

Η ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

(THE EPISTOLE)

a newsletter for Hellenic polytheists

published by:



ISSUE #23 ~ SPRING 2011

THE NEOKOROI* are a group of Hellenic polytheists who feel called to a path of service and devotion to the gods. We support mysticism, hard polytheism, and tend to favor reconstructionism as an approach to developing Hellenismos, while also recognizing the importance of personal experience and local cultus. We are especially dedicated to fostering communities, festivals, and public shrines, and providing guidance and information on religious matters – all to ensure the strength and longevity of the worship of the Greek gods.

HE EPISTOLE (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 polytheist community. We welcome feedback, and submissions from guest writers. He Epistole is a free publication and can be found in many locations nationwide. Please contact us if you would like to distribute copies in your area – in return you receive the issues in electronic format for free. Back issues can also be downloaded in PDF form from the website for free.

To contact the editor, email: heepistolesubmissions@gmail.com - or visit the Neokoroi website: neokoroi.org. (We have even more articles online, as well as information on the gods, photos, links and more!)

*The word *neokoros* is derived from the Greek words *naos* (temple) and *koreo* (to sweep) and originally meant “the one who sweeps the temple” or “the temple keeper.” It was a humble position, but an important one, for it was the neokoros’ responsibility to make sure that the temple was kept clean and free of any pollution, and also to tend to the daily service of the god in whose temple he or she served.

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THE HE EPISTOLE TEAM

Editor: Kharis Theocritos

Art Director/Graphic Designer: Khryseis Astra (K.S. Roy)

Web Manager/Technical Support: Miguel Oliveira

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THE PRINCIPLE OF LIGHT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN APOLLON AND THE TITAN HELIOS

An Excerpt From: "Crowned in Nine Rays: A Manual to a Modern Worship of Apollon" by Lykeia Daphne Kyrene

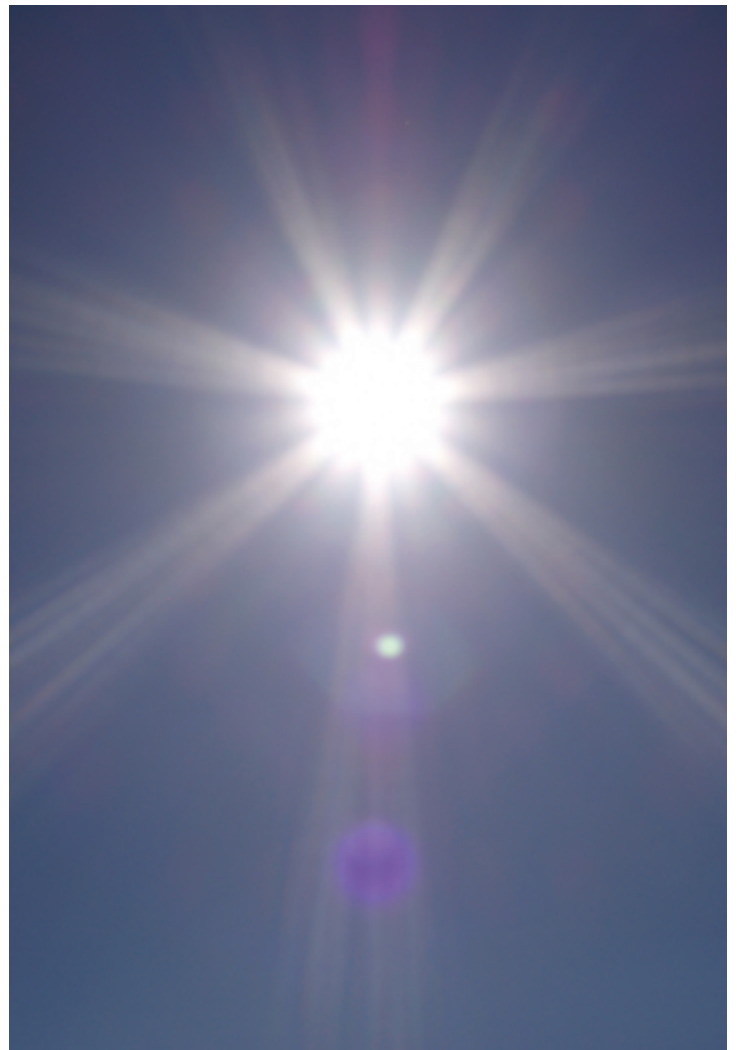
"See the gleaming car of the sun! His brilliance streams over the earth; before his fire the stars flee from the sky into mysterious night. Parnassus's untrodden peaks, kindling into flame, receive for mortals the wheel of light.

The fumes of the myrrh of the desert are wafted upward to Phoebus' roof. Upon the sacred tripod the Delphian priestess sits, and chants to the Hellenes the oracles which Apollo murmurs in her ears."

-Euripedes

Typically there is a great deal of confusion between Apollon and Helios, enough that many confuse Apollon and Helios together into one divine being. This is perhaps not so unusual considering that such confusions are not new but are formed because of certain overlapping commonalities without understanding how they function together. This function is based in the domain of Apollon of which Helios is a significant part, though just because he is within Apollon's domain does not make the titan synchronic with the god. Rather Helios, as the spiritual essence of the physical sun, acts as a vassal to Apollon's kingship. Robert Brown in his *The Great Dionysiak Myth* represents the sun as containing three main principles: light, fire, and generator or life-quickener. The light in itself possesses two aspects: physical and mental. Likewise the fire has two aspects: grateful and terrible. These are the powers of the nature of Helios. Apollon, as a god, is above Helios, a titan, and while Apollon controls, directs, and is responsible for the powers of the sun, but he doesn't eliminate Helios' individuality or decrease the importance of the sun.

In truth all bodies bearing light are within the domain of Apollon which includes all of the stars in the sky upon which humans have dependent for navigation for centuries. This special connection between Apollon and stars manifests not only through Apollon's affinity for navigation, but also through his natal story that makes it clear that Apollon doesn't have specific preference of the sun. In the Homeric Hymn as Leto beseeches the island Delos, which in some myths is the transformed body of her sister Asteria (starry). This, in effect places the birth of Apollon on a "star." Naturally a night star which fades and becomes invisible when the sun rises into the sky and washes out its cool beauty would be believed by all to be inferior, so too does Asteria express concern as being unworthy under the light of the sun. This indicates an impartiality of the god on the part of all sources of light. It would do us all a good turn to remember this that the light around which all the moths eagerly cluster, though it may be favored by the public, does not



receive any more worth from Apollon than the most modest glimmer peeking shyly. Thereby all that which belongs to Apollon receives equal favor from him.

We certainly place more importance on the star which gives life through its heat and light to our planet. To put it into perspective you should realize that out of all the combined components of our solar system, which includes moons, planets and debris, the sun makes up 99.86% of the combined mass. Of course all of this, according to science, originated from one collective source, a collapsed proto-sun. In a sense this can make the sun not only the center of our solar system but also, through its first manifestation as the protosun, a true progenitor of our solar system. One of the greater values of Helios in relation to Apollon is the very fact that Helios is the pinnacle around which all of our solar system rotates.

This apex both includes and transcends Apollon's relationship with Helios. Mythically Helios is the son of Hyperion, the titan of light and the western region of the heavens, suggesting that material light in essence fathered the physical sun. Naturally this also puts Hyperion in the fore as the escort of his son across the sky. Hyperion has a particular place in mythology as one of the four brothers who, that in conspiracy

with Cronos, stood at the edge of heaven to hold down their father Ouranos for castration. It was another brother Koios, also named Polos, who presided at the northern directional point. This Titan, who was likely represented by the North Star and ruled over the axis of heavens, was the grandfather of Apollon. As Helios more or less inherits from his father bringing the physical light of his father to the world, so too does Apollon inherit from his grandfather as a god who sits at the axis. In this function he built his house at Delphi which was believed to be the axis of the earth, or more appropriate at the center point of revolution of the cosmos. This includes the sun within his domain as the axis of our solar system. Also, as a god of the stars Apollon would likely be at the axis of the galaxies themselves as well directing the placement and directional rotation of all the stellar bodies. Thus his place therein attributes the powers of light as a great principle of his domain. So that the Platonist philosopher Proklos says of their relationship that Helios and Apollon share a common intellect since the sun also illuminates whatever the heavens contain even as Apollon sheds forth his nature to all the celestial bodies.

Therefore it would appear that the relationship between Apollon and Helios is largely hinged on the sun being a body producing light, and a body at the center of the revolving solar system. As a god dwelling at Helios and responsible for the powers of the sun, it is Apollon who keeps the balance of the orbiting spheres. This may in part explain the confusion between Apollon and Helios in the myth of Phaethon since the myth demonstrates the danger of upsetting the harmonic relationship between the sun and the earth. Certainly we are all aware that life on our planet is dependent on several factors and one of which is the distance between the earth and the sun, the way our planet tips on its axis to change the seasons, and the orbiting pattern of our world. In the myth Apollon or Helios cautions Phaethon to maintain the balance so that he won't burn the earth and boil the seas or burn down the heavens. Unfortunately the youth ignores the warning with dire consequences.

The flaming of the heavens and boiling of the seas illustrates a specific role of the physical sun, that of a heat-producing planetary body, the light of which can raise to dangerous extremes. Elementary science, and sun-block labels, reminds us that the sun delivers to the earth not only visible light but harmful ultra-violet light. It produced by very hot objects and has a shorter wave length than visible light which means that it carries more energy and is capable of penetrating and burning living skin. These are the rays that we particularly rely on our atmosphere to protect us from. However it proves that the energy of heat, and the light given off produced by chemical reactions between chemical energy and gases from the fuel, can be very destructive. It is no wonder that this force was instrumental in swiftly rotting away the corpse of Pytho after Apollon had slain her:



"An awful noise swelled up unspeakable as she writhed continually this way and that amid the wood: and so she left her life, breathing it forth in blood. Then Phoebus Apollo boasted over her:

"Now rot here upon the soil that feeds man' You at least shall live no more to be a fell bane to men who eat the fruit of the all-nourishing earth, and who will bring hither perfect hecatombs. Against cruel death neither Typhoeus shall avail you nor ill-famed Chimera, but here shall the Earth and shining Hyperion make you rot."

What is of particular interest here is that though Apollon destroyed her by the sun, the rotting process is carried out by the energy of Helios' father Hyperion, the light of which Apollon is the physical emanation of the principle associated with Apollon's domain. The act is carried out by accessing the physical power of Hyperion through the inheritance of Hyperion's son Helios. It is the rays of solar light which bring decomposition in alliance with Ge.

In short the intense heat and light of the sun can have devastating effects on the biological body, even as it effects the spiritual body. For the same reason that Apollon and Helios are ascribed to the parentage of Phaethon, it probably also contributes to why there are two terms for sunstroke borrowing from the names of each the titan and the god. That this comes directly from the sun it is called heliobletos, but because the sun is under the governance of Apollon and he is directing the powers of the sun it is also called apollonobletos. Despite how bad this sounds, heat-stroke/sun-stroke is more due to our own foolishness. Most adults are quite aware of the effects of long exposures to the sun and the consequences. Don't walk in a desert without SPF upward of fifty, preferably some head-covering and plenty of water. Try to stay indoors or in the shade

during the hottest time of the day (there is a reason why some cultures have an afternoon siesta), and for your own sake just be sensible. Neither he or Helios are out to get you and burn you alive the minute you step outside, but we have to use some common sense, especially you sunbathing “sun-worshippers” out there who like to gamble with UV rays and skin cancer.

The destructive character of light in general is evident in nearly all forms of physical light of various wavelengths, not all of which are produced by the physical sun. There are also gamma waves, which being shorter than ultraviolet waves they are able to pierce through concrete and metals and are so dangerous that they kill living cells, especially at high levels of release. These destructive wavelengths are the terrifying bi-product of our own civilization’s war technology released through nuclear bombs and causing extreme devastations, including mutation, by their impact. That is not say that Apollon is a god of nuclear bombs, but rather by harnessing this form of his energy we release destruction upon ourselves and each other. The tragedy that occurred with the bombing of Japan should be a constant reminder to us. Beyond gamma waves are cosmic rays which bombard us from remote regions of space and are testimony to the far-reaching and far encompassing power of Apollon’s domain that is not restricted to our own solar system. These rays produce the highest radiation and contain tiny particles of atomic nuclei.

But it is his relationship to the sun and the sun’s relationship to our world which entitles him to be called King. The sun is the most profound symbol of his domain as Helios Eleutherius, the “God of Freedom.” It has been commented on by some time about the remarkable iconographic similarities between Helios and the Statue of Liberty, but it is easy now to see why such imagery would have been borrowed. The crown of light and the illuminating torch, which are also emblems of Apollon, especially seen adorning Apollon Phosphorus at Corinth and the crown on some representations of Lykeios, are symbols of the principle. For light, the very light which maiden liberty wields and is crowned with, signifies freedom from darkness,



and an enlightenment, a principle on which this country was supposedly founded, which frees the mind from ignorance and superstition. The maiden Liberty, wearing the regalia of Apollon and Helios, is the agent of the god whom he sends out among us.

Apollon’s range is unlimited as he sends his agents and influence from afar embodied in the epithet of Hekatos, he who “Shoots from Afar.” While there may very well be some solar connotations associated with this epithet, the most prominent point is that the projectile from the bow can travel far from the source just as light can for a time appear even without the direct presence of the sun. For this reason Hekatos can also be specifically associated with the Hyperborean Apollon who is never entirely absent from our world, and the appearance of the mid winter aurora borealis, as he can be associated with the god’s general far-reaching influence. There are those who suggest that Hekate is his sister, and that she was particularly regarded in the provinces of Asia Minor, however as Artemis was likewise called Hekate as an epithet it likely refers to the goddess Artemis rather than the titan Hekate. Thus we see at Didyma Apollon was likewise called hekergos, and Artmeis was called hekaerge. This far-reaching presence of light is further demonstrated from the epithet of Apollon Hieios, the “Gleamer,” or “god of the morrow” who acted from afar in order to light up the night in aid of Jason in his escape. Therefore both epithets denote an idea of Apollon at times when he is not near, but instead he is separate. Proklos calls this the god’s arrow-darting energy that is associated with liberation by exciting universal motion by his arrow-like rays. Therefore by his arrows, regardless of his separation he reaches all things by his energies.

The power of light, and the symbolism associated with the sun, is a common spiritual factor within humanity. It is by this provenance that Apollon has frequently been connected to gods of other cultures in ancient times and often in modern times as well. Hellenic Egyptians worshipped Apollon as Horus, the falcon god of light. It was also his powers over light that spared Delos from Datis who made offerings of frankincense to the god because he recognized Apollon as Ahuramazda, the Persian god of the sun and the principle of light in the Zoroaster religion. The problem only comes when Apollon is identified taking over the part of Helios. Though it may appear at first glance that it would give him even further power and influence, it actually restricts him because then you lose a concept of the continuity of the god’s domain. Instead, under that interpretation, that is unfortunately quite prolific in Mythology 101 introductions in public school, he is understood in blocky segments as god of the sun, music, healing etc. Such a formula does not expand a worshipper’s understanding of Apollon, or how he impacts the world and our lives. Instead, it gives bits and pieces of rote memorization that appear to lack any connection. But, by retaining his larger and considerably more

subtle domain as the god of light, and all principles of light, his powers are inclusive over all things including the sun without having to reduce him into the role of Helios himself. It is for this that we call him Phoebus, the “Bright,” a salutation which hails the god as being a pure and incorruptible presence that manifests in the very beauty and brilliance of light.

“Therefore, the sun is but one, though important in this army, or host, led by Apollon, that which is particular to the domain and duties in the realm of light. And all the souls which follow after him are contained also within this gathering.”

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HYMN TO EUTERPE

By Suzanne Thackston

I begin to sing of sweet-voiced Euterpe
Muse who delights Far-Shooting Apollon
Daughter of Zeus and sister to all the Muses
who dance on Mount Parnassos.
You coax the silver strains
From lyre and drum and tongue.
Modest maidens leap lightly to their feet
and dance in delight
While the young men shout and sing
their paeans and praises
To Apollon of the golden lyre
And to Euterpe, Muse of Music.
Full-throated notes from bass and drum
Throb and thrum according to your will.
While men walk in wonder in the world
And sail the surface of the wine-dark sea
And listen enthralled to the celestial music
of the silver stars
Your name in all its beauty
And your gracious gift to men will be praised.



LIVING WITH HOUSE SPIRITS

By Crystal Tice

I used to have a problem with loose change in my house. It was on the floor, the vacuum, the laundry, and the source of more fights than I want to number. My family at the time consisted of an ex-boyfriend, his two sons, and my only son. The youngest was little enough to try to eat change and the older two would bicker over whose change it was they found on the floor. We couldn't up with a fair way of sharing the change that would make everybody happy so I decided to do something constructive.

I gave it to the house spirits.

Before I started on the Hellenic stage of my path, I viewed my house spirits as Gnomes. My statue was (and still is) a lawn gnome I was given for my birthday. The statue would sit among my house plants and watch over the comings and goings in the home. It would also hide keys and small electronics. A hand-made bowl housed a tea light lit as an offering.

I added a second bowl beside the candle and made a strict rule in the house that any change, except quarters, found on the floor would be given to the house spirits. The quarters became property of the laundry machine and the spirits were okay with that. We would bring our change to the table, pause for a moment, then honor the house spirits with the offering of shiny coins. The same process was used when something was lost. Coins would go into the bowl and the searcher would ask the spirits to return what was lost. The item would usually be found in an obvious place right afterward.

This system cut down the fighting and everyone was quite happy to donate to the house spirits.

The money is collected to be donated to a charity devoted to issues involving the house and home. My favorite local charity is the Emergency Residency Project. It is a homeless shelter for adult men and families. It is also a place for families in transition. In addition to helping those without homes, the ERP helps families stay in their homes by helping to pay for rent or utility bills. I feel like this is one of the best charities I could give money dedicated to the spirits of the house.



When I started working within the Hellenic system, I didn't feel a need to change our offering rituals very much. My gnomes became the Agathos Daimon with offerings of candles and change. When giving the spirits an offering, we now say:

To the gnomes, the Agathos Daimon,
the spirits of the house.
Please accept this offering
and watch over all
under this roof.

My main statue now occupies a place of pride on my altar. Smaller statues live among my plants and watch over the living room. They don't receive as much spare change now that it is only my son and I in the house, it hasn't been falling as frequently. Now they receive their tribute directly from our pockets and our hearts.



NEOKOROI NEWS

By K.S. Roy

(Info pulled from recent group messages)

- Neokoroi now has a new webmaster. We thank **Allyson** for all her hard work keeping the site going and welcome **Miguel**!

"Although I'm acting as the main 'janitor' at the moment I hope everyone in the group will help by sending me articles and info to put on the website. Consider them offerings to our online temple!"

- Miguel

Be sure to check out the new website layout, and consider adding some of your own work to keep our online temples going!

- Our website has also been updated to include our latest exegete: **Laurelei**, Exegete of **Aphrodite**. Other exegetai include **Thista** (Exegete of **Artemis**) and **Suz** (Exegete of **Demeter**). You can check out the Exegetai page here:

<http://www.neokoroi.org/group/programs/exegete>

- In keeping up with the changes of the group, our graphic designer **Khryseis** is working on a new layout for **He Epistole**.



Screenshot from the new website

Be sure to submit your art or writing for our new and improved Summer issue! A message has been posted to the Neokoroi Yahoo group and to the HE Team with further details.

- **Thista** will be presenting the Philokhoros as main ritual at this year's **Free Spirit Gathering** on Saturday, June 18th in Darlington, Maryland.

- Neokoroi News will become a regular feature. If there is something you feel should be posted here, please email me at Kadynastar78@yahoo.com



COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

By K.S. Roy

News gathered from the wider Polytheist community

- **May 2nd** is **International Pagan Coming Out Day**. Please visit the website at: pagancomingoutday.com and wear green on **May 2nd** to show your support!

- Calls for Submissions from **Bibliotheca Alexandrina**: We are currently seeking poetry, short fiction, scholarly essays, rituals, recipes, meditations, artwork and other submissions for several other devotional projects.

<http://neosalexandria.org/bibliotheca-alexandrina/>

- A **cynocephali** devotional anthology. Edited by **P Sufenas Virius Lupus** and **Solo**. Submissions close **22 May 2011**. Projected release date of **Autumn 2011**.

- **The Scribing Ibis: An Anthology of Pagan Fiction in Honor of Thoth** [edited by **Rebecca Buchanan**]. Submissions open **1 January 2011** and close **30 June 2011**. Projected release date of **August 2011**.

- **Queen of the Sacred Way: A Devotional Anthology in Honor of Persephone** [edited by **Melitta Benu**]. Submissions

open **7 February 2011** and close in **31 August 2011**. Projected release date **September 2011**.

- **Harnessing Fire: A Devotional Anthology in Honor of Hephaestus** [edited by **Star Foster**]. Submissions open **25 April 2011** and close **31 October 2011**. Projected release date of **January 2012**.

- A devotional anthology in honor of **Hermes** [edited by **K.S. Roy**]. Submissions will open in **August 2011** and close in **January 2012**. Projected release date of **March 2012**.

- **Shield of Wisdom: A Devotional Anthology in Honor of Athena** [edited by **Jason Ross Inczauskis**]. Submissions will open in **September 2011** and close in **February 2012**. Projected release date of **April 2012**.

- Community Bulletin Board will become a regular feature. If there is something you would like to be posted here, please email me at Kadynastar78@yahoo.com

ΚΑΛΑ ἈΝΟΙΞΙ (SPRING COLLAGE)

By K.S. Roy



Image Notes: The following images were used in this issue.

Page 4: Relief of Helios. (Public Domain)

Page 5: Apollo Kitharoidos. Painted plaster, Roman artwork. From the *Scalae Caci* on the Palatine Hill. Antiquarium of the Palatine, Inv. 379982. (Public Domain)

Page 6: Euterpe, muse of music, carrying a flute.

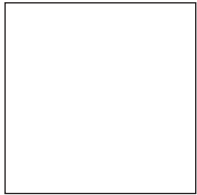
Detail from the "Muses Sarcophagus", representing the nine Muses and their attributes. Marble, first half of the 2nd century AD, found by the Via Ostiense. (Public Domain)

Page 7: Roman fresco showing Bacchus (on the left) and serpent (Agathodaimon) from the Casa del Centenario in Pompeii.

Museo Archeologico Nazionale (Naples). (Public Domain)

Page 9: The collage features the following images: The Three Graces & Eros, Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen (Public Domain) Lower slopes of Parnitha Mountain, as seen from Tatoi, the former king's property (Public Domain)

Diagram of a flower of Theobroma ("Food of the Gods") (Public Domain)



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neokoroi.org
HeEpistoleSubmissions@gmail.com



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In This Issue:

The Principle of Light • Hymn to Euterpe • Living with House Spirits

HE EPISTOLE – CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS!

HE EPISTOLE (a "message" or "letter") is published four times a year. We offer articles, artwork, hymns, prayers, poetry, reviews, information, community notices, fiction, recipes, and anything else of interest to the Hellenic polytheist community.

We're currently seeking submissions from guest writers.

For more information, please visit our website at: Neokoroi.org
Submissions may be sent to: HeEpistoleSubmissions@gmail.com

