community, sacrificial processions, communal meals, loud prayers and vows, temples with splendid votive displays.

Mysteries and Asceticism - Mystery Sanctuaries

- Inner acts vs. outer acts
 - While eusebeia concerns itself with outward communal acts, the mysteries (mysteria) and secret cults, only available through special initiation.
 - The telesterion is the special place in which the initiations take place.
- Initiation and Mystery
 - Orgia is also a word for ritual used especially for mysteries – to be transformed to a higher status by initiation is orgiazein.
 - The Eleusinian festival was known simply as “ta mysteria”.
 - The mysteries of the sacred were “aporrheton” or unspeakable. The image which epitomizes the mysteries is a closed basket with a lid, the “cista mystica”.
 - Another aspect of mysteries is the sexual aspect. Use of genital symbols and occasionally veritable orgies. Puberty initiation, agrarian magic, and sexuality unite in the great experience of life overcoming death.

Death and Individualism

- Death and Mystery
 - Mysteries are also accompanied by tales “hieroi logoi” telling of suffering gods.
 - Deadly terror of death is dispelled in ritual in which death is overcome. For the “mystes” death loses its terror and the initiate gains a guarantee of a blessed life in another world.
 - Secret societies and initiations are very ancient. The mysteries of Demeter and Dionysos show relationships with the Anatolian Mother Goddess.
- Rise of individualism
 - The discovery of “the individual” in the 7th century BCE gave rise to the mystery religions, in which individual death becomes a personal problem rather than just a fact which is built into the system of communal life.

Clan Mysteries: Kabeiroi and Samothrace

- Kabeiroi
 - Associated with enigmatic pre-Greek element
 - Mysteries – the cult of the Kabeiroi mainly at Lemnos and Thebes
 - Lemnos is the center of a Hephaistos cult, where there is a genealogical myth making the kabeiroi the grandsons of Hephaistos
 - The Kabeiron in Thebes point to guilds of smiths - frequent dedications to a bearded Dionysos, and bull sacrifice and drinking of wine would have been the main events in their celebrations. Small bronze bulls would be found among the votive gifts.
- Samothrace and Pelasgians
 - Inhabitants of Samothrace were called Pelasgians and were associated with the Trojans. However, in the 7th century, the building program of the mystery sanctuary is due more to Greek sanctuaries, as Greek inhabitants started to occupy this area and the gods of Samothrace became popular throughout the Mediterranean
 - Gods of Samothrace resist the clear shapes of Greek mythology. Elektra is honored. After mating with Zeus, she gives birth to Harmonia.
 - The mysteries of Samothrace are claimed to produce salvation from drowning at sea and sea voyages. Nike of Samothrace was erected to celebrate a victory won at sea.

Eleusis and Mystery Religion

- History of Eleusis
 - Starts with the Eleusinian section of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter up until the proscription by Theodosius and the destruction of the sanctuary in 400 AD, a period of 1000 years in which the cult drew men and women from all of Greece and from throughout the Roman empire, bringing them much happiness and comfort.
 - Most Athenians would have been initiated into the cult, the Eleusinion stood above the Agora of Athens.
- Eleusinian mystery rituals
 - The first act in an initiation was the sacrifice of a young pig. Each mystes had to bring his piglet took a bath in the sea together with his piglet. The myth associated the death of the pig with Persephone sinking into the earth.
 - The initiation went in successive stages, drinking from the kykeon, taking sacred objects from the kiste. Mortar and pestle were hidden in the basket, instruments for preparing the kykeon, a barley drink, a kind of barley-groat broth seasoned with pennyroyal.
 - The ceremony probably took place in the autumn month of Boedromion.

Public Procession at Eleusis

- The main public event would be a procession from Athens to Eleusis along the Sacred Way, a distance of over 30 kilometers.
- The procession sets off towards Eleusis, with the priestesses carrying a closed kistai carrying sacred objects. The procession is pervaded by a mood of dancing and ecstasy. The shout “lakch’ o lakche” could be heard throughout the crowd, the name “lakchos” being a daimon of Demeter or an epithet of Dionysus.
- When the procession reached the boundary between Athens and Eleusis, a piece of grotesque buffoonery was enacted on one of the bridges in which masked figures made fun of the passing mystai with mockery and obscene gestures. Thus in myth, lambe or Baubo cheered up Demeter.

Eleusinian Mysteries (Continued)

- Telesterion
 - The Telesterion is built to hold several thousand people at a time, watching as the hierophant showed the sacred things.
 - There are two kinds of participants – mystai (initiates) and epoptai (observers)
 - In the center of the Telesterion was the Anaktoron, a rectangular stone construction with a door at the end of one of its sides, where the throne of the hierophant was placed and a great fire burned on top of it. The anaktoron was opened and the hierophant appeared out of the Anaktoron. Apotheosis by fire seems to be indicated.
- Ritual
 - The mystes see Kore, who is called up by hierophant with the strokes of a gone, the underworld opens up, and terror gives way to joy or reunion. The hierophant announces a divine birth and then displays an ear of corn cut in silence.
 - A great bull sacrifice follows.
 - The mysteries of Eleusis take from death its terror and guarantee better fate in the afterworld.
 - Although immortality is not mentioned and death remains a reality, death is still seen as a new beginning. From the dead comes the nourishment of growth and seeds, which is shown when the hierophant cuts the ear of corn.

Bacchic Mysteries

- History
 - Cult of Dionysos is very ancient in Greece
 - From 7th century BCE, we start to see references to dithyrambos for Lord Dionysos, paintings of Fat Dancers displaying grotesque nakedness
- The Great Dionysia achieves fixed form
 - Around 530 BCE, the iconography of the Dionysiac thiasos with satyrs and maenads achieved a fixed canonical form
 - The Great Dionysia included, the dithyrambos, the tragodoi and the satyroi, a tragedy and a satyr play.
 - Societies of raving women, maenads, and thyiades, are ancient. Traditions include women breaking out of women's quarters and going to a mountain during certain times of years at annual festivals.
 - Pindar describes that the mystai and bacchoi walk a sacred way, the path of Zeus. The oreibasias is a path to the mountain where the mystai walk to achieve enlightenment.

Dionysus and Madness

- Meaning of Dionysos
 - Dionysos is a god of the exceptional, the individual, symbol of independence and separation from the Polis.
 - These festivals are esoteric, take place at night, access is only through initiation, telete.
 - Oreibasia, the procession from the mountain
 - Symbolic of the Beyond is the Bacchic cave or grotto.
- Madness and Frenzy in Dionysian ritual
 - Plato describes Dionysos as the master of teletic madness, which are caused when the god acts through purifications (katharmoi) and initiations (teletai) to bring relief from illness and afflictions.
 - One surrenders to the madness and allow oneself to be seized by the god to become free and well.
 - Raving (baccheia) is the fulfillment of Dionysiac initiation. This state of frenzy is seen as blessedness. In the midst of this paradisiacal environment, there is murderous savagery which culminates in the climax of dismemberment and the eating of raw flesh (omophagy). An atavistic spring of vital energy breaks through the crust of refined urban culture. Man frees himself in orgies and can develop his true self.
 - Alcohol and sexual excitement are Dionysiac stimulants, wine and phallos symbolism
 - Through encounter with the divine, one experiences the force and meaning of life. Built in is a hope for the afterlife

Bacchic Hopes for an Afterlife

- The initiates were garlanded with poplar, because this plant is chthonic. Thus myth and ritual give expression to the bond with the nether world and the conquest of death.
- Implied in the concept of baccheia is an ecstasy that arises from the Dionysiac orgia in which the fact of death seems to dissolve
- Evidence of hopes for the afterlife
 - Bacchic hopes for the afterlife can be seen in funerary gifts and paintings on vases.
 - Later Greek-Punic grave steles show the emblems of the Dionysiac orgia: the tympanon, cymbala, krotala, ivy leaf, and the kiste and kalathos

Orpheus and Pythagoras

- What is Orphism?
 - What Orphism really was is disputed but new discoveries shed light – It is not clear to what extent it can be seen as a unified spiritual movement.
 - (Derveni Papyrus – 5th century – theogonic/cosmogonic poem)
 - The genealogy of the gods in Hesiod's cosmogony is extended back to before Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus and now includes Night and an ultimate beginning
 - Wandering mystery priests appealed frequently to the books of Orpheus.
 - The use of books rather than just ritual and spoken word of myth distinguishes Orphism
- Myth of Orpheus
 - The myth of Orpheus probably originates in the 6th century, prior to the Trojan war
 - In myth Orpheus is a singer who casts his spell on animals and goes into Hades to fetch Euridice. He is eventually torn to pieces by Thracian maenads.

Metempsychosis and Orphism

- Other Variations:
 - In later times, included the idea of Persephone giving birth to Dionysos after being raped by Zeus in the form of a snake. He is guarded by Korybantes but eventually is killed by Titans sent by Hera, who kill him, tear him to pieces, then boil, roast and eat him. Zeus then hurls a thunderbolt at the Titans and out of their ashes, human beings rise up as Dionysos rises again.
 - The descent of man from the ashes of the Titans is a theme which alludes to the Titanic nature of man.
- Metempsychosis and Orphism
 - In the late Hellenistic compilation of Orphic known as the Rhapsodies, anthropogony is connected with metempsychosis.
 - Herodotus refers to a doctrine of transmigration
 - Aristotle discusses the Orphic poems in which the soul, borne by the winds of the universe, enters the soul of a living creature when it is born.

Bacchic, Orphic, Pythagorean - Similarities & Differences

- Comparisons:
 - They all involve mystery ritual and are associated with a master
 - Orphic and Bacchic are concerned with the afterlife
 - Orphic and Pythagorean are concerned with the doctrine of metempsychosis and ascetism
 - The Athenian-Eleusinian school of Orphism focused on Demeter myth and Eleusinian mysteries
 - The Pythagorean school focused on the doctrine of the transmigration of souls.
 - The concept of the soul (psyche) is transforming in these circles. This psyche is not the powerless unconscious image in a gloomy Hades, as in Homer's Nekyia. This soul is immortal, athanatos.
 - Although Plato thought that the mystery cults made polis religion superfluous and he objected to that, the idea of the immortal soul had finally reached a point that was only fulfilled by philosophy
- Distinctive, strict way of life was characteristic of both the Orphics and the Pythagoreans
 - Dietary taboos – Orphics eat no meat, no eggs, beans, or wine
 - There are no Pythagorean telete; the symbola or akousmata are oral teachings. Also prohibited beans, and had preference for white garments. Preference for vegetarianism but not absolute. Enter the sanctuary barefoot, bedtime and eating rituals, straighten the bed when rising from it
- In Croton, a form of communal life arose, communities with special rules - early form of monasticism
- Their peculiar way of life was often interpreted as a protest movement against the established polis. This led to a claim that they were elitists and were sometimes massacred in large numbers.

The Age of Philosophy

- The Age of Philosophy
 - Religion is defined not so much by behavior and institutions but more as a matter of theories and thoughts that individual men express in writing, books addressed to a nascent reading public.
 - In the background, the growing independence of the individual in a civilization marked by economic growth. The Greeks have conquered the Mediterranean, trade is on the increase, and Greek culture is being imitated everywhere. Possibilities for development are no longer restricted solely to the polis, family, or tribe
 - Attempts to explain being (ta onta) usually include explanation of things in the sky, things under the earth, the beginning, arche, from which everything became what it is, the existing world is order or kosmos.
- Pre-Socratics
 - 2nd half 6th century – Anaximandros and Anaximenes of Miletus and Heraclitus of Ephesus – conscious polemics and return to poetic form
 - Parmenides of Elea – speculative ontology
 - 5th century – Anaxagoras Empedocles, Leukippos and Democritus

Pre-Socratics

- Anaximandros –
 - how earth, sun, moon and stars move, portents in the sky.
 - The beginning of everything is the infinite, apeiron, immeasurable, undivided, inexhaustible. It never ages and it is divine. The neuter divine theion replaces mythical divine personalities.
- Anaximenes
 - posits that the beginning of everything is air or vapor aer
- Xenophanes – the divine beginning is the One, the greatest of all, behind comprehension.
 - How can the divine guide human beings? Through the nous – the concept of mind
 - Polemics against Homeric / Hesiodic religion - criticism of the immorality of the gods and refutation of anthropomorphism
- Heraclitus
 - The world order is characterized as everliving fire. Change is a smoke offering, steaming up.

Changes in Thinking

- Conscious break from the past, and yet a strong connection recognized. In some ways, the more precise comprehension of reality lead one to have a greater understanding of the divine.
 - “Everything is full of gods” said Thales.
 - They are not enclosed by the walls of a sanctuary.
 - In place of beholding the festivals of the gods, there is the beholding of a well-ordered cosmos. This beholding is called theoria.
- The problem with this development is that man can no longer say with assurance that the divine cares for man. This is a wound in consciousness.

The Crisis: Sophists and Atheists

- Sophist has carried the negative connotation of a charlatan that deceives with pseudo-knowledge.
- The true goal of sophistic education was the highest value of traditional morality, arete, to gain distinction through achievement and success.
- Higher education as a means for social advancement
- The sophists grew in an environment in which democracy has opened up many career possibilities to people. Knowing how to make an impression and persuade was the true object of sophistic teaching.
- Disputation – a new form of agon, the agon of words in place of gymnastic games
- Ruthless pursuit of argument –
- Nomos, (custom and law) became central concept of sophistic thought – Greater exposure to people from different backgrounds causes more questioning of traditional customs – Protagoras was put on trial for questioning religious customs
- Lots of questioning about how much we can really know about the gods and the roots of religion.
- The establishment put people on trial for asebeia and these doctrines were forbidden

Pre-Socratic Outlines

- Collapse of authority of poets and myth did not bring an end to religion. The upsetting of old patterns had a liberating effect for reflections on things divine.
- The concept of soul or psyche was key. There is in man an immortal, divine element, namely his mind, which is part of a universal mind, something of which Homeric religion had not an inkling.
- In continuing to extract what was good from myth, the device that was used was allegory. (When we refer to Zeus, we are really referring to the air.)

Influence of Plato

- Influence of Plato
 - Inexhaustibly rich mind and a refined master of Greek language
 - Presents his ideas in indirect, parabolic form through the conscious playfulness of myth.
 - For many centuries, Platonism was simply the way in which god was thought of and spoken about, in the West and Islamic East.
 - Prior to Plato, acceptance of reality was key. Plato considered an incorporeal unchangeable world as primary.
 - The piety towards the afterlife prepared the ground already in Orphic circles.
 - Progress in mathematics and astronomy paved the way for Plato's method and model

Plato's Thought

- The soul of psyche strives for arete or virtue through perfect knowledge of being.
- Soul of man is capable of the knowledge of being - carries within the knowledge which is won in recollection - anamnesis
- The essential personality is athanatos
- In myth, humans interacted constantly with the divine. Plato does too, although the anthropomorphism is lost. The concept of the divine is characterized by the just, the beautiful, and the good, all of which are neuter gender
- The ascent of the soul to cognition is a passionate undertaking, an act of the whole man, an act of love or eros, rising to madness, mania. The beautiful points the way.
- Memorable image of the immortal soul in Plato's Phaedrus and the story of the charioteer with winged horses, one good and one unruly and wicked.
- In the Symposium, ascent is described in language of the mysteries, that it is an initiation which secures a blessed state, myesis, epopteia, orgiazein.

Plato: Cosmos and Visible Gods

- Progress in science was key
- Natural science enters an intellectual, mathematical dimension. However, it maintains a surprising alliance with piety.
- Cosmos piety
- The world is created by a craftsman, demiourgos.
- Timeless eternity – aion
- World soul – harmony of mathematical proportions
- Nous, the power of intellectual comprehension, is planted as a daimon in man. The daimon's purpose is to point him upwards.

Aristotle and Xenocrates: Spirit God and Demons

- The Academy
 - Xenocrates took over the Academy after Plato died
 - Aristotle dissented and founded his own school. However, his philosophy is also essentially theology.
 - There is a certain monotheism behind the concept of mind, towards an apotheosis of nous
- Philosophical Religion and Polis Religion
 - Plato's Laws – discussion of polis – myth, logos, and nomos enter an alliance.
 - Rhythm and harmony in life are manifestations of the good – discussion of festivals in society
 - The festival awakens a compelling emotion in people – intensive images of polis religion
 - In this context in which the polis religion starts to collapse, Christianity could easily gain a foothold