



# Η ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

*a quarterly newsletter for Hellenic polytheists*

*written and distributed by the Neokoroi*

*Issue Number 8*

*Φθινοπωρον (Autumn) 2005*

## **Devotions to Zeus**

by Timotheos Anderson

*H*ellenismos has a Pantheon of many Gods. The most well known are the twelve (or thirteen) Olympian Gods, who include Zeus, Hera, Athena, Hephaistos, Poseidon, Dionysos, Hermes, Aphrodite, Artemis, Apollon, Demeter, and Ares. Many myths, stories and essays have been written about these Gods and the religion of Hellenismos, however there is little information about the individual devotional worship which can be done in order to gain a more intimate and spiritual understanding of Them. This essay is an attempt to offer such information, focusing on the pantheon's chief God Zeus, presenting:

1. General information about Zeus and His major roles in the Greek Pantheon.
2. A ritual outline for solitary or group worship based on the traditional worship style of the Ancient Greeks.

### **1. The Role of Zeus in the Hellenic Pantheon**

Zeus was known as the God above all Gods. He was originally a weather-God who eventually became the chief God of the Greek world. It was very rare that cities took Him as patron, as He must stand above all factions and divisions.<sup>1</sup> Many Greeks would address Him as "father," "the ruler of rulers," and "the most blessed of the blessed." It was because of these factors that a case can be made for Him being the predecessor of Monotheism,

although a crucial thing must be remembered. As all-powerful as Zeus is portrayed, He is also under the influence of the Fates, who know all time: the past, present and future. He is also under the influence of Themis, the Goddess of Justice. One must also take into account that there are a variety of Gods who are Kings. And if we are to truly accept the doctrine of polytheism, these other Kingly Gods must remain separate entities from each other, each of Them having Their own role to play in the function and flow of the universal order and Their respective pantheons.

So what does Zeus' Kingship mean if He is not the "supreme ruler" that the myths and ancient thought have portrayed Him as? The Greek pantheon has so many Gods who serve so many natural and societal functions, and who have individual personalities, desires and needs the same as humans do. Thus, there is a necessity for a leader to keep things from becoming too chaotic. Zeus' role as the King of the Pantheon is to maintain order in the House of the Gods so that the Universe may continue to function in appropriate order. His kingship is sustained by the very fact that He was able to put an end to the succession myth which had claimed the leadership of the previous Sky Gods: Ouranos and Kronos. Zeus is also able to reproduce by Himself, without a female counterpart. For instance, He gave birth to Athena from His head and also to Dionysos from His thigh.

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## Η ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

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The Neokoroi are a group of Hellenic hard polytheists working to foster communities, festivals, and temples, to provide guidance and information on religious matters, and to ensure the strength and longevity of the worship of the Greek gods.

Ἡ Ἐπιστολή (a “message” or “letter”) is published four times a year. We offer articles, hymns, prayers, poetry, reviews, information, rituals, community notices, fiction, recipes, and anything else of interest to the Hellenic pagan community. We welcome feedback and submissions from guest writers.

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We have even more articles online, as well as information on the gods, photos, links and more!

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Our next issue will be coming out in December 2005. The deadline for submissions is November 15<sup>th</sup>. Advertising space is also available.

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## Devotions to Zeus (continued from page one)

The birth of Athena also presents an important factor in Zeus’ power. According to myth, Zeus’ first wife was Metis, the Goddess of Wisdom. Out of fear of His being overthrown by the offspring of this union, Zeus swallows Her, absorbing not only Her essence, but also Her theological role into Himself. Power is combined with wisdom. His relationship with Themis, who is portrayed sitting in His right hand, brings another aspect into His Kingship, displaying a combination of power, wisdom and justice.

Part of Zeus’ role in maintaining order and justice is to uphold the laws of hospitality – the most important ethical value in the Greek culture, displayed even today in Greek society and Modern Greek Polytheism. One of His titles is the God of Strangers, and as such, one must be always hospitable to the stranger who may appear.

Zeus, as stated earlier is a weather God, and His weapon is the lightning bolt, fashioned for Him in the myths by Hephaestus, His son by Hera. As the Cloud Gatherer, He “dwells atop the mountains where storm-clouds gather.”<sup>2</sup> In ancient times, sanctuaries to Zeus were established where lightning struck the ground, and during severe droughts a priest of Zeus could perform a magic ritual which intended to bring about rain.<sup>3</sup> It was with His lightning bolts, according to myth, that Zeus was able to win many wars, specifically the war between the Titans and the war with the giants.

Zeus has numerous female and male lovers, although His queen is Hera. His infidelities quite possibly stem from the fact that He represented the freedom of the father as the head of the ancient Greek family. Our modern societal view of the family has changed so greatly that it is necessary for both Hera and Zeus to assume much different roles in the family. Wives and husbands are no longer held to the same expectations that they once were. It should also be noted that not all relationships are monogamous, and thus faithfulness is not just shared between two individuals, but in some cases with three or more. Also, long-term committed relationships are not strictly heterosexual as they were in the ancient Greek world, and so questions arise such as: Who takes the role of the husband or wife? What have these roles become? It is only when these questions are answered – questions which have different answers for different relationships – that Zeus’ role as the Divine Husband can be understood.

Zeus is also associated with fatherhood. In myth, He is the father of many mortals and Gods. His mortal children are normally heroes and have greater strengths than most other mortal children. His Immortal children include Athena, Dionysos, Apollon, Artemis, Hermes, Hephaestus and Ares. According to myth, Hera had persuaded Semele to make Zeus show Himself to her in His God form, which is inevitably fatal to all humans, and Semele was reduced to ashes. Zeus then takes the unborn Dionysos and sews Him into His thigh. This myth portrays Zeus as a loving father.

Zeus’ protection of children is shown through His title as Zeus the Mild. In this aspect, He is a Chthonic Deity, or a deity associated with the Earth and Death. In this role, He is often depicted as a snake or a bull, and children are considered most dear.

It is in this same aspect that Zeus is shown as a God of Purification. In this instance, He receives the sacrifice of a black sheep, whose skin is said to have the power of purification. Once a year, in a festival called the Pompaia, the Athenians would process around the city, carrying this sheep’s skin. Individuals could also be purified by sitting upon the sheepskin,<sup>4</sup> although the actual ritual used for the exact purification is unknown. Here, again we also see connections between Zeus and magical rites. To the ancient Greeks, water which flowed from natural springs was considered pure and thus it can be safe to assume that rain, as it flows from a natural source, can also be considered pure. In modern days, a priest of Zeus may mix the sheepskin (which can be actual skin or a blanket made with black wool) with a variety of purification methods from Greek origins in order to reproduce this type of ritual.

(continued on page ten)

## Hymn to Artemis

by Aristotimos

Sing; now Muse of Shining Artemis,  
Who poets do not lightly forget.  
She who is Virgin forever  
And bears as many names as  
Her brother Apollon.

Praise be to Leto, mother of Artemis  
Helper of Women, who  
In birthing she had no pain.

Praise be to Artemis the Light-Bringer,  
Who breathed into torches,  
The unquenchable light of fire  
Distilled from Mighty Zeus's  
Lightning bolts.

Praise be to Artemis of the  
Deer drawn chariot.  
She captured stags of  
Golden horn at the foot  
Of Parrhasian mountain,  
Along the stream of Anauros.

Artemis, My Queen, Huntress—  
You run amid the wilderness  
With your bow felling  
The deer and the hare.

Artemis, Ever-Virgin,  
You scorn the cities of mankind  
And the haughty looks  
Of lustful men.

Lady, you delight  
In the circle dances  
Of thy Nymphs.

Come here,  
From wherever you may be.  
Maiden of the Silver Bow,

We beg your kindly gaze.  
Diana of the Crescent Moon,  
We implore your blessings.

Lady may you not turn  
Your gaze in anger  
Upon us any longer.  
Those you revile;  
You pierce with cutting anger,  
You send plague to feed upon their bodies,  
You cause their prosperity to fail,  
Old men mourn their children and  
Women die in childbirth.

Lady those whom you love;  
You fill them with your grace,  
Their bodies glow with health,  
Their wealth multiplies,  
Families gather together in joy,  
And only the very old go to the grave.  
Artemis may my true friends and I  
Be among those.

We once dedicated ourselves to you.  
We once implored your protection.  
Swift Running Goddess,  
We dedicate this festival to you  
And honor you as our first patron.

Never let you be far from us,  
And from our thoughts,  
And from our hearts.

Lady of Munikhia, Harbor Watcher,  
Lady of Hounds accept our offerings.  
All hail Goddess,  
And be gracious to our song.

VSLM 4 AUGUST 2005



## Demos Profile

by Gitana

*Name of group (if any), and location:*

“The Hellenion Proto-Demos tes Hagnes Persephones” We hold rituals mostly in Warren PA and Jamestown NY, but have also held them in other locations in SW NY & NW PA.

*How many people does your group have, how old is it, and how did it begin?*

We have a group of 5 “regulars” but we have had as many as 30 people at a ritual in the past. The group was founded in May 2004 as a proto-demos of Hellenion (a Hellenic pagan organization).

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I founded the group in order to encourage people to come together to worship the Greek gods.

*How often do you perform ritual together, and what types of things do you do?*

At a minimum we schedule a ritual once a month, to offer a libation to one of the gods according to a schedule set by Hellenion. We also have rituals to celebrate various ancient holidays. All rituals are reconstructionist in style, as we do our best to research & emulate different festivals.

*Do you meet outside of formal worship?*

Not as a group, no. Many of us also belong to the local Reconstructionist Meetup, which also meets once a month.

*Are you open to new members, and if so do you have any criteria?*

Yes, we welcome new members! Anyone who wants to respectfully worship with us is welcome to any of our open events (almost all are open). We post our open events on the

Reconstructionist Meetup site: <http://reconst.meetup.com> and on various e-mail lists. However, in order to be an “official” member of the group, one has to, at the very least, also be a member of Hellenion.

*Have you made any innovations as a group, any aspects of worship unique to you?*

I wouldn't really say that we have, no. Of course, I would venture to say that each Hellenic worshipping group that comes together probably does things differently than others, so in that sense our style is probably unique to us. Currently I am working very hard to reconstruct an Orphic ritual, and some day we might perform it, if there's sufficient interest.

*Is there anything else you would like to say about your group?*

We maintain a website that lists all of our upcoming events, as well as ritual scripts & photos of some of our past events. I also post many of my articles to the site, and misc. info that I think might be helpful to other Hellenic pagans. The URL is: <http://persephones.250free.com>



## **Aidoneos: What he means for the people today and in the past**

by Mike Rasschaert

*A*idoneos, who is better known as Hades or Pluto, is a kind of deity most people tend to avoid. Even during antiquity, he wasn't widely worshipped like his brothers, sisters and nephews and nieces, but nevertheless, he was worshipped. His real name (Aidoneos) was never pronounced by the general public out of fear of being taken away by him to the Underworld. Instead they called him by alternative names like Pluto, Dis Pater, Ploutonas, Theos Khthonios or Zeus Katakthonios.

It is clear that Aidoneos isn't a popular deity. He plays almost no role in mythology with the exception of a handful of myths and he only stars in one myth that doesn't quite put him in a good light. I'm referring to the abduction of Persephone. In this myth, he is no different from his brothers who did the same thing frequently in mythology. People didn't like Aidoneos. It mostly has to do with his strong connections with the afterlife, that people feared him. It had nothing to do with him being a Hellenic version of Satan. The answer to why the Hellenes were so afraid of him lies in their beliefs in the afterlife, their way of life and in mythology. Hellenes were afraid of dying, just like every other being on this world. In that they don't differ from any other culture on Earth. It is one of the reasons why the Greeks like to enjoy life to the fullest. They didn't really know what to expect from the afterlife. They knew it was a grim place. Unlike Christianity, Judaism and Islam today, the ancient Greeks never really developed one singular view of the afterlife. They had several ideas on what the afterlife would be like, but those ideas never completed one another.

By the time of the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., Aidoneos had overshadowed Thanatos as the God of Death, and Aidoneos appeared as Hades in the Alkestis and Admetos myth where Herakles wrestled with the God of Death to save Alkestis from Death. So here we see that Aidoneos has taken Thanatos' place in mythology as the personification of Death and its God. So Aidoneos isn't just the God of the Underworld and Riches, but now he has become the God of Death as well. That would be enough for anyone to fear him. Certainly, if you knew that he could go to Earth and take mortals with him to his domain, like he did with Persephone, but she wasn't mortal. So they tried to do with Him, like they did with the Erinyes. The Erinyes received euphemistic nicknames like the Eumenides to appease them. With Aidoneos, the same thing was done. He wasn't just called Aidoneos or Hades anymore, since Hades was synonymous with the Underworld. But instead he received a wide variety of nicknames to appease him, like Zeus Katakthonios, Theos Khthonios, Pluto, etc.... What happened here wasn't an anomaly or anything like that. The assimilation of other deities by other deities is quite common, especially when the assimilated deity is a lower deity, or personification of something and the assimilator is an upper level deity, like Aidoneos or Apollon. It's a normal thing when a national deity is associated with a local deity.

Another aspect to why people feared him is due to his association with the afterlife. The ancient Greeks didn't have one singular view of the afterlife.

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They didn't have concepts like heaven or hell. Sure they had Elysium, Tartaros and the Isle of the Blessed, but those were reserved for special cases. The general population, who didn't fall in that category, dwelled aimlessly in the Underworld. Even for heroes it was no picnic. Homeros had Akhilles say to Odysseus, that he would rather be a slave, than to be dead. This coming from a man who wanted eternal fame and glory, says a lot. It drove fear in the hearts of every Greek that death was the end for them. They knew there was an afterlife, but they knew that it was no fun to be dead, to be in Hades for the rest of eternity wandering around as bodiless souls. When Herakles encounters Medusa in Hades, she had no body, only a head that floats. It might look funny, but realizing the full potential of her powers, the fun is directly sucked out of it.

So the expectations for the afterlife were pretty grim. So in a way it is understandable why Christianity gained more ground than most pagan religions, since they offered a better afterlife. The only problem here was that the price for it is too high.

People back then had a greater appreciation for life, than for Death, so it is only understandable that they wouldn't want much to do with Aidoneos. Aidoneos can mean more than just Death or a prospect for an afterlife. Through Him, we can learn to appreciate life more and live it to the fullest. Without Death,

there could be no Life. Without Death, life would be unbearable. Because we know we are mortal and we can die, it can offer us excitement, a reason to live. Without Death, there would be nothing we have to fear. We wouldn't be able to grow old, to become sick and to be hurt. Nowadays, that is a dream for most people, to be immortal and to not die. But they are delusional. Sure I was once one of them, but not anymore. We need death as much as we need life. The two are intertwined. Without one, there can not be another. Aidoneos can offer us a view of how to live better and live day to day and enjoy each day. We don't have to fear death but accept its inevitability. Through Aidoneos, we learn that Death does not discriminate. It does not separate the rich from the poor. To Death, we are all the same, no matter what status we have in life. We should help others through the process of grief. Remember the dead with fondness, for they live on in our thoughts and dreams. Aidoneos' blessing is acceptance of our mortality. It's the common lot of all men, what sets us apart from the Gods. It comes to everyone - the rich and the poor alike. We can fight it off, attempt to resist the inevitable, but in the end we will always fail. We should live with the sure knowledge that we will die, and make every moment a good and worthy one. When our time comes, we should meet it nobly, as we would an esteemed friend.

## **Antigone**

by Diotima  
diotima\_sophia@hotmail.com

*H*ands splayed on her brother's lifeless corpse  
Antigone plots the course  
Of her action – defiant of the king  
  
She knows full well  
The vital cost  
Of ignoring Creon's behest  
  
But she has no choice  
And will give her life  
To lay her brother's shade to rest.



## **A Retelling of an Orphic Cosmogony\***

by Gitana

*I*n the beginning were two winged serpents, named Khronos and Ananke, who entwined and coupled in the darkness.<sup>1</sup> Khronos then made the Aither<sup>2</sup>, and in it he created a brilliant egg. He wrapped himself around the egg, tighter and tighter, until he crushed it. When it broke open Phanes<sup>3</sup> emerged. Light radiated from his body and he illuminated everything. However, he was so bright that he could not be seen by anyone. A very

unusual creature, Phanes was a winged hermaphrodite, and had four eyes and horns. He also had the heads of a ram, a bull, a lion, and a serpent. He mated with himself and gave birth to the goddess Nux. He then mated with Nux and together they generated Ouranos and Gaia.

From the adyton of Nux, Phanes then began to create the physical world.

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First he put the sun and moon in their places, and fashioned a place for the gods to live. He then produced a nourishing rain from the top of his head so his creations would flourish. Another of his creations was a scepter<sup>4</sup> which was 24 measures long. After some time Phanes handed the scepter onto Nux, along with the gift of prophecy. She was then the ruler of all creation, and Phanes set out on his journey. With his car and horses he rode all around the large circle.<sup>5</sup>

Eventually, Nux decided to pass the scepter on to her son Ouranos. He then married Gaia, and together they gave birth to the Moirai, the Hundred-Handers, and the Cyclopes. However, Nux had previously told him that one of his children was destined to overthrow him. Concerned about the children he had borne, he threw them all into Tartaros in order to protect his rule. Gaia was heartbroken, and secretly she gave birth to the Titans, of which there were seven males and seven females. They were named Dione, Hyperion, Iapetos, Koios, Kreios, Kronos, Mnemosyne, Oceanos, Phoibe, Phorkys, Rhea, Tethys, Theia, and Themis. Of these children, Nux took special care of Kronos.<sup>6</sup> Gaia, seeking revenge against Ouranos, asked for the Titans' help in attacking Ouranos. Oceanos would not agree to this, and thus he separated himself from them all. The rest of the Titans, however, did agree. When Ouranos approached Gaia with love, the Titans attacked. They threw him from his chariot<sup>7</sup>, and when his blood spilled on the ground, the Giants were created. His genitals were cast into the sea, and this caused a great foam upon the water. From this the goddess Aphrodite was born.

Kronos then became the king, and he had this throne on Olympos. The Titans married one another, and produced children.<sup>8</sup> Kronos married Rhea, and they had many children together, including Hera, Hestia, and Zeus. However, Kronos was a cruel ruler, and he swallowed his children as they were born.<sup>9</sup> Rhea was able to hide Zeus, the youngest, in the cave of Nux. There he was cared for by the nymphs Adrastea and Ida. Adrastea stood in front of the cave and clashed bronze cymbals to disguise the baby's cries. The Kouretes also helped guard the child. Rhea then took the name of Demeter, and she brought a stone disguised as a baby to Kronos, which he swallowed. This caused him to vomit, thereby freeing the children he had previously swallowed.

From within her cave, Nux told Zeus that he was to become the next ruler of the gods, but in order to do so he must overthrow his father. Zeus asked for advice on how this could be done, as he wanted to preserve both the unity and individuality of what had already been created. She explained to him that this could be done by suspending everything on a golden chain, and enveloping everything in the aither. Rhea-Demeter wanted to help her son, so she arranged a huge feast for all the gods, taking care to have much honey. She created a drink especially for Kronos, which made him so drunk that he fell asleep. At this point Zeus bound and castrated him, and was thus able to take control of the scepter. The Cyclopes then gave the thunderbolt to Zeus.<sup>10</sup>

However, Zeus' task was not yet completed. He realized that he needed the help of his father, and so he asked him for guidance. Kronos described what the new creation would be like. Nux helped by pointing out the god Phanes, and Zeus promptly swallowed him. In so doing, he swallowed not only the god, but

everything he had created. Zeus now contained within him all the physical world, the gods, and the aither. He then began to bring forth each thing according to the plan previously described to him by Kronos, and thus became the creator, and therefore the rightful ruler, of the world.

Zeus continued to be advised by Nux, and she told him to keep Nomos at his side, along with Dike, the daughter of Nomos. One prophesy of Nux was that Themis would be a virgin until Rhea gave birth to a son. Now that this had come to pass, Zeus and Themis came together to give birth to the Horai and the Moirai.<sup>11</sup> Zeus also mated with his daughter Eunomia<sup>12</sup> and they gave birth to the Charities. Hera became his bride, and she gave birth to Hephaistos. Apollon and Artemis were born to Zeus and Leto. Dione ran from Zeus' advances, and he ejaculated into the sea, from which Aphrodite was born.<sup>13</sup> Zeus also generated a child by himself, Athena, who came forth from his head. Athena was then appointed as the leader of the Kouretes.

Zeus also pursued his mother Rhea-Demeter. In an effort to avoid him she turned herself into a snake. However, he also changed into a snake, and coiling into the Heracleot knot the two mated. From this union Persephone was born. She had two faces with four eyes and horns. Rhea-Demeter was frightened at the child's appearance and ran without nursing her. She (Persephone) thus became known as Athela, the unsuckled. Zeus was not frightened by her, and he again assumed the form of a snake and mated with the goddess, who then gave birth to Dionysos.

Rhea-Demeter decided to pass the queenship onto Persephone, but as she did, she also foretold that Persephone would unite with Apollon, and their children would have faces of fire.

Persephone stayed in her mother's house, guarded by the Kouretes, and she began to weave a robe with images of flowers and animals. As she was weaving a scorpion Haides abducted her and took her as his bride. Together they gave birth to the nine Eumenides.

While this was taking place, Dionysos was born from Zeus' thigh, and he was given to Hipta.<sup>14</sup> She put the child in a winnowing basket, and a snake coiled itself around it. Dionysos was brought to Mount Ida, and there he was guarded by the Kouretes for five years. Zeus decided that even though he was young, Dionysos was ready to be the new king of the gods, and he passed the scepter onto him. The Titans were overcome with jealousy, and they plotted against the young god. They asked Hephaistos to make them a mirror. Then they made their faces white with gypsum,<sup>15</sup> and gave the mirror to Dionysos. They also lured him away with the Hesperides' apples, a ball, a pine-cone, puppets, a bull-roarer, wool, knucklebones, and a narthex.<sup>16</sup> Once he was far enough away from the other gods, they attacked him, cutting his body up into seven pieces. They proceeded to boil and then roast the pieces for a meal. However, Athena was able to save Dionysos' heart, which was still beating. She put it in a casket and brought it to Zeus, while the other gods were mourning. Zeus, angry at the Titans for what they had done, hurled his thunderbolts at them. One Titan, Atlas, was punished by being made to hold up the sky.

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Apollon was given the remains of Dionysos, and he brought them to Parnassus to be buried. However, from the heart of Dionysos Zeus was able to restore him to life.

When the Titans were struck with the thunderbolts they left a soot on the ground. This was taken by Zeus, and from it he fashioned human beings, animals, and birds. There had been humans before, a golden race made by Phanes, and a silver race made by Kronos. This race, however, would be so foolish that they would not know good from evil. Zeus made their bodies mortal, but their souls were immortal. They would undergo a series of incarnations in which the soul, after being in an animal body, would float on the wind until it is caught by another animal body. However, after being in a human body it will be led into the Underworld by Hermes, where it will remain for three hundred years. If the person lived a good life, the soul would have a pleasant stay in the Underworld, but if the person led an evil life, the soul would pass its time in Tartaros. After such time the souls are reborn. Zeus instituted purification rituals, and appointed Dionysos and Persephone to help humans escape from the circle of reincarnation through regular sacrifices and rituals.

\* All details taken from the *Rhapsodies* with additional sources noted.

<sup>1</sup> *Argonautica* 12 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Aither* (ether) is the bright pure air, and is different from *aer* (air) which is what we breathe.

<sup>3</sup> Phanes is also called Protogonos, Erikepaios, Metis, Eros, Bromios, and Zeus in various parts of the *Rhapsodies*, and in the *Argonautica* and the *Hymns*.

<sup>4</sup> Proclus 107

<sup>5</sup> Presumably this means the *kosmos*.

<sup>6</sup> Here Nux is called the "nurse of the gods."

<sup>7</sup> The word could also be read as "throne." I here follow the reading accepted by M.L. West.

<sup>8</sup> Rufinus 56

<sup>9</sup> It is unclear here if he swallows all the children, or only the males.

<sup>10</sup> Previously they must have been released from Tartaros, although we do not learn how or when this happened.

<sup>11</sup> They were said to be the daughters of Ouranos and Gaia at an earlier point in the *Rhapsodies*, and so I keep the detail intact, even though it is not consistent.

<sup>12</sup> She is one of the Horai.

<sup>13</sup> She is known as the second Aphrodite, the first being born from the severed genitals of Ouranos.

<sup>14</sup> There was no attempt in the *Rhapsodies* to account for the conflicting stories of the birth of Dionysos.

<sup>15</sup> Nonn. 6.169

<sup>16</sup> Proclus on Hesiod *Works and Days* 52



## Autumn Festivals (from ancient Athens)

by Oenochoe

September 21<sup>st</sup>: **Epidauria** (Boidromion 18) - commemoration of Asklepios' arrival, celebrated with a procession, offerings, and a banquet for the god.

October 8<sup>th</sup>: **Proerosia** (Puanepsion 5) - agricultural festival of Demeter; the name means "preliminary to ploughing." Offerings of first fruits (mostly grain) are given to Demeter to ask for her blessing at the beginning of the sowing season.

October 10<sup>th</sup>: **Puanepsia** (Puanepsion 7) - a festival dedicated to Phoibos Apollon. A meal is held for him. There is a procession of boys carrying eiresiones, the traditional sign of a suppliant, from door to door, singing and begging for food. The ritual food that gave its name to this festival consists of a mixture of boiled legumes. According to myth, Theseus and his crew returned to Athens on this day, and offered Apollon this dish, made from the remains of their provisions.

October 10<sup>th</sup>: **Oskhophoria** (Puanepsion 7) - the celebration of the vine harvest, in honor of Dionysos. Men carry vine branches with the grapes still clinging to them through the town in a procession. Hymns about the harvest and wine-making are sung. A ritual meal is held, where legends are told and acted out.

October 11<sup>th</sup>: **Theseia** (Puanepsion 8) - a festival honoring Theseus, the son of Poseidon. A procession, sacrifices, athletic contests, and a feast including a porridge of wheat and milk.

October 12<sup>th</sup>: **Stenia** (Puanepsion 9) - a nocturnal women's festival for Demeter and Persephone in preparation for the Thesmophoria. The women insult each other light-heartedly to commemorate the way Iambe made the grieving Demeter laugh. Votive offerings are thrown into pits in the sanctuary of Demeter, including bread in the shape of snakes and phalluses, as well as sacrificed pigs, all of which are fertility symbols.

October 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>: **Thesmophoria** (Puanepsion 11-13) - all-female agricultural festival in honor of Demeter and Persephone. On the first day, the women make camp, sleeping on the ground in huts. On the second day, the women sit on the ground and fast from all solid food in sympathy for Demeter's mourning, and taunt each other in iambic verse. On the third day, there is a torch-lit ceremony, because Demeter sought Persephone by torch-light. Then the rest of the festival is spent in joyous celebration.

November 1<sup>st</sup>: **Khalkeia** (Puanepsion 30) - a festival of smiths, associated with Hephaistos and Athene. A day of rest from work; a procession of workers goes through the town carrying baskets of corn. Later, a feast is held.

(continued on page eight)

## Autumn Festivals (continued from page seven)

Late November: **Pompaia** (undetermined, end of Maimakterion)  
- a procession dedicated to Zeus Meilikhios (Kindly), a chthonic aspect of Zeus who appears as a snake.

December 9<sup>th</sup>: **Poseidea** (undetermined, probably Poseideon 8)  
- a festival in honor of Poseidon, most likely on the eighth day of the lunar month, since that day was sacred to him. Nothing else is known.

### Hymn to Hephaistos

by Sannion

*H*ephaistos, lonely son of Hera I sing,  
from an ugly birth sprang a God who makes beautiful things,  
at his solitary forge beneath the windswept waves.  
Brawny, soot-covered, ceaselessly toiling  
with hammer and tongs in hand,  
his craftsmanship is unmatched in all the world.  
He works the metal, drawing forth its hidden form,  
manifesting scenes of such tenderness and detail  
that one expects his birds to fly from the bronze cup  
or his roses to carry the scent of fresh bloom  
though they are made of gold.  
Though all the Gods come to him for trinkets -  
Ares' spear, Hermes' winged sandals, Amphitrite's crown -  
they all forget him when it comes time for feasting  
and joyous celebration on Olympos' craggy heights.  
Only Dionysos remembers and calls him friend of his bosom,  
sharing many a laugh over the wine-god's ever-flowing cup  
and the gay sporting of the shaggy-legged satyrs.

## Dionysos and His Rebirth <sup>1</sup>

by Alexandra Ellhnopoula<sup>2</sup>

*“There is nothing permanent except change” (Heraclitus).*  
*“Everything is full of gods” (Thales).*

*T*he fire brings the light at the same time it burns. And, to produce light, it needs an emotion, a movement to the outside. In the alchemic book *Corpus Hermeticum*, god is named “the archetypal light” (το αρχετυπον φως)<sup>3</sup>. So, to reach this ancient light, maybe we have to burn some things, and to bring these things to the outside. Let’s watch the god coming out from the fire.

There’s a myth in which Dionysos is a son of Zeus and of the mortal Semele of Thebes. Semele asked to see Zeus in his glorious form (not metamorphosed), and the powerful thunderbolts which came from this vision reached the womb where Dionysos already was. Dionysos was rescued and put in Zeus’ thigh, to develop and to be reborn. Zeus gave the child to the care of the Nymphs. In another version of the myth, Dionysos – known as Zagreus – is a son of Zeus and Persephone, Queen of the Underworld. Hera asked the Titans to attract the child with toys and then they tore him into pieces, putting him in a cauldron and eating everything except the heart

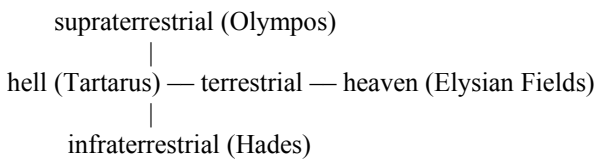
of Zagreus, which was saved by Athena (or Demeter, in other versions). Zeus remakes his son through that heart and gives it to Semele to consume, who then bears a new Dionysos (Διονυσος) Zagreus, the one who reappears in Eleusis as Iakkhos. Because of that, he is called the “twice born” or the one with a “double birth” (Dio-nysos).

The version about the cutting and boiling in a cauldron comes from the Orphic Hymn, and this ancient text constitutes part of the religious mythology of the Orphics. Orpheus also wrote: “The Titanes, jealous about his beauty, and the Titanides, taken by a crazy love, have thrown themselves over him and have cut him in slices. Then, sharing between themselves his parts, they made him boil in water and they buried his heart. Jupiter killed the Titans, and Minerva sent the heart of Dionysos to the Ether and, there, he became an ardent sun. However, from the exhalation of the body of Dionysos, came the human souls which ascend to heaven”<sup>4</sup>.

(continued on page nine)



Dionysos is a son of an Olympian god with a goddess of Hades, and he was born from a mortal of the Earth. So he has the supra-terrestrial, the infra-terrestrial and the terrestrial altogether. Besides that, he is attacked by the Titans, who live in Tartarus, a kind of hell. But his heart goes to the Ether and from him comes the souls that go to heaven.



We see in Dionysos the issue of opposites through division: he is a spiritual man (εσω ανθρωπος πνευματικος) and – at the same time – a seed of non-substance of the polymorphic and almighty cosmos (ουκ ον σπερμα του κοσμου πολυμορφον ομου και πολυουσιον). Dionysos is not eternal, he was born some day, but he is immortal, and that is what makes him different from humans.

However, everyone who identifies himself/herself with the gods or challenges them, has his/her parts disjointed. See Prometheus, Dionysos and even Jesus. That is what the alchemists call the operation of the *Solutio*, the stage of the water which they identified with the uterus, and about which they stated that would be a return to the womb. The image of Dionysos reborn/resurrected bring us an idea of a savior. In Greek, savior is λυτρωτης, someone who redeems, rescues (λυτρω), unfastens (λυτος) and resolves (λυτης) problems. He is unfastened and untied from his body for a sacred rebirth. In the “Tulkuisimo”, a concept found in many initiatory traditions, the master is cut into pieces so his disciples can communicate with him; he gives himself in flesh and blood - as does Dionysos, cut and served in a cauldron. He is wine itself. And when he associates with Demeter, queen of the cornfields, he is also bread. From him, only the heart remains.

In the Tulkuisimo, there would be a *tulku* identical to the original being, but it’s like a projection or an emanation or a transitory shadow, which is not a double because it can’t substitute for the master, but which is an initiate with its own role to fulfill. The word “tulku” means “a shape created by a magical process”. Well, there’s nothing which reminds us more of the idea of a magic recipient than a cauldron. In a cauldron, Dionysos was prepared before being “cloned”, knowing that Zeus used a part of his body to reconstitute the whole one, a very modern subject in such an ancient myth.

Pictures of a god-boy, a *puer aeternus* (eternal child), a παιδι / παις (child) – which show the young Dionysos – use to form a contrast with the pictures of a bearded adult Dionysos, who is not a παις, but a καβιρος (chthonic deity of fertility). In a painting of a vessel of Thebes (“Kabeiroi Banquet”, *Skypbos* from 435 BCE<sup>5</sup>), the boy was described as πρατολαος (“the one who does what he wills”) and the adult as μιτος (“string”, but which in the Orphic context was “seed”), who is next to a female creature called κραταια (“the one who gives birth”, in the Orphic sense).

Dionysos is “the matrix of the ideas, the potencies, the intelligences”, “of the generated and the non-generated”. “The

son of his mother, who dies early”, “Bacchus”<sup>6</sup>. It is necessary that we eat his flesh and drink his blood, because he has become conscious of the individual nature of each one of his disciples, and of the need that each one of them has to reach the nature which belongs to themselves<sup>7</sup>.

Dionysos is also a god able to change himself, metamorphosing, to the astonishment of his followers and the fascination of his women<sup>8</sup>.

Plato, in *Cratylus*, quoted Heraclitus from Ephesus, who used to say that we don’t bathe in the same water of the same river<sup>9</sup>. That’s what those who want a resurrection by discarding the old for the acquisition of the new are searching for: they find the immortality by keeping the body, avoiding the signs of a great age. When you are inside the cauldron of fashion, you can be a new world muse. A hyper-modern one. That is what makes a younger and mature Dionysos so appealing to our era. He is always sprouting up again and again.

Heraclitus has said: “For if it were not to Dionysos that they made the procession and sang the song with phallic symbols, their deeds would indeed be most shameful; but Hades and Dionysos are the same, to whomever they go mad and share the revel.”<sup>10</sup>

We know the association between Dionysos and the wine. But, besides drinking it, there was the aspect of eating the flesh of the god. Euripides said he had a “consecrate life since I became an initiate of Zeus from Ida and a herdsman of oxen of the nocturnal Zagreus, and when I ate the meals of raw meat”<sup>11</sup>. So, when they ate the sacrificial raw meat, the initiates received the god himself. The Orphics believed that men were the flesh and blood of Dionysos. The unfortunate men would be his dispersed body parts, squirming in their vices, while the initiates would be the ones who could reconstitute the body of the god through enchantments, making him die and reborn from them. The disciple was not only himself, his soul would be divided to live in a thousand bodies. He did not know if he was a man or a shadow. Or, even, a *tulku*.

As a Portuguese poet called Fernando Pessoa wrote in 1926: “Nothing ties me to nothing. I want fifty things at the same time. I long with an anguish of hunger of meat”<sup>12</sup>.

Together with the subject of death and resurrection, we have the subject of the loss and finding-again. There is a hope for eternity in the initiate. To them, death is not a curse, but a blessing, a sacred act which changes our destiny. Plato from Athens considered the body as the grave of the soul<sup>13</sup>, which agrees with Orpheus when he says that the soul is punished through the union with the body. Philolaus, a Pythagorean, confirms it, and Pythagoras himself said that “all the things we see when awake are death, and all we see in slumber are sleep”<sup>14</sup>.

In another poem, *Primeiro Fausto*, Fernando Pessoa proclaims: “That the death separates my members to turn me in another one, and that I can be the nothing of the nothing or the nothing of the everything; then I end at last this empty conscience, for to exist is what remains to me”<sup>15</sup>. This desire

for changing is also found in the Hopi word “koyaanisqatsi”, which designs a state of life which is in turbulence and which needs new alternatives to keep its course. All these things remind me that the Greek word for happiness is *eudaimonia* (ευδαιμονία), that is, to have a satisfied *daimon* (δαίμων). The hard thing is to find our *daimon*.

Still talking about the loss and meeting-again, we can note that the loss takes relationships away from a specific space-time, but it allows a new opportunity of re-meeting. This is why it’s wrong to see the continuous rebirth as something impersonal and disposable that we discard without recycling. There is a transformation initiated by the discovery. An overcoming. An “over coming”, moved by the eternal self-recreation of Dionysos. I hope we all can experiment and experience him.

<sup>i</sup> Adapted from a chapter of my postgraduate final work in Jungian Psychology, which was called *Dionísio e a Idade do Plástico: a humanidade descartavel e sua auto-recriacao* (Dionysos and the Age of Plastic: the disposable humanity and their self-re-creation), 2005, not translated to English. As I tried here to limit myself to the religion (not the psychology) of the question, the text can be a little disjointed, but – if we are talking about the “chopped up” Dionysos – it probably makes sense.

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<sup>3</sup> Hermes Trismegistos, *Corpus Hermeticum* (100-300), § 8.

<sup>4</sup> Orpheus, *Sacred Chants of Baccho or The Pure Spirit*, quoted in: Yolanda dos Santos and Claudia Santos (org.), *Antologia de Vidas Celebres* (196?), p.101.

<sup>5</sup> Jung, *Collected Works: Vol.V – Symbols of Transformation* (1995), Picture 30. [See below.]



## Devotions to Zeus *(continued from page two)*

The last aspect of Zeus that will be discussed in this article is his aspect as a God of Divination. He had oracles in many locations, the most well known was the oracle at Dodona. The medium for this oracle was a sacred Oak tree, and it was from the rustling of the leaves that the priests derived Zeus’ wisdom.<sup>5</sup> Even at the temple of Apollon at Delphi, it was the wisdom of Zeus that Apollon claimed to be speaking through His priestess, the Pythia. It was through Zeus that one could learn the way of the Fates, and through Apollon that one could hear the knowledge of Zeus.

### 2. A Ritual for Zeus

Greek Polytheistic ritual is an attempt to commune with our Gods and in essence, to grow spiritually through our worship of Them. The basic action of the ritual is to make a sacrifice to the God or Gods being worshipped, or to share with Them some of our time, our food, our energy, and our assets. Common sacrifices given to the Gods during ritual include fruit, meat, music, flowers, figures of animals or other things sacred to a particular God, and drinks such as water or wine (called libations). During the ritual, the Gods can be asked for a favor, or to simply join in the rites of the community. The sacrificial feast (also called the Gods’ banquet) can be described as the time when the Gods and humankind dine together.

The following ritual is derived from the Thusia, or the rite of animal sacrifice performed by the ancient Greeks. The ritual has

<sup>6</sup> Jung, CW: vol.IX/2 – *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, (1986), p.189-190.

<sup>7</sup> According to Jung, CW: Vol. IX/2, p.201.

<sup>8</sup> Ac. John Sanford, *Fate, Love and Ecstasy: Wisdom from the Lesser-Known Goddesses of the Greeks*, (1999), p.131.

<sup>9</sup> Ac. Plato, *Cratylus*, p. 31.

<sup>10</sup> Heraclitus, Aphorism n. 15, quoted in Donaldo Schuler, *Heraclito e seu discurso*, (2001), p.73.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Dieterich who was quoted by Jung in CW: Vol.V, p.328, note 59.

<sup>12</sup> Fernando Pessoa (as Alvaro de Campos) in the poem “Lisbon Revisited”, 1926.

<sup>13</sup> Ac. Plato, *Cratylus*, p.28.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Dudley Wright, *The Eleusinian Mysteries & Rites*, (2003), p.83.

<sup>15</sup> Pessoa, Fernando. *Primeiro Fausto*. 4th Theme: Fear of Death, part I (1914).



been modified for our modern way of life and for the specific worship of Zeus. It is up to the individual to determine which aspect of Zeus to sacrifice to, depending on if there is a specific need or desire of the worshipper, or if one simply wants to get to know the God a little better. Therefore, the prayer is only a suggested one, and the worshipper is encouraged to adapt the prayer however he or she sees fit.

The primary sacrifice for this ritual is an apple, as I have found with my own sacrifices that Zeus particularly likes these types of fruit. However, here are some things which could also be special offerings for Him:

- Oak leaves
- Figurines of black sheep, bulls, snakes, swans, or eagles.
- Benzoin or Styrax incense (note: many stick incenses are made with cow-dung. This is not always considered an appropriate offering to a God. Be sure to check the contents of the incense you are offering, although it is really the thought that counts here. The company Nipon Kodo produces incense which do not include waste products).
- Steak, lamb, or pork. Chicken is also possible, however it seems that Zeus seems to favor dark meat to white...this is from personal experience.

To perform the ritual, you will need to have a purified space in which to perform it. You can purify a space by sprinkling holy water around it, or wafting incense throughout it. An altar

should be set up either in the middle of the ritual space (during the procession, you will be walking around it) if possible, but if your space does not allow it can be placed against a wall and the ritual can be modified (you can use your hands to circle the offerings around the altar fire and it is just as symbolic).

The typical Greek Polytheistic altar always has a fire upon it. My personal altar has a cast-iron cauldron which I fill with rubbing alcohol (97%) and light with a match. If this is not possible the fire can be as simple as a taper, votive or tea-light candle. The important thing is that there is fire upon the altar. You will also need two offering bowls, one for food and one for liquids, although you can also put your food and libations directly in the fire if your space allows. You may also wish to have an incense burner if you plan on offering incense. An image of Zeus is very appropriate, but not necessary. The Greeks did not always have a statue of their Gods at a ritual; in fact, the earliest form of Greek worship did not have any cult imagery.<sup>6</sup> If you do desire an image, anything that reminds you of Zeus can be used. Eagles, snakes, lightning bolts, and the traditional statue of Zeus as King sitting in His throne are excellent forms of imagery. By the altar, you will need to place a bowl of holy water (natural spring water or water which has been purified by plunging a match into it) with which you will purify your hands. These things can be carried in the procession; however it seems impractical when there is only one person performing the rite.

Once you have set up your ritual space, you will need to gather the following things in a different area:

- An apple for the sacrifice and any other offerings you wish to give
- A bowl of barley beans (a traditional first offering of the Greeks)
- A knife with which to cut the apple
- A match with which to light the fire
- A jug of water, wine or other beverage to offer as a libation

When all the supplies have been collected, so begins the ritual:

**The Procession:** Carry all of the gathered supplies to the ritual space. When you have reached the space, walk around the altar with your offerings or move the offerings around the altar fire in a circular motion, presenting the offerings to Zeus. When you have done this, place the offerings close by.

**The Purification:** Wash your hands in the holy water placed by the altar, and then splash some of this water upon the offerings and sacrifice. Afterwards, light the altar fire with the match.

**The Prayer:** take a handful of barley from the bowl and raise your hands up to the sky (This is the typical way Greek Polytheists pray to Olympian Gods such as Zeus). Say the following or similar prayer:

*Great and Holy Zeus,  
Father of Gods and Mortals,  
King of the Gods and Patron of Leaders!  
It is in Your honor and in the honor of Your children, Holy One,  
To which I make my sacrifices and my offerings!  
It is of You, holy one, whom I desire to know more and celebrate,  
Come now, Great Zeus, Loving Husband,  
Just and Caring Father, Thundering God of Storms,  
Accept and delight in my sacrifice.*

Following the prayer, toss the barley into the food offering bowl. Take a few moments to experience your feelings. Allow yourself

to come into the presence of Zeus; however you may feel that presence.

**Offering the Gifts and Sacrifice:** It is now that you cut up the apple. Place the core and some of the skin and flesh of the fruit into the food offering bowl. (Note: In ancient times, food was shared with the Gods, and because it was not practical to waste food, the Gods received the bones and fat of the animal sacrifices. The same can be done today with the fruit, as the core and skin is bio-degradable and a natural substance which can later be returned to the earth...which was done when the ancients burned their sacrifices) Place the rest of the apple on a plate for you to eat. Next, bring forward any other offerings you may have brought with you to the altar. If you have incense, light it now; if you have figures, place them upon the altar (these would not be burned, but later placed upon a shrine for the God). If you have meat offerings, make sure that if you cannot cook them in the ritual space, that they are already cooked. One of the most important aspects of the sacrifice ritual is that all of the food is consumed in the ritual space. When you have finished placing your offerings and sacrifices upon the altar and into the offering dish, pour your libation into the libation bowl. Hold both of these bowls over the fire to consecrate them. You may want to add a phrase like "I consecrate these sacrifices and offerings for the God Zeus" if it helps you maintain the mood.

**The Feast:** Finally...eat! This is essentially the climax of the ritual, where the food is consumed in the company of Zeus. After you have eaten you may want to sit and read some stories about Zeus, or if you had friends join you for the ritual, pass around one of the mythology books telling the story of Zeus' birth for each person to read aloud. You may want to include some ritual music to enhance the mood. You can also perform a kind of divination, asking Zeus to favor you with some advice on a particular project, or dilemma. The important thing is that you enjoy whatever activity you are doing in the company of Zeus; especially Zeus Philios – Zeus of Friends. Zeus is the God of Kings and King of the Gods, the Divine Father, the God of Storms, the Divine Husband, a God of Divination, the God of Weather and Storms and much, much more. This article is intended to describe some of the most important of Zeus' aspects and His role in the Greek Pantheon, and to provide a ritual in the hopes that it will help others to experience Him in above all a spiritual way. As Hellenic Polytheists, our religion provides us with the means to express our spirituality allowing us to experience the Gods in whatever way we are able. For our research of the religion is only a small part of its practice, and we must always remember that experiencing the Gods is a powerful means of honoring Their essence and at the same time keeping our beings healthy and alive.

<sup>1</sup> Burkert, Walter. *Greek Religion*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, MA. 1985. p. 130

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.* p. 126

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* p.266

<sup>4</sup> Parke, H.W. *Festivals of the Athenians*. Cornell University Press. 1977. pp. 95-96

<sup>5</sup> Luck, Georg. *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*. John Hopkins University Press, 1985. p. 245

<sup>6</sup> Burkert. *Greek Religion*. p. 88

## Protodactyl

Shaman, wings yet moist with egg-white, groping shyly  
Through the fog whose dampness beads between white feathers,  
Vaporizing slowly through the humid wee-hours.  
In the fog, the hollow wing-bone slowly stiffens.  
Not long, muscles thickened up upon the back bones  
Bunch, and start the wings to heaving in the grey mist.

Airborn. He has shed loose body from body.

In Your Honor. Todd Jackson

*Inspired by the dactylic pentameter, the meter of the Hymns.*



Apollo and Crow – Kylix painting, c. 460 BCE (Delphi Museum)