

CHAPTER FIVE

DEITIES OF DELPHI

IT is time to consider Apollo in greater detail. There is a vase painting showing Apollo and Dionysus together at Delphi. A fragment of Aeschylus speaks of "Apollo, ivy-crowned, Bacchic, mantle." Plutarch, in *The E at Delphi*, gives him three names; Apollo, not many but one; Ieius, One; and Phoebus, Pure.

He came from the east. There are Hittite altars to Apulunas, discovered by Hrozny at Enni Gazi and Eski Kislá. *Pule* is Greek for a gate. His title Paian links him with a Cretan god of healing. The epithet Lykaios has been thought to mean: The god from Lycia (in Asia Minor); wolf-slaying, from *lukos*, a wolf; and the god of day, from luke, light. These different interpretations are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The name Loxias may refer to the ambiguity of his nature: god of plague and of healing, of light and death, of uncertain answers. The Greek *loxias* means oblique, and is the term used for the ecliptic.

He is the leader of the Muses. Scholars have often contrasted the intellectual nature of his inspiration with the emotional violence of Dionysus, but Cassandra and other victims of the Far-darter might have reservations about this.

Oulos is an epic word meaning destructive, baneful, fatal. *Apo* means from, from a distance. The name Apollo would suit him well if it implied 'death from afar'. He is often described as Hekebolos, the far darter, as is his sister Artemis. But Hermes, who is very like Apollo, is Puledokos, guardian of the gate, and it is still an open question. Apollo's weapons were the bow and

arrow, but he, with his sister, and Demeter, are all called *chrusaoros*, with golden sword.

The Trojan hero Hector is like an *oulios aster*, a baneful star, in *Iliad* XI:62.

In the form of a dolphin Apollo boarded a ship from Crete and made the crew sail to Krisa, the port for Delphi. He revealed himself as Apollo, and went to Pytho. This early name for Delphi may come from a root *puth*, well, which suggests the chasm between the two Phaedriades.

The name Parnassus appears to mean 'mountain of the house' in Luvian, a language of Asia Minor. This, and the presence in Greek of such words as Korinthos, *asaminthos*, *labyrinthos*, Hymettos, Mykalessos, is generally held to mean that the pre-Achaean people of Greece were of Asian origin, and were hosts to an immigration of Achaeans in the 2nd millennium B.C.. Tartessus was a Phoenician city near Cadiz, ruled by King Arganthonius (Cicero: *De Senectute* XIX).

The worship of Apollo at Delphi was not established until relations with Corinth were established about 800 B.C.. The orientalising tendency of Corinthian art is well known. The name Delphi itself suggests the Greek *delphis*, a dolphin. Delphyne was the name of the serpent that Apollo killed on arrival at Delphi. Note also *delphys*, matrix. Early in his career Apollo was a giant killer like Herakles and Hermes. He defended Olympus against the giants who piled Pelion on Ossa in their attack on Mount Olympus and the gods. He killed the giant Tityos. When Coronis, whom he had loved, decided to marry Ischys (strength), Apollo sent his sister Artemis to destroy her. He then snatched her son, the infant Asclepius, from the mother's corpse on the funeral pyre, and gave him to the centaur Cheiron to be educated in medicine. One is reminded of Zeus snatching Dionysus from Semele. Later, as a punishment for killing the Cyclopes, Apollo was servant to a mortal, King Admetus, as was Herakles to Eurystheus and Omphale.

As the deity at Delphi, he shines rather than speaks. Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 80, describes him as *lampros*, shining. His sister Artemis, called Loxo, is referred to by Homer as *eustephanos*, with beautiful crown [1], and in line 207 of the *Oedipus Tyrannus*: "the firebearing rays of Artemis with which she rushes across the mountains of Lycia." In line 186: "*paian de lampei*", the shout rings out (literally 'shines' or 'flashes').

Cassandra, captive at Mycenae, begins to prophesy: "O Apollo of the roads, my destroyer, *apollon* [2], whither have you brought me?" There was an occasion when the oracle at Delphi refused to answer Herakles. Herakles seized the tripod to smash votive offerings. Apollo fought back until Zeus intervened. He had long flowing hair.

There is a history of disaster overtaking mortals who saw a god or goddess. The goddess Hera says: "The gods are hard to look upon in their full brightness." [3]. The soldiers of Alexander the Great were blinded when they invaded the temple of Demeter at Miletus. Anchises was blinded by a thunderbolt for boasting of his union with Aphrodite.

When Hannibal wished to carry off a golden column from Juno's temple at Lacinium, he tested it with a drill and did find it solid gold, but then had a dream in which he was warned that if he removed the column he would lose the sight of his good eye. He had an image of a calf made out of the gold dust, and set it on the column [4].

A mediaeval Arab story tells that a certain pyramid that was built, according to Manetho, by Nitocris, is haunted by a beautiful woman who drives men mad.

There are several instances of people being driven mad as punishment for similar offences. At Patrae, a statue of Dionysus drove mad all those who saw it. A list of examples is given in an article by R.G.A. Buxton in the *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 1980.

We have seen that Apollo's sister Artemis was called by Homer Eustephanos, she of the beautiful crown. The crown, *stephanos*, is associated with her brother, too.

Every eight years at Delphi there was celebrated the festival of the Stepteria. A wooden structure was set on fire by youths who ran away, without looking back, to Tempe. The burning is said to represent Apollo's defeat of the serpent Puthon, and the journey to Tempe his eight years of servitude to Admetus. The situation is not unlike that at Thebes, where Kadmos killed the serpent that guarded the spring of Ares, and had to go and serve Ares for eight years.

Every eight years at Thebes the festival of the Daphnephoria was held. The Greek *daphne* is laurel. A procession brought a piece of olive wood, decorated with bay and flowers, 365 purple ribands, and a bronze globe from which smaller globes hung, to the precincts of Apollo Ismenios and Chalazios. The lower end of the stick was wrapped in saffron coloured cloth. A boy whose parents were still alive led the procession. Next came his brother or cousin, with the olive wood, then the *daphnephoros* (laurel bearer), a handsome boy, with flowing hair, in a splendid long robe, golden crown and wreath of bay, and elegant shoes. Last came a chorus of girls with branches. There is clearly some astronomical significance in the ceremony -- a purple ribbon for each day of the year -- and the word *chalaza*, hail, can also mean stones or meteorites, like the Hebrew *baradh*.

Let us look again at the Delphic succession. Gaia, Themis and Phoebe represent a powerful deity, associated with the earth and female. Dionysus, in his later form as the god with a pale face, long curly hair and epicene appearance guaranteed to enrage such a pillar of the Theban establishment as Pentheus, is a half-way house between Gaia and Apollo. Apollo is the male deity who operates as much above ground as from below ground. It is interesting that inhumation of the dead was usual in earlier times. Contact is thereby made with the earth-mother, Gaia. Cremation is practiced later, as if to link the dead with a sky god or the *aither*.

The effects of electricity on the human body were of great interest to the Greeks and Romans. There is a fine example in Vergil. During the hunt organised by Dido for her guest at Carthage, Aeneas and the queen take refuge in a cave during a thunderstorm. Earth (Tellus), and Juno Pronuba, i.e. Juno as attendant of the bride and patron goddess of marriage, give a sign; lightning flashes, the sky (*aither*) joins in as an accomplice [5].

The ithyphallic statues of Hermes found in all Greek cities are outstanding examples of electrical stimulation. One of the titles of Hermes is Stilbon, a name of the planet Mercury. The Greek *stilbo* means 'flash'. *Stilbein astrapas* is to flash lightning [6]. Among the Sybarites, *stilbon* meant a dwarf.

Hermes was the son of Zeus and of Maia, one of the Pleiades. He was born in the early morning, by noon he had invented the lyre and played on it, and by the evening he had stolen the cows of Apollo. He was the most cunning and deceitful of the gods, and gave early proof of this when he dragged the cows backwards by their tails so that their theft should not be discovered. His staff, the *kerakeion* or *caduceus*, enabled him to conduct souls to the underworld, and he has the title of *psychopompos*, escorter of souls.

Aphrodite is described as '*eustephanos*', of the beautiful crown, implying a link with electrical fire. The word was taken to refer either to a girdle (*zone*) or to a crown.

Eros, or sexual passion, is connected with light. He appears in Hesiod as the most beautiful among the immortal gods as well as being the first to come into existence [7]. In the Orphic stories he is Phanes, he who brings everything into light, and as Eros he is responsible for the marriage of earth and heaven.

The Greek word *kledon* means an omen or presage when one made an involuntary movement or exclamation. Such a chance act was thought to be caused by a god. Sneezing was significant. Epileptic convulsions were certainly of divine

origin, and are now attributed to electrical malfunctions of the brain. Shivering was a sign, and is to be connected with the stories in Diodorus and Plutarch of the goats made to shiver before slaughter as an essential preliminary to the Pythia's descent to the shrine to prophesy.

Readers of Pindar, the 5th century B.C. lyric poet of Thebes, will be familiar with passages where he uses images of fire and light for poetry, e.g. "setting the city on fire with my songs (*aoidais*)." [8].

Passages concerning hair, light, Apollo and *kledons*; from Homer, Vergil and Pausanias.

From the *Iliad*:

XIII:435: Poseidon casts a spell on the shining eyes of Alcahous and binds his gleaming limbs so that he cannot run away or dodge sideways.

XV:256: Apollo encourages Hector. Apollo Chrysaoros, Apollo of the golden sword.

XV:262: So saying, he breathed great power (*menos*) into the Trojan leader.

XXIII:141: Achilles cuts off a lock of his hair to lay on the body of Patroclus.

XXIII:281: Achilles announces the chariot race at the funeral games of Patroclus. He will not compete with his own horses: Patroclus often washed them with clear water and poured oil on their manes.

From the *Odyssey*:

I:90: Achaeans with flowing hair, *kare komoontas*.

I:153: The herald put a beautiful *kitharis* in the hands of the minstrel Phemius. He played a prelude (*phormizon*) and began his song.

The kithara, in Homer *kitharis*, was triangular in shape with seven strings. It was portable, and was Apollo's instrument. It is virtually the same as the *phorminx*. The *lura* was a larger instrument, with four strings; later with seven. Homer does not mention it, but the word occurs in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, line 423.

IV:122: Helen emerges from her room looking like Artemis of the golden distaff (*chryselakate*).

VIII:323: Lord Apollo Hekaergos (working far off).

XVII:541: Penelope says that if only Odysseus were to return, he and his son would soon avenge the crimes of the suitors. Telemachus gives a loud sneeze which echoes in a frightening way round the house.

From the *Aeneid*:

I:740: At a banquet with Dido, long-haired (*crinitus*) Iopas plays on his golden kithara; he had been taught by great Atlas.

III:80: When the Trojans land on Delos, they meet Anius, king of Delos and priest of Apollo, who wears fillets of sacred laurel round his head.

III: 170 ff.: The Trojans suffer ecological disasters in Crete. The Trojan gods appear in a dream and reveal that Corythus in Italy is their goal. Corythus was later Cortona, a town in Etruria. The name resembles *cortina*, the cauldron or tripod. *Korus*, *koruthos* is the Greek for a helmet. The gods who appeared in the dream had garlanded hair, *velatas comas*.

III:257: When they land in the Strophades, the Harpy Celaeno prophesies that they will know they are at their destination when they eat their tables.

VI:779: "*Geminae stant vertice cristae,*" twin crests stand on the head (of Romulus).

IX:660: Apollo's quiver clangs. They recognise the god and his divine weapons and resounding quiver, as they flee.

IX:658: He vanishes from their sight, melting into thin air.

X1:785: The Etruscans charge; Arruns prays to Apollo before hurling a spear to kill Camilla. "Great god Apollo, guardian of holy Soracte (a mountain), whom we among the first worship, for whom pine logs blaze in a heap, and, relying on our piety, we step on burning coals through the middle of the fire on the bed of ashes..."

Examples from Pausanias, chiefly concerning Apollo:

I:31:2: The shrine of Apollo at Prasiae receives the first fruits of the Hyperboreans, by relay. The Athenians take them to Delos. They are hidden in wheat straw.

I:41:8: Tereus is buried at Megara. The hoopoe first appeared there. (Cf. Aristophanes, *The Birds*. The crest of the bird gives it magical significance.)

II:24:1: At Larisa is a shrine of Apollo, first built by Pythaios of Delphi. There is a statue of Apollo of the Ridge. There is a priestess who once a month drinks lamb's blood and is filled with the god.

VII:22:2: At Pharai in the agora there is a stone statue of bearded Hermes. It has an oracle. In front of the statue is a hearthstone, with bronze lamps stuck on with lead. Burn incense on the hearthstone, fill the lamps with oil, light up, put a copper coin on the altar to the right of the god, and whisper your question in the god's ear. Stop up your ears, go into the market place, unstop, and the first thing you hear is the oracle.

The Egyptians have a similar oracle at the sanctuary of Apis. (Vide Herodotus II :153, re the temple of Hephaestus at Memphis).

IV:34:7: In Messenia, there is a seaside shrine of Apollo Korunthos (Crested).

III: 16:7: At the Limnaeum there is a statue of Artemis stolen from the Taurians by Orestes and Iphigenia.

Astrabakos and Alopekos, sons of Irbos, went mad when they found this statue. When the Spartans of Limnae, and the men of Kynosouria, Mesoia and Pitane sacrificed to Artemis, they quarreled and shed blood. Many died at her altar, and disease carried off the rest. Originally there was human sacrifice; Lycurgus changed this to whipping.

III:22:1: Near Gythion is a stone, 'Fallen Zeus', where Orestes's madness left him. VIII:15:9: On Mount Krathis in Arcadia is a sanctuary of Pyronian Artemis. The Argives used to fetch fire from the goddess for the Lernaean festival.

VIII:38: The city of Lycosoura is the oldest of all in the earth, the first city the *sun ever saw*. It is the source of men's knowledge of how to build cities.

Apollo is associated with the seven-day week, his birthday being on the seventh.

His title as leader of the Muses was 'Mousagetes'. The Muses themselves are sometimes referred to as Leibethrides. This word is connected with the verb *leibo*, pour (of libations). Libations were offerings of water, wine and blood to the dead and to the gods below. In this context it is worth considering the importance that the Greeks and Romans attached to remembering the dead, the *Di Manes*. The Muses were the daughters of Zeus and Memory, according to the most generally accepted story

Artemis is 'Hekaerge', she who operates at a distance.

In the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, line 529, Apollo promises Hermes a fine staff of riches and wealth, golden, with three branches, which will keep him *akerios*, safe from harm.

Hermes: He is similar to Apollo, and may be considered here.

Plato, *Ion* 534 E: Poets are interpreters (*hermeneis*) of the gods.

Iliad XXIV:339: The guide and killer of Argos obeyed: he at once bound on his feet the beautiful ambrosial golden sandals, that carried him over boundless land and sea with the speed of the wind; he took his staff, with which he charms men's eyes if he wishes, or wakes them from sleep.

Iliad XIV:489: Ilioneus, son of Phorbas who owned many sheep, whom Hermes loved most of the Trojans and had made him rich.

In this capacity, as bringer of good fortune, he was known as Eriounios, the Helper, and Akaketa, the Gracious and Benignant.

In his pastoral capacity he was Nomios. He was Dolios as an expert in secret dealings, *Odyssey* XIX:397. Autolycus surpassed all in theft and perjury; the god Hermes had given him this skill. Hermes is Chrysorrhapis, he of the golden wand. He is Psychopompos, conductor of souls to Hades, *Odyssey* XXIV:1. He is Pyledokos, Watcher of Doors, in *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, I.15. He is Hodios, or Enodios, a god whom you meet on the road.

Aeschylus, *Prometheus Vincetus* 680: Hermes killed Argus instantly: "Unexpected sudden doom robbed him of life." Elsewhere Hermes charms him to sleep with his rod and then cuts off his head.

His early life story is similar to that of Apollo.

Passages concerning: Eros; Aphrodite; electrical magic:

Iliad III:64: The lovely gifts of golden Aphrodite.

Iliad XXIV:611: When Niobe's children were killed by Artemis, they lay in blood for nine days, since the son of Kronos had turned the people into stone. The heavenly gods buried them on the tenth day.

Odyssey XIII:119: When the Phaeacians take Odysseus in their ship to Ithaca, they put him down on the shore fast asleep.

Aeneid 1:660: Venus sends Cupid to inflame (*incendere*) the queen, and to put fire in her bones (*ossibus implicet ignem*).

713: Dido looks at Ascanius, the young son of Aeneas, and is set on fire (*ardescit*) with love of Aeneas by looking at him.

Aeneid IV:23: Dido confides in Anna, her sister: "I recognize the signs of the old flame ..."

280: When Hermes has spoken, Aeneas's hair stands on end and his voice sticks in his throat.

VI:224: At the funeral pyre of Misenus, they look away as they hold the torch, in the approved manner.

VIII:389: Venus wheedles a suit of armour from Vulcan: "He suddenly felt the well-known flame, and the familiar glow entered his marrow and coursed through his trembling bones just like a flash of fiery lightning from a thunder cloud."

Pausanias I:14:4: Epimenides of Cnossus went into a cave to sleep, and slept for forty years. He then wrote poems and purified cities, including Athens.

IX:25:9: The anger of the Kabeiroi cannot be removed. Remnants of Xerxes's army who entered their shrine in Boeotia

went mad, jumping over cliffs and into the sea. Macedonians of Alexander's army were destroyed by lightning.

X:29:9: When Theseus and Peirithous descended to Hades, they were trapped and held in stone seats. There is a picture of them, amongst others, by Polygnotus, at Delphi.

VI:25:1: At Elis, inside the precinct of the temple of Aphrodite, mounted on a platform, is a bronze statue by Skopas of Aphrodite riding a goat, also of bronze.

She stands with one of her feet on a tortoise.

Euripides, *The Bacchae* 405: Cupids who bewitch the mind. The word 'bewitch' is *thelgo*, and is what Hermes does with his wand.

Hermes is said to have been the first to kindle a fire. He used laurel as tinder. Probably laurel symbolises a flickering electrical light or glow. *'Prometheus Vincitus'* 599: Io enters; her movements, *skirtemata*, are irregular; she is pestered by a gadfly sent by Hera. See section on dance, in Chapter XXII.

Aeneid VIII:372: Vulcan has a golden room, *aureus thalamus*.

Birds.

Birds were so important in prophecy that they may well be discussed in this chapter on the Delphic deities.

In Greek *ornis* is the word for a bird, whether wild or domesticated. It can have the same significance as *oionos*, a bird of omen. *Oionos* can mean the omen itself.

In Latin, *ales*, *alitis*, winged, is used alone to mean a large bird. Small birds are *volucres*. *Fulvus Iovis ales*, the yellow bird of Jupiter, is the eagle, *minister fulminis*, the servant of the thunderbolt, *flammiger*, the flame carrier.

Mercury, the messenger of the gods, is *Cyllenius ales*, named after Mount Cyllene, his birthplace in Arcadia. Perseus is *aureus ales*, the golden bird.

In augury, *alites* give omens by their flight. Such are the *buteo*, a kind of falcon, and the *sanqualis*.

The latter was the osprey, sacred to the Sabine deity Sancus. The eagle, *aquila*, was another bird watched for its flight.

The *oscines* gave omens by their voice; for example, the crow, *cornix* the owl, *noctua*, sacred to Minerva, and the raven, *corvus*, sacred to Apollo. The raven's flight was favourable if it was seen on the right, the crow's was good if seen on the left.

It may be helpful to glance at a play by Aristophanes, *The Birds*. It was first performed in Athens in 414 B.C., at the Great Dionysia, in the middle of the Peloponnesian war, when Athens was at war with Sparta. The play is anti-war and Utopian.

Peithetairos and Euelpides, sick of Athenian life, consult King Tereus, who had been turned into a hoopoe, and ask him which is the best place to live. After some discussion, Peithetairos suggests that the birds unite to build a great walled city in the air. It will be impregnable, for they will control the food supply of gods and men.

The birds agree. The two Athenians grow wings, and Nephelokokkugia, Cloud-cuckoo-land, is built.

Iris is caught trespassing when she inquires why sacrifices have stopped. She is sent away. More visitors arrive -- all mortals want wings. Prometheus arrives, tells of the gods' food shortage, and urges Peithetairos to make hard terms, to demand Basileia, Sovereignty, daughter of Zeus, as his wife. A deputation of gods arrives, Poseidon, Herakles, and a Triballian god. Peithetairos is successful, and a marriage is arranged.

Many kinds of birds are mentioned in the play. The hoopoe, formerly King Tereus, plays an important part. Apollodorus, 3:14, tells of his past history.

Pandion of Athens had two daughters, Procne and Philomela. Tereus, king of Thrace, married Procne, but also assaulted Philomela. In revenge the sisters killed his son Itys, and served him up to his father Tereus for dinner. When Tereus pursued them, he was turned into a hoopoe, Procne into a swallow, and Philomela into a nightingale. This story can be compared with the other instances of murders and feasts treated in the chapter on heroes and Herakles.

The hoopoe had great religious significance. In Greek it is *epops*. The *epoptes* is an initiate in the Eleusinian Mysteries; the word means 'one who beholds'. The bird has a remarkable erectile crest, chiefly gold with a little black. In the play it sings a serenade, in the course of which we hear that Apollo has golden hair. For its Hebrew name, '*dukhiphat*', spirit revealer, see the glossary. There is a frieze of hoopoes in Crete, at Knossos.

Other birds mentioned with crested heads and necks are the coot, *phaleris*, sacred to Aphrodite, and the lark *korudalle*. In Latin *alauda cristata* is the crested lark. The Legio Alauda was a legion named after the lark. The crested wren was called *turannos*, king. In line 291 ff., we hear that the birds are crested as though for the *hoplitodromos*, the soldier's footrace, in which each soldier wore a crested helmet and carried a shield.

The cock, *alektruon*, was the most important domestic bird. The Persian king wore a peaked hat, *kurbasia*. The king alone wore it upright like a cock's comb. It is portrayed in a mosaic of the battle of Issus.

The cock, *alektryon*, is not the only bird whose name contains the syllable *al* or *el*. We have met the lark *alauda*. If its voice, Greek *aude*, is here associated with *el*, so that its name is El's voice, we can see why a Roman legion should have the name.

Alkuon, Latin *alcedo*, is the kingfisher. *Alkedonia* are the fourteen days when kingfishers brood and the sea is calm. The Greek *kuo* means contain.

The woodpecker is in Latin *picus*, in Greek *druops*. As *drus* is a tree, especially an oak tree, it seems possible that the name means the voice from the tree. Another kind of woodpecker mentioned in *The Birds* is the *drukolaptes*. *Qol* is the Hebrew for voice. The woodpecker was important in augury for its note and appearance. It was sacred to Mars. Perhaps its rapid fire tapping suggested a hail of missiles.

The eagle, *aetos*, was the bird of Zeus. It was often shown on a sceptre [9]. The falcon, *hierax*, is obviously sacred with such a name (*hieros*, sacred). In Egypt Horus was the falcon god.

The owl, *glauk*, was sacred to Athene, who is called *Glaukopis*, with owl-like appearance. Some owls are called horned owls, but in the case of Athene the staring eye is likely to be the reason for the epithet. Sufferers from jaundice were advised to look at the stonecurlew. This bird has large golden eyes. Plutarch writes: "The bird draws out the malady, which issues, like a stream, through the eyesight."

The wryneck, *iunx*, was used by witches for spells. This bird's magical importance may owe something to the fact that it makes a hissing sound, suggestive of a snake.

A bronze eagle and a bronze dolphin were set up at Olympia where the chariot races were held. The eagle was raised, and the dolphin lowered, as a signal for the start of a race.

Three more words of interest from *The Birds* may be quoted.

Line 275: *Exedros* is a term used in augury. It means inauspicious, literally 'out of one's seat'.

Line 521: The soothsayer is called 'tampon', shining.

Line 364: *Eleleleu* is a Greek war-cry.

Among the Central American birds known as quetzals, the 'resplendent trogon' is well known for its long tail feathers, causing it to be worshipped by the Toltecs. The god Quetzalcoatl, whose name means 'tail-feathers' and 'snake', is associated with the morning star, the planet Venus. The resplendent trogon not only had significance because of the tail, but also resembles the hoopoe in having a crest.

The Greek adjective *epitumbidios*, crested, is applied to crested larks, from the resemblance of the crest to a mound. *Tumbos*, mound or tomb, is the mound over the ashes of a dead person, surmounted by a *stele*, tombstone. The divine fire in the head is discussed in the chapter dealing with the *Timaeus* of Plato.

The Latin phrase '*jubar stella*' means Phosphorus and Hesperus, i.e. the planet Venus. The Latin *jubar* is the radiance of a heavenly body. *Ar* is divine fire. *Juba* is the flowing mane or hair of an animal, the crest of a serpent, the crest of a helmet, the foliage of trees, and the tail of a comet.

Notes (Chapter Five: Deities of Delphi)

1. Homer: *Iliad* XXI:511
2. Aeschylus: *Agamemnon* 1085
3. Homer: *Iliad* XX:131
4. Cicero: *De Divinatione* I:24
5. Vergil: *Aeneid* IV:160 ff.
6. Euripides: *Orestes* 480
7. Hesiod: *Theogony* 120
8. Pindar: *Olympian* IX:219
9. Herodotus: I;195

CHAPTER SIX

SKY LINKS

ACCORDING to Heraclitus, "Thunderbolt steers the Universe." We have seen evidence that this was the general view in the ancient world of Greece and Rome. Having begun this study with chthonic forces, we need now to pay more attention to the sky, which was vitally important in ancient thought as the place where action was taken to create cosmos, order, out of chaos.

The main features of the Greek myths dealing with cosmogony are: marriage of earth and sky; production of a succession of monsters and giants; a succession of gods; theomachy (battles of gods with gods and with giants and monsters); allocation of spheres of influence; interference with the earth by extraterrestrial bodies and forces.

The overall picture has much in common with myths from all over the world. It is important to note that these myths appear at first as history; only later were they interpreted by Greeks and then by modern scholars as anthropomorphic descriptions of natural phenomena, or projections of human psychic activities.

The followers of Orpheus taught that the start of the order of the world as they knew it was Aither, upper air, and Chaos, yawning gulf. Night and the wind produced an egg, and from the egg emerged a shining creature, Eros, whose name means love. (Night was the first to prophesy at Delphi as we shall see later). Eros was the same as Phanes, the revealer. Phanes created the first gods. The Greek word *theos*, god, is probably derived from the word *thein*, to run. The alternative derivation is from *tithemi*, put, set in order.

An alternative version, leaving out the egg, is given by Hesiod, a Greek poet active in probably the 8th century B.C.. The gods were created by the mating of Ouranos and Gaia, or Ge, the earth.

The first god is Ouranos. The usual translation 'sky' or 'heaven' can be misleading. Even as late as the time of the pre-Socratic philosophers (c. 500 B.C.), we have a reference to numerous *ouranoi* or heavens. We should bear in mind the earlier Greek version which tells us that Ouranos was a god in the sky.

Ouranos and Gaia had numerous offspring, e.g. the Titans, six sons and six daughters, whose name implies straining and reaching. Their names were: Okeanos, Koios, Kreios, Hyperion, Iapetos, Kronos, Theia, Rheia, Themis, Mnemosyne, Phoebe and Tethys. Of these, Kronos and Iapetos were the most important; at any rate, they are mentioned together by Homer [1]. At first they all lived in the sky, later they were ejected from heaven.

Gaia and Ouranos produced the Cyclopes, huge one-eyed creatures, and the hundred-handed monsters.

Ouranos had imprisoned his children in Tartarus, the world far below the earth, and their mother Gaia instigated a revolt. Ouranos was displaced by his son Kronos, who castrated his father and ruled in his place. The Romans knew him as Saturnus. Kronos heard that he would be displaced by one of his sons, so he decided to devour them at birth. His wife, Rhea, prevented him from swallowing his son Zeus by giving him a stone wrapped in swaddling clothes, and sent the infant to Crete to be brought up in a cave in a mountain. Kronos (according to Diodorus, Zeus) fought with and defeated a monstrous snake called Ophioneus. After his victory he wore a crown.

Zeus banished his father and became ruler of Olympus. He himself had to defeat three revolts. The first was by the Titans. The second was by the sons of Aloeos in Thessaly. Otus and Ephialtes piled Mount Ossa on Mount Olympus, and Pelion on

Ossa, in an attempt to storm heaven. The third revolt was by the giants.

In all these battles, Zeus won with the help of the aegis (a goatskin) and the thunderbolt.

Zeus defeated a monster named Typhoeus or Typhon. It had a hundred snake heads and fiery eyes. Zeus attacked it with thunderbolts and sent it down to Tartarus.

Typhon corresponds to Set in Egyptian myth. Set murdered and cut into pieces his brother Osiris. Osiris was avenged by his son Horus. Horus defeated Set, but lost an eye in the process.

Firmly established at last, Zeus divided the universe into spheres of influence. He himself had the sky, Poseidon had Ocean, and Hades the underworld: The subsequent history of the *Olympian* gods is the family history of Zeus, who fathered Apollo, Hermes, Athene, and many others.

There was an old Egyptian saying: A god must die when he has seen his son.

The Greek deities tended to be classified in male-female groups. For example, there was an archaic altar at Athens showing twelve deities: Zeus-Hera, Poseidon-Demeter, Apollo-Artemis, Ares-Aphrodite, Hermes-Athena, Hephaestus-Hestia.

Two great floods, that of Deucalion, and that of Ogyges, were sent by Zeus to punish the human race for its wickedness. The sea is described as a "tear of Kronos" in Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*, 364. The source of the floods may well be the waters above the firmament; vide *Old Testament: Genesis 1:7*.

The succession Ouranos -- Kronos -- Zeus has a parallel in Hittite myth, where it is Anu, Kumarbi (Kronos), and the storm god Zas. Anu had previously driven out Alalu, the first king of heaven.

At Ugarit, on the Asian shore opposite Cyprus, the succession was El, a god with characteristics of a bull; Baal, son of El, the 'rider of the clouds'; and Hadad, god of lightning and the thunderbolt. Hadad, can mean 'The Torch', from Greek *das*, *daidos*, torch.

The brothers and sisters of Zeus were Poseidon, Hades, Hestia, Demeter and Hera.

The snake or dragon figures largely in world mythology, and calls for further study before we can proceed. 'Chronos', which means 'time,' in classical Greek, was a primary cosmic figure, who was personified as a winged snake with many heads. The Babylonian monster Tiamat was a many-headed dragon, according to some reports. It is possible that it resembled a goat.

In the Bible, Rahab and Leviathan are serpents, enemies of Yahweh, who destroyed them.

"Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength; thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. Thou brakest the heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness" [2].

Can there be here a reference to manna? Which waters are referred to?

"The Lord shall punish Leviathan the piercing serpent, even Leviathan that crooked serpent, and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea" [3].

In Akkadian myth there is a battle between Marduk and Tiamat. In Hittite tradition it is between Zas and Illuyankas. At Ugarit the snake is Lotan, slain by Baal. In Indian myth the serpent is defeated by Vishnu. In Norse myth the fight is between the snake and Thor.

Blood is shed liberally in these myths. Anath slays the enemies of Baal and wades in their blood; in Egyptian myth Hathor kills

the enemies of Re, and Mount Haemus in Thrace is spattered with the blood of Typhon as Zeus pursues and kills him. Horus cuts Apep, Ra's enemy, with a flint knife. The river ran red in Egypt at the time of the Exodus.

Before we leave this short and incomplete account of cosmic myths, we may note that Ocean and Night were two of the earliest cosmic entities. Okeanos should not be confused with *pontos*, or *thalassa*, two Greek words for sea. Homer, Iliad 14:200, reads: "to visit Okeanos, the source (*genesis*) of gods, and mother Tethys." Okeanos is to be located in the sky, as the "waters above the firmament," *Genesis* I.

Anath is female, a sister of Baal; Isis is the wife of the murdered Osiris, and in Greek myth there is a goddess, Athene, who was a sky goddess, sharing the aegis with Zeus.

It is worth devoting further study to the eastern connection at this point. There were Bacchic revels in Thebes. In Egypt, Thebes is 'Waset'. The Greek word *astu*, city, easily becomes waste, with the help of a diagram. The legendary origins of the Greek Thebes involve a serpent.

Kadmos was the son of Agenor, king of Tyre, the city on the coast of Phoenicia. Zeus fell in love with the sister of Kadmos, Europa, took the form of a bull, and persuaded her to climb on his back. He then swam off with her to Crete. In Crete she gave birth to Minos and Rhadamanthus.

Agent sent Kadmos to look for Europa. The Delphic oracle advised him to follow a cow which he would meet, and to found a city where it first lay down. The cow led him to a place in Boeotia, where Kadmos founded the Kadmeia, the citadel of the future city of Thebes. His companions, fetching water from a spring for a sacrifice, were killed by a dragon guarding the spring. Kadmos killed the dragon and sowed the dragon's teeth (on the advice of Athene). Armed men sprang up. He set them fighting each other by throwing a stone into their midst. All but five were killed. The five survivors, the Spartoi or 'sown men', built the Kadmeia.

Kadmos taught the Boeotians to write (the Greek alphabet used Phoenician letters). He married Harmonia, a daughter of Ares and Aphrodite. Among their children were Semele and Agave. Eventually Kadmos and Harmonia turned into serpents and departed to Elysium.

After killing the serpent, Kadmos had to serve Ares for eight years. One may compare the Daphnephoria, which took place every eight years at Thebes, and the killing by Apollo of the serpent at Delphi, after which Apollo had to serve Admetus for eight years, an episode celebrated in the festival of the Stepteria.

Melampus (Blackfoot) was a famous Theban seer. At his home near Pylos he rescued and brought up some young snakes. They licked his ears, giving him understanding of the voices of birds. Later, he met Apollo, who taught him prophecy by sacrifices. The association of Apollo and snakes licking ears occurs also with the Trojan seer Helenos and with Cassandra.

Melampus was the ancestor of the kings of Argos, and of the two prophets Amphiaraus and Amphilochus. Theoclymenos, mentioned in *Odyssey* XV:256, is an Apollonian practitioner. He has ecstatic visions. He too was descended from Melampus. Apollodorus, 3.17, tells how Polyidos, an observer of birds and snakes, raised Glaucus, son of Minos king of Crete, from the dead.

We will now look in closer detail at the sky, through the eyes of the Greeks and of some other peoples. The link with electricity is lightning, and a pattern may emerge if we study a representative selection of the scenes described.

An object, or objects, is described in ways that suggest a snake, a snake with wings, a horned creature, a bull, a ram, a seething pot, a stag, a horned snake, a horned owl, a goat, etc..

The Greek word *drakon*, a dragon, is also the aorist participle of a verb that means to see. It therefore suggests an eye.

We have already seen that the Ugaritic El was bull-like. The Greek goddess Hera, wife of Zeus, is given the epithet ox-like or ox-eyed, "*boopis potnia Here*"[4]. In *The Bacchae*, Dionysus seems to Pentheus to have horns, and the bull leads to disaster [5].

Turning to Akkad, we find the Akkadian monarch Naram Sin wearing, as shown on his stele from Susa, a horned cap. The Cerastae, horned people in Cyprus, were changed by Venus into bullocks [6].

The ceremony of the Suovetaurilia at Rome was a sacrifice of a pig, a sheep and an ox. The word hecatomb reminds us that oxen were sacrificed in great numbers. At a sacrifice, an ox was a *victima*, a sheep was a *hostia*. Pigs, horses and dogs were sacrificed.

Kerastes is a horned serpent; *keratias* is a word occurring in Pliny, meaning a comet resembling a horn. The Dorians who entered the Peloponnese after the collapse of Mycenaean civilisation worshipped a ram god, Karnos, and in the 6th century B.C., Zeus Ammon appears with ram's horns on coins of Cyrene.

Links with the Celtic World:

The Celts worshipped horned deities, and Taranis, the thunderer, is the opposite number of Jupiter. *Alces*, Greek *alkis*, is the elk, and reminds us of Al, El, horns being a mark of the divine.

Much important material is to be found in *Pagan Celtic Britain*, by Anne Ross, Routledge, 1967.

There were two kinds of horned deity. There was an antlered god, Cernunnus, the 'horned one'. *Keras* is Greek for horn. He often wears a tunic. His regular companion is the ram-headed or

horned serpent. This often appears with the corresponding version of Mars.

The stag god is portrayed as lord of the animals, e.g. on the Gundestrup cauldron, and may thereby have a link with Minoan Crete. There is an association with Mercury, the Roman Hermes.

The second type is of a bull-horned or ram-horned god. This also is associated with Mercury. It is commonest in North Britain, but is also found in Gaul. It is a god of war. There is an example at Maryport, Cumbria, and horned helmets have been found at Orange in France.

While on the subject of horned deities, it is worth noting that Hesychius, a 5th century A.D. writer, mentions the Greek word *skorobaios* as equivalent to *scarabos* and *karabos*. *Karabos* is a stag beetle.

Ravens were important to the Celts; they were sacred to Wotan and to Apollo.

The North British god Veteris or Vetiris has a boar and a serpent carved on his altar.

The Belgae worshipped a ram-horned god, and had bronze figures of a three-horned bull.

A dog deity Nodous was worshipped at Lydney in Gloucestershire. Dog meat was taboo for the legendary Irish hero Cuchulainn.

Celtic gods were to be placated by ritual, sacrifices and incantations. They were not immortal.

At Reinheim, near Saarbrücken, in 1954, there was discovered a burial of a queen or princess. A gold torc displayed a head of a female surmounted by an owl head like that of Minerva. Owls, including the horned owl, were sacred to Athene.

In 1891 in Denmark, a cauldron, the Gundestrup cauldron, was discovered. The scene is the slaying of a huge bull.

When an Irish king was to be chosen, the men of Erin killed a bull. One man ate some of the flesh, and a spell was chanted over him in his bed. The person he saw in his sleep would become king.

The cult of the severed head in Celtic religion may be linked with the tore. Cernunnus, the antlered god, often wears a torc. He is probably the same as Hern the Hunter in British folk lore.

The Celtic for a sanctuary is *nemeton*, similar to the Latin *nemus*, a grove.

I append some passages referring chiefly to the sky and the bull, many from Homer and Vergil, some from the east.

Iliad V:654: Hades has the epithet Klytopolos, famous for horses.

Iliad XV:184: Poseidon is angry when Iris is sent to tell him to stop fighting. He reminds her that when the universe was divided between the three gods, the earth and Olympus were held in common.

Iliad XV:225: The *enerteroi*, gods who dwell below with Kronos.

Iliad XX: In this book, the gods join the war at Troy in earnest, Poseidon versus Apollo, Athene versus Ares, Hera versus Artemis, Leto versus Hermes, Hephaestus versus Scamander (the river).

Odyssey III:6: Poseidon the Earthshaker, of the sable locks.
Odyssey VI:42: Athene goes to Olympus, where the gods are said to have their eternal home. It is not shaken by winds, nor drenched with rainstorms or snow, but cloudless air and white

radiance play over it. In it the blessed gods spend all their days in happiness.

Aeneid X:565: Like Aegaeon, who they say had a hundred arms, and breathed out fire from fifty breasts and mouths, rattling with as many shields and drawing as many swords as Jove hurled thunderbolts, so was Aeneas on the battlefield against Turnus and his troops.

A.N.E.T. (*Ancient Near-Eastern Texts*, J. B. Pritchard (Princeton, 3rd Edition 1967): "Primordial Apsu, and Mummu Tiamat."

Apsu is male, fresh water. Mummu is female, salt water.

The Cyclops Brontes, thunderer, is one of those named as father of Athene.

Centaurs were hybristic, and self-indulgent in sexual matters. Centaur, was a slang term for pederast. Aristophanes, *Clouds* 346: Socrates: "Have you ever looked up and seen a cloud looking like a centaur or lynx or wolf or bull?" "Good Lord, yes!"

Glaukopis, bright-eyed, a standard epithet of Athene, is also applied to snakes.

LEVIATHAN.

Yahweh controls the waters, smites Leviathan, and then creates day and night: "Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength; thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. Thou brakest the heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood; thou driedst up mighty rivers. The day is shine, the night also is shine; thou hast prepared the light and the sun. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth; thou hast made summer and winter" [7].

At Ugarit, Baal (son of El) slays Lotan with the seven heads. In Egypt, Apophis is slain (in one text he is slain by Set). Marduk defeats Tiamat in the Babylonian version, and the Hittites, Illuyankas is slain by the storm god. Farther afield, one meets Vishnu and the serpent, the Midgard serpent, and the Chinese dragon.

Chronos (Kronos) defeats Ophioneus (*ophis* = snake), and wears a crown.

In a quarrel between Ares and Hephaestus, Dionysus defeated Hephaestus by means of wine, and led him to Olympus on a mule.

Mesonux: This is the name of the Midnight Planet, one of the seven planets, so named by the Pythagoreans. It is mentioned by the poet Stesichorus.

The Moirae were spinners of the thread of life and fate. In the Orphic version, they lived in Ouranos, in a cave by the pool, where white water gushes from the cave. According to Hesiod, they were daughters of Zeus and Themis.

Ophion: Eurynome and Ophion ruled over the Titans before Kronos and Rhea. They resided on Olympus.

Typhoeus: In *Aeneid* VIII:298, he is described as 'towering'.

*PASSAGES ON VARIOUS TOPICS: THE ORIENT; BULLS;
THEBES.*

Iliad XX:402 ff.: Achilles strikes Hippiodamas in the back; he expires, bellowing like a bull dragged round the Lord of Helike by youths in whom the Earthshaker delights. Helike in Achaia was a centre of worship of Poseidon. The roaring of the victim is taken to mean that the god accepts the sacrifice.

Aeneid VIII:77: Aeneas prays to the river Tiber: "O father Tiber, horned river, ruler of the waters of Hesperia ..."

Pausanias I: 34:2: Near Oropus the earth split open to receive Amphiaraus and his chariot.

Pausanias IX:8:4: The Elektra Gate at Thebes is named after Elektra, sister of Kadmos. The Neistan gates were named after the last lyre string, the *netes*, which Amphion invented at these gates. But Amphion's brother Zethos was called Neis, and the gates may have been named after him.

Neate chorde is the lowest string (highest in pitch). Kapaneus attacked the wall at the Elektra Gate and was struck by lightning.

Further instances from Pausanias:

IX:12:2: There is an altar and statue of Athene Onka, dedicated by Kadmos.

IX:17:2: Near the shrine of Artemis of Fair Fame at Thebes is a stone lion.

X:15:3: King Attalus of Pergamum was 'Son of the Bull'; he was addressed by an oracle as son of a bull.

IV:1:6 f.: The Great Goddesses were worshipped at Thebes, in the oak-forest of Lykos. The Kabeiroi initiations were introduced to Thebes by Methapos.

The Golden Bough, Chapter 36: Asiatic Greeks strung up an ox in a tree and stabbed it.

Zas and Chthonie.

Iliad VI:303: Hecabe chooses her longest and richest dress, Sidonian work, as a present for Athene. Theano lays the robe on the knees of the goddess and prays for Trojan success against Diomedes.

The Anakalypteria is the Festival of Unveiling, and a time for giving the wedding presents. When the *oikia*, home and

contents, are ready, Zas makes a fine big *pharos*, robe, and on it he creates Ge and Ogenos and the halls (*domata*) of Ogenus. (Grenfell and Hunt, *Greek Papyri Series* II:11 p.23. 3rd Century A.D.). Does Chthonie put on the robe to become Ge, or is the robe hung on the tree?

Isidorus: "So that they may learn what is the winged oak and the decorated *pharos* on it, all that Pherecydes theologised in allegory, taking his starting point from the prophecy of Ham."

But consider also the poetry of the man of Syros, and Zeus and Chthonie and the love in them, and the coming-into-being of Ophioneus and the battle of the gods, and the tree and the *peplos*. Maximus Tyrius: IV:4.

I suggest that there may be a correspondence here with Yggdrasyl.

Some passages referring to the bull:

Achelous. Hesiod, *Theogony* 340: He was a child of Tethys and Ocean.

Iliad XXI:194: Not even the mighty Achelous can fight against Zeus.

He had a bull's horn in his forehead, like Okeanos. Herakles had broken off the other.

Pasiphae was a daughter of the sun. She married Minos, king of Crete. Poseidon made her fall in love with a bull as punishment for her husband's refusal to sacrifice to Poseidon a beautiful bull that he sent. She gave birth to the Minter, half man, half bull. It was kept in the labyrinth built by Daedalus.

The name Pasiphae means 'shining on all'. The name could well be given to a bright heavenly body such as the moon, or a comet.

The story is rather similar to the story from Ugarit about Anath and Baal. An announcement is made that a wild ox is born to Baal, a buffalo to the Rider of the Clouds.

This chapter would be incomplete without reference to the relationship between Zeus and his sister-wife Hera. Their sacred marriage was celebrated each year in Crete. In *Iliad* XIV, Homer describes the seductive wiles of Hera when she distracts Zeus's attention so that Poseidon may help the Greeks. The fragrance of the ambrosia with which she anoints herself reaches heaven and earth (line 174), and her veil, of spun material, is as bright as the sun (line 185). When they embrace on Mount Gargaros, they surround themselves with a golden cloud, and dew rains on them (line 350). Early in Book XV, when Zeus wakes up, he is angry. He reminds her that he once fettered her and suspended her in the sky, and cast out of heaven those who had helped her. In line 26 we read of Herakles being despatched by Hera over the sea with the help of Boreas.

It seems likely that the sacred marriage aimed at restricting the god's amorous escapades, and at preventing him upsetting the cosmos by introducing additions to the Olympic family. Possibly Hera was the atmosphere round Zeus, and people feared the result of anger and separation. when Ixion tried to rape Hera, he was deceived by a cloud in the shape of Hera.

The Egyptian *hra* means 'face, or 'upon.'

Notes (Chapter Six: Sky Links)

1. Homer: *Iliad*= VIII:479
2. Old Testament: *Psalms*, LXXIV:13
3. Old Testament: *Isaiah*, XXVII:1
4. Homer: *Iliad*' VIII:471.
5. Euripides: *The Bacchae*= 1159
6. Ovid: *Metamorphoses*' X:222
7. Old Testament: *Psalms* LXXIV:13-17 95 a. 96 follow.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SACRIFICE

THE Greeks (and many others) tell us that strange objects appeared in the sky, often with unpleasant consequences for the earth. If we assume that they were telling the truth as they saw it, then their reactions appear to have a certain logic behind them.

I suggest that imitation, better still imitation with slight alterations to portray a safe outcome, was the reaction of the peoples of the world; in fact, sympathetic magic. The hope must have been that a celestial object which, from previous experience, might be a threat to survival, would go away, assume a safer orbit, etc.. Since it was not possible to repel such gods or monsters by ordinary physical means, sympathetic magic and prayers were the only possibilities. Here we have one explanation of sacrifice.

This is not a modern interpretation. Plutarch, in his *Isis and Osiris*, 362 E, tells us that "the Egyptians sacrifice to Typhon with the intention of soothing his anger, yet at some festivals they insult red-headed men, and throw an ass over a cliff, because Typhon was red-headed and like an ass in colour." In 363 B, he says that the Egyptians sacrifice red cattle because Typhon was red.

The Greek verb *sphazo* means slaughter, Hebrew *zabach*. The *thuoskoos* was the priest who slew and offered the victim. *Thusiue* are rites, or offerings. *Thrustas boe* is the cry uttered in sacrificing [1]. 'Thuo', usually translated as "I sacrifice", implies 'I offer part of a meal as first fruits to a god, by throwing it on the fire'.

The *hiereus* was a priest who divined from the victim's entrails. The procedure was that an ox would have its horns gilded. Hair was cut from the forehead of the ox and thrown on the fire before it was killed. At Rome a fillet, a band of red and white wool, was worn by both priest and victim. The victim was bedecked with garlands, and some of the hair burnt. The *vitta*, fillet, was worn by poets, brides, Vestal Virgins, tied round altars [2], and on sacred trees.

THE SACRIFICE OF GOATS.

The goat Amalthea was foster mother to Zeus. The monster Tiamat, according to an old tradition, had the appearance of a goat. The animal was clearly of great importance to the Greeks, and a he-goat was sacrificed in March at the start of the Great Dionysia, the drama festival in honour of Dionysus.

The goat was used for removing guilt from a community, and the term scapegoat is still in use today. "And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness" [3].

"And he shall go out into the altar that is before the Lord, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about" [4]

"And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness" [5].

Goat and horse sacrifices are mentioned in the Rig Veda.

In Greek a *pharmakos* is a sorcerer, also a human scapegoat. The word occurs in the *Agamemnon*, line 548, "*pharmakon blabes*", a scapegoat against harm, and in Aristophanes, *The Frogs*, line 733. In the festival of the Thargelia at Athens two men were driven out. Originally two men had been put to death in an expiatory sacrifice. In Chaeronea, hunger, *boulimos*, was whipped out of the door in the form of a slave. At Massilia, in time of plague, a poor man was feasted for a year, then expelled (see *Greek Religion*, by Walter Burkert). In Greece, an ox was driven out, across the city boundary, or towards enemies [6].

The aegis was the shield of Zeus, and seems to have been made of goatskin. It appears on statues of Athene as a short scaly cloak. It is fringed with tassels, *thusanoessa*. '*Thusanos*', tassel, is also the arm of a cuttlefish. It is described by Homer: "*phobos estephanotai*", crowned, or surrounded, with fear [7]. Strife, Might, and Rout are shown on it, and it is set with the head of the Gorgon. The combination of goatskin and snake-like arms suggests a connection with Tiamat, the cosmic serpent mentioned above. There are plenty of accounts of monsters with writhing limbs, etc., so the derivation of aegis and of *aix*, a goat, from the verb '*aisso*', to move with a quick darting motion, is easy.

If we turn to Norse myth, we find confirmation. Thor, the sky god who wielded his hammer Myollnir, lightning, with iron gloves on his hands and wearing a belt of strength, rattled through the sky in his carriage drawn by goats. His hammer had a handle slightly too short. This is normally explained by reference to throwing hammers with a hole in the end of the shaft, but another interpretation is possible, since in mountainous country, if one sees lightning strike the cairn on a peak it seems to fall short.

Thor was provided with gigantic cauldrons, which remind us of the seething pot in the sky (*Old Testament Jeremiah 1:13*).

Thor had a red beard, and there is probably a connection with what the Greeks say they saw in the sky. There is a story that the giant Thrym stole Thor's hammer. To recover it, Thor disguised himself as Freya, to be married to the giant. At the wedding feast Thrym tried to kiss the bride, but was disconcerted to see the fierce glare of the bride's eyes under the veil. When the hammer was passed round to bring good luck, Thor got his hands on it, and the crisis was over. Incidentally, a feather suit such as Freya wore is also worn by Quetzalcoatl-Kukulcan, the feathered serpent of Central American myth.

Thor's encounter with the Midgard Serpent is well known. The Tarnhelm, or helmet of invisibility, may be a link with Hades, the Greek god of the underworld.

The Greeks commonly used two words for an altar: '*bomos*', and '*eschara*'. *Eschara* means especially a hearth, such as there was at the shrine at Delphi by the Pythia's tripod.

An altar was of stone and had horns at the corners.

It was sometimes decorated in relief with a serpent. There is a Celtic example, showing a ram-headed serpent, at Lypiatt Park, Gloucestershire. There was an altar to Apollo at Delos, his birthplace, made entirely of horn, according to Plutarch:

"I saw the horn altar, celebrated as one of the seven wonders, for it needs no glue or other bond, but is fixed and fitted together only by horns taken from the right side of the head" [8].

It is obvious that this altar, and any other with horns of real horn as opposed to stone representations, would not be used for an ordinary fire. The aim was to induce a lightning strike on the victim. Electrical action from the sky would be more likely if water or blood were poured over the victim and round the altar, and this is in fact what was done.

There are remains of altars on the island of Samothrace. A temple precinct there had a *'bothros'*, or pit, and an *eschara* or hearth altar, and at Thera there is an open air *temenos* dedicated by Artemidorus, a Greek from Perge. It is cut in the rock of a low cliff. The altar to the Samothracian gods (who are closely connected with magnetism and electricity) has a hole six inches in diameter cut in the top, a channel from this to ground level, a distance of forty inches, and a shallow depression in front of the altar in the stone floor of the *temenos*. It is well designed for conductivity.

The altar constructed by Elijah has been mentioned, but there is so clear a description of the technique that it deserves to be quoted at greater length.

"And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any answer, nor any that regarded. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on

the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran around about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. And it came to pass at the tune of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art god in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, the Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God" [9].

If electrical effects began to fade the design would be changed, altars and horns would be of stone throughout, to allow an ordinary fire to be used to stimulate or to replace the electrical fire from the sky.

There is another word for an altar in Greek -- *thumele*. It was an altar-shaped platform with steps, practically a mini-ziggurat, which was placed in the middle of the orchestra, the circular area in front of the stage in a Greek theatre. '*Thumele*' suggests the verb '*thuo*', sacrifice by burnt offerings. It is also called '*eleos*'. The Greek writer Julius Pollux, fl. A.D. 180, tells us that it was an ancient table; before the time of Thespis a man mounted it and spoke to the chorus.

Yet another name for an altar is *thuoros*. Presumably it is from *thuo*, sacrifice by fire, and *oros*, mountain. It means a sacrificial table, for offerings. According to Pherecydes, a 6th century B.C. logographos or chronicler, it is the gods' word for *trapeza*, the usual word for a table. Opinions differ as to whether a *trapeza* originally had three legs or four. *Trapeza* also means a part of the liver.

MAGIC; SACRIFICE: SOME RELEVANT PASSAGES.

Iliad XVII:520: Just as when a strong man with a sharp axe cuts behind the horns of an ox, cutting right through, and the ox jumps forward and collapses, so he (Aretus) jumped and fell on his back.

Odyssey III:418: Nestor gave orders for a heifer to be brought from the field. The goldsmith Laerces gilded the heifer's horns. Wood was brought to go round the altar, and fresh water. The smith beat the gold into foil and laid it round the heifer's horns. Aretus brought a flowered lustral bowl and a basket for barley grains. Thrasymedes held a sharp axe (*pelekus*), and Perseus held the dish (*amnion*) to catch the blood. Nestor started the sacrifice by sprinkling lustral water and grain, and throwing a lock from the ox's head into the fire ... They prayed and threw grains of barley, and Thrasymedes struck (*elassen*). The axe cut the tendons of the neck and the heifer collapsed. The women raised their cry. The men lifted up the heifer from the ground and Peisistratus cut its throat (*sphaxen*). When the blood had run out and it was dead, they cut up the body, cut slices from the thighs, wrapped them in folds of fat and laid raw meat on them. The old man burnt them on the faggots, and sprinkled fiery wine on them. The young men beside him held five-pronged forks. When the thighs were burnt and they had tasted the inner parts, they cut up the rest and skewered it on spits over the fire.

Odyssey III:464 ff.: Polycaste gave Telemachus a bath, rubbed him with olive oil, and he looked like a god. He sat down to the feast. When they had roasted the flesh on the spits, they ate and drank. Then Nestor, mindful of the laws of hospitality, ordered horses and chariot to be prepared so that Telemachus would not have to start on his journey alone.

Aeneid II:268 ff.: Aeneas is asleep while the Greeks are mounting the final attack on Troy. Hector appears to him in a dream, and urges him to leave at once with the Penates. He brings out from their shrine the fillets (*vittas*) and mighty Vesta and the eternal fire.

Aeneid IV:54 ff.: Dido confides in her sister Anna, and consults the gods about her hoped-for marriage with Aeneas. They visit the shrines, asking for the favour of the gods. They sacrifice selected sheep to Ceres, to Phoebus and to Bacchus, especially to Juno, who presides over marriage. Dido herself holds the dish and pours the wine between the horns of a white cow, or walks up and down before the faces of the gods' statues at their altars covered in offerings, and celebrates each day anew with gifts. She studies the open breasts of victims, gazing with parted lips at their steaming entrails. Alas for the ignorant minds of seers! What help to the infatuated woman are prayers and shrines? The flame consumes the soft marrow of her bones, the wound in her heart is silent yet alive. Unhappy Dido burns; she wanders, out of her mind, all over the city.

Aeneid IV:450: Bad omens on altars: The sacred water turns black and the wine turns into blood.

V:84: At the funeral games for his father, Aeneas sees a huge snake, writhing in seven coils, creeping over the burial mound and altars. It consumes the offering, then departs.

Pausanias I:16:1: When Seleucus set out from Macedonia with Alexander, the firewood on the altar moved and burned spontaneously.

II:5:5: Between Corinth and Sicyon is a burnt temple to Apollo. One story is that it was dedicated to Olympian Zeus, and sudden fire fell on it and burnt it down.

GOATS

Iliad IV:166: Agamemnon consoles the wounded Menelaus: Zeus who lives high up in heaven will be angry at the Trojan's treachery and will shake his dark aegis at them all.

Pausanias III: 15:9: The Laconians sacrifice goats to Hera the goat-eater. Herakles founded the sanctuary and was the first to sacrifice goats.

Iliad XVII:593: Apollo inspires Hector, and the son of Kronos takes up his glittering tasselled aegis, veils Mount Ida in cloud, and sends a lightning flash with a great clap of thunder. He shakes his aegis, and gives victory to the Trojans, putting the Achaeans to flight.

Herodotos IV: Greeks took the aegis for statues of Athene from Libya. The dress of Libyan women is of leather and has tassels of leather instead of snakes. Libyan women also wear goatskins dyed red, fringed.

Aristotle refers to the fall of a meteorite at Aegospotami (goat's river), when a comet was in the sky.

Frazer, *The Golden Bough* XLIII, mentions Dionysus as "The one of the black goatskin." When the gods fled to Egypt to escape the fury of Typhon, Dionysus was turned into a goat.

At Rome a she-goat was sacrificed to Jupiter Vedijovis. At Tenedos the new born calf sacrificed to Dionysus was shod in buskins.

At Delphi the dragon Python had a son called Aix (goat).

ALTARS

Aeneid IV:219: Iarbas, the unsuccessful suitor, prays to Jupiter Ammon with complaints against Aeneas, this second Paris, wearing a Phrygian cap tied under his chin and over his oiled hair, accompanied by the train of effeminates. As he prayed, he held his hand on the altar.

Iliad XX:402: A bull is dragged round the altar.

The Contest of Homer and Hesiod, line 325: Homer crossed to Delos to the assembly (*paneguris*), and standing on the horn altar he recited the *Hymn to Apollo*.

Notes (Chapter Seven: Sacrifice)

1. Aeschylus: *'Seven Against Thebes'* 269
2. Vergil: *'Eclogues'* VIII:64
3. Old Testament *Leviticus* XVI:7-10
4. *Ibid.* Verse 18
5. *Ibid.* Verse 21
6. Plutarch: *'Quaestiones Graecae'* 297
7. Homer: *'Iliad'* V:738 ff.
8. Plutarch: *'The Intelligence of Animals'* 983
9. Old Testament I *Kings* XVIII:25 ff.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SKY AND STAGE

WE are now in a position to reconsider the origin and significance of Greek tragedy. A goat-song festival began with the sacrifice of a bull at the beginning of the Great Dionysia at Athens.

The bull was slain as the procession entered the city; a he-goat was sacrificed, probably on the *thymele*, and the festival of drama began. The sacrifice was accompanied by a dithyramb. This was a form of lyric poetry heard especially at Athens. It was in the Phrygian mode, as befitted Dionysus, accompanied by pipes. The leader mounted the *eleos* (*thymele*), or altar, to recite a tale in trochaic metre about Dionysus. There was a circular movement of the chorus, probably with reversal of direction for the antistrophe. There is a fragment of Aeschylus, addressed to a female chorus: "You are to stand round this altar and shining fire, and pray, in a circular formation."

The word tragedy comes from '*ode*', song, and '*tragos*', goat. The other word for a goat, *aix*, is used by Aristotle to mean a fiery meteor. Tragedy, according to Aristotle, developed from the leaders (*exarchontes*) of the dithyramb. The first name known to us of a tragedian is that of Arion, who flourished around 600 B.C. in the city of Corinth. Choral odes in tragedy retained the Doric dialect of Dorian Corinth. Thespis, about 536, wrote the first recorded tragedy. There was one actor, and the chorus.

In the early days of Greek dithyramb, inflated goat skins were covered with olive oil. The chorus jumped on them and slithered off.

The scenery for a tragedy was usually a palace or a temple. In the 5th and 4th centuries B.C., there would be a prologue, in which one, or sometimes two, actors introduced the subject of the play, but this was a later development. A primitive tragedy began with the entrance of the chorus, originally resembling satyrs (*capripedes satyri* Horace). They were generally humble inhabitants of the city where the action of the play took place. There would be twelve or more of them. At each side of the orchestra there was a *parodos*, or entrance, which gave its name to the opening song, *parodos*, of the chorus, which was accompanied by a musician playing a pipe. The actor, or 'struggler' (*agonistes*) came onto the stage. 'Episode' is an entrance. The chorus, rather than solo actors, were the original performers, but a second actor was introduced by Aeschylus in the 5th century, and a third by Sophocles. The first actor was the protagonist, the second the deuteragonist, and the third the tritagonist.

In a very early tragedy the subject matter would be the life and death of a god, especially Dionysus. Later, heroes would be the subject, and eventually ordinary people. When tragedians abandoned stories about Dionysus, public criticism said 'It's nothing to do with Dionysus'. Aeschylus introduced the tetralogy to meet this objection. His '*Oresteia*' had the '*Proteus*' as a satyr play to follow the three tragedies.

The actors wore masks. We learn from the Roman poet Horace that Thespis, regarded by many as the inventor of tragedy, went on tour with wagons, presumably used as a stage; his players coloured their faces red with wine lees. He is also said to have introduced masks made of linen. In the 5th century at any rate, the masks had expressions that suited the character of the wearer. The mask had a projection, *onkos*, at the top, supporting a high wig.

The actor wore *cothoroi* or buskins. These were high boots, laced at the front, with a thick sole which would increase the height of the actor and help to give an imposing and even supernatural appearance. Since a buskin could be worn on

either foot, the word became a nickname for a trimmer in politics.

The actor wore a wig, headress and a long robe. Female parts were played by men. (In a comedy, actors wore a *sisura*, goatskin, like a shawl, over the tunic).

The episodes in a tragedy were scenes involving actors and chorus. Between episodes the chorus would sing a *stasimon*, a song during which they would stand in one place, as opposed to the *parodos* when they entered. The *stasima* were reflections on the action that had just taken place in the episode.

After the final episode, there was a final *stasimon*, then the *exodos* or final scene.

It is generally held that in Aeschylus's plays the emphasis is on the gods controlling events, as in the *Iliad*; in the plays of Sophocles the clash is between man and god; in Euripides the heroes and heroines may be brought right down to earth, but the gods are never far away. Euripides was attacked by Aristophanes for clothing his characters in rags. To give an example in detail, the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus portrays the murder of Agamemnon by his wife Clytemnestra and her lover Aigisthos. In the next play of the trilogy, Orestes murders his mother to avenge his father, acting on the instructions of the god Apollo. In the third play, the *Eumenides*, he is under attack from the Furies, or Eumenides, divine pursuers who take a different view of the action of Orestes from Apollo. Man is a puppet, pulled this way and that by warring deities.

In his clash with an opposing force (god, hero, man or woman), a fatal flaw in the character of the tragic hero is revealed. *Hamartia*, the Greek word for sin in the New Testament, means in classical Greek missing the mark, going astray. The cause of the error is probably *hubris*, or arrogance, going too high and too far, like a god. The corresponding word in Latin, which comes from the same root, is *superbia*. It implies setting oneself up above one's fellow mortals. This results in a confrontation, and at some point the complications of the plot are resolved by

a change of direction and fortune, the *peripeteia*. The hero who was successful and powerful is overthrown. In most tragedies, great importance attaches to a recognition scene which leads to, or indeed is part of, the *peripeteia*. In the *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Oedipus, king of Thebes, has been very, even too, successful. He has answered the riddle of the Sphinx, been rewarded with the throne of Thebes and with Jocasta, the widowed queen. When plague affects the city, he undertakes to find the guilty man who has brought pollution. He is himself revealed as the guilty man, a man who has murdered his father and married his mother. It is through his own persistence that he finds out who he is, and is revealed as the cause of the plague.

In *The Bacchae* of Euripides, it is the Stranger who is revealed as the god Dionysus.

After the *katastrophe*, or overturning, things settle down to a new order, possibly helped by the appearance of a god or goddess from the sky, lowered by a crane (*deus ex machina*). Scene shifting and stage effects were employed in a Greek theatre. The *ekkuklema* was a device for rapidly removing scenery to reveal the interior of a house. There was a lightning machine, *keranoskopeion*, and a thunder machine, *bronteion*.

The tragic pattern is a sequence: *koros*, a surfeit of happiness and success; *hubris*, the resulting arrogant behaviour; *nemesis*, the desire of the gods for vengeance. They are red in the face with anger. They send *ate*, the blind folly which is associated with disaster which the victim brings on himself. Then come the *peripeteia* and *katastrophe*.

It is noteworthy that the word *peripeteia* is cognate with a verb meaning to collide, with unpleasant results. It is used, of ships colliding, by the historian Thucydides.

The Greeks felt that life was a matter of walking along a razor's edge. Any excess in any direction might prove disastrous. 'Nothing to excess' was one of the precepts engraved in stone at Delphi. With luck, life would go smoothly with the appropriate rites and sacrifices carefully observed. The slightest

irregularity, *hamartia*, could bring ruin. This idea may have influenced the Greek philosopher Epicurus, best known through his follower the Roman poet Lucretius, whose account of nature and the universe is expressed, as was usual for exalted subjects, in a poem, *De Rerum Natura*. The gods, if they exist, are far away. There is no need to fear them and placate them with human sacrifices, as was done in the case of Iphigenia in the hope of getting a fair wind for the voyage to Troy. There is a rational cause for everything that happens. But Epicurus and Lucretius were then faced with the problem of free will. The solution put forward by Lucretius, that the atoms of which matter is composed have a tiny swerve, *exiguum clinamen*, introduces an element of uncertainty worthy of Heisenberg (*De Rerum Natura* II:292).

It begins to look as if a Greek tragedy was a religious ceremony originally connected with a threat from the sky. In particular, it tried to counter a threat which had assumed the appearance of a goat. The aegis or goatskin inspired terror when waved, and, with the thunderbolt, played a leading part in the battles in the sky which are described so vividly in stories from all over the world, including Greece. The members of the chorus were in rectangular formation, but originally, in the dithyramb, they were in circular formation, as mentioned above. I suggest that they represented the solar system as the Greeks understood and described it. The intrusion of a strange body, with glaring eye (*drakon*), prominences that are compared to horns, a fiery crown, and a flowing tail, causes a disruption of the status quo. The danger is only averted when the object assumes a different course, is brought low like Lucifer, and is sent down to Tartarus. The representation by chorus and actors was not only a matter of remembering great events, of returning to Eliade's '*illud tempus*', the past events and tune of great significance. It was also, and primarily, apotropaic, aimed at preventing disaster. We have already met a similar idea in the previous chapter in Plutarch's reference to Typhon.

The axe used for sacrifice was the *pelekus*, a double edged axe. In *Odyssey* III:442, it is used for slaying a bull. In *Iliad* XVII:520, Automedon uses one in battle, and lays low his

opponent like a priest at a sacrifice. For the word *pelekus*, compare Peleg, *O.T.Genesis X:25*, in whose days the earth was divided.

The head of the double axe resembles the thunderbolt as portrayed in the hand of Zeus. It can be compared with Thor's hammer Mjollnir, lightning.

COMEDY

The word 'comedy' is cognate with the Greek word '*komos*', a revel, and resembles '*kome*', a village. Aristotle says that comedy owed its origin to the leaders of the phallic songs.

It shares with tragedy certain features. The chorus, twelve men and twelve women, wore masks and were caricatures of ordinary people, sometimes dressed as, for example, birds or wasps. They were generally padded, but removed their outer garments when they danced. They were equipped with phallic symbols, and specialised in a lascivious dance, the Kordax. This dance, associated with drunken revelry, originated in the Peloponnese, in honour of Artemis.

After the parabasis (entrance of the chorus) there was a contest between two leading characters, an *agon*.

The function of the chorus in comedy was to spur on the contestants, whereas in tragedy they usually only commented and tried to appease.

After various episodes, a comedy ended with an exodus of celebrations, feasting, or a wedding.

Just as electricity in the sky played its part in the origin of dithyramb and tragedy, so on the earth, in comedy its physiological effects were demonstrated and perceived by the chorus as the force behind fertility rites associated especially with Dionysus, Hermes, Demeter, and Pan.

POETIC INSPIRATION

If we accept the idea that the Greek oracles exploited electrical stimulation of the Sibyl, we can hardly avoid considering an electrical basis for the Greek theory of poetic inspiration. The 7th century Greek poet Archilochus, *Fragment 120*, declares that he can create the dithyramb when lightning-struck by wine [1]. The Roman poet Statius has *laurigerosque ignes*, laurel-bearing fire, for poetic inspiration (*Achilleid* I:509).

The Muses were led by Apollo. They, together with the oracles, were the source of information which the Greek and Roman poets tapped. Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus* 69, has: "I sent Kreon to Phoebus's temple to find out (pythoit) what I should do to save this city." The resemblance between Pytho and *pythoit*, the verb 'to find out', is a happy one.

Line 8 of the first book of the *Aeneid* reads: "*Musa, mihi causas memora...*" Muse, tell me the causes ...

The poet was thought of as inspired by an external force causing a condition akin to madness, '*mania*'. '*Mantis*' is the Greek for a prophet, and we have seen instances of mantic possession of the Sibyl at Cumae, when consulted by Aeneas, and of Cassandra on her arrival at Mycenae. Poetic inspiration was originally like this, accompanied in some cases, perhaps always at first, by dance. The verb *skirtao*, dance, which is used in *The Bacchae*, is associated with the frolics of goats. The *temenos* or sacred precinct at Samothrace had Ionic *propylaea*, or entrance gates, with a sculptured frieze of dancing girls.

At Delphi, the Thriae, three goddesses who were associated with prophecy by lot, relied on honey for inspiration (*Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, line 560): "And when they are inspired through eating yellow honey, they are keen to speak the truth."

"Inspired" here suggests 'set on fire', Greek '*thuiosin*'. We can compare Vergil, *Georgic* IV, where honey is "*caelestia mella*", and bees have a share of the divine nature.

The Homeric bard or rhapsode wore a purple cloak when reciting from the Iliad, and a green one when reciting from the Odyssey.

The word *rhapsodos* is generally thought to come from *rhapto*, stitch. The minstrel stitches words together.

It also suggests *rhapis*, a staff, and the satrap, the rod of Set, and the augur with his lituus. It is likely that the minstrel originally carried a staff not merely as a symbol of authority, but because of its association with electrical influences, as in the case of Moses's rod, and the ark. The words of Archilochus, already quoted, are certainly not against this idea. A. E. Housman spoke of poetic inspiration in his own case coming as a physical sensation while shaving.

The poet Hesiod, *Theogony* 30, describes his inspiration by the Muses: "So spoke the beautifully sounding daughters of great Zeus, and they cut off and gave me a shoot of strong laurel as a rod (*skeptron*), and breathed into me a divine voice, so that I should celebrate things future and past.

"In the *Euthydemus* of Plato, 277 d, there is an argument as to whether a learner in a class is wise or not. Euthydemus is questioning Kleinias. Socrates intervenes to warn Kleinias and his friend Dionysodorus:

"Perhaps you don't realise what the two strangers are doing to you. They are doing what those do in the rite of the Corybants, when they hold an 'enthronement' around the one they are going to initiate. Furthermore, there is a kind of dancing there and children's games, as you know if you have been initiated. And now these two are simply dancing round you, and are dancing in play, initiating you afterwards."

According to Nonnos, *Dionysiaca*, Kadmos saw a dance at Samothrace, with music from double pipes, and the clashing of spears on shields.

In the *Ion* of Plato, Socrates discusses with a bard, Ion, the nature of a minstrel's art and inspiration.

"I see, Ion, and I come to show you what I think this is. For this speaking well of yours about Homer is not a 'skill', as was said just now, but a divine power which sets you in motion. Just as in the stone which Euripides called the Magnesian stone, and most others the Heracleian. Further, this stone not only leads the iron rings themselves, but also puts a power into the rings so that they can do this very thing which the stone does, attract other rings, so that sometimes a long chain of bits of iron and rings is formed, hanging from each other. And thus the Muse herself makes people full of god, and through these inspired people a ring of other inspired people is found. For all epic poets, if they are good, utter all their fine poems not through art, but by being filled with the god and possessed, and good lyric poets similarly, just as Corybants dance when out of their minds; thus lyricists are not in their right minds when they create these beautiful lyric poems. But when they embark upon harmony and rhythm, they are filled with, and controlled by, Bacchic frenzy, just as Bacchantes when they are in their right minds; and the soul of lyric poets does this, as they themselves say. For the poets tell us, indeed, that they bring us lyrical poetry from springs flowing with honey from certain orchards and glades of the Muses, like bees, and they fly, too, like the bees. And they speak truly. For a poet is a light, winged and holy creature, who cannot create before the god enters him, and he is in ecstasy, and reason has left him (as long as he is in his right senses, every man is incapable of creating and singing prophetic songs). So in so far as they create not by art and by saying many fine things about men's deeds, as you do about Homer, but by divine lot, each one is only able to do that to which the Muse has impelled him, one to dithyramb, another to panegyrics, one to choral odes, another to epic, another to iambics. In other branches he has poor ability. For they create this poetry not by art but by a divine power, since if by art they knew how to create well, they would be able to do so in all branches. For this cause the god robs them of their reason when he uses, as his servants, prophets and divine seers, so that we who hear may know that it is not they who say such valuable

things while out of their senses, but that it is the god himself who speaks, and is intelligible to us through them." [2]

When reading the above remarks about the Magnesian stone, or magnet, Chiron comes to mind. He was a centaur, son of Kronos and a daughter of Oceanus. He was half man and half horse, since in a domestic crisis Kronos had disguised himself as a horse. Chiron was the teacher of Asclepius and of Achilles, and was wise and just. He is referred to as the Magnesian centaur by Pindar, *Pythian* III:45.

Plato, *Ion* 535e: "Do you realise then that the spectator is the last of the rings which I said took their force from each other under the action of the Heracleian stone? You, the rhapsode and actor, are the middle man, the poet himself is the first. And the god, acting through all these, pulls the human psyche in whatever direction he wishes, making a suspended chain of force. And, just as from that lodestone, a great chain is set up of dancers, directors and assistants, obliquely dependent from the rings suspended from the Muse. And one poet is dependent from one Muse, another from another; we say 'possessed', but it is the same thing, for he is held; and from those first rings, the poets, others are suspended in turn and filled with the god, some inspired by Orpheus, some by Musaeus. The majority are possessed and held by Homer.

PASSAGES REFERRING TO INSPIRATION AND POETRY

Iliad XIV:508: "Tell me now, Muses who live in the halls of Olympus, who of the Achaeans first took the bloodstained spoils from a slain enemy, when the glorious Earthshaker swayed the battle."

Iliad II:100: Agamemnon holds his staff as he stands up to speak in the assembly.

Aeneid IV:60: Dido holds the dish during sacrifice as she seeks the will of the gods.

PASSAGES THAT SHED LIGHT ON GREEK TRAGEDY

Iliad XIX:85 (an apology for hybristic behaviour): When Achilles has declared in the assembly that he is willing to end the feud and rejoin the fighting, Agamemnon stands up and speaks. "The Achaeans often reproached me for what you have just mentioned. But it is not I who am the cause, but Zeus and Fate (Moirai) and the Fury (Erinys) that walks in darkness, who in the meeting cast fierce Ate into my mind, on that day when I took away Achilles's prize."

Odyssey VIII:260: When Odysseus is entertained to dinner and a display of dancing by the Phaeacians, officials enter and clear the dancing floor and a ring, *agon*, wide enough for the performance.

Line 264: The dancers strike the holy floor with their feet (*choron theion*, holy dancing-floor). Odysseus marvels at the flashing movements of their feet (*marmarygas*).

According to Hesychius, *choros* is the same as *kuklos* and *stephanos*, circle, and crown. It means especially the round dance of the dithyramb, or the floor where it is performed. *Choros kuklikos* = dithyramb.

PASSAGES REFERRING TO THE AXE

Odyssey V:235: Odysseus builds a boat to sail away from Calypso's island Ogygia. She gives him a big axe with an olive wood handle.

Aeneid V:305: At the funeral games in honour of his father, Anchises, Aeneas offers prizes. He will give two Cretan arrowheads shining with polished iron, and a double axe (*bipennis*) with silver chasing.

Frazer, *The Golden Bough* XLIX: At the end of June in Athens, the Bouphonia took place. The ox was brought to the bronze altar of Zeus Polios on the Acropolis. The ox was driven round the altar. The axe and the knife were dipped in water. The ox

was laid low by a blow of the axe behind its horns, and its throat cut with a knife. The axeman threw his weapon away and fled, and the knifeman did the same.

A trial was held in a court presided over by the king to allocate blame for the murder. The girl who brought the water blamed the sharpeners, these blamed the men who handed the weapons to the butchers, the butchers blamed the axe and the knife. The axe and knife were found guilty and thrown into the sea.

At one time the killing of an ox had been a capital crime in Attica.

Notes (Chapter Eight: Sky and Stage)

1. Diehl: A. L. . G. 77
2. Plato: *Tom.* = 533d.

CHAPTER NINE

TRIPOD CAULDRONS

IF put up into the air, a tripod cauldron resembles the popular idea of a comet. It also looks like the seething pot of *Old Testament Jeremiah* I:13. I suggest that the Greeks linked the god in the ground with the god in the sky. There was a copper cauldron on the roof of the temple of Zeus at Olympia, and another at Delos.

Is there any evidence to support this theory?

By simple metathesis, such as occurs with the Greek '*kratos*' and '*kartos*', we get '*stephanos*', crown, and '*setphanos*', Set revealing or shining.

The Egyptian god Set was well known to the Greeks. He killed Osiris; the Greeks equated him with Typhon. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the tripod and cauldron, with a crown of fire, were an attempt to represent, and to establish communication with a god in the sky, elsewhere described as a seething pot facing north, and a cauldron for the use of the god Thor. Homer, *Iliad* XVIII:369 ff., describes the manufacture of tripod cauldrons: they are for action in the sky.

It is significant that the oldest attendants of Dionysus were the Silenes, followed later by the *Saturoi*, Satyrs. *Oura* is a tail. Were it not for the short 'u' of Saturos, philology might suggest that the Satyrs were Set's tail.

At first a Satyr had long pointed ears, a goat's tail, and small knobs like horns behind the ears. Later, goat's legs were added. Hesiod writes: "The race of Satyrs, worthless and unfit for work" [1]. In the Doric dialect, Satyros is Tityros, but Strabo

distinguishes between Satyrs, Silenes and Tityri. A comet might display less tail with each return.

To the east of Ionia was the Persian Empire. The king ruled through provincial governors called satraps. I suggest that Set explains the word satrap. *Rhapis* and *rhabdos* both mean a rod or staff, like *skeptron*, English sceptre. Chrysorrhapis, of the god Hermes, means bearing a golden rod [2]. A satrap was Set's rod, ready to punish rebellious provincials with the speed and force of a thunderbolt. The festival of the Steperia may have been the flight of Set (Greek *pteron* is a wing).

A *skeptron* (staff) was not just for leaning on; the verb *skepto* means hurl or shoot (lightning, for example). There is a passage in *The Suppliants* of Aeschylus where the king is addressed. He controls the altar, the hearth of the land, and by his sole command controls all, sitting on his throne to which alone the sceptre belongs (line 370 ff.) [3].

Silenus, the oldest companion of Dionysus, had prophetic powers. He had a long horse's tail. His name is explained by two Greek words, *seio*, shake; and *linos*, vat. He is shown on vase paintings treading out grapes.

PASSAGES REFERRING TO TRIPODS

Iliad XXIII:884: As a prize, Achilles gave an unused cauldron with a floral pattern, *lebet' apuron, anthemoenta*.

Iliad XXIV:233: Priam chooses presents to take to Achilles as ransom for Hector's body. He takes out of his chests two tripods gleaming like fire (*aithonas*), and four cauldrons. The epithet *aithon*, of the tripods, is noteworthy.

Odyssey XIII: 13: King Alkinous proposes that Odysseus should be given presents, a big tripod and cauldron from each man.

Aeneid III:90: The Trojans call on king Anius, priest of Apollo and king of Delos. Aeneas prays for guidance; there is an earth

tremor, and "*mugire adytis cortina reclusis*", the shrine seemed to open and there was a bellowing sound from the cauldron.

Aeneid III:466: The seer Helenos gives advice, and gives them presents when they leave, silver, and cauldrons from Dodona.

V:110: The memorial games for Anchises are prepared. Prizes are displayed, including '*sacri tripodes*' and '*coronae virides*', crowns of fresh greenery.

Pausanias IV:12:9: mentions one Oebalus at Sparta who happened to have a hundred terracotta tripods. He took them to Ithome and dedicated them to the god, so as to fulfil the Delphic oracle's promise. Those who dedicated a hundred tripods to Zeus of Ithome would be the winners in the war between the Spartans and the Messenians.

Pausanias III:18:7: At the sanctuary of the Graces near Amyclae there are bronze tripods. Under the first is a statue of Aphrodite, under the second a statue of Artemis, under the third, of Persephone.

Pausanias X:13:7: He mentions: (1) the fight between Herakles and Apollo over the tripod at Delphi; (2) a gold tripod standing on a bronze snake, a dedication from all the Greeks from the spoil of Plataea.

Iliad XVIII:343: Achilles called to his comrades to set up a big tripod, so as to wash the bloodstained body of Patroclus as quickly as possible. They set up a tripod for washing water in blazing fire, and poured water into it, and took wood and burnt it underneath. The fire took hold of the belly of the tripod, and the water was heated. And when the water boiled in the glittering brass, they washed the body and annointed it with oil.

In line 348, note the phrase "the belly of the tripod."

Iliad XXIII:702: For the winner a big tripod (to go on the fire), which the Achaeans valued at twelve oxen.

Iliad XVIII:369: Silver-footed Thetis came to the starry, imperishable house of Hephaestus, distinguished among the Immortals, made of bronze, which he himself, the lame one, had made ... She found him sweating, busied with his bellows, and in haste. For he was making a total of twenty tripods to stand round the wall of his well-based hall. He had put golden wheels under the legs of each, so that they might plunge into the arena (*agon*) of the gods of their own accord, or return home again; they were a marvellous sight. They were finished, but for the fact that the ornamental handles were not yet fitted. He was preparing them and cutting the rivets.

This passage suggests that the tripod cauldron was a representation of an object in the sky.

The word '*puthmenes*' for the legs or supports, is interesting. The word is also used for the handles, or supports of the handles, of Nestor's cup. Compare the Phoenician work in *Old Testament I Kings* 7:30: "Every base had four brasen wheels, and plates of brass." And verse 29: "On the borders were lions, oxen and cherubims."

Iliad XVIII:417: The golden servants hurry round their lord, like living handmaidens. They have a mind and voice and strength, and their skill comes from the immortal gods.

Iliad IX:122: Agamemnon addresses Menelaus; he intends to set out seven "*apurous tripodas*," tripods untouched by fire; or it might mean purely ornamental, like "*apurotos*" in XXIII:270, of a *phiale*, or libation bowl.

Iliad IX:264: Seven untouched tripods.

Iliad XI:700: A tripod was a prize in the games.

Iliad XXIII:264: At the funeral games for Patroclus, there is a tripod with handles, a twenty-two measure tripod.

In *Odyssey* VIII:434, a tripod and cauldron are heated for a bath.

It will be seen in Chapter XVI that the tripod cauldron was used in resurrection rites in ancient Greece.

THE TOPRAKKALI TRIPOD

This 8th century B.C. tripod from Urartu was found at Erzincan, near Lake Van, in 1938. It is now in the Ankara Museum. It shows hieroglyphs that resemble Hittite, and is decorated with bulls' heads with horns.

Tripods, thrones, footstools, beds, were standard equipment in Mesopotamian temples, including that to the Urartian god Haldis, at Rusahina. This temple was probably founded by the Urartian king Rusas I (733-714 B.C.). See *Early Anatolia* by Seaton Lloyd.

Set may appear in a number of words. The following examples are mere suggestions, not certain:

Setania (Latin), was a kind of onion; also a kind of bulb. The onion and garlic were powerful herbs. The bulbs and roots could resemble a comet in shape. Vide the Glossary.

Setia, a mountain in Italy, near the Pomptine marshes. Marshy land attracted lightning.

Saeta, *seta* (Latin), a bristle, hair. Cf. Gk. *Chaita*, mane; Egyptian *chet*, hair.

I suggested earlier that Saturos could hardly be 'Set's tail' because of the short 'u'. It may not be a valid objection. Kastor and Pollux were twin sons of Zeus, the Dioskoroï or *Dioskouroi*. The diphthong 'ou' in *kouroi* is long; in the compound word it becomes a short 'o'.

It was held that iron was Set's bone, and that iron came from him. The second of these statements may be seen today as an inversion. We prefer to think that the presence of iron attracts Set. The place where lightning struck was sacred and might be

walled off with a *puteal*, or curb, such as was built round a well. Rock containing iron would be especially likely to attract the god of the thunderbolt, and this could easily have given rise to the belief that lightning was responsible for the presence of iron ore.

Notes (Chapter Nine: Tripod Cauldrons)

1. Hesiod: *Fragment XIII*
2. Homer: '*Odyssey*' V:87
3. Aeschylus: '*Supplices*' 370ff.

CHAPTER TEN

THE EVIDENCE FROM PLUTARCH

MATERIAL relevant to our subject is to be found in the writings of Plutarch, A.D. 45-120, who was born in Boeotia, central Greece, and moved to Rome as a teacher of philosophy. Among his *Moralia* are *Isis and Osiris*, *The E at Delphi*, *About why the Pythia does not now answer in verse*, and *The Obsolescence of Oracles*. The following extracts are partly translation, partly paraphrase or precis.

In *Isis and Osiris*, a work dedicated to Clea, a Delphic priestess, he gives much information about Greek and Egyptian religion. Very early in the work he declares that the truth is the most important thing for men, and that the effort to arrive at the truth, especially the truth about the gods, is a longing for the divine.

Typhon is mentioned, 351, as the enemy of Isis. In 353b he says that wine was thought by the Egyptians to be the blood of those who had battled against the gods. This adds support to the placing of Dionysus in the sky, with his oldest companion Silenus, who treads out the blood-red grapes.

In *The E at Delphi*, 387d, he tells how Herakles tried to carry off the tripod by force, explaining the occurrence as the contempt of Herakles for logical reasoning. Later, he says that Dionysus has no less a share in Delphi than Apollo. Theologians declare that the god is immortal and eternal, but undergoes transformations. He has various names: Apollo because he is alone (a- not, *polloi*, many); Phoebus because he is pure and untainted; Dionysus; Zagreus (the hunter); Nuctelios; Isodaites. And they sing to him dithyrambic tunes full of emotion and of a transformation that contains a certain wandering and dispersion. Indeed, Aeschylus says: "It is

appropriate that the dithyramb with its mixed sound should occupy the revellers who attend Dionysus."

392a: One of the explanations put forward for the letter 'E', which was inscribed at Delphi along with 'Know Thyself', and 'Nothing To Excess', is that it means 'Thou Art'. The god greets the visitor with the words 'Know Thyself', and the visitor answers 'Thou Art', as being a true form of address, and the only one fitting, viz., the assertion of existence. (This can be compared with the 'I Am' of the god of Moses). One of the god's names is Ieiús. In 393c, Plutarch derives this from the cry 'Ia', uttered when invoking Apollo. He thought it to be the epic word meaning 'one'.

It might be well at this point to remember that we are not concerned here with the truth of Plutarch's beliefs, but with the fact that he and, presumably, many Greeks held them.

394a: The names of Apollo, who is permanent existence, are to be contrasted with the names of another god who is concerned with birth and destruction. Apollo (not many), and Pluto (abounding); Delian (clear), and Aidoneus (unseen); Phoebus (bright), and Scotios (dark). One is accompanied by the Muses and memory, the other by oblivion and silence. One is an observer and discloser, the other 'Lord of dark night and idle sleep.'

In *Why the oracle no longer answers in verse*, 397b, Plutarch gives us a quotation from Pindar: "Kadmos heard the god revealing correct music, not sweet nor voluptuous nor broken up in the tunes."

397c: "The god does not compose the verses, but he supplies the source of the impulse, and each of the priestesses is moved in accord with her natural tendency. He puts into her mind only the visions, and creates a light in her soul directed at the future."

This is in accord with Plato, *Timaeus* 71 and 72, where we read that the liver plays a decisive part in aiding or preventing

prophetic vision. When the liver is relaxed by gentle thoughts, the soul is open to divination and dreams, while reason and understanding are out of action through sleep, or an abnormal condition caused by disease or divine inspiration. It is the task of 'spokesmen' (*prophetai*) to interpret the visions and words, not the task of the inspired person. They should not be called prophets, but expounders of the utterances of the prophets.

In this passage, at the start of 72b, "whom they call them prophets ...," Plato's language, using both 'whom' and 'them', betrays oriental influence.

In Plutarch 400b, there is a reference to talk by philosophers of the Stoic school about 'kindlings' and 'exhalations', and it is as well to bear in mind the connection with *thumos*, *thuo*, and fire, in the word '*anathumiasis*', exhalation. It is used of a rising in fume or vapour, by Aristotle; of the soul, by Heraclitus; and of an exhalation, by Aristotle, *De Anima*. The related verb *anathumiao* means to make to rise, to draw up vapour (of the sun, by Empedocles), and to kindle. Polybius uses it in the phrase 'to kindle hatred.'

400f: The guide conducting Plutarch's party round Delphi pointed out the place where lay the iron spits, property of the courtesan Rhodope. Iron may have owed some of its reputation to the fact that it was attracted by a magnet. Iron objects are mentioned, and found, at Samothrace, which will be discussed in greater detail later.

401b: There is a reference to Herophile, of Erythrae, who had the gift of prophecy, and was addressed as Sibyl.

404 c and e: 'The god (*anax*, Lord, is the word used for Apollo), whose oracle is at Delphi, neither speaks nor conceals; he indicates.' Add to these well said words and reflect that the god here uses the Pythia for hearing just as the sun uses the moon for sight. For he shows and reveals his thoughts, but shows them blended with a mortal body, and a soul unable to keep quiet or to offer itself unmoved and stable to the mover, but as

if tossed by waves and enmeshed in the movements and emotions in it, and making itself more disturbed."

404f: What is called 'enthusiasm' seems to be a mixture of two impulses, the soul being influenced in the one case from outside, in the other in accordance with its own nature.

In *The Obsolescence of Oracles*, Plutarch tells us that whereas formerly Delphi (where he was an official) was staffed by two full-time priestesses and one reserve, it now has only one, who is adequate for all needs. The work is full of interesting side issues.

410b: The priests at the shrine of Ammon reported that the ever-burning lamp there consumed less oil each year, and they regarded this as proof that the year was becoming shorter.

414d: We must not think that because oracles may die, the god himself is dead. He quotes Sophocles: "The works of gods may die, but not gods."

415: Cleombrotos, one of the speakers, approves of the theory that there is a race of demi-gods midway between gods and men. Hesiod, he says, mentions four classes of rational beings: gods, daimons (demi-gods), heroes, and humans. There is a force that unites them in fellowship.

417c: Concerning the Mysteries, in which one can obtain the best view of, and insight into, the truth about daimons, "Let my lips be sealed," as Herodotus says. As to sacrifices, they are performed *apotropes heneka*, for the turning away of evil daimons.

We have already met the word '*prester*' in a quotation from Heraclitus. The word is used by Plutarch in 419f. One of the speakers, Demetrius, tells how he voyaged to some islands near Britain, almost uninhabited. Some of the islands bore the names of daimons and heroes. When he visited one of these islands, occupied only by a few holy men, there was a tempest;

portents (*diosemae*), and *presters* fell. The islanders said that the death had occurred of one of the mightier ones.

From this passage it seems probable that *prester*, to Plutarch, has its usual meaning of lightning or thunderbolt, though meteorite would fit.

421c: Among the stories about Delphi is one of the slayer of Python. The story of exile in Tempe is untrue. When he was expelled, he went to another *kosmos* (world), and after nine cycles of great years he became pure and bright (Phoebus), and returned to take over the oracle, which had been guarded by Themis in the meantime.

Such, he said, was the case with stories about Typhons and Titans. There had been battles of daimons versus daimons, then flights of the conquered or punishment of the sinners by a god, as, for example, Typhon is said to have sinned in the matter of Osiris, and Kronos in the matter of Ouranos. The honours you pay to these have become dimmer or failed altogether, when the deities were transferred to another world. I learn that the Solymi too, neighbours of the Lycians, honoured Kronos among the greatest. But he killed their rulers, Arsalos and Dryos and Trosobios, and fled and left for another abode, they can't say which. Kronos was neglected, and Arsalos and his followers are named the hard gods, and the Lycians invoke curses, both public and private, in their names. Many similar examples can be found in the works of theologians. If we call some demi-gods by the usual names of gods, one should not be surprised, said my friend. For with whatever god a man is linked, and from whom he has been allotted some power and honour, from him he is likely to take his name. Indeed one amongst us is Dius, another Athenaios, another Apollonius or Dionysios, another Hermaios. A few by chance have been rightly named, the majority have acquired divine names that are inappropriate.

431e: As the others joined in asking this, I paused for a moment and said: "Actually, Ammonios, by some chance you created an opportunity for introducing the subject on that occasion. For if

the souls which have been separated from the body or have never had one are, according to you and the divine Hesiod, 'holy dwellers on earth, guardians of mortal men,' why do we rob souls in bodies of that power, by which it is the nature of demi-gods to know the future and reveal it beforehand?"

432b: The soul has great powers of memory. But memory is the hearing of silent things and the sight of invisible things. Hence it is not remarkable if, having power over what no longer exists, it grasps in advance many of the things that have not yet happened.

432d: The earth sends up to men springs of many other forces, some ecstatic and bringing disease and death, some good and helpful, as is clear from experience. The prophetic current (*rheuma*) and breath (*pneuma*) is most god-like and holy, whether it is produced by itself through the air or whether it comes with running water. It is likely that by warmth and diffusion it opens certain passages which form a picture of the future, just as wine, rising like fire, reveals many impulses and words that were stored and concealed. To quote Euripides: "For Bacchic revelry and passion contain much prophecy," when the soul becomes hot and fiery and thrusts aside the caution that mortal intelligence brings, and often diverts and quenches the inspiration (enthusiasm). At the same time one might not unreasonably say that dryness arising in the soul with the heat makes subtle the breath (of prophecy) and makes it ethereal and pure. For this is 'dry soul', as Heraclitus puts it.

433: The prophetic (*mantike anathumiasis*) has an affinity and a relationship with souls.

435 c and d: After telling the story of the discovery of Delphic influence on goats and on Koretas, the goatherd, Ammonios said: "The *anathumiasis* or exhalation, when it is present, whether the victim (goat) trembles or not, will create the inspiration (*enthousiasmos*), and dispose the soul correspondingly, not only of the Pythia, but of anyone whom it touches."

436f: For we do not make prophecy godless or irrational when we give to it, as material, the human soul, and give the inspiring breath and the exhalation as an instrument or plectrum ...

437: When priests put garlands on victims and pour libations over them and watch the victim tremble, they are watching for a sign that the god is present to give answers.

437c: Plutarch refers to the delightful fragrance that comes from the shrine. It does not come often, nor does it occur regularly. He thinks it likely that it is produced by warmth or some other force.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE PRESOCRATIC PHILOSOPHERS

THE early philosophers before the time of Socrates help considerably in our investigation, and give support to the view that electrical forces were a major preoccupation of the Greeks. The earliest of them, the Ionian physicists, lived in a region that had close contacts with the East and with Egypt.

The city of Miletus produced, within a century, Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes. Each searched for unity behind the diversity of the appearance of the material world. Each looked for a single primary element as the basis of the physical world, and tried to isolate and to identify it. With these three we can also take Xenophanes, who was educated at Kolophon, the seat of a famous oracle. He was well informed about Ionian theories and moved to Western Greece.

Thales is well known for having predicted an eclipse of the sun, probably the eclipse of 585 B.C.. His ancestry was Phoenician. It has been suggested that his parents were Kadmeians from Boeotia, and that his father's name, Examyas, is Karian.

Aetius, A.D. 100, tells us that having been a philosopher in Egypt, Thales moved to Miletus when older.

Thales seems to have regarded water as the original element from which the rest of the physical world is derived. Aristotle says that Pherecydes and others, and the Magi, put the "best thing" (*ariston*) as the first creating substance.

Pindar, *Olympian Odes* I, says: "Water is best, and gold is a blazing (*aithomenon*) fire."

Olympian III:42: "Water is best, and gold the most precious."

Aristotle, *De Anima*, says that "Thales appears to have supposed that the soul (*psyche*) was something that could move; if indeed he said that the stone had a soul because it moved iron."

Diogenes Laertius, 3rd century A.D., reports that Thales was said to have attributed a share of soul to soulless things, calling in evidence the magnet, and amber.

Aristotle, *De Anima*: "Thales thought that all things were full of gods."

Anaximenes is the next writer to mention the soul. He says that our soul is air, and holds us together, and that breath and air surround the whole cosmos. There is an important distinction between '*aer*' and '*aither*', the damp misty air or breath, and the dry upper air. Anaximenes held that by rarefaction and condensation one substance can be many different things.

Anaximander (he was aged sixty four in 547 B.C.) is said by Cicero (*De Divinatione* 1.50) to have warned the Spartans to move into the fields, as an earthquake was imminent. He postulated a single original substance, '*to apeiron*', the infinite. He was a pupil of Thales.

Only one sentence of Anaximander's work *Concerning The Physical Universe* has survived. Simplicius, quoting Theophrastus, 3rd century B.C., says: "Into those same things from which they take their origin, all the things that exist also go on to their destruction, and of necessity; for they are punished and make retribution to each other for the injustice in accordance with the decree of time, expressing it in more poetical terms."

(R. Mondolfo, *Problemi del pensiero antico*, Bologna 1935, suggests that the crime is expansion of the worlds caused by collisions).

There are infinitely numerous worlds (*ouranoi*) in the *apeiron*, all equidistant. Cicero, in his *De Natura Deorum*, I:10:25, says: "*nativos esse deos*," i.e. that the gods come into being by birth.

Moirai, one's lot, *ananke*, necessity, and *dike*, justice, make up the impersonal law given by the *apeiron*.

Aetius writes: "Anaximander declared that the infinite *ouranoi* were gods."

The 6th century B.C. poet and philosopher Xenophanes wrote a philosophical poem on nature, and a number of poems called *Silloi*, 'squint-eyed'. They ridiculed the anthropomorphic deities of Homer. He studied fossils of fishes in mountains, and concluded that land and sea must have undergone great changes. Simplicius reports of him that his single, non-anthropomorphic deity "always stays in the same place unmoved, and shakes everything without trouble by his mind."

This thought is similar to one expressed in Aeschylus, *Suppliants* 96 ff.: "Zeus casts mortals down from the lofty towers of their hopes, to utter destruction. He puts forth no violence, but sits and at once accomplishes his thought somehow from his holy resting place."

Heraclitus, who flourished in Ionia about 500 B.C., is well known for his doctrine of flux: "Everything flows, nothing remains constant," and "You can't step twice into the same river." He has fire, and '*logos*', as solutions to the problem that occupied the Ionian physicists. The soul is a fragment of the surrounding cosmic fire. Macrobius, A.D. 400, on the *Somnium Scipionis*, I:14, says: "Heraclitus declared that the soul is a spark of the essential substance of the stars, '*scintilla stellaris essentiae*'." Stars are concentrations of *aither*. In this context, *Fragment 26* is relevant: "When man dies and his eyes are extinguished, he unites in happiness with light; living man asleep resembles the dead, for he, too, has his eyes closed; man awake resembles a man asleep."

Heraclitus seems to have regarded lightning as a manifestation of the cosmic fire. "Thunderbolt steers the universe."

The statement attributed to Heraclitus, that the way up and the way down are the same, may imply the identity of the electrical weapon of the god in the sky, and the electrical force of Gaia, the goddess of *chthon*, the earth. Plutarch describes Hermes as being both *ouranios* (of heaven) and *chthonios*, of earth. Euripides (*Alcestis* 743) describes him as *chthonios*.

A similar view of the relationship between the soul and ethereal fire is found in Indian thought. The flames of the funeral pyre help the soul to rise to join the heavenly fire. In Homer, on the other hand, the *psyche* or soul is a breath soul. It survives death in the house of Hades. When Odysseus descends to the underworld, he has to slaughter sheep so that the pale ghosts can drink the blood and speak audibly (*Odyssey* XI:23 ff.). Heraclitus thought that knowledge of the soul was needed for knowledge of the cosmos, and Pythagoras linked the soul with moral standards.

This brings us to the question of the Greek concept of justice. Let us start with lines from a chorus in the *Medea* of Euripides, 410 ff: "The waters of sacred rivers flow uphill, and justice and all things are reversed. Man's counsels are deceitful, and belief in the gods is no longer firm."

The above passage is complemented by Heraclitus, *Fragment* 94: "The sun will not overstep his measures; otherwise the Furies, ministers of justice, will find him out."

The Furies, Erinyes, Eumenides, the kindly ones, the winged females with snakes in their hair, regard it as their especial duty to punish anybody who steps over the limit, who strays or misses the mark. Hesiod says that the Furies are the offspring of Gaia, earth, and the blood of Ouranos.

The word *dike* in Greek originally meant the way in which things are done. In the opening scene of the *Agamemnon*, the watchman is standing on the battlements of Mycenae resting his

head on his hands *kunos diken*, in the manner of a dog, waiting for the fire-signal that is to announce the capture of Troy.

Later, the word *dike* comes to mean justice and punishment. In Plato's *Republic*, it is not one of the virtues, but rather a harmony of the other virtues; a balance. The *Republic* of Plato is an inquiry into the nature of justice, and Plato proceeds by analogy. Just as in the ideal state there is a harmony between the workers, the auxiliaries and the philosopher rulers, with none becoming too powerful or overstepping the limits, so in the individual there is a balance between the instincts, the 'high-spirited element', and the reason.

Zeus was above all others the god who stood for justice. To him a suppliant would pray, raising his hands to heaven and crying out for justice. Open almost any Greek tragedy, and a reference to Zeus and justice is likely to appear. In fact, we can go back to our conclusions on Greek tragedy and see a link between justice in the individual human being, in the Greek city state, and the stability of the sky and of the solar system. If the sky is darkened by a monster one can but hope that the god of light will do battle and win.

In Pindar, *Olympian* II:70, we read: "The souls of the just pass by the highway of Zeus to the tower of Kronos." There may also be a connection between this passage and *Nemean* VI: "Toward what mark we run, by day or by night ..." There may also be a link with Alkman, a Greek lyric poet who flourished about 600 B.C.. A papyrus from Oxyrhynchus, number 2390, published in 1957, contains quotations from Alkman. It is discussed in *The Presocratic Philosophers*, by Kirk, Raven and Schofield.

"For when matter began to be established, a certain passage (*poros*), like a beginning (*arche*), was created. Alkman says that the material of everything was confused and not made. Then, he says, there came into being he (or that, masculine) who arranged everything; then a passage came into being, and when the passage had gone past, a sign (*tekmor*) followed. And the passage is like an origin, and the sign is like an end. When

Thetis came into being, these became the beginning and end of everything, and all things have a similar nature to that of bronze, and Thetis to that of the craftsman, and the way and the sign to the beginning and the end... on account of sun and moon not yet having come into being but matter (*hyle*) still being without distinction. There came about therefore ... passage and sign and darkness. Day and moon and thirdly darkness; the flashings; not merely day but with sun; first there was only darkness, after this when it was separated (= distinguished?) ..."

Lyrica Graeca selecta, ed. Page (Oxford Classical Texts 1968).

In the Partheneion of Alkman, *Poros*, way or passage, is linked with Aisa as the eldest of the gods. Aisa is generally a divine dispensation or decree, sometimes translated as 'fate'.

Alkman's *poros* may be compared to the phenomenon described by Plato in the story of Er, son of Armenius. Souls assemble on a meadow before returning to the sky before reincarnation. They travel to a spot where there is a pillar:

A straight light like a column (*kion*) extended from above through all the sky (*ouranos*) and earth, looking like a rainbow in colour..." *Republic* X:616 b..

The Greek '*kion*' means either 'column', or 'going', depending on the pronunciation (different accentuation). Egyptian *ioon* =column.

In Plato, Poros is the father of Eros (*Symposium* 203b). The mother of Eros was Night, and Night made prophecies before Themis did (scholium on Pindar's *Pythian* odes, in *Scholia Vetera* edited by Drachman; discussed by Kerényi in *Dionysus: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life*)

The imagery of the pillar may perhaps be traced in the following passages:

Euripides, *The Bacchae*, 1082 ff.: "A light of holy fire stood between earth and heaven, and the upper air was silent, and so

were the forest glades, and you would not have heard a sound from wild beasts."

The above translation is alternative to the one given in Chapter III. The verb *sterizo* can be transitive (set up), or intransitive (stand). For the silence, compare the silence before the god's voice is heard speaking to Oedipus before his death (in the messenger's speech of Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus* 1623).

Pindar, in *Pythian* X:29, may refer to the *poros* when he writes: "But neither in ships nor on foot will you find the marvellous road to the *agon* of the Hyperboreans." The latter are the legendary people who live beyond the North. '*Huper*,' as well as meaning beyond, also means above. *Agon* is not only a contest but also a place where contests may occur, e.g. a stadium, as at Delphi, or the sky, as in the case of the tripods of Hephaistos in Homer, or a dancing floor, as at the court of King Alkinous.

The Greek concept of justice described above may not be unique. The Egyptian *ma'at* is truth and justice. The Latin *meatus* is movement or course, especially of sun and moon. Lucretius employs the word frequently in this sense, e.g. I:28. "...*solis lunaeque meatus*."

The Egyptian "*men ma'at Re*" means, "The truth of Re remains". The Greek *meno* = remain, stand firm, withstand. Cf. Egyptian *menkh*, linen clothes worn by a priest, which I suggest were to give protection against radiation.

When moving the ark from the house of Obed-edom into the city of David, David "danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod" (*II. Samuel* VI:14). Similar precautions were taken by the Israelite priests, and at the temple of Apollo at Gryneion linen breastplates were on show.

CHAPTER TWELVE

MYSTERY RELIGIONS

FURTHER interesting material concerning the soul and the *aither* emerges when one looks at the mystery religions, of which Samothrace and Eleusis were important centres.

The Greek mysteries were secret religious ceremonies. Initiations took place at festivals in honour of Demeter (at Eleusis), and of Dionysus (the Orphic mysteries). They satisfied religious yearnings that could not be met by orthodox religion or science, and helped people to face misfortune, old age, and death.

Orpheus came from Thrace, north-eastern Greece. He was said to be the son of one of the Muses, Kalliope. He was a follower of Dionysus, a god associated with Thrace. So great was his skill on the lyre that his playing moved wild beasts, trees and rocks, and on the ship Argo his singing diverted the attention of the crew from the song of the Sirens.

When his wife Eurydice died from a snake bite, he went down to Hades to recover her, but forgot the condition imposed, and on the return journey he looked back, and she was lost, this time for ever. He wandered through Thrace, lamenting his loss, until he was torn to pieces by Maenads.

We have met this phenomenon, the *sparagmos*, or tearing in pieces of a man or an animal, in The *Bacchae* of Euripides. The same thing happened in the case of the daughters of Minyas, the eponymous ancestor of the Minyans who lived in Orchomenos. They resisted the worship of Dionysus. The god drove them mad, as he drove mad Agave and other Theban women. They

tore in pieces Hippasos, the son of Leucippe, one of the sisters. They were subsequently turned into bats.

This dismemberment of a god is followed in the case of Dionysus by a restoration to life, as in the case of Osiris. It is sometimes explained as a sacrifice to a god; the slaughtered animal is sacred to the god, indeed is the god. It is eaten by worshippers in an attempt to achieve contact, even unity and identity, with the god. It is also generally thought that behind Greek religion lurk ancient fertility rites, aimed at ensuring a good harvest. It seems likely that things are first seen in the sky, and are then copied on earth.

There are plenty of stories about the dismemberment of gods in the sky. Ouranos and Kronos are an obvious early example. One of the sights was a seething pot, *Old Testament, Jeremiah* I:13.

The Greek Tantalus killed and cooked his son Pelops, and served the dish to the gods at a banquet to see whether they would be deceived. Pelops was brought back to life, but a curse was on the house. His son Atreus killed and cooked the children of Thyestes, his other son. Thyestes had a son, Aegisthus, by his own daughter, Pelopia. Aegisthus later killed the son of Atreus, Agamemnon, on his return from Troy. We shall see later that a resurrection technique was inspired by the idea of a seething pot.

Kings, priests, and people imitated what they saw in the sky. We have already had an example of this in the word satrap, Set's rod, for a Persian viceroy. In the world of ancient Greece, survival meant imitating on earth what was thought to have happened in the sky, and examples of the influence of such thinking in early times permeated classical civilisation, and are still with us today.

At Eleusis, on the coast west of Athens, the mysteries were associated especially with Demeter and Persephone in association with Iacchos, who was a form of Dionysus. There is

a vase painting of a child in a cauldron which suggests the reborn Dionysus.

The other great centre was Samothrace, a rocky and mountainous island off the Thracian coast, not far from the coast of Asia Minor. The name of Mount Phengari suggests light. Not far away is the island of Lemnos, where Hephaistos, the god of fire and smiths, is said to have landed when ejected from Olympus. In *Iliad* XIV:230 the goddess Hera goes to Lemnos to meet Hypnos and Thanatos (sleep and death).

One of the Titans, Iapetos, had a son, Prometheus. In one version of the story Prometheus stole fire from the workshop of Hephaistos on the island of Lemnos. In another version he stole it from Olympus and flew down to earth carrying it in the hollowed-out stalk of a narthex. The pith of this plant was used as tinder, and the narthex was the thyrsus of the Bacchic revellers.

Certain 'Great Gods' were worshipped at Samothrace, probably the same as the Kabeiroi of Lemnos, who were companions of Hephaestus and experts in metal working.

Before looking at Samothrace in detail, it may be useful to review the subject of the Great Mother and her worshippers, since earth, mining, metal-working, electricity and fertility are related in the Greek mind.

The marriage of Ouranos and Gaia resulted in the birth of Rhea, known as the Mother of the Gods. Her name may be linked with the word '*rheo*', flow, suggesting Okeanos, or it may be metathesis for '*era*', earth. On the whole the latter was the preferred derivation. She was called the Great Mother because she produced Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades; their father was Kronos, himself a child of Gaia and Ouranos. Ouranos was a child of Gaia as well as a consort. Such a relationship seemed inevitable and natural, and made easier the acceptance of the relationship of Zeus and Dionysus which we have already seen in our discussion of Dionysus and the Delphic succession. It

also helps to understand how Dionysus can have an alter ego, a child named Iacchos.

Rhea was worshipped in Asia Minor as Meter Oreia, mountain-mother. She has other epithets derived from names of mountains. From Mount Berecyntos in Phrygia she is Berecyntia; from Mount Dindymon in Mysia, sacred to Cybele, she is Dindymene; and from Mount Ida she is called Idaia. In Phrygia she is known as Matar Kybele. According to Kerényi, *'The Gods of the Greeks'*, she is the same as the Cretan 'Mistress of Animals', who appears flanked by two lions on top of a mountain. This reminds one of the Lion Gate at Mycenae, and raises the question of the significance of the two animals, and of the column between them which is Cretan in style. *'Kybelis'*, according to Hesychius, is a double-axe.

Her procession has drums, pipes (or shawms or reed pipes, however one chooses to translate the word *aulos*), rattles, bull-roarers and male dancers. The latter represented spirits of gods, *daimones*. In Phrygia they were known as Berekundae, and as Korubantes.

The Greek equivalent of these worshippers of the Great Goddess were the Idaean Dactyls and the Kouretes.

For the story of the Dactyls and the Kouretes, we can turn to Hesiod, *Theogony* 468. Kronos had decided to devour his new-born children, having heard that one of them would displace him. Rhea was received by Earth in Crete, and taken to a cave in Mount Aegeum. Dicte and Ida were two other mountains in Crete which claimed to be the birthplace of Zeus.

Rhea supported herself on the soil by her two hands, and the mountain produced ten spirits called the Idaean Dactyls (fingers). They were also called Korubantes or Kouretes, but in some versions of the story the Kouretes are sons of the Dactyls. They danced round the child clashing their weapons to drown his cries.

The number of Dactyls and Kouretes varies. Originally there were ten Dactyls and three Kouretes. The Dactyls from Rhea's right hand were smiths and discoverers of iron. There is a story of three Dactyls, representing hammer, anvil, and steel. In all the stories they were smiths, magicians, obstetricians, and dwarfs; sinister, like the Nibelungs.

There was a Mount Ida in Phrygia, and it was said that Idaean Dactyls, called the Kabeiroi, came from Phrygia to Samothrace with their secret cult. They were fertility daimons, sexually well-endowed like the statues of Hermes. They came from the region round Mount Berecyntus in Phrygia. It was believed that Rhea had established her sons, the Korubantes, on Samothrace. Kabeiroi also lived on Lemnos, where they were called Hephaistoi.

The name *Kabeiro* suggests the Hebrew *chabhar*, sorcerer.

Kabeiro, mother of the Kabeiroi, i.e. Rhea, had a son, Kadmilos, by the fire god Hephaestus. In one genealogy the father of the Korubantes is Kadmilos, i.e. Kadmilos is both child and husband to the Great Mother. At Samothrace two of the Kabeiroi were the Dioscuri, Castor and Polydeuces. The Greek '*kadouloi*' were boys used in the worship of the Kabeiroi; Greek '*doulos*' = slave. Servants of Ka? At Rome, boys, called '*camilli*', assisted the Flamen Dialis, or priest of Jupiter.

The *Dios kouroi*, sons of Zeus, were the children of Zeus and Leda. Accounts vary, but according to one account Leda laid two eggs (Zeus had taken the form of a swan), from one of which emerged Kastor and Polydeukes, and from the other Helen and Clytemnestra.

In Homer, *Iliad* III:243, they are mortals, but they were worshipped as protectors of sailors. St. Elmo's Fire, flickering on the mast of a ship, indicated their presence. They were brave fighters. When Kastor was killed in a fight, Polydeukes asked to be allowed to die too. Zeus said that they should take turns to go to Hades, or spend alternate days in Hades and Heaven.

On the island of Rhodes, there were 'Telchines', even more underground and sinister than the Kabeiroi. They went to Crete to help rear Zeus, and also reared Poseidon, helped by an Okeanine named Kapheira.

The Telchines were servants of the Great Mother, and were nine in number. They made images of the gods. They foresaw the Flood, and left Rhodes.

There was a Kabeiros at Thebes also, who resembled Dionysus. There is a full treatment of the Kabeiroi and the Mysteries by Susan Cole, *Theoi Megaloi: The Cult of the Great Gods at Samothrace* (Leiden 1984).

The story went that Eetion and Dardanus, sons of Elektra (the Okeanine, wife of Thaumias, 'Marvel'), came to Samothrace, where Eetion founded the Mysteries. Dardanus subsequently left for Troy, and founded mysteries there.

The Theban myth of Kadmos and Harmonia eventually stated that Harmonia was the third child of Elektra.

The buildings that survive at Samothrace are mostly from the 4th century B.C.. There was a sacred enclosure with two altars, a *bothros*, or pit, and an *eschara*, or hearth altar.

The *myesis*, or initiation, went as follows: There was a declaration that those with unclean hands were forbidden to take part. This *'praefatio sacrorum'*, or preface to the rites, is mentioned in Livy 45:5:

Lucius Aemilius Paulus took charge of the Macedonian campaign that the Romans fought against Perseus. Gnaeus Octavius put in at Samothrace, and Lucius Atilius addressed the people: "Men of Samothrace, is what we have heard true, that this island is sacred and that the ground is holy and inviolate?" When they all agreed that it was sacred, he continued: "Why then has a murderer polluted it, and violated it with the blood of King Eumenes, and, although the preface to the rites excludes from the ceremonies those with unclean hands, you allow your

shrines to be defiled by the presence of a blood-stained brigand?"

There was a similar preliminary announcement on the first day of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

There were three stages: *myesis*, *telete*, and *epopteia*. At Eleusis it took over a year to become an *epoptes*, or one who has seen the highest mysteries, but at Samothrace it could all be achieved in one night.

There was a round structure surrounding a central pit, with a narrow doorway. At the top was a shallow recess, and at the bottom of the pit a stone. Libations may have been poured. Certain rocks in the *bothroi* or pits were objects of special libations.

There was a frieze of dancing girls at the entrance to the precinct, and before the doors of the sanctuary stood two ithyphallic bronze statues, with their hands stretched to the sky. Herodotus reports, II:51, that there was a holy tale about them in the mysteries.

It is probable that there were dances round a seated figure. Plato, in the *Euthydemus*, quoted above, tells of *thronosis*, or Corybantic dances round a seated figure, and Kadmos, according to Nonnus (*Dionysiaca*), saw a dance at Samothrace. The *diaulos* was played, and spears were clashed on bronze shields. A large bronze shield and iron knives have been found.

There was a lodestone, and a ring of magnetised iron. They are mentioned by Lucretius, '*De Rerum Natura*' VI:1044 "It also happens that iron sometimes moves away from this stone, and is accustomed to flee and to follow it by turns. I saw iron at Samothrace jumping, and fragments of iron moving inside the bronze basin, when the Magnesian stone had been put underneath. The iron always seemed to wish to escape from the stone." [1]

Rings sometimes had a layer of gold covering the iron. "Even slaves now put gold round the iron, and other things that they

wear they decorate with pure gold. The origin of this display reveals by its name that it was instituted in Samothrace." Pliny, *Natural History* 33:6:23.

Plato, in his *Ion*, mentions the skill of the rhapsodist. It depends on a divine force, which moves the rhapsodist just as the force in the lodestone makes iron move.

Bathing was important, just as it was for the Pythia at Delphi. We have what is probably a description of the procedure in the *Clouds* of Aristophanes, lines 497 ff.. As Strepsiades, a would-be initiate, is about to enter Socrates's Phrontisterion, or Thinking Shop, Socrates tells him to take off his *himation* and to step down. Strepsiades asks for a honey-cake as an offering, and says that he is frightened, as if he were descending into the oracle of Trophonius. (There was an oracle in Boeotia, where Trophonius had been swallowed up by the earth. He was consulted there in an underground room under the name of Zeus Trophonius. Enquirers emerged from underground looking sad and uneasy).

At Samothrace there is a drain outlet, so the initiate probably went down, undressed, and was purified by bathing.

We have some indirect knowledge of Samothrace from another site, Thera. There is an open-air *temenos* dedicated by Artemidorus, a Greek from Perge. It is cut in the rock of a low cliff. There are statues of Hecate, Priapos (a male fertility god), and Tyche (Chance). There are reliefs dedicated to Zeus, Poseidon and Apollo, and altars to other gods. The altar to the Samothracian gods has a hole six inches in diameter cut in the top, and a channel from this to ground level, forty inches, and a shallow depression in front of the altar, in the stone floor of the *temenos*.

The Dioscuri, Kastor and Polydeukes, were worshipped here. They are represented with tall conical hats, *piloi*, and with stars carved in relief over their altar.

Artemidorus dedicated an altar to Priapus Lampsacenus. Evidently there was a fertility cult at Lampsacus too. Next is an altar to Hecate Phosphorus, Hecate the Light Bringer.

We left the initiate undressed, washed, and shivering in the dark underground. He may have worn a purple sash. At Eleusis, as far as we can tell, the final stage of the initiation consisted in flashes of light revealing glimpses of objects symbolic of fertility, resurrection and immortality, and probably a ritual representation of the birth of Dionysus. Grains of corn, and the phallic symbols carried in processions in the worship of Dionysus, would figure prominently.

At Samothrace, the "*Elektria tellus*", as Valerius Flaccus describes it (II:431), and at Eleusis, we see a combination of the worship of Hermes, and physiological stimulation by electricity, wine, and magnetism. Orpheus, with his power to attract animals, trees and stones, is a symbol of the power of music and the magnet. Phanes and Eros, the primal light and passion, and the sky gods whom they created and revealed, are related to the earth deities, and are equated by the Greeks with the action of the *aither* and of the soul.

Three words often occur when the Greeks write about the mysteries: *zetesis*, *heuresis*, and *tyche*. Of these words, *zetesis* and *heuresis*, searching and finding, are straightforward, but chance, *tyche*, calls for comment. The Greek verb that corresponds to it means to light upon, to hit, to hit the mark. One might say that *tyche* is the opposite of *hamartia*, missing the mark or sin, which we have met before in the character of the tragic hero. Electricity is tricky stuff to track down, and who knows where and when lightning and meteorites will strike?

PASSAGES REFERRING TO ORPHEUS, MYSTERIES, AND LEMNOS

Pausanias IV:26:7: He refers to a dream sent to Epiteles. He dug in a certain place and found a bronze jar. Epaminondas

opened it and found a leaf of tin inscribed with the mysteries of the Great Goddesses.

The British Museum contains some gold leaf inscribed with Orphic instructions on obtaining immortality after death.

Pausanias IV:14:1: The Messenian priests of the Mysteries of the Great Goddesses fled to Eleusis when the war against Sparta ended.

Pausanias VIII:15: The Phenaeans in Arcadia have a shrine of Eleusinian Demeter. They also have a rock, two great stones fitted together, by which they swear. Once a year they open the stones, take out the sacred writings, read them to the initiated, and replace them.

Aeneid VIII:454: Vulcan is "*pater Lemnius*."

There was a volcanic peak on Lemnos: Moschylos. (*Moschos*, Greek, = calf). Cf. Stephane (crown), a mountain in Thessaly.

*PASSAGES REFERRING TO KABEIROI,
DACTYLS, GREAT MOTHER, VARIOUS DEITIES*

Pausanias I:4:6: In antiquity, Pergamene territory was the sacred ground of the Kabeiroi.

Pausanias IV:1:7: Methapos established the initiation of the Kabeiroi at Thebes.

Pausanias IX:25:5: Three or four miles from Thebes is a sanctuary of the Kabeiroi. People called Kabeiroi lived there. Demeter entrusted one of them, Prometheus, and his son Aitnaios, with a sacred object.

Those of Xerxes's men, and later those of Alexander, who entered the sanctuary, went mad, or were struck by lightning.

Pausanias warns, VIII:37:6, that the Kouretes and the Korybantes are of different families.

Rhea, or Kybele, or the Great Mother, may have been the same as the Cretan Mistress of the Animals. As such, she appears between two lions on a mountain.

Bull-roarers were used in her procession, together with pipes, cymbals, and rattles.

The Kabeiroi were called Hephaistoi.

The Caucasus is referred to as the Mother of Iron. Aeschylus: *Prometheus Vincitus* 303.

The Telchines forged Poseidon's trident. They had the evil eye.

They had a sister, Halia. Rhodos, Rhodes, was the daughter of Poseidon and Halia.

The Dioskouroi: They were among the Kabeiroi at Samothrace, so they may conveniently be mentioned here.

Odyssey XI:300: Odysseus visits the underworld, and sees Leda, who bore (to Tyndareus) Kastor and Polydeukes. Each is alive and dead on alternate days. They are honoured like gods.

Pausanias III:24:5: There is a small cape at Brasiae in Laconia, where there are bronzes one foot high and caps on their heads. Some think they are Dioskouroi or Korubantes.

Pindar, *Nemean Ode* X:61 ff.: Lynkeus saw the Dioskouroi sitting in the trunk of a tree.

Plutarch, *Quaestiones Graecae* 296, Question 23: "Who is the joint-hero in Argos, and who are the Averters?"

They call Kastor joint-hero and think he is buried with them, and revere Polydeukes as one of the Olympians. Those who drive out epilepsy they call Averters, and think that they are offspring of Alexida the daughter of Amphiaraus."

OKEANOS [2]

Early descriptions of Okeanos put him in the sky. Sea, sky, Poseidon, Hephaestus and Athena are interlinked, as some of the following passages suggest.

"Water is *ariston* (best)." (Pindar).

"Pherecydes and some others take the first generator as the best thing." (Aristotle).

Pausanias I:33:2 ff.: At Rhamnous near Marathon is a sanctuary of Nemesis. Pheidias carved the statue. She holds an apple branch, and an engraved bowl with figures of Aethiopians. Some say that the river Okeanos is father of Nemesis, and the Aethiopians live beside Okeanos. Okeanos is not a river, however, but the most distant part of the sea which is sailed by human beings. It contains the island of Britain, and has Iberians and Celts on its shores.

Iliad XV:160: Zeus gives instructions to Iris to go and tell Poseidon to stop fighting and to rejoin the gods, or go to the holy sea, *eis hala dian*.

Homeric Hymn to Demeter: Tyche (Chance) is a daughter of Okeanos.

Pausanias IV:30:6: mentions a statue of Tyche holding the sphere on her head and Amalthea's horn in her other hand. Amalthea's horn is the cornucopia; Amalthea, nurse of Dionysus, was a goat.

According to another story, Amalthea's horn was that of a bull; the infant Zeus drank from it. A drinking cup in the form of a bull's horn is called a rhyton. Compare also Thor, who lowered the level of the sea in a drinking contest.

Tyche, fortune, could be either good or bad.

Eurynome, daughter of Okeanos, received Hephaestus, with the help of Thetis, when he was thrown out of Olympus. Eurynome and Ophion ruled over the Titans before Kronos and Rhea. They dwelt on Olympus.

In the *Prometheus Vincetus* of Aeschylus, the Okeanines enter flying, followed later by their father Okeanos on a griffin. A griffin had the head and wings of an eagle, and the body of a lion.

Hesiod, *Theogony* 790: (Okeanos surrounds earth and sea). Far under the wide-pathed earth a horn of Okeanos flows out of the holy river through night. A tenth part of it is allotted. Okeanos, winding with nine silvery whirling streams round the earth and broad back of the sea, falls into the salt water, and the one (part) flows out from a rock a great trouble to the gods.

"*Eis hala piptei*" falls into the salt (sea): this may be the waste of waters on which the earth floated, Hebrew Tehom, as opposed to the waters above the earth, *Old Testament, Genesis* 1:7.

"Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters." (*Old Testament, Psalm LXXVII:19*).

Theogony 292: Herakles crossed the *poros Okeanoio*, the ford, or passage, of Okeanos. Compare the use of *poros*' by Alkman, mentioned in Chapter XI supra.

Theogony 265: Thaummas (marvel) married Elektra, daughter of deep-flowing Okeanos.

274: Gorgons who live beyond glorious Okeanos. ('Glorious' is *'klutos'*).

242: Doris, daughter (*koure*) of Okeanos, perfect river. 'Perfect' here is *teleeis*. *Telos*' has the primary meaning of completion, end or boundary.

130 ff.: Earth first bore starry Ouranos... She also bore the fruitless sea (*pelagos*), Pontus, with raging swell, without desire and love. But then she lay with Ouranos and produced deep-swirling Okeanos, Koeos, Krios, Hyperion and Iapetos and then Kronos.

107: "*halmuros pontos*", the briny sea.

Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* 364: "The sea is a tear of Kronos," a Pythagorean saying.

Among fragments from the Epic Cycle we have bits of the '*War of the Titans*.' "The poet of the Titanomachy, whether Eumelos the Corinthian or Arktinos, has spoken as follows in his second book: 'In it were floating golden-faced dumb fish, swimming and playing in the heavenly water.'" Athenaeus VII:277D. 'Heavenly' is in Greek '*ambrosios*'. To Homer, fish are '*hieroi*', holy (*Iliad* XVI:407).

Pausanias VIII:41:6: The Phigalians told me that it (the statue of Eurynome) is a wooden idol tied up with gold chains, like a woman down to the waist, and below that like a fish.

THE OLD ONE OF THE SEA

He ruled the sea before Poseidon. Nereus, Phorkys, and Proteus are three names of 'The Old One of the Sea'.

Pictures show Nereus with the body of a fish, with a lion, a buck and a snake thrusting their heads out of his fish body.

Herakles wrestled with Nereus, who assumed different frightening shapes.

Hesiod, *Theogony* 233, describes Nereus as the eldest son of Pontus.

Triton and Rhodos were two famous children of Poseidon and Amphitrite.

In *Theogony* 931, Hesiod speaks of Triton of wide force, at the bottom of the sea, in a golden palace of Amphitrite and Poseidon, holding the foundations of the sea (or: holding the pillars of the sea).

POSEIDON

Odyssey III:6: He is Enosichthon, the Earthshaker, Kuanochaites, of dark hair.

V:292: He takes up his *triaina* and stirs up the sea to wreck Odysseus. (*Ainos* = dread).

Homeric Hymn to Poseidon: He is a great god, mover of earth and sea, Pontios (Lord of the Sea), who has Helicon and wide Aegae. He has a double function, to be a tamer of horses and a saviour of ships.

Hesiod, *Shield of Herakles* 105: He is a bull-like earth shaker, *taureos*; he is a guardian of Thebes and its walls.

He was the son of Rhea and Kronos. Rhea gave Kronos a foal to devour. The infant was carried to Rhodes by Rhea, and entrusted to Kapheira, a daughter of Okeanos, to nurse. The Telchines forged his trident.

The Telchines had a sister, Halia (Greek *hals* = salt), whom Poseidon married. Rhodos was their daughter.

Poseidon also married Demeter. He was dark haired, and their son Arion was a horse with a black mane.

Poseidon wished to be the patron deity of Athens.

At a blow from his trident a horse sprang up from the rocky soil of Attica. The Greek '*hopl*' is a hoof; '*hoplon*' is a weapon. Cf. the story of Pegasus, who struck Mount Helicon with his hoof, thereby creating the spring of Hippocrene.

He saw Amphitrite of the Golden Spindle dancing with the Nereids on the island of Naxos, and ravished her. On their marriage he became ruler of the sea.

Pausanias VII:24:6 ff., in a passage too long to quote in full here, gives an account of the destruction of Helike by earthquake and tidal wave. He also distinguishes three kinds of 'quake. The usual warnings are continuous rain-storms or droughts for a long time beforehand, sultry weather in winter, haze and red glare of the sun in summer, violent wind-storms, electrical storms in mid-heaven with much lightning, new configurations in the stars that bring terror to observers.

The fortunes of Athene and Hephaestus were linked, and they shared a temple. We will take Athene first.

Pausanias IX:19:1: In Teumessos in Boeotia there is a sanctuary of Telchinian Athene. Perhaps a party of Telchinians came to Boeotia from Cyprus.

Iliad IV:8: Athene has the epithet Alalkomeneis, the Parrier. Zeus notes that two goddesses help Menelaus, namely Argive Helen and Parrier Athene, whereas Aphrodite wards off disaster from Paris. Alcis is a Macedonian name for Athene.

Iliad V:856: Athene helps Diomedes to wound Ares. He draws blood with a wound to the belly. Brazen Ares gives a shout as loud as nine or ten thousand men joining battle. Brazen Ares is then seen going up to heaven in a mist.

Iliad XXI:400: Ares strikes Athene's tasselled aegis, which is proof against even Zeus's thunderbolt, with his spear. Athene picks up a big rough boulder, a marker in a field, and hurls it at Ares, hitting him on the neck and making him collapse. His hair is full of dust, his armour rings out, and he sprawls on the ground. Athene taunts him, then turns her brilliant eyes away (*phaeinós*, shining).

Iliad IV:70: Zeus sends Athene down to earth. She swoops down from the peaks of Olympus like a meteor (*aster*) that the

Son of Kronos of the Crooked Ways has sent, as a portent to sailors or to a great army on land, blazing and sending out showers of sparks. Just so did Pallas Athene rush down to the earth.

HEPHAESTUS

Eurynome, daughter of Okeanos, with the help of Thetis, received Hephaestus when he was flung out of Olympus. It was from a temple shared by Hephaestus and Athene that Prometheus stole fire.

Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 2:10:23, refers to *furtum Lemnium*, the theft at Lemnos (to which island Prometheus brought the fire that he stole from heaven).

Hera was the mother of Hephaestus (without Zeus), and probably of Ares.

Another name of Hephaestus is Palamaon.

In *Iliad* 1:577 ff., Homer tells us that Hephaestus is the son of Zeus and Hera, and that he makes peace between his parents. Hephaestus assisted at the birth of Athene from the head of Zeus.

Hephaestus was physically abnormal; his soles and heels were turned backwards, and he rolled rather than walked. This recalls a story about the origin of human beings in Plato's *'Symposium'*.

Iliad XVIII: 395 gives another version of his fall: Thetis and Eurynome, not the Sintians on Lemnos, saved him.

Hephaestus had the task of making thrones for the *Olympians*. There was an occasion when Hera sat on her throne and was paralysed. The throne rose into the air. Only when Dionysus made Hephaestus drunk, and led him to Olympus on a mule, could Hera be released.

The wife of Hephaestus was Aglaia, the youngest of the Graces (Charites). *Charis* can mean the charm of art.

Aeneid VIII:424 ff.: The Cyclopes, Brontes the Thunderer, Steropes the Lightner, and Pyrakmon the Fire-Anvil, were making a thunderbolt. They had given it three spokes of twisted rain, three of rain-cloud, and three of red fire and winged South wind. Now they were mixing in it terror-flashes, thunderclaps and fear, and rage, with flames that pursue. Elsewhere they were working on a chariot for Mars with the flying wheels with which he inflames men and cities; also the aegis that fills with horror, the weapon of angry Pallas They were competing to polish it with golden scales of serpents, with snakes intertwined, and on the breast of the goddess the Gorgon's head rolling its eyes.

Pallas was said to be the father of Athene. He was winged. Athene killed him and wore his skin.

The Cyclops Brontes (Thunderer) is one of those named as a father of Athene. The Cyclopes were close to the Idaean Dactyls, phallic and primordial.

Itonos also was Athene's father, and supervised her education.

Athene bore a son, Apollo, to Hephaestus. Athene and Leto (mother of Apollo) were connected, according to stories current in Athens and at Delos.

The Greeks had a tradition of unusual things happening in the sky, the sea, and on earth at the time of the birth of Athene.

Pindar. *Ol.* VII:32 ff.: To him the golden-haired one from the sweetly scented shrine said that he should sail directly from Lerna's shore to a pasture set in the sea, where once the great king of gods drenched a city with golden snowflakes, at the time when, by the arts of Hephaestus, with his axe wrought in bronze, Athene, shooting up from the top of her father's head, gave a great long war cry. Heaven and mother Earth shuddered at her.

Iliad II: 653 ff.: In the catalogue of ships (of those who went to Troy) we meet Tlepolemus, a son of Herakles, who brought nine ships from Rhodes. He had killed his great-uncle Licymnius (a son of Ares), so fled to Rhodes, where he was favoured by Zeus, king of gods and men; and the son of Kronos poured down on them divine wealth.

'Divine' here is *thespesios*. It implies sent from a god, mighty, awful.

Iliad XV:669: Athene removes the "*thespesion*" mist that had covered the eyes of the Achaeans.

Odyssey VII:42: Odysseus lands in Phaeacia. Athene, disguised as a wondrous, young girl, leads him to the town. She does not allow the Phaeacians to see him, for she pours a divine '*achlys*', mist, round him.

Odyssey IX:68: Zeus sends a north wind against their ships, with a storm from heaven (*thespesie*).

In Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1154, '*thespesios*' means prophetic.

Homeric Hymn to Athene 7 ff.: At her birth, Athene stood before Zeus, shaking a sharp spear. Great Olympus raised a loud battle-cry at the wrath of the bright-eyed one, and earth gave a terrible echoing cry. The sea was moved, tossed with purple waves; foam suddenly poured forth. The bright son of Hyperion stopped his swift horses for a long time, until Pallas Athene had taken the heavenly armour from her immortal shoulders. Wise Zeus rejoiced (*gethese*).

The break in the sun's routine marks an exceptional occurrence.

Notes (Chapter Twelve: Mystery Religions)

1. The entry under 'Pytho' in the *Lexicon* of Suidas states that at Delphi there was a bronze tripod, with a bowl on top, containing divination pebbles which jumped when questions were put to the god. The Pythia, supported on it or inspired, said what Apollo answered (literally: what Apollo brought out). Suidas, *Lexicon*, s.v.Pytho, in Adler, ed., IV:268-9, quoted by Kerényi in *'Dionysus: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life'* translated from German by R. Manheim; Routledge & Kegan Paul, London). One of the phrases used for an oracle responding is 'ho theos aneile,' literally 'the god raised'.
2. Akkadian 'uginna' is a circle. Hebrew 'chugh' (as in Scottish 'loch') means circle, horizon, vault of heaven. Compare the Greek 'hugros', wet.

**[Click here to view
the next section of this book.](#)**