

Rays of Classical Greek Deities

By Dr. R.F. Newbold

In a recent edition of the *Journal of Esoteric Psychology*, Martin Fiebert has offered a ray scheme for 7 Greek gods and 7 Greek goddesses (Fiebert, 1989). The scheme offers valuable insights but appears to owe too much to a desire for symmetry and comprehensiveness. The number of 12 Olympian deities does not really fit into a 7 ray scheme and even if we include two major chthonic non-Olympians, Hades and Persephone, there remains the problem of a major deity, Dionysus, not being included in Fiebert's scheme. Dionysus becomes the pantheon's fifteenth deity (or thirteenth if we confine attention to the Olympian family), and if we accept the story that has Hestia making way for Dionysus to keep the Olympian figure to twelve, there is a loss of symmetry, with seven males and five females. Furthermore, even if we had a culture that gave equal prominence to each member of its first-rank deities, and if the number of that pantheon was a multiple of seven, we cannot assume that a culture will at the same time give equal prominence to each ray, and thus apportion ray attributes to its deities in such a manner as to acknowledge the equal significance of each ray. It could be part of the distinctiveness of a culture that makes R over-or under-value one or more of the rays.

Fiebert matches 14 Greek deities with rays as follows: 1 - Zeus and Hera, 2 - Apollo and Aphrodite, 3 - Athena and Hermes, 4 - Demeter and Poseidon, 5 - Artemis and Hephaestus, 6 - Ares and Hestia, 7 - Persephone and Hades. Greek theology, even by the standards of its time, was not particularly advanced and we should not expect their deities to be pure ray types but reflect their human worshippers at least to the extent of having distinct soul and personality rays. Further, when the deities are not pure entities but mostly the results of conflation

between two or more deities, we could expect them to present a somewhat variegated aspect. Fiebert acknowledges a debt to Jean Bolen's stimulating elaboration of 7 Greek goddesses as Jungian archetypes (Bolen, 1984). While making for fascinating reading, Bolen's elaborations are highly speculative and for the sake of coherence can neglect certain features of the mythology surrounding a goddess. Thus, in developing Demeter as the archetype of the mother, Bolen has little to say of her important connection with the Eleusinian mysteries. In a series of articles in the *Journal of Esoteric Psychology*, Michael Robbins, enlarging on hints and information provided by the Tibetan, has suggested soul and personality rays for the planetary gods, thus: Hephaestus (Vulcan) I and 7, Hermes (Mercury) IV and 3, Ares (Mars) I and 6, Aphrodite (Venus) V and 2, Zeus (Jupiter) II and 6, Cronos (Saturn) I and 7, Uranus VII and 3 (Robbins, 1986 a, b, 1987). Additionally, Hades (Pluto) has a 1st ray personality and Poseidon (Neptune) a 6th ray soul. This leaves, of the 13 non-chthonic deities of pantheon, 5 goddesses, Artemis, Athena, Hera, Hestia, Demeter, and two gods, Apollo and Dionysus.

Athena was born fully armed and uttering a great shout (Greek Megalaphone, or telephone) from the head of her father, Zeus. Zeus had swallowed Athena's pregnant mother, Metis, in order to subvert a prophecy that a child of Metis would challenge his supremacy. At the judgment of Paris, Athena offered Paris the power to be the greatest warrior in the world. Her martial attributes included wearing the special aegis or shield of Zeus. She was the only deity entrusted with Zeus' thunderbolts and was the protector of strongholds. As a warrior, she was noted for her cunning stratagems, such as having the idea for the wooden horse that overcame Troy. She had a keen interest in law, justice, and

politics generally, where her guile and communicative skills were useful. She introduced juries to replace blood feuds as a means of settling disputes. Athena was also closely associated with economics, both in the original Greek sense of household management and in the broader sense of commercial activity. Olive oil was a staple item for local consumption and trade and a gift from Athena to mankind. The olive tree or branch symbolized peace through prosperity. She invented several crafts, such as spinning, weaving, and pottery, and artifacts, such as the ship, plough and double flute-an instrument she refused to play, however. She nurtured the arts that sustain the life of civilized communities. Athena was a great weaver, both of cloth and plans. Her manifold activities and communicative skill marked her out as a natural patron of education. A strong and independent woman, she kept her distance from men by rejecting marriage but befriended mortal heroes who could act out some of the qualities she embodied. Rays 7, especially the 7A steadfastness and endurance aspect, and 3, especially the 3B practical activity aspect, are indicated. Her association with wisdom and her attribute, the owl, might suggest ray 2 (2B, the wisdom aspect) but she was the daughter of Metis, which means cunning intelligence, rather than Sophia. Athena's owl appeared on Athenian coins and this link with commercial activity is a clue to the real "wisdom" of Athena. (On the other hand, her wisdom may refer to the 1st ray quality of wisdom to establish, uphold or enforce the law). The drive or need for achievement, identified and researched in great depth by psychologists in recent years, manifests in a restless search for excellence, innovation and entrepreneurship that corresponds to ray 3 behavior. In her Roman guise of Minerva (or, Minerva, deriving from *mens*, intelligence, design, inventive power), Athena is also the warlike patron of artisans. Although Athena could be a voice for mercy, she is ruled by the head rather than the heart. Insofar as Zeus was the supreme deity, God, spear-carrying Athena identified with and

imposed his plan, and thus manifested her 1st ray soul purpose as fearless servant of God's will. She represents the ideal combination of 1st ray soul energy and 3rd ray personality, whereby dynamic spiritual will is expressed with creative intelligence, adaptability, skillful dexterity and, where necessary, by an indirect approach.

Dionysus was born from the thigh of Zeus. He had spent six months in the womb of his mother Semele, who had been vaporized after insisting, at the malicious urging of Hera, on seeing her lover in all his might and majesty. Hera sought to destroy her husband's offspring by persecuting Dionysus' nurses and affecting him with madness. Zeus showed unusual solicitude for this particular child of his. Dionysus thus survived and was commissioned by his sire to confer two boons on suffering humanity, care-dissolving wine and license to revel. With his missionary band of satyrs and powerful, possessed women (maenads), he spread the new dispensation as far a field as India, a proto-Alexander the Great. His gifts were not always welcomed but resistance meant disaster for the recusants. Dionysus brought pain, terror and altered states of consciousness. Dancing and rhythmic music, especially drumming, can induce trances, inspiration, intoxication. Wherever he went there was dancing, loud explosive sounds from a variety of voices and musical instruments, ritual madness, and orgiastic, highly expressive behavior. Dionysus was gender-ambivalent almost to the point of androgyny, a vegetation and fertility god, a god of masks/masques, shape-shifts and paradoxes, and an appropriate patron of drama. Throughout his mortal career he suffered periodically from the persecution of Hera and others, and fluctuated between timorous passivity and ruthless aggression. Among his titles were the Roman Liber (Free) and the Greek Lusios (Releaser). In the area where Greek and Hindu cultures overlapped, he was readily identified with the god Shiva, the Creator, Destroyer and Cosmic Dancer. The stock attribute of Dionysus and his followers

was the spear-like thyrsus, a fennel rod wound around with ivy and with a pine cone on the end. Dionysus' rays would appear to be 1, particularly the liberating, destructive 1B aspect, and 4, particularly the struggle and conflict 4B aspect. Like Athena, he implemented the divine will, though in a much less serene way. This was partly because he was not a full immortal until rewarded for his service and elevated to Olympus and ultimate reconciliation with Hera. He was an entity of elemental power and cruelty, all the more destructive to those misled by his effeminate, soft appearance. But to those not committed to the old structures, he brought color, abundance, freedom, ecstatic union with the divine, enthusiasm (literally, the state of having a god inside oneself). "Once the dancers launch into harmony and rhythm, they are seized with Bacchic transport and are possessed," observed Plato. Yet to those who could not handle his power, madness, terror and drunken excesses supervened. With typical ray 4 duality, Dionysus revealed himself in fathomless silence and in pandemonium. The horrors of the tragedies performed in the theatre of Dionysus released pent-up feelings and provided catharsis in the witnessing of death, suffering and the reversal of fortune. In Dionysus and his exploits, and in the effects of his presence on his followers we see the 4th ray personality, torn between the polarities and lacking self-control. The 1st ray soul provides purpose and stability to the conflicted personality, and eventual peace, but not at any price and not at the cost of evolutionary ray purpose. Ideally, dynamic will is expressed harmoniously and without unnecessary conflict. To the extent that Dionysus could express the great principle of liberation through dance, song, music or drama, he expressed that ideal. Dionysus dramatized his ideas by the situations he engineered and by the artists he patronized.

Apollo was the god of light, Phoebus the radiant One, and was often associated with the sun. Born of Zeus and Leto on Delos, island of light, he slew the monstrous Python and

brought order to the savage land around the navel, centre or common hearth of Greek world, Delphi.

There he sent often ambiguous prophecies through mediums to humanity. A healer himself, he passed on healing skills to his son, Asclepius. As a lover of mortals, he had a poor record, bringing little success to himself or happiness to them. He led, inspired and played the lyre for the nine muses of the arts, and Orpheus was his protege. His other chief attributes were the bow (hence his appellation of the Far-Striker), and the laurel or bay-tree, which supposedly had purifying powers. For his blood-guilt incurred in slaying the Cyclops Apollo expiated himself by serving King Admetus for a year. Apollo was associated with reason, beauty, harmony, purification, and expiation of the guilt that comes with civilization. The sun is a 2nd ray being and Apollo, as light-bearer and revealer of truth, suggests the 2B wisdom aspect. He stood for the essence of wisdom, since what he said was believed, even if his utterance called for considerable intuition to reveal their true meaning. Apollo's narcissism, self-absorption and failed relationships suggest some of the weaknesses of the 4th ray. His wide and deep involvement in the arts also suggest ray 4 influence, mainly the 4A creation of beauty and harmony aspect, the qualities that reveal themselves so pleasingly in the balanced and carefully calculated proportions of a Greek temple. His most well known wisdom utterances also have a 4th ray coloring, counseling self-control, moderation and being centered: abstain from inauspicious words; fear authority; do not glory in strength; make obeisance to the divine; hate hubris; govern your spirit; observe the limit; nothing in excess; know yourself. And, he might have added, in beauty, truth. By offering expiation from sin, Apollo offered peace in place of the pain and torment of guilt. Ideally, self-knowledge and understanding of the causes of disease permits harmonious expression of wisdom and love. Aesthetic sensibilities provide a channel for a light-bearing healer

and teacher. Apollo's clarity and balance complemented the dynamics and enthusiasm of Dionysus and they came to share worship at Delphi.

Hestia, quiet goddess of the hearth (Latin, focus) was a deeply respected and widely worshipped deity. Eldest sister of Zeus and Hera, she was without mortal frailties and is the subject of no myths, apart from a story that, weary of Olympic domestic strife, she ceded her place in the twelve to Dionysus. According to Plato, her name means "the emergence of things." No images of her were made, she was formless, abstract, a wise virgin figure, associated with stillness, sanctuary, stability, contemplation, and the warming, illuminating, sanctifying, perpetual flame at the centre of the house, the city, and, at Delphi, the Greek world. A mild, charitable figure, she is the archetype of the woman who becomes a nun, is happily single or domesticated, contentedly pursuing her own interests and focusing inwards. Through fire she provided a bridge from mortals to immortals, transforming and bearing upwards sacrificed goods. This mediating role is often given to or taken by saints. Hestia's all-persuasiveness helps explain her relative anonymity. Having so little "personality" one might simply select a soul ray for her, or regard her as a pure ray type. One of the titles of the 6th ray Lord is the Imperishable Flaming One. The 6th is a ray often associated with saintliness. Hestia appears to belong to the more mystical, quietly devoted 6A subtype. Aldous Huxley (Huxley 1946), commenting on the decline in popularity of hagiography, attributed it to the apparent tedium of the simple, humble, focused life that is without the flaws that lend interest to the lives of lesser mortals. If Hestia is to have a separate personality ray, the 2nd seems most appropriate, giving a combination that at times lacks assertiveness to uphold ideals (Olympus needed her calming presence) but which may succeed in doing so with a sensitive, kindly manner.

As Zeus' consort, Hera was a powerful,

regal figure with a rather negative image amongst the Greeks. She was the patron of all stages of a woman's life in relation to men, and she could be protective and nurturing. Hera was recognized as standing for important ideals, such as commitment and fidelity in marriage (and hence secure paternity), and stability in community life but she also exemplified how hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. She passed on her ferocity and lack of control to her son, the war-god Ares. Like Zeus, she could bring on thunder, lightning and storms. In keeping with the archetype, her loyalty and devotion to her husband was such that he was spared most of her jealous anger, and "the other woman" and her children were the targets of Hera's wrath, despite the fact the women were usually victims rather than the willing partners of Zeus. Her attributes included the peacock, cow and the Milky Way, symbols of pride, watchfulness and fertility. And when that great band of stars combines with the peacock we get an image of starry-eyed idealism. Hera sided with the Greeks against the Trojans, not only because Paris had rejected her claims to the golden apple, but because he had violated a marriage by his abduction of Helen. For daring to test her own fidelity, Ixion was dispatched to Tartarus to be stretched out on an ever-turning wheel of fire. Yet this apparently admirable fidelity may have led to a certain martyr complex and bitterness that her sacrifices were not adequately rewarded. Tiresias had had experience of being a woman as well as a man and when he avowed that women derive nine times as much pleasure from sex than men, instead of being pleased, she blinded him, suggesting a failure of some kind to come to terms with sexuality. In psychoanalytic theory, blinding equates with castration. The story that she conceived Hepaestus without benefit of intercourse is a peculiarly 6th ray fantasy. One of the 6th ray Lord's titles is the Implacable Ruler, and Hera's vindictiveness and destructive quarrelsomeness is the negative side of the militant, fiery aspect of this ray, 6B, which can

also convey devotion, loyalty and no-nonsense idealism. Her pride, cruelty, egotism, her love of being queen and controlling others, her repressive self-containment, and her uncompromising expectation of loyalty from others are 1st ray personality features that appear in combination with the 6th ray soul. Passionate devotion to ideals combine with a powerful and unrestrained desire to impose the personal will and further the cause. Ideally, the cause of sacred marriage benefits when humility, restraint and wider vision eliminates the vulnerability to humiliation and frustration that pride and narrowness engender.

The De- (or Da-) of Demeter may mean earth, and meter certainly means mother. Demeter lived in a fortress-like palace, a single mother in a one child household. She sought to keep her daughter Persephone to herself and insulated from the outside world but, despite her precautions. Persephone was seized by Hades and taken to the underworld. Demeter's deep mourning for her daughter afflicted the plant kingdom, hitherto yielding fruits and nuts for mankind in a perpetual season of abundance. Mass starvation was prevented by a deal whereby Persephone was able to spend some of the year with her mother. The joyous earth sprouted with new life at such times. Thus the seasons came into being. In this new cyclic dispensation, cereal agriculture was given out by Demeter to humanity and the mysteries of life and death were revealed to initiates at Eleusis. Demeter, the possessive nurturer, relaxed the apron strings to some extent and an important evolutionary step for humanity took place. The comforting, unstructured, unchallenging, somewhat Eden-like earlier way of life was gone. The Eleusian mysteries were held underground and celebrated the sacred marriage of heaven and earth, matter and spirit, the highest and the lowest. Demeter's chief symbol was an ear of grain. At a key point in the ritual, initiates were shown the symbol, and saw the seeds as being physical containers of spirit and immortality, the dross that covers the

alchemical gold. The nine-day ceremony prescribed careful rules and disciplines to prepare the groups of initiates for the ultimate experience when people had, temporarily at least, given up certain comforts in order to grow. In that mortals were buried in the earth, Demeter provided a tomb as well as the womb for mankind. Her 7th ray connections with life after death, elemental forces, the mineral kingdom and subterranean world are clear, particularly the creative and transformational aspect, 7B. Of the three rays that govern the plant kingdom, it is the 2nd that is associated with cereals. Demeter created by expressing the divine design through form and thus fulfilled a 7th ray soul purpose. Her dependence - fostering over-attachment to her daughter suggests one of the personality faults of the 2nd ray. The associating tendencies of this ray appear in the annual peaceful gathering of Greek communities at the temple of Demeter' in Thermopylae after the grain was sown. But the rhythm and ritual organization of the 7th ray may also be evident here, just as the 7th ray appears in the worship of Demeter as a guardian of corporate bodies and city assemblies. Demeter's association with law appears in the Oath taken to her, Zeus and Athena by Athenian judges and jurors. Ideally, Demeter expresses structured living mellowed by warmth and generosity, and she dissolves the blockages and heals the debilitation and disease caused by the fear of death.

Artemis was a great virginal figure and nature goddess who came to be particularly associated with the hunting and nurturance of animals. An accurate archer and leader of a band of nymphs, she was a somewhat remote figure, living in the wild, especially on mountains, with her silver bow, a symbol of the new moon. She was closely associated with childbirth, adolescent initiation to adulthood, and marriage. Women in childbirth invoked her aid. Quick to protect and punish, she enjoyed the freedom of non-attachment and relative solitude and was, by Greek standards, a liberated, athletic woman who knew from

very young what she wanted in life, and got it. Artemis could be ruthless and unforgiving; when one of her companions was 'aped' by Zeus, she turned the victim into a bear. Without awaiting any explanation, she destroyed the hunter Actaeon when he came upon her bathing. Bears, quails, goats and oxen were particularly associated with Artemis, as was the moon and its rhythms and its pale, silvery, mysterious light. Artemis' frequent depiction as a torch bearer suggests both the seeker after and the shedder of light. Her special relationship with the animal kingdom, her association with the moon, her power to destroy and initiate, her merciless judgment, her presiding over rites of passage suggest 5th ray influence. She presided over the merging of the animal kingdom into the human via domestication, and at her rites humans adopted animal garb, perhaps a way of illustrating the permeability of the border between the kingdoms. As the moon she was a receptive agent of illumination, and living with nature qualified her to discover the keys to its mysteries. Of the 5th ray Lord titles, The Keeper of the Secret, The Cloud upon the Mountain Top, and (via arrows) The Great Connector fit well. Patience and perseverance are 5th ray qualities that make a good hunter. Her connection with fertility might partly be explained by the 5th ray tendency to work through the sacral chakra. If Artemis has a 1st ray personality, her relation to death and destruction, as well as her detachment, independence, toughness, focus on her target, leadership of a land and spirit of adventure are explained. Focus, detachment, harshness and destructiveness are qualities common to both rays. Like nature, Artemis was fertile, cruel, awesome, beautiful and mysterious. With her will unimpeded by emotion Artemis was equipped to impersonally oversee rites of passage. Her deep knowledge of nature and its rhythms, in particular, offered her an opportunity to tap the wisdom of animals, and could be used to help overcome communal and individual crises.

In sum, the following soul and personality

rays are proposed for the deities under discussion:

Athena 1A and 3B, Dionysus 1B and 4B, Apollo IIB and 4A, Hestia II and 6A, Hera VIB and 1, Demeter VIIB and 2, Artemis VA and 1.

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