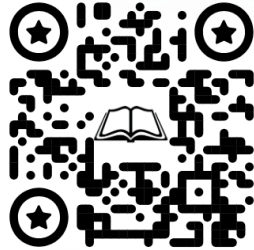


*May you find a path that fills your heart,
and sanctuary wherever you go.*

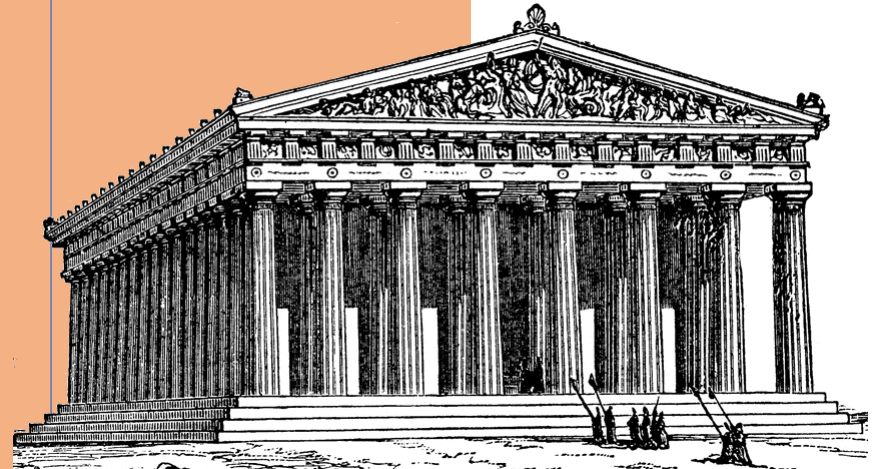


Bright Blessings, and Safe Travels!

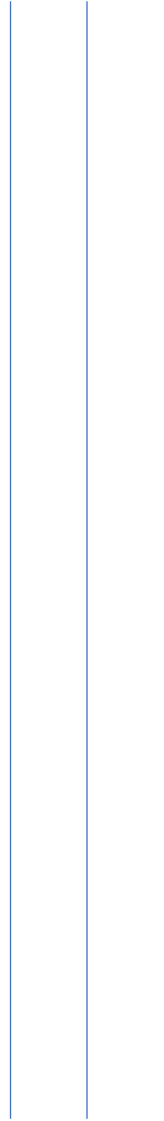
Hellenism
Hellenism
Hellenism

Hellenism

Greek Reconstructed Polytheism



By Ada Muffoletto



A Hymn to Hestia

Beginning any new ritual practice can be a daunting experience. To help you get started here is a sample hymn that can be spoken to invoke Hestia. This can be used to open a larger ritual or exist as a standalone prayer.

*Hestia, Royal daughter of Almighty Kronos,
it is you who holds the central abode,
the magnificent perpetual fire.*

*Elevate the respectful supplicants who worship you in their holy
ceremonies,*

Grant to them ever-flourishing happiness, glad and pure.

*O dwelling of the blissful gods,
steady support of mortals,*

eternal, glow-formed, needed by all.

*Come, smiling blessed goddess,
accept these offerings with kind heart,
inspire happiness and gentle health.*



What is Hellenism?

Hellenism is a Neo-Pagan faith that seeks to revive and/or reconstruct the indigenous pre-Christian religion of the Greek peninsula as if the faith had survived unbroken to the present day. While many Hellenists base their practice in 5th century Athenian styles of worship, ancient Greece was not a monolith either across time or location, so many different historical traditions exist for Hellenists to derive practices from. Still, modern Hellenists do share basic similarities: worship of the Greek gods, giving offerings, celebrating festivals, and adherence to broadly similar virtues.

The Hellenist Worldview

Hellenists are polytheist, meaning they believe in a large pantheon of autonomous divine beings who have influence over different aspects of nature and human society. These deities include the Olympian gods many are familiar with, but also divine personifications of abstract concepts, nature and house spirits, and the semi-divine Heroes. Reciprocal relationships with these gods through a cycle of gifts makes up the foundation of Hellenist practice.

The cycle of reciprocity between gods and mortals is described by the Ancient Greek word *kharis*. *Kharis* has no direct analog in English, but covers concepts like grace, favor, delight, and goodwill. In brief, it is the relationship built between gods and mortals through back-and-forth gifts: mortals through offerings (food, drink, artwork, hymns, devotional acts, etc.) and the gods through protection and divine blessings. It is more akin to the way you would buy a friend a meal or help them move house than bribery or contracting. This is built on the trust that you have the other's happiness at heart, not an expectation of repayment.

Xenia is the Greek virtue of hospitality. It describes a code of conduct between guest and host, and includes that a host may not refuse to house a guest without good reason. In Ancient times, it was believed that the gods would occasionally take mortal disguises and walk amongst the people, and several myths describe the consequences of refusing hospitality to a divine being, as well as the rewards for properly abiding by *xenia*. In modern times, this virtue is expressed through kindness to strangers, especially those who request your help or are in obvious need. Aside from being a generally pro-social attitude to have, abiding by *xenia* is also a devotional act to Zeus Xenios, Zeus of the Stranger.

Hesiod's *Theogony* tells the Greek creation myth and how the world came into its current order. It contains much information about the gods, particularly Zeus and the other children of Kronos.

The *Homeric Hymns* are a very practical starting source, as each one is a poem dedicated to one of the Greek gods. These poems, written in Homeric style but not by Homer himself, are a source of many myths about the gods. They particularly focus on myths pertaining to births and heroic feats. They are a useful tool for meditative study and can be recited during rituals as a devotional act.

The *Orphic Hymns* come from a particular group of Ancient Greeks who practiced Orphism, a style of worship focused on figures who entered the Underworld and returned from it such as the poet Orpheus. The poems are simultaneously invocations and poems of praise addressed directly towards the honored god. For modern Hellenists they are a useful source of invocations used to invite the gods to witness ritual.



Sources for Reconstruction

Hellenism is fortunate to have a relatively large amount of documentation about the historical religion and the culture it existed within. These range from archaeological finds such as temples and pottery to treatises and histories preserved by Muslim scholars during the Islamic Golden Age and re-disseminated to Europe during the Renaissance. These primary sources reveal many aspects of ancient religious practice that are useful to Hellenists today.

Broaching this wealth of information can be daunting, but there are a few sources that are the most useful to someone just beginning a Hellenist practice. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, collectively referred to as the Homeric Epics, are some of the oldest surviving works of poetry. They were composed piecemeal over centuries before being recorded in their most popular form around the 8th century BCE by Homer.

These poems tell a few tales of the Greek Bronze Age, specifically a war with the Anatolian city-state of Troy and the aftermath. In ancient times they were considered quasi-histories and memorizing them was a required part of education. In modern times they are a source of characterization for the gods, the expected behavior of heroic figures, and how the Greeks viewed the world they lived in. Many subsequent plays expand the tapestry of the Homeric Epics, tracing different characters' experiences before, during, and after the Trojan War. Additionally, it offers bits of information scholars have used to reconstruct Greek magic, necromancy, ritual structure, the laws of *xenia*, and more.

Worshipping the Gods

Modern Hellenists do not have the benefit of widely-accepted belief, grand sanctuaries, or vast public festivals that the Ancients enjoyed. In the absence of a governing body, the faith is very individualized and largely practiced solo. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as each person has the freedom to construct a practice and cultivate relationships with the gods that works best for them. Some choose a more rigidly defined reconstructionist path pieced together from historical sources, while others are comfortable drawing influence from the wider Pagan community and creating an eclectic practice. Both options, and the spectrum that lies between them, are valid.

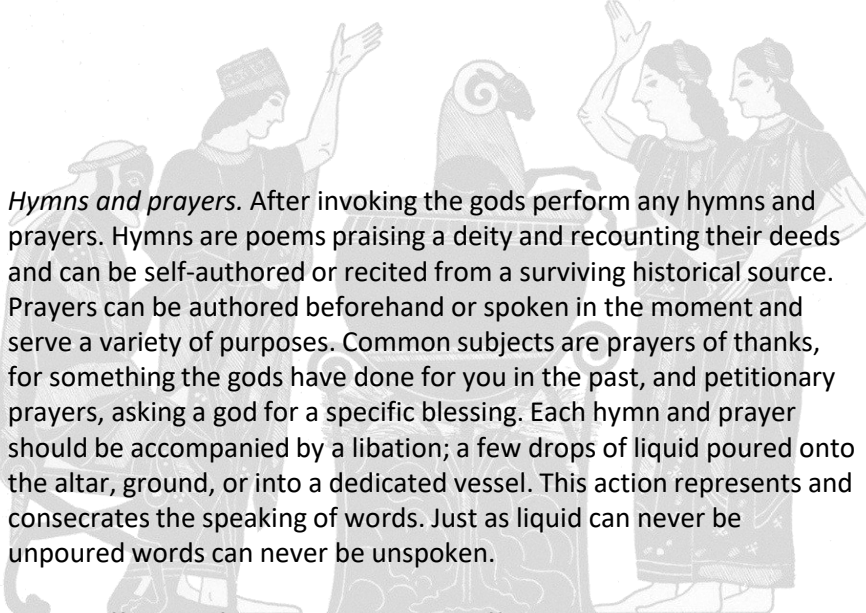
Additionally, Hellenism is an open practice, meaning it is accepting of all who feel drawn to the Greek gods and Hellenic worship. There is no requirement of Greek ancestry, nor is there a concept of "conversion." There is no ecclesiastical body or initiatory process you must go through in order to become a Hellenist, and the gods will not be "angry" at any previous belief or non-belief you held. The best way to get started is to do your research, reach out to a deity, and construct your practice over time. The fear that you are doing it "wrong" is difficult to unlearn, but the gods are understanding and do not penalize innocent ignorance.

The Gods in the Modern Day

While many people are somewhat familiar with the Greek pantheon through myth-inspired media such as *Percy Jackson* or *Clash of the Titans*, the lived reality for Hellenists is somewhat different. The gods have power and influence over different aspects of nature and society, but their authority is not so strictly defined as “Goddess of Marriage” or “God of War.” The Greek gods have multifaceted and often overlapping domains, and their roles within the ebb and flow of Ancient Greek society were specific to Greek social constructions of life transitions, proper behavior, and piety.

While those social constructions do not always map onto modern society, enough overlap exists for the ancient domains of the gods to provide a jumping-off point for a modern worshiper’s relationship with them. An example of this is Demeter, an Olympian goddess associated with the seasonal cycle and the grain harvest. Modern technology has drastically changed our relationship with agriculture, to the point where many of us do not grow the food we eat ourselves and do not need Demeter’s blessings as directly. Instead, a modern worshiper may find connection with Demeter through a love of houseplants, baking bread, or parenting.

Even considering their historical domains, the gods are not static beings, and many worshipers in the modern day have found resonances of modern concepts within their experiences of the ancient divinities. When enough people have similar experiences of the gods, that experience becomes Shared Personal Gnosis (SPG) that is then incorporated into definition of the god for modern Hellenists. Examples include Dionysus and Apollo as patrons of queer people, and Ares as a supporter of those battling PTSD.



Hymns and prayers. After invoking the gods perform any hymns and prayers. Hymns are poems praising a deity and recounting their deeds and can be self-authored or recited from a surviving historical source. Prayers can be authored beforehand or spoken in the moment and serve a variety of purposes. Common subjects are prayers of thanks, for something the gods have done for you in the past, and petitionary prayers, asking a god for a specific blessing. Each hymn and prayer should be accompanied by a libation; a few drops of liquid poured onto the altar, ground, or into a dedicated vessel. This action represents and consecrates the speaking of words. Just as liquid can never be unpoured words can never be unspoken.

Giving offerings. If you have a physical offering prepared or a devotional act you want to perform, this is the time. What a physical offering consists of is limited only by your imagination and personal preference. Two common kinds of offerings exist: first fruits and votives. Historically, first fruits are the first parts of a harvest taken from the fields or orchards given to the gods in thanks for a successful growing season. As most modern people don’t grow their own crops, “first fruits” food offerings may be offering a portion of their own meal or a dish they prepare especially for sacrifice. Votive offerings are small tokens that represent a deity in some way. It could be any item you associate with their domains, their mythology, or their historical symbols. Devotional acts are actions you perform that you dedicate to a deity. Just about any action can be devotional, such as cleaning up a park in honor of the nymphs, exercising in honor of Heracles, or fiber crafts in honor of Athena.

Closing. Once the sacrifice has been made a final libation to Hestia is given to formally close the ritual. From here you can clean up your workspace and reflect on the experience. A common question is how long to leave food offerings out. A good rule of thumb is to take food off the altar when it is no longer appetizing, up to 24 hours. Thus, an offering of almonds could be left out longer than an offering of meat.

Basic Ritual Structure

From historical sources we know that the Ancient Greeks practiced household worship. The ritual structure used by modern Hellenists is derived from what we know about how this household worship was conducted. Every Hellenist has their own way of conducting ritual but some elements are common.

Lighting a flame to Hestia. In ancient times the hearth fire was the center of the home. It is where meals were prepared, provided light and heat, and was the focal point of household worship. It was only allowed to go out in very rare and specific circumstances. Hearth fires are the domain of Hestia, eldest daughter of Kronos. Thus, it is respectful and customary to invoke her with a prayer or hymn when beginning a household ritual.

Making kernips. The kernips is the primary means of spiritual purification in household worship. It is made by filling a jar with clean water, then plunging lit incense or bay leaves into the water. The consecrated water is then sprinkled over the altar and used to cleanse the face and hands to remove any lingering miasma and set the space aside as sacred.

Invoking the gods. This step changes depending on the purpose of a ritual. Any gods you plan to honor and sacrifice to should be invited to witness your devotion and receive your offerings. A helpful source of historical invocations is *The Orphic Hymns*, which is available for free online in multiple translations. Feel free to modify any invocation you find to fit your needs.

Ouranic vs. Chthonic

The Ancient Greeks divided the domains of the gods into two rough categories: the Ouranic deities and the Chthonic deities. Ouranic deities were associated with the heavens; the unending and immortal aspects of the universe. Chthonic deities were associated with the earth, and because the Greek afterlife was believed to be underground, with the cycles of birth, death, and rebirth. While most gods are either one or the other, some have both Ouranic and Chthonic aspects because of their roles. The best example is Hermes. He is a major Olympian and therefore Ouranic god, but one of his roles is to guide recently departed souls to the borders of the Underworld; a Chthonic task.

This distinction is an important foundational concept, as many other aspects of Greek worship find their reasoning here. It is considered rude on the part of mortals to bring the Ouranic gods into contact with death, as it is antithetical to the eternity they represent. This necessitates the identification and cleansing of *miasma*.

The way one prays and offers to the gods is affected by their Ouranic or Chthonic status. Ouranic prayers are done with the face to the sky and the arms stretched upwards, while the opposite holds for Chthonic prayers. A portion of libations to Ouranic gods may be drunk by the worshipers, while the entire vessel is upended onto the ground for Chthonic libations.

Miasma and Purification

The Hellenic concept of *miasma*, often translated to “pollution,” is a complicated subject and must be separated from Christian ideas of sin. Miasma is not sin. Miasma is simply a side effect of being mortal and thus a being that comes in contact with death. It was mentioned earlier that bringing Ouranic deities into contact with death is considered rude. That contact with death is what incurs miasma.

Understanding why certain actions and experiences incur miasma involves an understanding of Greek ideas about death. Obviously, contact with dead bodies and sickness was considered polluting. But so was childbirth, mortal sex, and bodily fluids. The first is because the womb was seen as a gateway to the Underworld from whence the soul of the newborn came; making it associated with death. Bodily fluids are something mortals experience that the gods do not, so they are evidence of mortality and inevitable death.

Other pollutants were acts of impiety. This pollution went beyond simple miasma. Impious acts, historically, were thought to incur *agos*, the wrath of the gods. However, impiety as a crime is one of premeditation and intention; it is impossible to accidentally incur *agos*. Furthermore, the list of things that would call down the gods’ wrath was short and highly defined. Many of these acts are inaccessible to modern people, such as defiling a god’s sanctuary, none of which still exist.

All this to say, there was and is no expectation of being free of miasma 24/7. Such a feat would be impractical and result in a rather boring life. The only times the cleansing of miasma is required is when approaching the gods at the altar. In this instance, miasma clouds the connection between mortal and divine. This means your prayers and offerings may not come through clearly nor any messages the gods are trying to send you.

Cleansing miasma is a fairly simple process. A combination of physically cleaning the body and washing the hands and face from the kernips usually suffices. If you feel you need additional cleansing for whatever reason, a ritual bath or incense cleansing is also an option.

August 2023
Hekatombaion – Metageitnion
Εκατομβαιών – Μεταγειτνιών
Year 3 of the 700th Olympiad

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 19 Hekatombaion	7 20 Hekatombaion <i>Civic Holiday (Canada)</i>	1 14 Hekatombaion FULL MOON 2:31 pm EDT 8 21 Hekatombaion	2 15 Hekatombaion <i>Synokkia</i>	3 16 Hekatombaion <i>Synokkia</i>	4 17 Hekatombaion	5 18 Hekatombaion
13 26 Hekatombaion <i>Panathenaia ta megala</i>	14 27 Hekatombaion <i>Panathenaia ta megala</i>	15 28 Hekatombaion <i>Panathenaia ta megala</i>	16 29 Hekatombaion <i>Panathenaia ta megala</i>	17 30 Hekatombaion <i>Panathenaia ta megala</i> <i>Hekate's Deignion</i>	18 1 Metageitnion <i>Noumenia</i>	19 2 Metageitnion <i>Agathos Daimon</i> <i>Herakleia?</i>
20 3 Metageitnion <i>Athra</i>	21 4 Metageitnion <i>Aphrodite, Herakles, Hermes and Eros</i>	22 5 Metageitnion	23 6 Metageitnion <i>Artemis</i>	24 7 Metageitnion <i>Apollon</i>	25 8 Metageitnion <i>Poseidon and Theseus</i>	26 9 Metageitnion <i>Helios, the Muses and Rhea</i>
27 10 Metageitnion	28 11 Metageitnion	29 12 Metageitnion	30 13 Metageitnion FULL MOON 9:35 pm EDT	31 14 Metageitnion		

Example calendar from Hellenion.org

The Festival Calendar

Every Ancient Greek city state has its own calendar and annual cycle of festivals, but the only one to survive in near-entirety is the Athenian Festival Calendar. Because of this, it is the most common festival calendar used by modern Hellenists.

The calendar is lunisolar, with the largest division of time being the Olympiad, or the length of time between Olympic Games. This consists of four years, each year being made up of thirteen lunar months and turning over on the first new moon after the summer solstice. Because the cycle of lunar months does not align perfectly with the solar year, an intercalary month is added in the winter every third and fifth year of an eight year period (two Olympiads).

Within each month is a combination of two types of auspicious days: annual festivals and monthly festivals. Annual festivals occur once a year and historically were public holidays financed by the polis. While many were open to the whole population, some festivals required initiation into the relevant cult for participation. Many of the ancient cult mysteries were secretive and thus not recorded. Modern Hellenists celebrate these festivals as best we can.

Monthly festivals are tied to the phases of the moon and dictate the cycles of household worship. They consist of days dedicated to specific gods, during which it is appropriate to offer and pray to them. Monthly festivals are mostly clustered around the beginning of the month while annual festivals tend to occur at the end of the month. Because the Ancient Athenian and modern Gregorian calendars do not line up the Gregorian date of all festivals changes every year even though they occur on the same Athenian date. Multiple versions of the modern worship calendar are publicly available online and in print.

No Hellenist is required to participate in every festival day on the calendar. In fact, roughly half the year is some kind of festival day making celebrating each of them with elaborate rituals an impractical and exhausting task. It is up to the individual to decide which festivals they would like to celebrate and how.

Altar Spaces

Many pagan faiths involve worship at an altar, and Hellenism is no exception. Common elements of a Hellenist's working altar include:

- The Hearth Flame: A candle or oil lamp lit to invoke the historical hearth fire and usually dedicated to Hestia.
- Deity Representations: Any physical object that represents the deities being honored in a ritual.
- Kernips: A jug filled with consecrated water made and used for pre-ritual cleansing.
- Incense: A common offering; also a useful trigger of ritual headspace.
- Libations: Liquid offerings poured out at the conclusion of any invocations, hymns, or prayers spoken during ritual.
- Offering Bowl: A receptacle for any food offered during ritual.

While an altar is a workspace that is arranged and rearranged for different purposes, some Hellenists also maintain shrines to deities they have close relationships with. Shrines are spaces dedicated to a particular god or gods that houses objects representing or "belonging" to them. These can be deity statues, artwork made in their honor, things you find that remind you of them, a candle dedicated to them, etc. etc. etc. The creating and maintaining a shrine of is a common devotional act.

The Olympians

Perhaps the most well-known Greek deities, these gods are the most widely-worshiped both in ancient times and modern. They consist of the siblings and children of Zeus. While all Olympians are primarily Ouranic deities, some have roles and associations that grant them a Chthonic aspect under which they can be worshiped. Deities with dual roles are noted.

Zeus - The king of the gods and most powerful Olympian. He gained his throne by overthrowing his father Kronos and freeing his older siblings. He married his sister Hera, though was famously promiscuous with other gods and mortal women. These affairs produced six Olympians and many famous Heroes. His domains are many, but include the heavens, storms, strangers, war, prophecy, civic leadership, and household protection.

Hera - Zeus's wife and mother of Hephaestus and Ares. Her characterizations in myth are rather unflattering to modern readers, as she spends much of her time punishing Zeus' lovers, both the willing and the unwilling. As a goddess of marriage she has few options but to demonstrate the unacceptability of infidelity, yet cannot directly punish Zeus. Elsewhere, she is a patron of Heroes and a protector of cities. Evidence suggests she was a major cultic figure in Ancient Greece. Unfortunately little evidence of her worship and festivals remains. Her domains include marriage, women, and protecting women during childbirth.

Poseidon - The older brother of Zeus, Poseidon is best known as a god of the seas, sailors, earthquakes, and horses. As the Greeks were a seafaring people strung out over many islands it was common to pray to Poseidon for safe passage over the ocean. His influence over the tides and currents is so great that many sections of the *Odyssey* happen because Odysseus kills Poseidon's son, the Cyclops Polyphemus, and in revenge the god conspires to make Odysseus' journey home long and difficult. His mastery over earthquakes means he is occasionally worshiped in a chthonic capacity.

Zeus

Keraunios – Of the Thunderbolt
Hypatos – Most High
Ktesios – Of the House
Xenios – Of the Stranger

Poseidon

Pelagios – Of the Sea
Asphalios – Secures Safe Voyage
Ennosigaios – Shaker of the Earth
Hippios – Of the Horses

Hera

Teleia – Of Married Women
Gamelia – Of Marriage
Henioke – Of the Chariot

Demeter

Khthonia – Of the Earth
Khloe – First Shoots
Plutodotera – Giver of Wealth
Megala Mater – Great Mother

Aphrodite

Pandemos – Of All People
Urania – Of Divine Love
Symmakhia – Ally in Love
Morpho – Beautiful

Hephaestus

Klytometis – Famed for Skill
Polytekhnes – Of Many Crafts
Polyphron – Ingenious
Kyllopodion – Crooked-Foot

Ares

Theritas – Brutish
Miaiphonos – Bloody
Obrimos – Mighty
Enyalios – Warlike

Athena

Parthenos – Virgin
Pallas – Of the Spear
Eryma – Defender
Polias – Of the City

Apollo

Phoebus – Bright
Thearios – Of the Oracle
Hekatos – Shooter from Afar
Paian – Healer

Artemis

Agrotera – Of the Hunt
Pheraia – Of the Beasts
Philomerax – Friend of Young Girls
Orsilokhia – Helper of Childbirth

Hermes

Epimelios – Of the Flocks
Diaktoros – Messenger
Polytropos – Wily
Khthonios – Of the Earth (Underworld)

Dionysus

Bakkos – Of Frenzy
Staphylites – Of the Grape
Kissios – Of the Ivy
Dimetor – Twice-Born

Hades

Plouton – Wealthy
Polydegmon – Who Receives Many
Eubuleus – Good Counsel
Agelastus – Melancholy Countenance
Agesilaus – Who Attracts All People

Persephone

Despoina - The Mistress
Hagne – Pure
Aristi chthonia – The Best Chthonic
Kore – The Maiden
Karpophoroi – The Bringer of Fruit

Epithets

A concept often neglected in myth-inspired media is the Ancient Greek use of epithets. These are titles appended to a deity's name that serve a few different purposes. In poetry they are used as additional descriptions that add to a scene or understanding of the god as a character. Common examples are "Son of Zeus," "Swift-footed," and "Far-shooting." Some epithets reference a god's mythology, often the name of a god's birthplace or a statement of a past feat. But the most important kind of epithets to the Ancient Greeks were cultic epithets.

Cultic titles are the epithets that were used in ritual worship. They were common elements of prayers and hymns that served to define the specific role the god was being honored for or the kind of blessing a mortal was asking them for. Most gods had at least a handful, but the more widely worshiped gods had dozens of epithets. An example Apollo, who among his epithets has two commonly used: Paeon and Thearios. *Paeon* means, "healer;" *Thearios*, "of the oracle." One may call on Apollo Paeon for a blessing of healing, while someone engaged in divination may seek the blessing of Apollo Thearios.



Demeter - Another daughter of Kronos, Demeter's most famous myth is an origin story for the seasonal cycle. The tale of Demeter and Persephone is one of the most well-known Greek myths, and has been adapted by modern storytellers many times in many different configurations. To the Ancient Greeks, she was a vital goddess of agriculture, fertility, and the cycle of planting, growing, harvesting, and fallow. The Eleusinian Mysteries were an initiatory sacred mystery of Demeter and Persephone, and this festival was one of the biggest and most important holidays of the Ancient Athenians, behind only Athena's Panathenaea. The mysteries were said to impart a special insight to the Underworld, and increase one's chances of a favorable afterlife by the grace of Lady Persephone. This festival also signifies Demeter's Chthonic associations.

Aphrodite - Ever popular with Hellenists and eclectic pagans alike, Aphrodite is well-known for her beauty and sexual appeal. As a goddess of love she held the rare epithet *Pandemos* - Aphrodite of All People. Her myths center around love in all its positives and negatives, including the myths of Eros and Psyche and the Trojan War. Aphrodite also has the distinction of being the Olympian most distantly related to Zeus. According to Hesiod, she was born from the sea foam created when Kronos castrated his father Ouranos and threw his genitals into the ocean. This technically makes her Zeus' aunt. She is married to her great-nephew Hephaestus, though their union was mutually unhappy and not much honored. She is an important figure in Roman mythology as well. The poet Virgil in the *Aeneid* makes her this mother of the titular hero Aeneas; a survivor of the Trojan War that goes on to found an Italian colony that eventually became Rome.

Ares - Unlike his counterpart Athena, Ares is a god of the most brutal aspects of war. To the Ancient Greeks he personified all the parts of war people prefer not to speak about – the active battlefield is his domain. Thus, he was not much liked by the Ancient Greeks. However, recent academic analysis has identified further domains of Ares as a god of order, law enforcement, and valor. Many modern Hellenists connect with Ares as a supporter through mental health struggles and the mental fortitude needed to survive life-threatening situations.

Hephaestus - The blacksmith of the gods, Hephaestus is venerated by craftspeople of all stripes, particularly those who work with metal and machinery. In myth, he is responsible for many of the gods' strongest weapons, including the Aegis – Zeus' shield embossed with the terrifying face of a Gorgon. He is also venerated as a god of disability and accommodation, as he is the only Olympian with a stated birth defect, a lame leg. He was thought to be responsible for many innovations in construction and metallurgy, as he disseminated his inventions to mortals through divine inspiration.

Athena - Born fully formed from the forehead of Zeus, Athena played an important role in the mythology and religious structure of multiple communities. In mythology, she is the patron of Athens, mentor of Odysseus and Telemachus, and a master weaver. As a reflection of her importance, a cycle of festivals dedicated to her was celebrated by the Athenians, culminating in the massive public festival of Panathenaea. Her most famous temple, the Parthenon, still stands at the apex of the Acropolis. She is a goddess with many domains, including warfare, battle strategy, wisdom, government, weaving, and the olive industry.

Apollo - The son of Zeus and younger twin of Artemis, Apollo held sway over many aspects of Greek society. Though his worship was centered on Corinth, he was also an important figure in Sparta, Athens, and Thebes. In addition to being a god of light, his domains include divination, poetry, music, archery, and healing. He was especially important in Delphi, where the Pythian Oracle had her sanctuary. This Oracle, sponsored by Apollo, was the most well-respected and trusted oracle in Ancient Greece, consulted on matters as important as warfare and political action. Apollo was thought to be the emissary of Zeus' will, revealing it to mortals through oracles and other forms of divination. He was also regarded as a protector of young men as they transitioned into full adulthood.

Artemis - Apollo's twin sister, she occupied a similar role as a guardian of transitions, though her domain is largely in the female. Like Athena and Hestia, she forsook marriage and vowed to remain a virgin. In doing this, she is positioned within the liminal space between maiden and married woman, and protects women as they cross this threshold. Additionally, she is a goddess of the moon, wild game, hunting, archery, childbirth, (as she midwifed her own brother) and unmarried girls. Her refusal to marry and association with an all-female group of hunters has led modern worshippers to revere her as a patroness of lesbianism and other sapphic sexualities.

Types of Nymph

- Okeanides – Salt Water
- Naiades – Fresh Water
- Crinaeae – Fountains
- Eleionomae – Wetlands
- Potameides – Rivers
- Limnades – Lakes
- Pegaeae – Springs
- Potameides – Rivers
- Dryades – Trees
- Daphnaeae – Laurel Trees
- Meliae - Ash tree
- Hyleoroi – Watchers of Woods
- Melissai – Bees
- Oreiaides – Mountains
- Epimelides – Pastures
- Leimonedes – Meadows
- Alseides – Groves
- Auloniades – Valley Pastures
- Napaeae – Dells
- Anthousai – Flowers
- Kissiae – Ivy
- Nephelai – Rain Clouds
- Aurai – Breezes
- Hesperides – Sunsets
- Asteriai – Stars
- Haliai – Shores
- Nereides – Seas
- Lampades – The Underworld



Nature Spirits

Like many world religions, Hellenism has an animist component. It is believed that everything in nature – trees, rocks, waterways, and more – has a spirit. In Hellenism, these spirits are called nymphs. Typically represented as beautiful women, nymphs were worshiped largely by rural farmers and others whose lives took them close to nature. However, urban folks still took time to honor them, either within sacred groves or by visiting areas known to have a strong nymph presence.

Nymphs played a large role not just in the balance of nature, but in sovereignty, lineages, and life transitions. Many myths involving nymphs feature them procreating with mortals, both willingly and unwillingly. The prevalence of this motif can be explained partially by Ancient Greece's poor track record of women's rights, but also by political propaganda. If a family was able to claim descent from the spirits of the land itself it meant they held a personal connection to it. The family was thus more likely to have the land's favor. Such claims were powerful in a time where the wiles of nature played a much bigger role in survival.

Nymphs were also thought to play a role in some life transitions, particularly those of young women. It was common for a family to leave offerings in a nymph-associated cave before a wedding to protect the bride as she made the social transition from maiden to married woman.

Today, nymphs are honored through simple worship. They don't require the elaborate cleansing and ritual structure employed when approaching the Olympians. Instead, their worship is done through offerings of water or honey cakes, or something as simple as spending time in their presence and listening to what they have to say.

Hermes - A younger son of Zeus by the nymph Maia, Hermes' domains are largely concerned with aspects of human society. These include shepherds, travel, commerce, thievery, trickery, athletics, boundaries, messengers, and guides. He holds two important roles: as the Messenger of the Gods and as a guide of departed souls to the afterlife. This gives him both Ouranic and Chthonic aspects. As such, his roles take him among mortals more than most other deities. He is popular among worshipers today, as his ancient reputation as a friend to mankind has endured in modern SPG.

Dionysus - Perhaps the youngest Olympian, Dionysus' origin myths are long and complicated, undergoing significant evolution over time. He is one of a handful of deities to be attested to in Linear B inscriptions - the script used before the more well-known Greek alphabet. His domains in later attestations include wine, vineyards, ecstatic experiences, and playwrights. His mystery cult was famous for its general abandonment of societal norms in seeking religious ecstasy through ritual drunkenness. He also has a chthonic aspect due to some versions of his birth myths involving resurrection from the Underworld.

Hestia - While the main gods of the Greek pantheon are often referred to as the Twelve Olympians, it's really more of a Baker's Dozen, as who occupies the twelfth spot changes over time and place. In some instances, it is Dionysus, but in others it is Hestia. Daughter of Kronos and goddess of the hearth, Hestia was highly important in household worship as her domain over the hearth fire made her the primary point of contact to the other gods. The sacrifices offered to the fire were said to reach the gods through the fragrant smoke they produced, courtesy of Hestia. In Rome, she had a temple administered by the Vestal Virgins. These priestesses maintained a hearth fire in her honor that was never allowed to go out.



Chthonic Gods

In ancient times, the gods of the earth were approached with caution, if at all. Their worship was uncommon, as speaking of the Underworld and its denizens was thought to invite their attention and possibly lead to death. This idea has been largely abandoned in modern worship, leading many to develop close relationships with these gods and entities.

Hades - Eldest son of Kronos and Rhea, Hades literally drew the short end of the stick when his siblings were dividing up their domains. Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades drew lots to determine who would rule the three major aspects of the Ancient Greek world: the sky, the sea, and the earth. Zeus won the sky, Poseidon the seas, and Hades accepted lordship over the afterlife. He is the god of the dead, and is the head administrator of the Greek afterlife. His main job is to keep the dead from escaping back to the land of the living, and to manage the other deities in their various roles.

Persephone - Queen of the Underworld and the subject of an oft-adapted story. Her abduction and subsequent queendom over the afterlife has been retold numerous times in media such as *Lore Olympus*, *Hadestown*, and *Hades*. In practical worship, she is both Ouranic and Chthonic depending on her name. As Kore, the maiden, she is a goddess of spring. As Persephone, she is a goddess of death and rebirth. The dynamic between her and Hades plays out in a few myths, with Persephone being the more merciful figure regarding those who enter the land of the dead with breath still in their lungs. As someone who regularly passes back and forth between the worlds, she provides the sympathetic figure contrasting her husband's strict duty to keep these worlds separate.

Thanatos - The divine personification of death itself, Thanatos is the figure present at the moment of death. Though he does not personally separate the soul from the body, he watches over the transition and ensures the separation happens correctly.

Charon - After Thanatos manages the transition and Hermes guides the newly departed to the banks of the River Styx, Charon the ferryman takes them across. He ensures only those who were given proper funeral rites enter the Underworld. Part of these rites include coins placed over the eyes, as "payment" for passage to the Gates of Hades.

Cerberus - The three-headed guard dog of the Gates of Hades. His role is twofold - ensuring those who are dead stay in the Underworld, and keeping those still alive out.

Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Aeacus - The judges of the dead. A later addition to the Underworld mythos, these famously wise kings were given a special role after they died - to sort the dead according to their living deeds into one of three afterlives. Those who were particularly heroic were sent to the paradise of Elysium. The vast majority of people who lived ordinary lives went to the meadows of Asphodel for rest and rejuvenation. Only those who committed agos and angered the gods were sent to the realm of punishment: Tartarus.

The Erinyes - Also known as the Furies or Eumenides, the Erinyes are a trio of ancient goddesses who govern oaths and revenge. If one breaks a sacred oath sworn in the name of the gods, or commits agos, the Furies will torment them in life and death. A historical example of this concept is seen in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, in which Orestes is punished for murdering his mother until he is judged to have been in the right by Athena.

Hecate - Hecate has many roles and meanings across time. In ancient times, she was a goddess of crossroads and the restless dead. She was thought to control the restless dead and, because Greek magic relies on these spirits, became associated with magic. In modern times, her domains have expanded as the concept of "magic" has expanded beyond its original Ancient Greek definition, making her popular with witches and other magic-weavers. One thing that has remained consistent across time is her association with the dark moon, as the dark moon of every month was her festival day and many modern practitioners choose to honor her at this time Hellenist or otherwise.