EIRENE

STUDIA GRAECA ET LATINA

LVIII / 2022 / I–II

Centre for Classical Studies
Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague

APOLLO AND THE SHADOW OF GREEKNESS*

RADEK CHLUP

The aim of my paper is to shed light on the "symbolic core" of the god Apollo. While I am aware that present-day classicists are frequently sceptical of attempts to discover some deeper unity behind the widely disparate attributes and functions of a polytheistic god, I hope to show that there might be a more subtle and complex way in which a unified core of meaning might be attributed to Greek divinities. Inspired by the approach recently proposed by Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge and Gabriella Pironti,[1] I will argue that we can still speak of a god's "core" if we conceptualize it as a dynamic symbolic complex of themes loosely guiding the logic of local and historical developments, most of which can be seen as variations on a Panhellenic structural theme. I will illustrate what this means in the case of Apollo, a god who is interesting precisely due to his complexity, which has always made it difficult to characterize his "essence" in a straightforward manner. My starting point will be three influential 20th-century accounts of Apollo by Walter Otto, Marcel Detienne, and H. S. Versnel. Though

* I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their numerous comments, which have provoked me into greatly expanding the article. The work was supported by the European Regional Development Fund-Project "Creativity and Adaptability as Conditions of the Success of Europe in an Interrelated World" (No. CZ.02.1.01/0.0/0.0/16_019/0000734), as well as by the "Cooperatio" Program of Charles University – research area Theology and Religious Studies.

[1] Pirenne-Delforge – Pironti 2015.

at first sight their portraits of Apollo might appear as incompatible, I will try to show that it is precisely by taking them into account all together that the symbolic structural core of Apollo may be grasped in an interesting manner.

In addition to this, I will relate the results of my structural analysis to a more general theory of Greek polytheistic divinities and their cultural function that I have recently presented in another paper, in which I conceptualize the gods as "a highly efficient cultural mechanism for supporting the cultural system by providing it both with firmness and with plasticity".[2] The gods do this by both defining and guarding the basic norms and values of a sociocultural system and by helping to deal with its inevitable limitations and inconsistencies. I will show what this might mean in the case of Apollo, "the most Greek of all the gods",[3] who in the 19th and early 20th century was seen precisely as a god expressing some of the basic norms and values of Greek culture, but who at the same time was depicted in a number of myths as transgressing these norms himself. I am convinced that it is only by considering the normative and the transgressive side of Apollo together that we may understand the part he played in the Greek cultural order.

Methodological Introduction, I: Does a God Have an Essence?

Before starting my analysis, it will be necessary to clarify some of my methodological principles. The first concerns the fundamental question of whether searching for the "essence" of a Greek god is a viable and meaningful approach at all. Many present-day scholars would probably answer the question in the negative. Since the 1960s, classicists have become aware of how difficult it is to find some unity behind the wide and locally variable range of functions and attributes of each divinity. The older generation of scholars solved this problem mainly by adopting the evolutionist perspective, choosing one aspect of the god as the "original" one and deriving the god's character solely from it; the other aspects were described as having evolved from it or were passed in silence altogether. The resulting portraits of the gods were one-sided and based on arbitrary speculative choices that failed to persuade most other scholars.

[2] Chlup 2018, 121.

[3] Otto 1954, 78.

In response to this, a number of historians of Greek religion started to doubt that it was possible to see the Greek gods as unified personalities with an "essence" that would bind together all their aspects. As C. J. Herington put it in his review of Séchan and Lévêque's *Les grandes divinités de la Grèce* (the last academic attempt to offer concise portraits of all the Greek gods in one book), the idea of Greek divinities "as solid, unitary beings with defined origins and smoothly evolving careers" may perhaps be useful as a technique to present the gods to the modern public, but "as an instrument for attaining the complex reality" that each god represents "such a treatment is worse than useless", as it only produces "flat abstractions".[4] As Herington argued, all such attempts to see the gods as stable objective entities are based on "the confident nineteenth-century assumption that the phenomena of human culture can be analysed by exactly the same methods as those applicable in the natural sciences", though in fact "the gods remain flickering reflections of the human mind, varying unpredictably according to time, locality, social class, and observer".

Today, such an approach is shared by many historians of Greek religion. Thus Fritz Graf in his book on Apollo explicitly refuses even to "try to find a unity that would underlie the different roles" of Apollo, limiting himself solely to mapping the diverse provinces of the god's activities.[5] This goes hand in hand with the frequent emphasis of present-day scholars on the local and the particular, as opposed to the Panhellenic and the general. As Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood puts it:

> Hence the study of Greek divinities must not be based on the assumption that the divine personality of a deity was substantially the same throughout the Greek world. Consequently to avoid the danger of distortions we must study each local personality of a deity separately from the Panhellenic one, and not use evidence from the latter to determine the former. Instead, we must recover each local manifestation of the personality, and then relate it to the Panhellenic *persona*. Moreover, we must not extrapolate from one local cult to another and attempt to interpret an aspect found in one place through another found elsewhere. Nor should we conflate evidence from different parts of the Greek world. The result would be a totally artificial conflation that had no cultic or theological reality. The fact that a given function is, for example, associated with

[4] Herington 1969, 169–170.

[5] Graf 2009, 5.

> Aphrodite at Sparta only means that this function only belongs to her in the context of a particular personality nexus. It is not necessarily found in all, or indeed any, of her other personality nexuses which, I have argued above, had a different profile. Nor is it an inalienable part of an integral complex which included all the aspects of Aphrodite from the whole of the Greek world, and which would be "the" Aphrodite.[6]

However, while all of these critical points should be taken seriously, there are perhaps more complex ways in which a unified core of meaning might be attributed to Greek divinities. An interesting attempt in this direction has been offered by Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge and Gabriella Pironti, who see each god on the one hand as "defined by his or her own powers, competences, attributes, and so on – its own network", on the other hand as "characterized by relationships and associations with other gods belonging to the same pantheon".[7] What unites all the powers, competences and attributes of the god in question is the "god's name", which is capable of evoking a dynamic network of the god's powers:

> A god can be conceptualized like such a network: different activities or contexts, such as the telling of myths or practice of particular cults, let some segments and portions of the network appear. The whole set of connections is not necessarily entirely activated in each context, whatever that may be, but remains potentially available.[8]

In the case of the Hera network, for instance, "marriage, legitimacy, power, and sovereignty *are essential* aspects for determining at least part of a definitional structure of the goddess, which is largely rooted in the relationship between Hera and her husband and brother, the king of the gods",[9] and it is this network that connects, for example, the Hera of Argos with the Hera of Samos despite the numerous differences between these two cult personae.

It is basically in this sense that in my paper I will speak of Apollo as if he actually had an "essence" uniting all his attributes and competences. I believe that in the end the gods do have an "essence", though not in the sense of some immutable Platonic form, but rather in the sense of a dynamic network or com-

[6] Sourvinou-Inwood 1978, 102. Cf. in similar vein Burkert 1985, 119; Parker 2005, 390–394; Versnel 2011, 23–149.

[7] Pirenne-Delforge – Pironti 2015, 40.

[8] Pirenne-Delforge – Pironti 2015, 40.

[9] Pirenne-Delforge – Pironti 2015, 43.

plex of themes that is ever open to new developments, but which nevertheless retains some unity in the sense that each new historical or local development can be seen as a variation on a Panhellenic structural theme. In other words, if we return to the example of Aphrodite by Sourvinou-Inwood, while local conceptions of Aphrodite could vary, I believe the variations were not quite arbitrary, they had to respect the type of structural patterns usually associated with Aphrodite, even though they could develop them in novel ways in response to various locally and historically contingent factors.[10] Importantly, the symbolic core of each god consists in structural patterns which are "empty" in themselves but which can be "filled" with whatever content is at hand. It is for this reason that the particular competences and attributes of each god can differ greatly in each local context and historical period.[11] At the same time, the "nodes" of the network can grow or diminish in importance across different times and locations – "rather like the word clouds one sees on blogs whose topic frequency is expressed in the size of the font over against less frequent keywords", as one of the anonymous reviewers of this article fittingly put it.

What this approach implies is that in most cases the symbolic core is not easily characterized, since it does not consist in any area of competence, but rather in a specific *mode of organization* of any such area.[12] It is not enough to say what areas the divinity supervises. It is more important to inquire in what manner it does so and how this relates to other areas covered by the same divinity. To understand it means to study a wide range of the god's aspects and to pay attention to the structural similarities between them. Even in the case of divinities whose main "theme" or "area of competence" seems clear, such as

[10] This is what Pirenne-Delforge 1994 attempts to show in her Aphrodite monograph (cf. esp. pp. 11–12).

[11] At the same time, it should be stressed that I do not imply a strict structural coherence of all the local attributes and functions of a god. The "core" I am looking for is not a mathematical formula with precise results. It is rather a loose structural pattern which is applied by random metaphorical association. In this regard, I agree with Versnel 2011, and Parker 2005, 392.

[12] While this may remind the reader of the well-known claim of Detienne – Vernant 1981, 177 that "the mode of action employed by a god is more significant than the list of places where he intervened or of occasions which prompted him to do so", my conception differs from theirs in being more structural, involving dynamic patterns of organization and transformation. Cf. Detienne 1999, 136, who in retrospect saw his focus on "the criterion of a single, constant mode of action" as too limited, for a truly structuralist method should rather consist in contrasting each god in each of his or her fields of action with as many other gods as possible, "in a series of micro-networks which reveal them as interacting in a complex fashion throughout the entire cultural field" (Detienne 1999, 148).

Artemis "the goddess of nature", or Aphrodite "the goddess of sexuality", the actual symbolic core is much more complicated, consisting of various dangers and transformations connected with these themes.

In case of Artemis, a good example of the kind of analysis I have in mind was done by J.-P. Vernant. Instead of simply portraying her as the goddess of nature, he defines the structural core of Artemis in a much more complex and dynamic way: "Artemis always operates as a divinity of the margins with the twofold power of managing the necessary passages between savagery and civilization and of strictly maintaining the boundaries at the very moment they have been crossed."[13] This flexible pattern may be related to a wide range of the goddess' functions, showing them as variations on a structural theme. When presiding over the hunt, for instance, she is operating at a boundary between the wilderness in which it takes place and the firm cultural rules by which it is regulated. In a similar vein, while not a war goddess, she receives a goat sacrifice before battle in a liminal situation that not only "separates life from death, peace from warrior combat" but, even more importantly, that "tests the limits established between the civilized order, where each combatant has his place and is expected to play the role he has been taught in the gymnasium from childhood on, and a domain of chaos, given over to the kind of pure violence found among the wild beasts who know neither rule nor justice."[14] Last but not least, an analogous pattern can be traced in her supervision of childbirth, which "displays to Greek eyes, with its screams, its agony, and its delirium, the wild and animal side of femaleness precisely at the moment when, by giving the city a future citizen, the wife is reproducing the city itself and therefore seems most integrated into the world of culture."[15]

While the symbolic complex of Artemis may be characterized relatively easily, with Apollo the situation is more complicated, for he does not have any domain that could at least superficially be seen as an epitome of his symbolic core. He is active in many areas that are widely different, and it is not easy to identify a consistent pattern behind them. Still, I will attempt to show that in the end there is a coherent set of themes and structural patterns that unifies many of Apollo's competences and attributes, and that in many cases helps to explain why the god was depicted in myths and worshipped in cults the way he was.

[13] Vernant 1991a, 204.

[14] Vernant 1991a, 202.

[15] Vernant 1991a, 202. My summary of Vernant's argument is highly simplified, of course, leaving out a number of other features of the goddess that he covers not only in this piece but also in Vernant 1991b.

Methodological Introduction, II: Gods as Cultural Mechanisms

In trying to capture the symbolic complex of Apollo, I will not just remain content with tracing various recurrent themes and structural patterns behind the god's myths and cults, but will additionally interpret these by relating them to a more general theory of Greek polytheistic divinities and their cultural function that I have recently proposed in another paper. I propose to "consider the gods as a highly efficient cultural mechanism for supporting the cultural system by providing it both with firmness and with plasticity."[16] According to this theory, the gods are beings who are created to support the sociocultural system by serving as its symbolic focal points that embody its most important norms, values and notions. However, the gods do not do this simply by positively expressing and guarding the norms but also by dealing with various *limitations* and *internal contradictions* that any system of sociocultural norms is bound to entail. The gods are capable of doing this because they transcend these norms themselves, frequently behaving in various transgressive ways. The gods are excessive; they behave like men, but with an intensity and power that surpass human possibilities. The total chastity of Artemis, for instance, goes beyond anything mortals can achieve (and if, like Hippolytus, they try, they are bound to die). If the gods sometimes embody ideals, at other times they serve as warnings and paragons of excessiveness. In cultural terms, this gives them one big advantage: it allows them to support the system without being constrained by it themselves. Thanks to this, they are able to mediate the contradictions that every cultural world entails, filling in various gaps and helping to achieve dangerous transitions between categories.

In my previous paper I illustrated this on the goddess Athena, who was "a highly paradoxical being: a chaste girl weaving at the loom, and a mighty warrior impossible to defeat; an emancipated female who seems to threaten the patriarchal order in the manner of the Amazons, but who in fact of all the goddesses is the most consistent upholder of patriarchy."[17] I interpreted this as a reflection of some fundamental paradoxes inherent in the Greek sociocultural system, such as the paradox of the wife, who was envisaged as integrating centre of the household, but who was also its weakest point, liable to succumb to outside seducers, or the paradox of women in general, who were politically marginal

[16] Chlup 2018, 121.

[17] Chlup 2018, 117.

in the city but who at the same time were necessary for its reproduction. Athena took these paradoxes upon herself, and as a goddess she was strong enough to contain them and keep them from disturbing the human world. She reminded the Greeks of the dangers connected with women, but guaranteed that if they entrusted these dangers to her, she would be sufficiently strong to avert them.

To put this in different terms, since the gods are not themselves bound by the rules of the system, they are ideally disposed for expressing what we may call its *shadow*, i.e. the various tensions any cultural ordering of reality is bound to generate. This shadow is normally not confronted directly but can be reflected in various indirect symbolic ways. The gods offer a good opportunity for such reflection, but since they are at the same time regarded as divine guardians of cultural order, they allow "confrontation with otherness without destabilizing the entire system".[18] While normally the possibility of violating the rules would be seen as dangerous, the gods manage to *convert this danger into positive power*, which they use to support the order in turn.

Abstract as this may sound, the aim of my paper is to illustrate what exactly this may have entailed in case of the Apollo. By doing so I hope to show how different aspects of the god cohered and formed a meaningful pattern. My inquiry will be helped by three questions that I recommend asking concerning each divinity:[19]

> (1) What are the positive norms the god establishes for the worshippers and in what way does he or she transgress them? ... (2) What conflicting norms or principles does the god unite in his or her personality? ... (3) What transitions does the god allow his or her worshippers to make? Does he or she play part in any rite of passage? Did he or she make any dangerous passages himself/herself?

In analysing Apollo, I will thus focus both on the positive ideals he embodies and on various ways in which he reveals their shadowy side. At the same time, I will be interested in various contradictory types of behaviour that are ascribed to Apollo and will search for a meaningful way to see them all as aspects of a more complex structural pattern. The key to this search will be precisely some of the transitions that Apollo undertakes himself.

In addition, I will try to show what part the symbolic complex called "Apollo" played in the Greek cultural system and why it looked the way it did. Ultimately,

[18] Chlup 2018, 111.

[19] Chlup 2018, 122.

the basic question my paper asks is why the Greeks needed to create the cultural mechanism they referred to by the name of Apollo to counterbalance some limitations of their cultural order. The answers I will offer will probably seem too abstract and speculative to most classicists, but even so I believe speculations of this sort have their place in the study of Greek gods and may be used as an enriching complement of standard solidly based historical studies of Greek religion.

Some Classic Portraits of Apollo

Before I start my analysis, it will be useful to give an overview of some of the important modern attempts to capture the symbolic core of Apollo. In the 19th and early 20th century, probably the most influential conception of Apollo was the one first formulated by Winckelmann, which pictured the god as embodying the lofty spirit of Hellenic culture in its sublime perfection, a god of measured restraint and detachment, of reason and clarity of forms. This image of the "Apollonian spirit", made especially famous by Friedrich Nietzsche, found its culmination in the impressive portrait of the god given by Walter Otto in 1929, who characterized Apollo as "the most Greek of all the gods":[20]

> Although Dionysiac enthusiasm was once an important force there can nevertheless be no doubt that the Greek temper was inclined to subdue this and all other forms of intemperance, and that its great representatives unhesitatingly embraced the Apollonian spirit and nature. ... Apollo rejects whatever is too near – entanglement in things, the melting gaze. ... The sense of his manifestation is that it directs a man's attention not to the worth of his ego and the personal inwardness of his individual soul, but rather to what transcends the personal, to the unchangeable, to the eternal forms. ... In Apollo there greets us the spirit of clear-eyed cognition which confronts existence and the world with an unparalleled freedom – the truly Greek spirit which was destined to produce not only the arts but eventually even science.

Otto's picture of Apollo is phrased in anachronistic terms that are hardly applicable to Archaic times, but if we leave aside the Platonic language and focus on the main point, it certainly has something to it. All the dimensions that he stresses are indeed present in the symbolic complex of the god. There is no

[20] Otto 1954, 78–79.

doubt that he is characterized by "spiritual loftiness",[21] manifested, e.g., in the "theomachy" scene of the *Iliad* (XXI,462–467) in which Apollo refuses to fight Poseidon, inasmuch as battling for the sake of ephemeral mortals would be unworthy of a god. Apollo is a god of culture and measured music. He is the founder of cities (Callim. *Hymn Ap.* 55–57) and guardian of their lawfulness. According to Pindar (*Pyth.* 5,66–67), the god "puts into men's mind good governance (*eunomian*) free from strife",[22] and *The Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (253, 293) describes Apollo's prophetic activity by the verb *themisteuein*, which means not only "to prophesy" but also "to lay down law and right", one of the functions of the Delphic oracle being to sanction laws and constitutions and provide them with sacred authority. The exhortations "Know Yourself" and "Nothing in Excess" inscribed in the walls of his sixth-century Delphic temple show him as a champion of moderation, enjoining humans to recognize their mortal limits. As the god admonishes the raging Diomedes in the *Iliad* (V,440–442): "Do not wish to equal the gods in spirit, for the race of immortal gods is by no means similar to that of men who walk on the earth."[23]

It was only after WWII that this idyllic picture ceased to be taken for granted and scholars began to point out that the "moral" aspects of Apollo only form one small part of the much more complex figure of the god, and one that was far from dominant.[24] When looking carefully at ancient sources, it is easy to come up with a completely different image of the god, one that shows Apollo as an arrogant fellow prone to violent outbursts of anger, a rebel who on several occasions had to be exiled, a dark god associated with death. It was particularly Marcel Detienne who in the 1980s and 1990s paid attention to these sides of Apollo, stressing his vengefulness, his penchant for killing beautiful youths, but also his madness and exile after the killing of Python.[25] Detienne's feverish portrait of "Apollo the impudent murderer, the audacious cut-throat" with a "passion for blood, knives, and butcher-boys"[26] is slightly overblown and not quite convincing in some of its details, but he did identify some interesting structural themes which I will show to be crucial for understanding Apollo's symbolic complex. In particular, he pointed out the god's ambivalent relation to purity: "Both the pure and the impure are at work in a god whose power is

[21] Otto 1954, 67.

[22] All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

[23] Translated by Rees 2005.

[24] See e.g. Nilsson 1955, 647–652; Davies 1997.

[25] See Detienne 1998, and for a brief sample in English Detienne 1986.

[26] Detienne 1998, 51, 48.

double, who is purifier and killer, a god who cures the plague and the sickness he himself brings to mortals."[27]

It is precisely this structural theme of purity and impurity which has been pursued by H. S. Versnel in what I consider the best analysis of the structural core of the symbolic complex of Apollo offered so far. For Versnel, Apollo's "most obvious and central function is to keep the impure in (or to dispel the impure to) the outer world where it belongs, and to keep the pure in the inner circle where it belongs."[28] This is manifested not just by the expulsion of the scapegoats during the Thargelia, but also by Apollo's patronage of colonization, which in many cases was also presented as a kind of purification, frequently depicted in stories as a reaction to some kind of crisis which is averted by consecrating a part of the population to Apollo and sending them out to found a new city.[29] To manage these purifying transitions, Apollo must be able to make them himself, being "at home in both the marginal territories and at the centre".[30] Thus we find Apollo periodically retreating to the utopian land of the Hyperboreans during winter, to return gloriously next spring. Finally, Versnel detects the same pattern in Apollo's patronage of ephebes and their integration into the polis. Apollo is himself "an ephebe on the brink of adulthood", and his periodic returns from his exile could thus be "interpreted as an image of the return of the initiates from the marginal region, or the liminal phase, a return which entailed their introduction into the society of the adult."[31]

---

[27] Detienne 1986, 51.

[28] Versnel 1994, 299.

[29] Versnel 1994, 304–310; cf. in detail Dougherty 1993.

[30] Versnel 1994, 310.

[31] Versnel 1994, 316. Versnel mainly bases this interpretation on Burkert 1975, who linked Apollo (whose name in the Doric dialect sometimes appears in the form Apellōn) with the Dorian Apellaia festival, which (similarly to the Ionian Apatouria) served as a gathering of a phratry during which new members were introduced into the community. Burkert is the most important interpreter of Apollo missing in my discussion, as it would require a length analysis. Suffice it to say for now that while ephebic associations frequently pop up in myths and images connected with Apollo, in his actual cults (such as that of Apollo Delphinios – Graf 1979) we find him associated with the political world of male adults and their various groups rather than with ephebes. It is possible that in more ancient tribal times there existed full initiation rites under Apollo's patronage, which were transformed with the rise and development of the polis. But it is equally possible that Apollo had been a god of adults from the beginning and that his own ephebic character had always been just a symbolic way to give weight to the boundary of the adult group he was protecting. The initiation pattern of separation – liminality – reintegration is a powerful symbolic image that is fascinating in itself, and on this account may be used for a variety of purposes, many of them quite unconnected with actual rites of passage, or connected with them only as a mental template.

I believe Versnel's identification of Apollo's symbolic core is correct, and I will build on it. However, I will go further than Versnel and will interpret the structural patterns described by him in a more general manner that will allow me to link them to many more aspects of Apollo's symbolic network. What is particularly underrepresented in Versnel's pattern is the dark side of Apollo himself, as stressed by Detienne. At the same time, I also find it important to relate the pattern to all those bright and orderly aspects accentuated by Otto and to see the two sides as fundamentally interrelated. I will not be able to cover all of Apollo's features and functions, as this would require a full monograph, but I hope to present a sufficiently wide selection of the most important ones to show how my method works.

Apollo's Ambivalence, I: The Bow and the Lyre

I will begin my investigation with some of Apollo's aspects which reveal the god's ambivalence in a more or less straightforward manner. Perhaps the best starting point will be the lyre and the bow, the most typical attributes of Apollo, which Otto used as one of the pillars of his interpretation.

The lyre expresses the positive side of Apollo and shows him as the *founder of culture*. For the Greeks, music was the mark of civilization, a cultural activity par excellence.[32] At the same time, music and dancing were a symbol of divine bliss. When Pindar describes the blessedness of the holy race of the Hyperboreans, who live without sickness, toil, and battle, and in whose land Apollo spends every winter, he stresses that everywhere among them "choruses of maidens, sounds of lyres, and pipes' shrill notes are stirring" (*Pyth.* 10,38–39).[33] By making music and dancing, therefore, humans can for a moment experience something of divine blessedness.

The bow is the very opposite of the lyre: a deadly weapon "striking from afar" (*hekatēbolos*, as runs a common epithet of Apollo in the *Iliad*).[34] Apollo's arrows appear unexpectedly from a faraway unseen source, and in *Il.* I,43–53 they are an apt image for an epidemic of plague that strikes the Greek army suddenly and terribly. Apollo, whose alternative name Phoibos has since antiquity been frequently interpreted as Bright, appears here as a dark, vengeful god, arriving "like the night" to spread havoc. Yet, Apollonian death has its gentle

[32] Cf. Calame 1997; Graf 2009, 34–36.

[33] Translated by Race 1997.

[34] Graf 2009, 14–16.

and welcome aspect as well, for the god's arrows may come quickly and painlessly (cf. *Od.* XV,408–411). In such cases, the bow comes close to the lovely lyre, indicating a fundamental alliance between the two instruments, one that was recognized by the Greeks themselves.[35]

That Apollo acts as a terrifying god sowing death with his bow in itself does not contradict his image of the founder of culture. After all, the beings he destroys are mainly dangerous monsters (such as Python or the Aloadae), or various immoderate humans that are justly punished for their hubris (e.g. Niobe or Marsyas). His killings may thus be seen as essential part of his order-setting and culture-founding activity. As Pindar stresses, "those creatures for whom Zeus has no love are terrified when they hear the song of the Muses" (*Pyth.* 1,13–14),[36] giving Typhon as an example. Otto expresses the same point in more philosophical terms:[37]

> The song of the most alert of all gods does not arise dreamlike out of an intoxicated soul but flies directly towards a clearly seen goal, the truth, and the rightness of its aim is a sign of its divinity. Out of Apollo's music there resounds divine recognition. In everything it perceives and attains form. The chaotic must take shape, the turbulent must be reduced to time and measure, opposites must be wedded in harmony. ... Apollo the musician is identical with the founder of ordinances, identical with him, who knows what is right, what is necessary, what is to be.

However, Apollo's deadliness is not always exercised as just punishment in the name of order. Occasionally, it seems to be aimless and dangerous. A striking example is the opening scene of the *Homeric Hymn*, in which Apollo rushes into the halls of Olympus and frightens all the gods, who "all rise from their seats as he draws near, when he stretches his gleaming bow".[38] Apollo here appears as an unpredictable hooligan. "The awesome god who interrupts the peaceful banquet

[35] Cf. the passages quoted by Otto 1954, 76–77.

[36] Translated by Race 1997.

[37] Otto 1954, 77. The culture-founding unity of music and killing is succinctly expressed by a myth about the origin of the paian, an Apollonian song characterized by its refrain *iē paiān* by which the god's help was invoked before various risky undertakings (cf. Rutherford 2001; Graf 2009, 41–45). According to Callimachus (*Hymn Ap.* 97–104), the paian originated when the god was about to shoot Python and the locals encouraged him by shouting "shoot, Paian" (*hīe Paiēon*), using Apollo's epithet that mainly stresses his healing aspect. In this mythical image, killing, healing, and order-setting are present all together.

[38] All the quotations of the *Hymn* are translated by Rayor 2004.

of the Olympians and strikes terror in the hearts of the divine assembly appears as the potential violator of the Olympian order and usurper of Zeus's dominion," comments Clay.[39] Zeus immediately "restores tranquillity" and "indicates unmistakably that his son, far from being an enemy to be feared, is a friend and ally of the established order."[40] Even so, the *Hymn* lets us see that beneath Apollo's domesticated surface there lies dark force that needs to be pacified.

The structural pattern of a dark force hiding within Apollo's brightness comes out in numerous other instances. There are occasions, for instance, when Apollo's deadliness is not the result of alert aiming at a "clearly seen goal", but rather *an unintended disastrous byproduct of the god's measured perfection*. This is what we see in his love affairs. These display the same combination of romantic beauty and death that we have seen in the bow and lyre attributes, but this time with a remarkably tragic tinge.[41] Apollo's loves mostly "miss the mark": sometimes he is refused by his beloved (Daphne, Kassandra), sometimes his lover dies tragically (Hyakinthos, Kyparissos) or chooses a mortal instead of him (Koronis, Marpessa) – in some versions because she feared the god would abandon her when she grew old.[42] Significantly, the death is sometimes caused by the god himself: he kills Hyakinthos by mistake when throwing the discus and he shoots Koronis in rage at her betrayal.[43] Symbolically, the stories express Apollo's divine distance. When the god tries to overcome it and get near mortals, the nearness turns out to be unbearable for them, leaving Apollo lonely and distant and showing the Apollonian ideal as essentially unattainable for humans.[44]

---

[39] Clay 2006, 38.

[40] Clay 2006, 38.

[41] For the well-known stories, see e.g. Hard 2004, 149–156, 571.

[42] Thus Apollod. I,7,8–9 for Marpessa, and Acusilaus 2F17 for Koronis.

[43] Thus Pherecydes (*schol.* Pind. *Pyth.* 3,60) and Apollod. III,10,3. In the version of Pindar (*Pyth.* 3,25–46) it is Artemis who kills Koronis in rage, sent by Apollo. As Zeitlin 2002, 204 notes, Artemis here serves as Apollo's "feminine counterpart, who often acts *with* him, as in the slaying of Niobe's children (in defense of their mother), or else acts *for* him, as in the slaying of Koronis. ... In some versions of those exploits that are more typically assigned to him, she even *takes his place* (for example, the slaying of Tityos)." Apollo's rage in the situation is also sometimes mentioned in connection with the raven who brought him the tidings of Koronis' betrayal, whereupon Apollo cursed him and turned him from white to black (*schol.* Pind. *Pyth.* 3,52b; Apollod. III,10,3). In other words, the rage is always present in the symbolic field, and it is just differently distributed in different versions of the myth. The raven, Apollo's typical companion, is yet another alter ego of the god, and his change from white to black nicely highlights the tension between brightness and darkness that is one of the cornerstones of Apollo's symbolic complex.

[44] The few cases in which Apollo succeeded as a lover were of a clearly genealogical character, and even here the god retained his distance, though this time by his own choice. The most

What we see here is a pattern wherein the god embodies *the ideal of measured cultural order*, but at the same time shows it as *unattainable for humans*, and even *deadly* for them. I suggest seeing this configuration as a crucial part of Apollo's symbolic network. It is defined by a tension between *brightness and darkness, proximity and distance, love and death, divine perfection and human suffering*. While at first sight these are clear-cut opposites, the point of the Apollonian symbolic complex lies in their paradoxical interconnection, which makes either of the poles repeatedly turn into the other. The principle is well expressed in Apollo's second epiphany in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (182–206). This time Apollo arrives at the house of the gods in fragrant clothes as a musician, spreading joy and making the younger divinities dance, the elders watching and rejoicing in their hearts. Yet even amidst all this delight there immediately appears a streak of darkness, for the content of the song turns out to be "the gods' undying gifts and the sufferings that the deathless gods inflict on human folk, who live witless and helpless, unable to find a cure for death or defense against old age" (190–193). The idyl thus has a reference to suffering at its heart. Harmony of the lyre implies death sown by the bow.

The same tension is to be found in the third area that Apollo in the *Homeric Hymn* (132) proclaims to be his own, that of *prophecy*. Like the song of the poet, prophecy attempts to bridge this distance between men and the gods by offering insight into the divine world and, at the same time, transporting the audience towards it.[45] Yet, just as the poet's song through its sorrowful content undermines this unity, so does prophecy problematize it by means of the dark obliqueness and ambiguity of its statements. In this way, the promise of proximity is immediately undercut by a distancing element.

In itself, this structural oscillation between opposites is a neutral pattern that is in many regards compatible with the normative Greek worldview. The pole of darkness, distance, death, and suffering is not to be seen as evil or troublesome, but rather as an inevitable part of reality, which for the Greeks was defined by a tension between the blessed gods and the suffering mortals. Apollo's symbolic

elaborate example is that of Kyrene, an Artemis-like nymph from Thessaly, whom the god abducted to Libya and made her the first queen of the town that was named after her. Pindar, who tells the story in detail (*Pyth.* 9,4–70) even speaks of their marriage, but apparently it was a one-sided one: Apollo did not settle with Kyrene, and left her to rule the city by herself, taking their son, the rustic god Aristaios, from her and entrusting him to Earth or to Cheiron to rear him.

[45] Thus Versnel 1994, 303: "Apollo thus creates a passage from the unreachable world of the sacred to the world of men by giving them a temporary insight into things generally outside their reach."

complex thus helps to map this worldview in all of its tragic beauty. However, there are occasions when the dark pole of the god transgresses this normative vision and starts to be more disturbing.

First, the killings sometimes result from *violent outbursts of anger* to which our "measured" god tends to succumb, usually as a consequence of his wounded pride. We have already seen the example of Koronis, whom Apollo killed in rage when she deceived him with a mortal. Out of her dead body, he took out their unborn child Asclepius, who later became so skilful in his medical art that he started to revive the dead, whereupon Zeus slayed him with his thunderbolt. This made Apollo so furious that he slew the Kyklopes who had fashioned the thunderbolt for Zeus, that is, he directed his rebellion "against Zeus's primary weapons, the undisputed source of his authority".[46] Thus, Apollo "the founder of ordinances" reveals his disorderly side, threatening to destroy the very foundations of Zeus' order.

On other occasions, this disorderliness is stressed by the fact that Apollo's otherwise just punishment starts to show disturbing marks of *inhumane cruelty* – "the excess of violence and the murderous madness of the angry young Apollo", as Detienne calls it.[47] The best-known example is his musical competition with Marsyas, a Phrygian Satyr who learned to play the flute so well that he challenged Apollo to a musical competition. The god won, and to punish Marsyas for his arrogance he flayed him alive.[48] The contest is based on an opposition between nature and culture. Not only is Marsyas a Satyr, who mixes human and animal features, but the flute was an ecstatic Dionysian instrument that was occasionally seen as opposed to the quiet harmony of the lyre.[49] Through Apollo the culture is victorious – but this victory is at the same time depicted as something inherently violent, and even brutal. It seems thus that the harmony Apollo institutes of necessity casts a shadow, that there is something deadly and savage in it as well.[50]

[46] Zeitlin 2002, 212.

[47] Detienne 1986, 53.

[48] For the story and sources, see Hard 2004, 157.

[49] E.g. Aristot. *Pol.* 1341a18–28; Plat. *Resp.* 399d; cf. Graf 2009, 37–39. In fact, however, as Martin 2003 argues, the flute–lyre opposition was mainly promoted by a small group of Athenian intellectuals from the late 5th century on. Generally, the two instruments were seen as complementary, and the Apollonian paean was more frequently accompanied by the flute than by the lyre (Rutherford 2001, 79–80).

[50] Another example of this is the Argive and Megarian tradition of the female monster with snaky hair Poine, which the angry Apollo sent to steal and eat children after his mistress Psamathe had been killed by her father. When Poine was slayed by Koroibos, Apollo's anger grew even bigger, and he sent a plague upon the land, demanding the death of all the men who participated in the killing. See Paus. I,43,7–8; Stat. *Theb.* I,557–668.

Apollo's Ambivalence, II: Acquisition of Delphi

Further dimensions to the tension inherent in Apollo's symbolic complex will emerge if we look at several myths of how Apollo got hold of his most important sanctuary at Delphi. The oldest and best-known version comes from the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, which depicts Apollo embarking on a journey shortly after his birth in search of a location for his oracular sanctuary. He finds the right place at Delphi and establishes his shrine there in the wilderness all by himself from scratch. The only power he encountered at Delphi was an evil dragoness guarding the place and causing much harm to the shepherds and their flocks. Apollo killed her, and it was after the dragon's body, which dark Earth and Helios made "rot away" (*pythein*), that he gave to Delphi its poetic name Pytho, "Rottington" (*Hom. Hymn Ap.* 363–372). What we have here is a straightforward myth of a young civilizing hero killing a chthonic monster, which is in harmony with Otto's image of Apollo as the establisher of order.

The *Homeric Hymn* version of the myth is different from most other accounts, which insisted that Apollo took the oracle over from its previous owners. Details vary from source to source, but all versions include Gaia or Themis, or both (some include Leto's mother Phoibe, Poseidon, Dionysos, Night, or Python).[51] Moreover, even these versions can be divided in two distinct types: in one, Apollo receives the sanctuary *peacefully*, the other postulates a *conflict* between him and the previous owners. The earliest preserved account of the first type comes from the *Eumenides* (1–8), where Aeschylus presents the line of ownership Gaia – Themis – Phoibe – Apollo, stressing that the goddesses gave the oracle "willingly" and the god did not take it "by force" (*Eum.* 5). As the scholium on the passage explains, this is an allusion to the version of Pindar, according to whom "Apollo seized Pytho by force, hence Gaia wanted him cast into Tartaros". The violent takeover motif is further elaborated by Euripides (*IT* 1259–1280), who narrates that when Apollo took the oracle from Themis, her mother Gaia begot dreams which were revealing the future to mankind, in this way depriving Delphi of their clients. Alarmed Apollo hurried to Olympus, "coiled his boyish arm around Zeus' throne" and begged for help. Zeus complied, with one shake of his locks depriving dreams of their truthfulness.

How do these three versions relate to each other? Did the author of the *Homeric Hymn* know the alternative accounts in which Apollo took the oracle over from Gaia and others? Clay believes he did and decided to purge all traces of them because he wanted to stress the Panhellenic against the local,

[51] For details, see Sourvinou-Inwood 1990.

and the Olympian and male against the pre-Olympian chthonic and female.[52] As Sourvinou-Inwood has shown, however, evidence for a sanctuary of Gaia at Delphi only comes from the first half of the fifth century, when our literary evidence starts as well, and it is well possible, therefore, that the author of the *Hymn* (which was probably composed in the 6th century BC)[53] knew nothing of it and that the entire tradition of previous owners was a 5th-century invention.[54] Since the matter cannot be decided, I find it more fruitful to focus on the symbolic implications of the different myths. Once we do so, interesting structural similarities start to emerge and the stories will appear as complementary rather than contradictory.

A crucial motif that the three versions have in common is *the relation between Apollo and ancient female powers*. In the previous-owners versions, these are represented by Gaia and Themis, in the *Hymn* by the dragoness. Whereas from the 4th century on the Delphic dragon is usually male and named Python, in the *Hymn* it is female, called Delphyne by Hellenistic authors.[55] Moreover, the *Hymn* dedicates full fifty verses (305–355) to explaining that the dragoness nursed Typhon after Hera had given birth to him when she was angry at Zeus for his begetting Athena all by himself. As several scholars have pointed out, in giving birth to Typhon, Hera followed the disruptive female tradition of Gaia, Typhon's mother in Hesiod's version (*Th.* 821).[56] By placing the dragoness in the same tradition, therefore, the *Hymn* presents Apollo as a valiant defender of the order of Zeus and an enemy of those primordial female powers that threaten to dissolve it.[57] All versions of the takeover of Delphi thus see the oracle as originally connected with ancient female powers, but while some sources picture these powers as neutral or even beneficent, the *Hymn* stresses their negative aspect and lets Apollo stand out as a patriarchal hero opposing the dark females.

[52] Clay 1994.

[53] For the notoriously difficult question of dating the *Hymn*, see Faulkner 2011, 11–12.

[54] Sourvinou-Inwood 1990. The only other 6th-century version we have, that of Alcaeus (fr. 307c Page = Himer. *Or.* 48,10–11), mentions neither the previous owners nor the dragon, and it also presents Apollo as a civilizing hero sent by Zeus to establish the Delphic shrine "in order to speak to the Greeks as a prophet of justice (*dikē*) and due order (*themis*)".

[55] E.g., Apoll. Rhod. *Arg.* II,706; Dionysius Perieg. *Orbis descr.* 442. The male dragon Python is usually said to guard the sanctuary for Ge or Themis, i.e. it is again closely tied with the ancient goddesses. For the details of all the versions of the slaying of Python see Fontenrose 1959, 13–22.

[56] Loraux 1992, 41; Pirenne-Delforge – Pironti 2016, 63, 332.

[57] Thus e.g. Clay 2006, 65–74; Zeitlin 2002, 201–202.

Interestingly, Gaia and Themis are also present in the *Hymn*, but in a positive way. Gaia is mentioned in verse 369, where Apollo rejoices over the dead dragoness that at this point not even Typhon will help her but "black Gaia and shining Hyperion" will make her body rot away, i.e. Gaia is on the god's side against the dragoness. Themis appears as Apollo's nurse (*Hom. hymn Ap.* 124), and her name can be heard in the verb *themisteuein*, "pronounce oracles", that the *Hymn* uses several times.[58] In this regard, the *Hymn* shares important symbolic motifs with the peaceful-takeover version. But it also shows a remarkable similarity with the violent-takeover version, for the *Hymn*, too, presents Apollo as surprisingly arrogant: when Leto tries to persuade Delos to allow her to give birth on its soil, the island does not feel worthy of accepting the mighty god (67–68), "for they say that Apollo will be an extremely arrogant fellow (λίην ... ἀτάσθαλον), who will lord it mightily over gods and men" (μέγα δὲ πρυτανευσέμεν ἀθανάτοισι καὶ θνητοῖσι). Modern interpreters have sometimes been puzzled by this attribution of extreme arrogance to Apollo,[59] but it is in full accord with the beginning of the hymn where Apollo rushes into the halls of Olympus with impudence, stretching his bow and making all the gods tremble and rise from their seats.[60]

What are we to make of these contradictory, any yet in many respects similar accounts? To most present-day classicists such a question would be meaningless. Since we are dealing with different texts by different authors from different periods, their disagreement is only to be expected, and there is no reason why we should look for full consistence in their conceptions of Apollo. I agree to a large extent, but at the same time I do not see disagreement and consistence as mutually exclusive. It is possible to view them rather as two different levels of meaning. On the surface, the texts do indeed disagree, and yet they all contain the same set of motifs, only arranged in different ways. It is precisely on this deeper structural level that we may look for consistence and identify basic Apollonian patterns that each text develops differently. In other words, the name of Apollo automatically evokes a network of structural motifs both

[58] *Hom. hymn Ap.* 253, 293. For Themis in relation to Apollo, see Detienne 1998, 150–174.

[59] A good example is Miller 1986, 38–42, who tries to explain the passage away by arguing that Apollo's hubristic arrogance is "no more than a theoretical possibility debarred from realization by the course of events".

[60] Thus e.g. Clay 2006, 35–38, according to whom Delos' words in addition betray the fear that Apollo would become another rival to Zeus' rule – a threat Apollo himself dispels immediately on his birth, when in his first spoken sentence he promises to "proclaim to humans the unerring will of Zeus" (*Hom. hymn Ap.* 132).

in the author and in the audience that are seen as distinctly Apollonian, but that are ever reinterpreted in novel ways.

What all the texts display is a basic symbolic complex defined by *the relation between Apollo as the bringer of new order and the ancient female powers*. The two poles of this basic opposition are examined both in their positive and negative aspects. The three versions circle around it, so to speak, each mapping it from a different angle and exploring both its positive potential and its troublesome aspects. While demarcating a basic opposition of Olympian order and pre-Olympian disorder, they blur its edges at the same time, showing the pre-Olympian pole as ambivalent rather than negative, and pointing out a certain arrogance entailed in the Olympian establishment. The violent-takeover version is especially important in this regard, drawing attention to the one-sidedness and fragility of Apollo's civilizing ethos and contrasting its audacious precariousness with the stable order of Zeus, who is firmly in control even vis-à-vis the ancient feminine powers.

The feminine powers are themselves described in a highly ambivalent manner: sometimes they are pictured as dark beings resisting the Olympian order, at other times they are depicted as positive supporters of this order. Even in this latter case, however, the dark aspect is frequently captured by the "decomposition" technique, which deals with ambivalence by splitting a complex reality between two different mythical figures, one representing the bright aspects, the other the dark ones.[61] Thus e.g. in the *Hymn* the positive side of ancient female power is represented by Gaia and Themis, while the negative side by the dragoness.

Apollo's Ambivalence, III: *Oresteia*

To many scholars, postulating a deeper structural unity behind texts by different authors from different periods will probably seem as far-fetched. It may be useful, therefore, to show how the same complex of themes viewed from different angles can be traced in one and the same text: the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus.

When Orestes kills his mother Klytaimnestra in revenge for her murder of his father Agamemnon, Apollo stands firmly on his side against the Erinyes, who defend the right of the mother. The Erinyes embody the "ancient laws" (*Eum.* 778) of blind retaliation, which in the play are associated with the dark, the chthonic, and the feminine (in *Eum.* 128 they are even likened to the Del-

[61] Cf. Caldwell 1990, 351–353. Caldwell explains decomposition in psychoanalytic terms, but the technique makes sense even without such psychological presuppositions.

phic dragoness). Apollo represents the "younger gods" (*Eum.* 162, 778), who are distinctly patriarchal and who help institute more subtle judicial procedures. In this regard, Apollo has often been seen as a champion of the new moral order who "ventures not merely to purify the matricide but, in the name of a higher justice, to defend the deed, which he himself enjoins, against the frightful cry of vengeance."[62] This is in harmony with the way Apollo is presented in the *Homeric Hymn* – but it is just one side of the picture. A closer look at the *Oresteia* shows that the part played by Apollo is rather controversial.

First, the god appears to be no less vindictive than the Erinyes: when he orders Orestes to murder his mother, he does so in a manner that has little resemblance to "higher justice", threatening the youth with an impressive list of horrors that await him if Agamemnon remains unrevenged (*Cho.* 269–296). As Bierl comments, "the passage shows that Apollo cannot deny his 'female side' and that the horrible and the uncivilized belong to him as an integral part of his ambivalence."[63] Apollo's behaviour is no less ambivalent in the *Eumenides*. The purification he gives to Orestes at the Delphic shrine turns out to be insufficient to rid him of the Erinyes. At the court he does present himself as a defender of a higher moral order standing in opposition to the blind vengeance of the Erinyes, but this position only strengthens the fruitless antagonism between the two sides of dispute and leads nowhere. His famous speech that minimizes the role of woman in procreation (*Eum.* 657–666) is no less one-sided than the desperate defence of Klytaimnestra by the Erinyes. "Apollo is seen as the pettifogging lawyer who represents only one party."[64] As Kitto puts it, "neither Apollo's extreme and designedly unconvincing arguments about the primacy of the male, nor the lofty disdain that he shows towards the older deities, crude though they are, allow us to feel that we are on firm ground."[65]

While some modern critics have been puzzled by Apollo's behaviour, even going so far as claiming that "Aeschylus takes up a definite attitude of criticism towards Apollo",[66] it appears less surprising compared to the arrogant tendencies of Apollo we have seen in the previous section as well as in other tragedies, where "he is an awful, horrible god who lacks all the measure generally attributed to his Delphic aspect".[67] To some extent, of course, this picture results from the

[62] Otto 1954, 70.

[63] Bierl 1994, 91.

[64] Bierl 1994, 87.

[65] Kitto 1961, 92.

[66] Winnington-Ingram 1933, 103.

[67] Bierl 1994, 81.

tragic genre, which is generally prone to taking things to the limit and critically examining various basic norms, including the behaviour of the gods. But in following this standard tragic approach, Aeschylus is at the same time faithfully mapping Apollo's symbolic complex, demonstrating both his bright side and his shadowy one. For him, Apollo does indeed represent the new moral order, but in one regard he stands for its confrontational and presumptuous aspect.

Importantly, in addition to these contrasting images of Apollo (champion of new moral order vs. arrogantly one-sided youngster), we also find a third image of the god in the *Eumenides*, which presents him as the honourable lord of Delphi who has received the shrine from Gaia and Themis as a birthday gift. In this synthetic image, the ancient feminine powers are able to peacefully coexist with the new Olympian order. Aeschylus does not explicitly say how this relates to Apollo's arrogant behaviour in the rest of the play, but he does explain how the dark feminine goddesses have been transformed from danger into power. The transformation happens due to the intervention of Athena, who solves the conflict between Apollo and the Erinyes by effecting a compromise and integrating the old gods in the new order. "She supersedes Apollo, and by implication she corrects him: her courtesy towards the Erinyes contrasts markedly with Apollo's contempt."[68] Athena manages to do so because in her androgyny she can represent patriarchy while herself displaying motherly features. "Mother is denied but not denied",[69] and the position of Apollo is likewise "superseded but not fully denied".[70]

By the time this happens, Apollo is long gone from the stage. Yet the prologue anticipates precisely this kind of harmonious coexistence of the old and the new, and the pacified Erinyes are explicitly associated with the earth (*gaia*) and its blessings (*Eum.* 904, 925). Once again, the ancient female element turns out to have a positive side as well, which may actually support the Olympian order. But whereas previously we have only seen the positive and the negative side separately, either in different versions of a myth, or within the same narrative split between a bright mythical figure and a dark one, in the *Eumenides* we find a third option which consists in a *transformation* of a negative female power into a positive one. As I argue in the following, this is actually the key to the Apollonian symbolic complex, and in other instances we will see the transformation effected by Apollo himself.

[68] Kitto 1961, 92.

[69] Zeitlin 1978, 172.

[70] Zeitlin 1978, 167.

Apollo's Ambivalence, IV: Good and Bad Mothers

As my last example of the same symbolic complex, I will have a short look at Apollo's relationship with various mother figures.[71] At first sight, Apollo's ties with his mother Leto are exemplary: he is deeply devoted to her and passionately defends her honor, punishing all those who insult her, such as the giant Tityos, who attempted to rape her, or the bragging Niobe, who boasted to have fourteen children whereas Leto only had two. In the version of Hyginus (*Fab.* 140), even killing Python is presented as Apollo's revenge for his pursuit of Leto. Leto herself is the most positive maternal figure imaginable, "the kindliest one in all Olympus", as Hesiod calls her (*Th.* 408). As Zeitlin points out,[72] her kindliness clearly has its theogonic reasons. In Hesiod's *Theogony*, the most difficult task for Zeus was to stabilize his rule without repeating the mistake of Ouranos and Kronos, i.e. being betrayed by the feminine deities and overthrown by his son. To ensure this, he takes care to beget his offspring in various ways that prevent this. The Titaness Leto might appear as highly dangerous in this regard, and it is to neutralise this danger that Hesiod presents her as totally benevolent and clearly dissociated from the ambivalent figure of Gaia. Her kind nature guarantees that her son "will prove no threat to his father's hegemony" and will "support the subordination of female to male".[73] This is well expressed in the above-discussed opening "hooligan" scene of the *Homeric Hymn* in which Apollo displays his potentially destructive force by threatening the gods with his bow. It is Leto's motherly intervention that neutralizes his cocky behaviour and turns him into an agreeable Olympian.[74]

However, on closer examination, the situation turns out to be much more ambivalent. First, as Zeitlin notes,[75] it is typical of Greek myth that in its tendency to balance one-sided images with their opposites it "insists on creating a tension between two opposing maternal figures, one positive and one negative". The most important dark mother of Greek myth is Hera, who frequently acts as the evil stepmother of Zeus' illegitimate children. In the case of Apollo, she only intervenes before his birth, when she tries to prevent Leto from delivering

[71] Many of the points made in this section were first pointed out by Slater 1968, 137–144.

[72] Zeitlin 2002, 206.

[73] Zeitlin 2002, 206.

[74] *Hom. hymn Ap.* 6–9: "She unstrings Apollo's bow, closes his quiver, lifts the bow from his mighty shoulders, hangs it from a golden peg on a pillar near his father, leads him to his throne and bids him sit."

[75] Zeitlin 2002, 202.

by threatening all the lands that would dare to receive her and by forbidding the childbirth goddess Eileithyia to help her.[76] Once Apollo is born, Hera ceases in her attacks, but the part of the evil mother is taken by other figures: by the Delphic dragoness (who in turn is associated with Hera through her nursing of Typhon), by Gaia (mother of the gods par excellence, and the mother of Typhon in Hesiod's version – *Th.* 821), as well as by the Erinyes (defending the right of the mother, and repeatedly described in the *Eumenides* as children of the Night, who also sometimes featured among the previous owners of Delphi). In myths, Apollo is confronted with these motherly figures in different ways that map his ambivalent position towards them. That the good and the bad mothers should be seen as complementary is clear from the figure of Themis, who in the *Homeric Hymn* (124) acts as Apollo's loving nurse, but in Euripides (*IT* 1259–1280) belongs among his opponents.

Second, even Apollo's relationship with his mother Leto is not devoid of some ironic features, for in some cases his devotion and submission to her start to resemble dependence, and the god behaves as a mummy's boy. The best example is the ode to Apollo in the *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1234–1273). The strophe narrates the god's birth on Delos and his killing of Python. But while in the *Homeric Hymn* Apollo kills the dragoness by himself, Euripides claims that the new-born god was carried to Delphi by his mother and shot the dragon from her arms. In itself, this can be read as "a means of glorifying the power of the god, invincible and infallible from his infancy on",[77] but it looks different when contrasted with the antistrophe, which tells the above-mentioned story of Apollo being threatened by Gaia's prophetic dreams and with his "boyish arm" (χέρα παιδνόν – 1271) desperately begging Zeus for help. Zeus does restore Apollo in his lucrative Delphic office (πολύχρυσα ... λατρεύματα – 1275), and on the surface the ode ends well. But, as Čechvala argues, "the combination of affirmation of power with powerlessness, as well as the rhythm of action and reaction, gives an interesting undertone to this stasimon", one that is only strengthened by the critical attitude vis-à-vis the gods in the rest of the play.[78] In view of this, Apollo's shooting of the dragon from his mother's arms appears as an image

[76] Thus in detail Callimachus in his *Hymn to Delos.* The holding back of Eileithyia is already mentioned in the *Hom. hymn Ap.* 98–101.

[77] Kyriakou 2006, 393. It is in this heroic mode that the baby god is depicted as shooting Python from Leto's arms on two lekythoi from the second half of the 6th century and the first half of the 5th century (Nos. 993 and 988 *LIMC* II/2, 269).

[78] Čechvala 2013, 137. Orestes accuses the gods of falsehood at 569–573, and Phoebus specifically at 711–712.

of both his strength and his weakness, expressing well his ambivalent relationship with motherly figures. While on the surface Apollo's total attachment to his mother was no doubt perceived as laudable, it implied a latent tension in the symbolic field of our god, who is capable both of fully submitting to his mother and of insisting in the *Eumenides* that "the so-called 'mother' is not a parent of the child" (658). It is this latent tension that Euripides with his sense of irony perceived and allowed to stand out in the background, poking subtle fun at Apollo's precocious boyishness.

One might rightly object that what I have just said is inappropriate psychologizing and that a god should not be interpreted as if he were a single individual undergoing psychological analysis. I agree that a god is not to be understood as a personality intelligible in psychological terms. The psychological features each god displays are so disparate and so extreme that they do not make sense in terms of standard human psychology. As Vernant classically put it: "The Greek gods are powers, not persons."[79] Yet, while this is true from the etic perspective of a modern scholar analysing the symbolic structures that each god consists in, from the emic perspective of the ancients these structures were articulated in anthropomorphic terms, and it was thus natural to conceive of each divinity as if it were a person with a psychology of its own.[80] That these psychological characteristics did not really hold together as features of a realistic personality was irrelevant. What mattered was that they made the symbolic structures of each god intelligible and easy to relate to. For this reason all of these psychological mini-portraits are important from my structuralist perspective, for it is through them that different facets of the symbolic complex of each god are expressed.

Accordingly, Apollo's complicated behaviour towards his mothers may be read as yet another way of mapping his relationship to the ancient female powers, which oscillates between arrogant enmity and childish weakness. Apollo is sometimes attacked by these ancient females, sometimes he attacks them, but in both cases he reveals his weakness face to face with them in various manners. Apollo represents a power that is both strongly opposed to the maternal feminine and dependent on it. In the end, however, he manages to achieve a relatively stable equilibrium. He is reconciled with the evil mothers, and they are all worshipped together with him at Delphi.

[79] Vernant 1982, 98.

[80] Cf. Versnel 2011, 317 (who, however, presents this personal conception as opposed to Vernant's structuralist one, and does not seem to realize that the two interpretations are complementary, corresponding to the emic and etic outlook respectively).

Toward Interpretation: Three-Fold Pattern

As I have proposed above, all of these conflicting stories may be seen as different viewpoints mapping the complex reality of the symbolic complex of Apollo. To understand their relationship, I suggest reading them through the prism of the above-sketched conception of the gods as expressing both the ideal norms of a cultural system and its shadow. Following this theory, we may expect the images connected with the gods to be of three types.

(1) First of all, the divinity will embody the positive principles it guards and will thus be portrayed as their positive archetypal model. This, of course, is what we intuitively expect from the gods, and it is an aspect that will usually be most noticeable. In the case of Apollo, this will amount to the glorious vision of the god sketched by Otto. This is the kind of portrayal we find in the *Homeric Hymn*, which depicts Apollo as a heroic killer of monsters and establisher of civilisation in the wilderness, and in the *Eumenides*, where he presents himself as a shining champion of a new moral order defending Orestes against the powers of blind vengeance. His passionate defence of the honour of his mother also belongs to this type.

(2) Since the boundaries of a classification system are at the same time its limits, the second task of the gods is to deal with these. Every act of classifying things involves some repression: by selecting one way or organizing things, we exclude all the others, producing a partial image of reality that of necessity generates tension. The gods are able to display these tensions and confront humans with them in a non-destructive way. In the case of Apollo, this will amount to all those disturbing images that show him as arrogant and presumptuous, and yet also weak and mother-dependent. It is this side of the god that has been so much stressed by Detienne.

(3) While the limits as such might be displayed and reflected in a number of cultural ways (e.g. by means of art or philosophy), the specific strength of the gods lies in the fact that they are able not just to *demonstrate* the tensions involved, but also to *transform them into power* that in turn is used for supporting the normative system of categories. This is what we see in the Delphic cult, where Apollo worked in intimate cooperation with the same female chthonic powers he so passionately opposed in some of the myths. Gaia had a shrine south of his temple. Pythia herself was on a famous red-figure cup from the second half of the fifth century by the Codrus Painter identified with Themis, another of the previous owners.[81] And last but not least, the evil Python had his

[81] Antikensammlung Berlin, F2538; Beazley Archive No. 217214.

grave in Apollo's temple, according to some accounts right under the prophetic tripod[82] (next to the tomb of Dionysus, another symbol of Apollo's reconciliation with wild feminine power).[83] In this way, Apollo was able both to express the tensions inherent in the Greek classification system and to integrate them into a multifaceted cultic symbolic complex in which contradictory powers worked together in harmony.

Cycle of Transformation, I: Exiled God

Intelligible as the threefold pattern is, from what has been said so far, it is not obvious how exactly Apollo manages to achieve the transformation from the conflicting stage two to the balanced synthesis of stage three. The myths we have analysed say little about this: they express each of the stages clearly enough but do not comment on their relation. Is the resulting harmony not rather artificial?

To answer this question, we need to make one more important distinction. Whereas the reflection of hidden tensions is best done in *myths*, which frequently depict extremes, the synthetic work is typically done by *cults*, which are much more positive, presenting all the transgressive features of the divinity as being closely, though somewhat mysteriously allied with its normative aspects, supporting them and endowing them with power.[84] This is just what we see in the case of Apollo. Whereas myths sometimes present him as switching between extremes, in cult these are shown as integrated. It is significant that in the *Eumenides* the idyllic account of Apollo's peaceful takeover of the Delphic shrine, which contrasts greatly with his behaviour in the rest of the play, is placed in the mouth of his priestess Pythia, who in the prologue represents his cultic aspect.

It is in the cultic milieu, therefore, that the details of the transformation from stage two to stage three are fully articulated. In the Delphic cult, the killing of the dragon was handled ritually in a complex manner. Although the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* presents it as altogether beneficial, according to the Delphic tradition, Zeus considered it a murder and sent Apollo to exile to the Thessalian valley of Tempe to be purified there (Ael. *VH* III,1). Plutarch (*Mor.* 293c), a Delphic

[82] For references, see Parke – Wormell 1954, 14, note 17.

[83] For Dionysus at Delphi, see Suárez de la Torre 2013; McInerney 1997.

[84] For this view of the relationship between myth and cult, see Chlup 2008. The pattern has been well described for those instances where the transgressive features are embodied by the god's heroic double: "Antagonism between hero and god in myth corresponds to the ritual requirements of symbiosis between hero and god in cult" (Nagy 1979, 121).

priest himself, claims that the god "fled" to Tempe "in need of purification". After receiving it, Apollo "made himself a wreath from the laurel of Tempe and taking a branch of this same laurel with his right hand he returned to Delphi and took over the oracle" (Ael. *Var. Hist.* III,1).

This mythical event was repeated at Delphi every eight years at the Septerion festival, performed shortly before the Pythian games. Its details are described by Plutarch (*Mor.* 293c, 418a–b). It started by building a wooden hut in the Delphic sanctuary, representing Python's palace. A band of youths of noble birth with lighted torches led a young boy with both parents living to the hut in silence, they set fire to it, overturned a table within it, and flew without looking back. Subsequently, they went to Tempe, where the boy imitated Apollo's servitude, underwent a purification rite, offered a lavish sacrifice and was crowned "with wreaths woven from the same laurel from which the god originally wove his own wreath" (Ael. *VH* 3,1). Afterwards they returned gloriously to Delphi by a different route, receiving honour along the way "equal to that accorded to the delegation bringing the sacred offerings from the Hyperboreans to the same god" on Delos (ibid.). It is this laurel brought from Tempe that was used for making the wreaths given to victors in the Pythian games – which were themselves regarded as funeral games for Python.

That a god should be polluted by killing an evil dragon and sent into exile might seem surprising, yet it makes good sense in case of Apollo, who is able to grant purifications precisely because he underwent one himself. Nor is the Septerion festival our only testimony. Credit for the god's purification for killing Python was also claimed by Crete and Argos.[85] A particularly interesting tradition is reported by Pausanias (II,7,7–8) from Sikyon, where Apollo tried to obtain purification together with his sister Artemis, "but at the place which even now is called Fear (Phobos) dread came upon them, and they changed course and went to Crete to be purified by Karmanor." In consequence, Sikyon was stricken with plague, and seers advised that the citizens must propitiate Apollo and Artemis and persuade them to return to the city, an event annually re-enacted during a festival of Apollo. The basic pattern is similar here to the Septerion, but with slight shifts. Instead of a place of murder, we have a place of dread evoked by the murder. Once again, Apollo must flee to a faraway otherworldly place (Crete having such connotations no less than Thessaly)[86] to be

[85] Argos: Stat. *Theb.* I,562–71; Crete: Paus. II,7,7; II,30,3; X,6,6; according to *schol*. Pind. *Pyth*. (*hypothesis* c), Apollo was first purified in Crete by Chrysothemis and from there went to Tempe.

[86] For Thessaly as an otherworldly place, see Mili 2015, 295.

purified there. What the Sikyonian version particularly stresses is the importance of the god's return, which is healing and reinvigorating for the community, but which cannot be taken for granted and requires regular ritual persuasion. The most fascinating feature of the Sikyonian version is the "dread" (*deima*) by which the divinities are seized. It confirms that the pollution is to be taken seriously – it permeates all of the god's being. Apollo in this way becomes assimilated to Orestes, who is depicted in various mythic and ritual traditions precisely as mentally haunted by his crime.[87]

The symbolic pattern of exile and return lies at the very core of Apollo's symbolic complex. Exiles are so typical of him that Aeschylus (*Supp.* 214) without a word of explanation can evoke him with striking ambivalence as "pure Apollo, god exiled from heaven" (ἁγνόν τ' Ἀπόλλω, φυγάδ' ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ θεόν). His best-known other exile is the one Apollo underwent after slaying the Kyklopes in revenge for the death of Asclepius. For this, "Zeus wanted to throw him to Tartarus, but at the intervention of Leto he ordered him to serve as a serf to a man for a year" (Apollod. *Bibl.* III,10,4). Accordingly, Apollo spent a year herding cattle for the king Admetos in Thessaly.[88]

Apollo's exiles are a specific version of a more general symbolic pattern of the god's regular "transition from margin towards centre, from the divine/utopian or the savage/natural world towards the world of human culture".[89] This is best seen in Apollo's periodic retreats to the land of the Hyperboreans in the far north, an otherworldly place which ordinary humans can reach "neither by ship nor on foot" (Pind. *Pyth.* 10,29–30). Apollo spent there each winter to return at the beginning of spring (in his absence the ruler of Delphi was Dionysos – Plut. *Mor.* 388e–389c). In this case, the Other World to which Apollo departs is not a place of punishment, but rather a paradisiacal place in which the Golden Age reigns for ever (Pind. *Pyth.* 10,38–44). Still, the basic pattern of a journey to another world from which the god then gloriously returns again full of strength and purity is the same. There are even some sources that explicitly make this symbolic link. A story which Apollonius of Rhodes (*Arg.* IV,611–617) attributes to "the Celts" states that after slaying the Kyklopes Apollo was ban-

[87] Cf. Detienne 1998, 202–208.

[88] The story goes back to Hesiod (fr. 54 Merkelbach – West); cf. Eur. *Alc.* 1–7; Gantz 1993, 91–92.

[89] Versnel 1994, 303. As Versnel admits (297), "similar epiphanies or *epidêmiai* are known of other gods as well, but with the exception of Dionysos nowhere as emphatically as in the case of Apollo, who is invited to come by means of *humnoi klêtikoi* (Men. Rhet. 334,25–336,4)."

ished by Zeus not to Thessaly but to the Hyperboreans, and the tears he shed there became drops of amber. In the same vein, in the pseudo-Eratosthenic *Catasterismi* (29) we learn that the Arrow constellation is the arrow with which Apollo killed the Kyklopes and which he then hid in the land of the Hyperboreans but retrieved it after his Thessalian purification; the arrow was then transported back by Demeter Fruit-Bringer (Karpophoros) and would eventually be set among the stars by Apollo. Marginal as these traditions are, they attest to a structural homology between Apollo's exiles and his regular sojourn among the Hyperboreans. In both cases, we see Apollo as departing from our world to return triumphantly at some later time. The part played by Demeter Fruit-Bringer confirms that it was particularly the reinvigorating returns that were crucial. The arrow that originally was a polluted instrument of the god's transgression is in the course of his exile transformed into a vehicle of life-giving power.

Cycle of Transformation, II: Purifying God

The pattern of exile and glorious return is related to one of the most important ritual functions of Apollo, that of purification. A number of scholars today agree that the name Phoibos means "Pure" rather than "Bright".[90] The nature of Apollonian purification shows itself best in his epithets Apotropaios and Alexikakos, both with the same meaning "Averter of evil". As these names suggest, Apollo's purificatory task is to guard the boundary between the inside and the outside, "to keep the pure in the inner circle pure", dispelling "the impure to the outer world where it belongs".[91] The god manifests this ability on a number of different levels.[92] In relation to human bodies, he is worshipped in a number of places as "Doctor" (Iatros), Healer (Oulios), or Paian. Most of our epigraphic evidence associates Apollo not so much with the healing of individuals as with that of entire communities, of turning "his bow against the onset of those collective plagues which he could also send".[93] It is probably also due to his harm-averting skills that Apollo guarantees the prosperity of cattle and crops. He was worshipped on Rhodes as "Mildew Apollo" (Erythibios – Strabo XIII,1,64), in Chryse as Lord of Mice (Smintheus – Hom. *Il.* I,39), and in Athens as "Locust

[90] See Chantraine 1980, 1216–1217; Pettersson 1992, 23.

[91] Versnel 1994, 299.

[92] See in detail Graf 2009, 79–91; Farnell 1907, 408–411.

[93] Parker 2005, 412–413. Cf. Detienne 1998, 227–229.

Apollo" (Parnopios) "because once when locusts were devastating the land, the god said that he would drive them from Attica" (Paus. I,24,8). While epithets of this kind are frequently translated as "slayer of mice/locusts", it is clear that Apollo is not just the enemy of these pests but also their lord: he is able to both send them and drive them away.[94]

Apollo's crops-protecting function is particularly obvious in one of his most important festivals celebrated by all the Ionians, the Thargelia,[95] which displays interesting symbolic parallels with Apollo's cycle of exiles and returns. This first-fruit festival was celebrated in the month of Thargelion in early summer, when the crops were grown but not yet fully ripe, and its purpose was apparently to purify the city before harvest. It consisted of two contrasting parts. The first day, the sixth Thargelion, was focused on two "scapegoats", called *pharmakoi*, the masculine form of the word *pharmakon*, "medicine, drug, poison". They were two men "of very low origin, poor and useless" or "maltreated by nature, such as mutilated or limping",[96] who had been fed dried figs, cakes and cheese, and then on the 6th Thargelion were adorned with a necklace of figs and led through the city in a procession with flute music. They were beaten with the squill and with twigs of a wild fig tree. The procession then left the town through a special gate and made a circle around the city. Finally, the *pharmakoi* were chased over the border.

On the second and main day of the festival, 7th Thargelion, Apollo's birthday, the atmosphere changed entirely and the rite became a celebration of renewal and plenty.[97] There was a first-fruit offering to Apollo called *thargēlos*, consisting of a pot full of a pulp cooked from the first immature ears of corn, together with the first bread made from the harvest. This offering was displayed and carried in a procession for the Sun and the Seasons (Hōrai). There was a competition of choruses singing hymns. Most importantly, it was probably on this day that new fire arrived from the sacred hearth at Delphi and was used to rekindle the public hearth of Hestia in the council house from which then the temples as well as the private households got their own new fire – a practice common throughout the Greek world (Delos being another possible source of fire for cities in and around the Aegean).

[94] Thus e.g. Apollo Smintheus received his name because once upon a time he got angry with one of his priests and sent mice on Chryse, which ate nearly all crops; it was only when he was placated by a friend of the priest that the god shot the mice with his bow, and was subsequently worshipped as Smintheus (*schol.* in Hom. *Il.* I,39).

[95] See in detail Bremmer 1983; Hughes 1991, 139–165; Parker 2005, 481–483.

[96] *Scholia* on Ar. *Eq.* 1136 and *Ran.* 733, and on Aesch. *Sept.* 680.

[97] Cf. Parker 1983, 25–26; 2005, 203–205; Jim 2014, 102–103.

Extinguishing old fires and rekindling them from the sacred fire of Apollo was "the most powerful ritual symbol of renewal",[98] of injecting new life force into the city. It corresponds to the glorious return of the god from his exile. But the first day of the Thargelia is no less Apollonian, paralleling the exile of the polluted god. As we have seen, it was precisely this pattern that Versnel convincingly identified as the structural core of Apollo. As a purifying divinity, Apollo was able to guard the boundary between the inside and the outside, "to keep the pure in the inner circle pure", dispelling "the impure to the outer world where it belongs",[99] but he was also a "coming god", whose happy return from the Hyperboreans was celebrated every year.[100] What Versnel does not fully take into account is that Apollo's "dispelling the impure to the outer world" is structurally identical to his exiles. In other words, instead of just expelling the impurity, Apollo takes it upon himself, cleanses the expelled element, and transforms it into a source of new power that can be subsequently reincorporated in the community.[101]

Since such ambiguity is difficult to stand, it is not surprising that on many occasions it is again solved by the "decomposition" technique: it is often only the triumphant return that is directly attributed to Apollo, while the polluted exile is ascribed to his mythological double – a hero acting as "umdunkeltes Spiegelbild des Gottes".[102] A typical example is Orestes, who is so strongly urged by the god to kill Klytaimnestra that he can be seen as Apollo's extended arm. It is for this reason that Apollo is so eager to ensure Orestes' purification.[103] Another example is Hyakinthos, who takes on himself Apollo's deadliness and goes to a permanent exile to the Other World of the dead. From the blood of the youth the god made the hyacinth – a flower blooming shortly in early spring, around the time the west wind starts to blow and Apollo returns from his winter retreat among the Hyperboreans. Hyakinthos is thus compensated by reaching a new state of being in which mortality and immortality are com-

[98] Graf 2009, 94.

[99] Versnel 1994, 299.

[100] Versnel 1994, 302.

[101] The symbolic pattern as such is transcultural – cf. Jesus Christ and his ability to redeem the sins of men by taking them upon himself and purifying them through his self-sacrifice.

[102] Burkert 1975, 19.

[103] Interestingly enough, in this case the heroic double of Apollo is itself decomposed into two figures: Orestes, who represents the polluted side of Apollo and is protected by him, and Neoptolemus, who represents Apollo's arrogance and is killed by him at his own altar in Delphi (Pind. *Paean*, 6,79–86) but subsequently receives a heroic cult there (Pind. *Nem*. 7,44–47). On Apollo and Neoptolemus see Nagy 1979, 118–141; Detienne 1986, 48–49; Kurke 2011, 77–84.

bined: the irreversible linear death of humans is exchanged for the cyclic death and rebirth of plants. This goes hand in hand with his heroic cult at Sparta, where he is worshipped together with Apollo as his dark double during the Hyakinthia festival, which was gloomy and mournful in its first part devoted to the hero, but cheerful and celebratory in the second part dedicated to the god[104] – in this way resembling the Thargelia. Once again, Apollo finds a way to turn tragedy and death into a source of new strength.

To return to the threefold pattern sketched above, I suggest it is in this way that Apollo effects the transformation from the "shadow" stage to the integrative synthesis of stage three. The pattern is expressed most clearly in his killing of Python, which is both a valiant act of establishing order by defeating a monster (= stage one) and a crime that turns the god into a polluted criminal haunted with dread (= stage two). By going into exile, Apollo expiates the crime and transforms the pollution into power, with which he triumphantly returns in stage three. The result is a state of synthesis in which Apollo is reconciled with the ancient female powers and their ally Python. At the same time, however, this state is not achieved permanently once and for all. It is rather a fragile state that needs to be periodically recreated. What this means is that the Apollonian pattern is a reaction to some kind of permanent danger inherent in the Greek cultural order. Apollo embodies this order, but he also embodies the danger, and offers a way of dealing with it and turning it into power.

Cultural Dangers, I: Fragile Foundations

What then were the cultural dangers that Apollo helped the Greeks deal with? I will offer two tentative answers to this ambitious question. The first one relates to another important function of our god that I have so far passed by, namely his ability to *lay foundations*. "For Phoebus always takes pleasure when cities are being founded (πολίεσσι φιλῆδεῖ κτιζομένῃσ'), and Phoebus himself weaves their foundations (θεμείλια Φοῖβος ὑφαίνει)," as Callimachus puts is (*Hymn Ap.* 55–57). The god displayed this ability already at his birth on the island of Delos. Previously, this had been just a rock floating under the surface of the sea; it was only when it received Apollo that "four upright columns with bases of adamant rose from their foundations in the earth and on their capitals held up the rock" (PIND. fr. 33d), which thereupon changed it name to Conspicu-

[104] See in detail PETTERSSON 1992, 9–41.

ous (Dēlos), for it was no longer sailing about "inconspicuous", *adēlos* (Callim. *Hymn Del.* 36–54). The typically Apollonian polarity of darkness and light thus corresponds to the contrast of *rootlessness* vs. *firm foundations*.

In this way, Apollo appears as a deity who can provide firm foundations even in situations that seem extremely fragile. This is the subject of the second part of the *Homeric Hymn*, which tells of Apollo's journey in quest of a place where he could find his oracular sanctuary. We see the god wandering around the Greek world in its still wild and uninhabited form. Apollo seems to be rambling, but as Detienne emphasizes, he is clearly doing this as a kind of cosmogonic act: building his own roads, laying out sites, carving out territories – in other words, organizing and orienting the space by naming the sites to be inhabited and defining the paths that would connect them.[105]

It was particularly in relation to cities that Apollo's ability to lay foundations was crucial. When Greek city states started to emerge in the 8th century, Apollo, together with Athena (closely followed by Hera and Artemis), was one of the first deities to whom sanctuaries were built, and who were thus perceived as important for stabilizing the newly established polis formations.[106] It was often a sanctuary of Apollo that contained the laws, decrees, and treaties of a city, sometimes even inscribed on the temple walls.[107] "The privileged location demonstrated that such laws derived their authority from the god himself."[108] The same kind of support was provided by the Delphic oracle, which "was consulted by communities in times of local disaster or political strain and in times of political innovation, when new cities were being settled or new cults established."[109] Apollo's sanctuaries were frequently close to the agora, as in Argos (Apollo Lykeios), Athens (Apollo Patrōios) or Miletos (Apollo Delphinios). But his most important sanctuaries, such as Delphi and Delos, were remote, thus providing neutral reference points. The location of Apollo's sanctuaries thus mirrors the combination of distance and proximity that we have seen in his myths. It is telling that the most remote of these sanctuaries, Delphi, located

[105] Cf. in detail Detienne 1998, ch. 1, summarized in Detienne 1999, 142–145.

[106] See de Polignac 1995, 21–26; Detienne 1998, 126–131; Cole 2004, 21.

[107] For numerous examples, see Scafuro 2013.

[108] Cole 2004, 73.

[109] Cole 2004, 72. In this regard, Apollo's foundation-setting is related to his prophetic function. The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (253, 293) describes Apollo's prophetic activity by the verb *themisteuein*, which means not only "to prophesy" but also "to lay down law and right", one of the functions of the Delphic oracle being to sanction laws and constitutions and provide them with sacred authority.

on the steep lower slopes of Mount Parnassos, far from civilization, was at the same time seen as the sacred centre of the earth, whose "navel" (*omphalos*) was located in the temple of Apollo. "On the Greek mainland, the sacred center of each polis was linked by roads to the sacred center of each local, ex-urban sanctuary and ultimately to Delphi itself, the center of all."[110] By traversing this network of sacred roads back and forth, the polis communities were repeating the periodic departures and returns of the god himself.[111]

What is it about foundations that makes them culturally dangerous and requiring the help of a god? A foundation is always paradoxical, standing at the interface between order and chaos. It founds the order but lacks a foundation itself. Moreover, it sets a boundary between various possible orderings of reality and the one actually chosen. It is this that makes the foundation precarious: there is a risk that by examining it too closely one may realize the arbitrariness and one-sidedness of whatever order it founds. Thus, e.g. each polis relies on a number of premises that should not be questioned, such as a claim to a territory or a particular division of power. To endow these with a firm foundation, societies need to have recourse to various symbolic mechanisms that allow to turn danger into power. Apollo's symbolic complex offered precisely one such mechanism.

How Apollonian foundations work may perhaps best be seen in colonial cities. I have already mentioned that Versnel related Apollo's purifying function to his patronage of colonization, which was frequently depicted in stories as a reaction to some kind of crisis, which is averted by consecrating a part of the population to Apollo and sending them out to found a new city.[112] Most of these stories are probably not to be taken as historical records but as narratives that the communities in question only created in retrospect to legitimate themselves as regular city-states.[113] In other words, the stories tell us a lot about the

[110] Cole 2004, 76.

[111] It is possibly also in relation to this network of roads that the god was worshipped as Apollo of Ways/Streets (Agyieus). His primary function in this case was to protect the *oikos* from evil, and he was represented by a pillar that stood in front of each house. Yet it is telling that his epithet associates him with the public street rather than the house he is supposed to protect (cf. Farnell 1907, 152). Moreover, *agyia* (derived from *agō*, "to lead") was not just a city street but a road in general. It is with these connotations in mind that Kassandra in (Aesch. *Ag.* 1086–1087) reproaches the Agyieus pillar standing in front of the palace: "Lord of the Roads (*Agyiate*), my destroyer, what road is this down which you have led me!" (ἀγυιᾶτ', ἀπόλλων ἐμός. ἆ ποῖ ποτ' ἤγαγές με;).

[112] Versnel 1994, 304–310; cf. in detail Dougherty 1993.

[113] Cf. Osborne 1998; Redfield 2003, 254–256.

Greek conception of what it means to establish a polis. Just as the Thargelia, they stress the conception of a polis as a pure unified body of citizens in which internal conflicts have to be solved by identifying the source of impurity and expelling it. In the second stage, the task of Apollo is to transform this expelled element into something that eventually may become the foundation of some new type or civic order. Whereas in the Thargelia this transformation happens as part of a cycle of renewal of one and the same community, in colonization it resembles rather a rite of passage, the renewal amounting to the establishment of a new community.

The similarity with the *pharmakoi* stands out particularly strikingly in a number of stories in which the motivation for colonial expulsion is murder committed by the leading colonist in his original polis. The best example is Syracuse, one of the richest colonies, which was said to have been founded by Archias of Corinth after he had unintentionally killed his lover Aktaion; as a consequence of this, Corinth was beset by plague, and when desperate citizens consulted the Delphic oracle, they were told that Poseidon was angry with them for having left Aktaion's death unpunished. "When Archias learned these things, being one of those consulting the oracle, he decided of his own free will not to return to Corinth; instead, he sailed to Sicily and founded the colony of Syracuse" (Plut. *Mor.* 773b). That the colonies should have chosen murderers as their founding heroes might come as a surprise, but, as Dougherty argues,[114] it makes sense when read from the perspective of the Apollonian pattern. Murder is a prototypical cause of pollution that needs to be purified by Phoibos. Even more than in the case of physical illness, it concerns both the killer and the entire community, which is in danger of being defiled by him. Once again, the best method of purification consists in expelling the culprit. This is done under the auspices of Apollo, who takes care that the pollution is not only removed but may even be *transformed into positive potency* – a transformation the god himself underwent after killing Python. The polluted colonist is buried in the newly established city and is worshiped as its founder, who precisely on account of his transgression acts as a source of power.

Colonization thus helps us see what it meant for the Greeks to establish a polis and what part Apollo played in this risky task. It is a crucial property of a firm foundation that it sets the limits of the social unit in question, but at the same time takes care that these limits will not be questioned and transgressed. Purification offers an ingenious way of achieving this. To purify a polluted per-

[114] Dougherty 1993, 31–41.

son means to separate him from society, turn him into a liminal being, and then effect a second reintegrative separation that marks a clear boundary between his former polluted state and the new state of acceptance by the community. It is this second boundary that is capable of firmly founding the new social unit, the pollution acting as a protection zone imbued with sacred power and guaranteeing the stability of the newly founded boundary. Apollo is a god who helped the Greeks achieve this, being a purifier and a founder at the same time, and it is in this way that he provided the Greek world with a stable form and measure.[115]

The pattern applied to the old mainland cities as well, though in various less direct manners. A good illustration is Sparta. Here, the foundation does not concern the city as such but rather its Dorian conquest, which was thematised during the Karneia, the most important Dorian festival of Apollo. For its Spartan version, Pausanias (III,13,3–4) tells two aetiological myths. In the first, Karnos (Ram) was an aboriginal seer whom the invading Dorians killed, for which Apollo punished them by pestilence; the Karneia was then established to appease the god's anger. In the second story, Karneios was an aboriginal deity worshipped in the house of the seer Krios (Ram), who betrayed the Achaians and told the Dorians how to capture Sparta. The stories seem contradictory, but their symbolic pattern is the same: the conquest is always depicted as generating guilt to be expiated, the focus is always a seer who is seen as ambivalent: in the first story, he represented both the aboriginal population to be conquered and the god the conquerors worshipped; in the second he betrayed the city, but by doing so became a founding hero of the Dorian establishment. The seer thus acts as a mediator between the natives and the invaders. The same is true for Apollo, who is portrayed as an indigenous Achaian deity offended by the conquest, but who also seems to be the leader of the Dorians: he was iconographically represented as a ram, a leader of the flock, and the theme of leadership was so important for the festival that it was sometimes referred to by the alternative name Agētoria, Festival of Leadership.[116]

One of the main themes of the Karneia appears to be the fragility of political foundations, which are seen as generating guilt, but also as an opportunity to turn the guilt into power by expiating it. In the Spartan case, the foundation was connected with the Dorian conquest, but it is questionable whether this should be read literally (and whether there was ever a Dorian invasion on the

[115] Cf. a roughly similar interpretation of Detienne 1998, 236, who supports it by a 460 BC inscription from Selinous specifying the rules of purification for a murderer (see the texts and discussion in Burkert 2000).

[116] Hsch. *s. v. agētēs*; Pettersson 1992, 63; Malkin 1994, 151–156.

Peloponnese).[117] The invasion pattern appears to be part of Apollo's symbolic complex whose relation to historical events is secondary.[118] Invasion may be read as an image that points to the nonobvious nature of all claims to domination over a territory. In myths such claims are depicted as violent and generating pollution. The task of Apollo is to turn this pollution into protecting power, just as we have seen it in the establishment of colonies.

In the Spartan Karneia, in addition to singing, dancing, and banqueting in tents, the most noteworthy rite consisted in a race during which young men called *staphylodromoi*, "grape runners", pursued a man adorned with wool filets, who was running and praying for the well-being of the city; "should they catch him, they expected good things for the city, but should they not, the contrary."[119] As Pettersson notes,[120] the rite is an inversion of the scapegoat expulsion: in the latter the main ritual actor represents the bad luck of the community to be driven away, though at first he is treated nicely, in the former he stands for the good luck to be seized, though at first he is hunted like a criminal. By being adorned with wool filets, the pursued man resembles a sacrificial ram; in the end, however, a real ram is killed instead.[121] "Moreover, the purpose of pursuing him was to foresee the city's well-being; in other words, the race was a form of augury", which makes it possible "to interpret the chased man as a seer".[122] The original mythical seer Ram – "unreliable but indispensable"–,[123] who was closely allied with Apollo but became a source of guilt, is thus here replaced by a ritual seer–ram, who may be seen as a transformed version of the ambivalent Apollonian power: he is chased like an animal, but in the end rep-

[117] E.g., Pettersson 1992, 106–109 is convinced that the Dorian invasion was a myth invented in the 9th century by the ruling elite to justify its political hegemony in parts of the Peloponnese.

[118] That the "historical" realia are less important than the symbolic pattern expressed through them can be seen in a third aetiological myth told by Pausanias (III,13,5), in which the Greeks besieging Troy cut down wood from a grove of cornel trees (*kraneia*) sacred to Apollo in order to build the wooden horse; by doing so they made the god angry and had to propitiate him by instituting the Karneia. Once gain we see the theme of guilt-ridden conquest, but this time on a Panhellenic scale independent of the Dorian invasion. Apollo is again the god of the conquered population (in the *Iliad* he is the main protector of Troy), who is ritually converted into the patron of the invaders.

[119] *Glossae rhetoricae*, in: I. Bekker, *Anecdota Graeca*, I, p. 305, *s. v. staphylodromoi*.

[120] Pettersson 1992, 70.

[121] Cf. Burkert 1985, 235.

[122] Pettersson 1992, 70.

[123] Pettersson 1992, 71.

resents good luck. Just as the foundation of Sparta is fragile, requiring Apollo's support, so is future good luck elusive, though with the god's help it can be seized. Whereas in the Thargelia the Apollonian pattern of danger to be turned into power is projected in time and space, the scapegoat being driven out of the city's territory to be replaced by sacred fire arriving from Delphi the next day, in the Karneia it is condensed in one single action, the danger of the past being ritually pursued as the power of the future.

Yet another version of the pattern can be found in Argos, one of many cities where Apollo was worshiped under the epithet Lykeios, "Wolfish". He was the chief divine protector of the city, and his sanctuary next to the agora contained the undying fire of the city, kindled in primordial times by the very inventor of fire Phoroneus (PAUS. II,19,5). The sanctuary was founded by Danaos, the mythical king of Argos, grandson of Io, an Argive mistress of Zeus who incited the anger of Hera and fled to Egypt. When Danaos returned to Argos and demanded the ancestral kingship, a wolf attacked a herd of oxen and killed the largest bull. This was taken as an omen predicting Danaos' victory – "since both he and the wolf were strangers and were attacking the natives" (PLUT. *Pyrrh.* 32,5). In effect, Danaos attacked the city and was victorious, or, in the version of Pausanias (II,19,3) was freely given the kingship by the Argives. Since Danaos believed that it was Apollo who sent the wolf, he founded a sanctuary for him. Apollo's "patronage of the wolf is here set into a social frame of reference; he is the patron of an outcast from society, the enemy or the outlaw."[124]

We already know that Apollo himself was repeatedly in the position of an outcast, and it seems likely that this was one of the connections between him and the wolf. According to Delphic tradition, after the god had killed Python, it was a wolf that first brought him a laurel twig from the valley of Tempe (SERV. *Aen.* IV,377). We have seen that Apollo's return from his exile in Tempe symbolized the inflow of power which was dangerous and polluting in itself, but which the god managed to turn into a source of new life. The wolf seems to be an appropriate symbol of such ambivalent power. As Gershenson speculates,[125] Apollo, like the wolf, is "the messenger, the fearsome being that passes the boundary between the known and the unknown, the manifest and the hidden. ... The wolf represents the realm of the hidden; for unlike man, ... he has licence to enter the realm beyond the boundary, and pass into the realm of the unseen and return to the light once again from there." It is interesting in light of his hypothesis

[124] GERSHENSON 1991, 9. Cf. BUXTON 1990, 63–64.

[125] GERSHENSON 1991, 128.

that according to Aelian (*De nat. an.* 10.26), the wolf can see at night even when there is no moon, "which is why this time of the night is called Wolf's Light, for it is only the wolf that in times like this has been given light by nature."

Once again we see the contrast between darkness and light which we have observed as typical of Apollo. His ability to pass back and forth between the realm of darkness and the realm of light, turning the former into a source of power for the latter, is one of the cornerstones of the god's symbolic complex. It is analogous to his ability to mediate between proximity and distance, this world and the other world, love and death, purity and pollution. In Argos, these symbolic qualities of the god were put to socio-political use. Danaos played a part analogous to that of the polluted founders of colonial cities. He came as an invader (like the Dorians), but at the same time he was returning to his real home (like the purified Apollo returning to Delphi from his exile). His claim to the Argive throne was dark and uncanny, but the uncanniness was interpreted as a sign of divine intervention. In this way, the Argive socio-political order received a refoundation, so to speak, one that through its dark mysteriousness functioned as liminal sacred protection zone. Apollo is the protector of this foundational zone, ensuring that its darkness will serve as a source of power.

Cultural Dangers, II: The Shadow of Greekness

While the fragility of socio-political foundations is one example of cultural danger Apollo helped the Greeks to deal with, it hardly accounts for all the paradoxes I have detected in his symbolic complex. We have seen the god not just as an exiled murderer undergoing purification, but also as a youth who is both arrogant and vulnerable, both precocious and immature, both aggressively masculine and afraid of powerful females, both opposed to the dark maternal powers and showing signs of dependence on his own mother, both moderate and succumbing to outbursts of anger in consequence of his wounded pride. To what cultural dangers do these symbolic features of the god react? What aspects of the cultural system does the god help to protect through them? And what does this tell us about the Greeks and their own shadowy side? While aware how difficult it is to generalize about Greek culture, I would still venture several observations.

In the first place, we may note that many of these shadowy features concern Apollo's complicated relationship with females, who are simultaneously denigrated, feared, and revered. This is hardly surprising if we recall the misogynist ethos that pervaded Greek patriarchal culture and that feminist classicists have analyzed extensively. Not only did the Greeks insist on a strictly subordinate

position of the female, but they supported this view by picturing women as more irrational than men, easily yielding to emotions, being obsessed with sex, and incapable of self-control. Clearly, such a one-sided image must have been difficult to maintain at all times and must have created considerable cognitive and emotional tension. Apollo seems to have embodied both the one-sidedness as such and its inevitable fragility face-to-face with the diversity of actual life situations. His function was similar to that of dreams in psychoanalysis: by symbolically expressing what has been repressed, he allowed a release of the tension that this repression created.[126] But what is more, in addition to giving a vent to the tension, he was able to transform it into positive power with which he supported the cultural system in turn. In the Delphic cult the Greeks were assured that with divine help the dark power of the feminine could in the end be reconciled with the patriarchal order and could even act as its deep source of strength.

Furthermore, the Greeks can be seen as a "shame culture",[127] in which individuals derived their self-esteem from what others thought of them, pursuing honour "in order to assure themselves of their worth" (Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1096b27). The point is well summarized by Vernant:

> In a face-to-face society where to be recognized one had to surpass one's rivals in constant competition for glory, each person was placed under the gaze of others; each person existed because of that gaze. One was what the others saw in one. The identity of an individual coincided with his social evaluation: from derision to praise, from scorn to admiration. If a man's worth remained thus connected to his reputation, any public attack on his dignity, any act or word

[126] By drawing a comparison with psychoanalysis, I do not mean to imply that the repression is a matter of individual psychology. In this regard my interpretation differs from that of Slater 1968, who was the first to draw attention to a number of the shadowy aspects of Apollo that I have discussed above. However, Slater understood these as mirroring actual psychic tensions of ordinary Greeks, and by doing so turned the Greeks into psychopaths. From my perspective, it is misleading to regard the gods solely as magnified images of psychological tensions, who only differ from ordinary humans in that they manifest their unconscious desires in a clear manner. For me, the tensions are primarily those relating to the entire Greek sociocultural system, and it is for this reason that they are so strong and that the corresponding dark desires of mythical actors go well beyond anything humans do in their actual lives. Of course, culture is ultimately created by human individuals, and a tension in a cultural system thus must have some correlate in individual psychology. But this correlation can only be a loose one, and we may expect it to apply just to some of the individual Greeks, and in much weaker form than that manifested in Apollo.

[127] Thus classically Dodds 1957, 17–18, 28–63.

> that cast aspersions on his status, was felt by the victim ... as a disparagement or annihilation of his very being, his intimate virtue, and as a way of bringing about his fall from grace.[128]

It was on account of this that the Greeks were so much obsessed with competitiveness in all areas of social life, from athletics to warfare. One's self esteem had to be publically reconfirmed again and again by measuring oneself against others. The basic attitude behind all this must have been a combination of outward self-confidence and inward insecurity – which is just what we see in the case of Apollo, who is both presumptuous and fragile vis-à-vis the ancient feminine powers.

In addition, the Greeks were not just a culture of males, but more specifically of young males dreading old age. As Mimnermus classically puts it (fr. 2):

> Who are we? Like the leaves that bloom in flowery springtime, when they grow quickly in the rays of the sun, like them we enjoy the blossoms of youth (*hēbē*) for a short time, not knowing what good or bad things the gods have in store for us. But black Spirits of Death (Kēres) stand by, one has prepared for us the future of grievous old age, the other that of Death. The fruit of our youth ripens quickly and lasts only as long as sunlight in the afternoon. But once this glorious time has ended, it is better to be dead than alive. For many are the sorrows that spread in our heart.

The Greek ideal was thus precisely the Apollonian youth. But, as Mimnermus illustrates clearly, this ideal immediately cast a shadow as well: the awareness of the transiency of youth and of the darkness that is waiting behind its boundaries. The "better to die young than to experience old age" motif is typically Apollonian, as we can see, for example, from the legend of Trophonios and Agamedes, the mythical builders of the Delphic temple of Apollo, who on finishing the construction asked the god for their reward, which he gave them by letting them die in their sleep (Plut. *Mor.* 108f–109a).[129]

---

[128] Vernant 1995, 18.

[129] In the similar classic story of Kleobis and Biton (Hdt. I,31) it is Hera to whom the mother of the two youths prays for "the best thing a man can get", but "the god" (ὁ θεός in masculine) who shot them with his gentle arrows, and thus "demonstrated that it is better for a man to be dead than to live", was surely Apollo, who specialized in quick and painless deaths of this type.

Hand in hand with this went the frequent poetic depiction of man as a powerless being who can never be sure of anything and is left at the mercy of the gods whose plans are mostly unfathomable for mortals. As Theognis declares (141–142), "we humans have vain expectations but know nothing, while the gods accomplish all according to their plans". Apollo is precisely the god who most of all embodies such sentiments, reminding humans of their mortal fragility (cf. HOM. *Il.* V,440–442; XXI,462–467). As a god, of course, he seems to be above it himself, standing for the perpetual youthfulness that mortals can never achieve. In fact, however, we have seen that even his divine personality is remarkable fragile and easy to set off balance.

We may perhaps illustrate some of this if we have a look at one type of archaic statues that is closely associated with the Apollonian ideal: the naked, striding youths which in modern times have been dubbed *kouroi*.[130] In the 6th century these were omnipresent in the Greek world. They were used as tomb markers or as votive gifts. 19th-century scholars frequently saw them as depicting Apollo, for they exactly corresponded to his iconographic type, and were sometimes discovered in his shrines. Contemporary scholarship mostly rejects this theory and agrees that the statues represent a human youth at the peak of his bodily powers. In the eyes of the Greeks, this was the most glorious time of human life, one that will only be followed by a sad decline. The *kouroi* express this peak time (*hēbē*) of human life – but by doing so they also foreshadow the downfall that will follow.

By functioning as a tomb marker or votive gift, a *kouros* was meant to represent the deceased or the donor. But instead of realistically depicting him, it acted as his ideal double, representing him not in his individuality but as a timeless, typical member of a homogenous group. The *kouroi* captured the brilliant image with which the Greek nobility identified. Yet this is not the say that all the *kouroi* were identical. As Stewart emphasizes, each *kouros* tried to be special, "hence its manifold variations of anatomy, physiognomy, and coiffure".[131] The contrast between sameness and difference built "a tension into the image from the beginning, a tension that is often mistakenly articulated as archaic 'schematization' versus incipient 'naturalism'."[132]

It is this tension that in Stewart's eyes signals a warning: though expressing

[130] In what follows I am inspired by the brilliant analysis of STEWART 1997.

[131] STEWART 1997, 65.

[132] STEWART 1997, 65.

something perfect and eternal, "the *kouros* evidently required continual supplementation and adjustment. Clearly, no single example was felt to be definitive."[133] Together with the obsessiveness with which the Greeks erected the *kouroi* this suggests that the ideal order which "the *kouros* so confidently bodied was far from universally manifest, but also that men felt considerable anxiety about whether it existed at all, or if it did, what it consisted of" (ibid., 68). Greek poets reflected on this at least partly when they bemoaned the essential fragility and fleetingness of human beauty and strength – which in their accounts seem remarkably similar to Delos, a tiny island of light in the middle of a turbulent sea. Stewart relates these sentiments to the inherent instability of the Greek nobility in the sixth century, when numerous conflicts raged both between the "haves" and "have-nots" as well as between the nobles themselves, in many cases resulting in coups and tyrannies. In this light, the *kouros*, "far from being a simple expression of the solidarity and success of a securely entrenched aristocracy, ... was a creature born of rapture and anxiety. ... To meet the rising clamor for social justice (*dikē*), it created the seductive illusion of a stable, elitist social order."[134]

Apollo seems to have played a similar part in the Greek cultural system, but unlike the *kouroi*, which onesidedly expressed the archaic aristocratic ideal (and thus ceased to be produced once the archaic epoch drew to a close), he was a more complex figure, embodying not just the ideal but its concomitant tensions as well. On the one hand, he helped the Greek nobility experience just the kind of eternal perfection that shone out of the *kouroi*. The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* gives an impressive picture of this when describing the Delia festival celebrated by all the Ionians on Delos (147–155),

> where the Ionians, in trailing robes, gather
> with their children and respected wives.
> They please you when they hold their contests,
> remembering you with boxing matches, dance, and song.
> One would say they are immortal, forever unaging,
> if one came upon them, thronged together.
> Seeing the grace of them all, one would delight
> at the sight of men and well-dressed women,
> swift ships and the Ionians' many possessions.

[133] Stewart 1997, 67.

[134] Stewart 1997, 70.

On the other hand, it was Apollo himself who constantly reminded the Greeks of their mortal transience and of the distance between gods and men. And what is more important, he himself displayed many dark and dangerous features that seemingly contradicted the idyllic image. His harmonious lyre went hand in hand with his deadly bow. His youthful strength and perfection easily turned into arrogance. His elevated calmness was interrupted by outbursts of anger resulting from his hurt pride. His sense of order and harmony at times gave way to savage violence. His masculine self-confidence was undermined by signs of mother dependence. Most of his loves ended with the death of his sweethearts. However, like all the other gods, Apollo was able to contain all these tensions. Indeed, he was able to make use of them, in the course of his festivals turning the dark side into a strength that he used to support the positive ideals. From this perspective, Apollo may be seen as a symbolic complex that the Greek culture produced to counterbalance its internal tensions.

Conclusions

The aim of my paper has been to shed light on some of the essential principles of the cultural symbolic complex the Greeks designated by the name of "Apollo". I followed a theoretical approach outlined in my previous paper,[135] which sees the gods as beings created to support the sociocultural system not only by protecting and embodying its basic norms and values, but also by dealing with various limitations and internal contradictions that any system of sociocultural norms is bound to entail. The gods thus need to be able to found the norms while at the same time transcending them themselves. Accordingly, to grasp the symbolic core of a divinity, one needs to pay attention both to its norm-establishing aspects and to the various ways in which it transgresses them, as well as to the various conflicting norms the divinity unites in its personality. I believe it is only when one manages to find a meaningful relation between the orderly bright side of a divinity and its "shadowy" aspects (as I have called them) that its structural core will start to emerge.

In the case of Apollo, the norm-setting aspects have been abundantly stressed by the older "moral" image of Apollo as a god of order, measured restraint, and "spiritual loftiness",[136] who establishes cultural norms, sanctions laws, and

[135] Chlup 2018.

[136] Otto 1954, 67.

enjoins humans to recognize their mortal limits. All of these normative aspects were impressively captured by Otto's classic portrait of the god. Yet, we have seen that this positive image is complemented by darker and more disturbing sides of Apollo (first stressed by Detienne) and that his symbolic complex seems to be based on repeated oscillations between brightness and darkness. His orderly perfection tends to be deadly, and his measured restraint occasionally gives way to rage and savage brutality. His killing of Python is both a valiant order-setting act and a polluting crime offending the ancient goddesses ruling the Delphic sanctuary. His protection of Orestes is both a defence of a new "higher justice ... against the frightful cry of vengeance",[137] but also an act of one-sided arrogance that would in itself fail to resolve the situation were it not for the intervention of Athena. He is an exemplary defendant of his mother's honour, but at the same time shows signs of mother-dependence and displays immature arrogant enmity towards other motherly figures.

Importantly, however, it is only in myths that these paradoxes stand out. In his cults, Apollo managed to overcome the tension between his normative and his shadowy side. And what is more, by means of a circular pattern first identified by Versnel he was able to transform his shadowy aspects into a source of power that could support the Greek sociocultural order in turn. He was doing this because the gods were created as "highly efficient cultural mechanism for supporting the cultural system by providing it both with firmness and with plasticity".[138] Accordingly, the cultural function of Apollo was not just to sanction some of the important norms ad values of the Greek cultural world but also to help the Greeks deal with the tensions these very norms and values inevitably produced.

I started my analysis with the influential German conception of Apollo as the "most Greek of all the gods". The subsequent sections have shown this traditional picture as one-sided, but they have not altogether negated it. Apollo is perhaps indeed a god who made the Greek miracle possible, as Otto believed. But if we are to accept this statement, we should read it in a more complex way. Apollo did not just embody the positive values that defined the Greek "spirit". He also helped deal with the shadow this spirit necessarily cast. The stress on lucidity and clarity of forms, the awareness of the fleetingness of individual things combined with the desire to transcend it by achieving something glorious that will be remembered by future generations, the spirit of perfection – all of these

[137] Otto 1954, 70.

[138] Chlup 2018, 121.

were fundamental values for the Greeks. Yet, while we may perhaps regard them as parts of the essence of Greekness, it would be naive to think that they represented the entire reality of the Greek world. What they expressed was an ideal that the Greeks used not just to aspire to but also to shield themselves from various conflicts that formed the inevitable shadow of this glorious vision. The fundamental part of Apollo in this consisted in the fact that he was both able to embody the ideal and to deal with the tensions it produced, uniting all the contraries in his divine personality. In this way, he allowed the Greeks to entrust their unconscious tensions to him, so to speak, guaranteeing that he would bear their weight in a glorious manner. There was really something arrogantly fragile about the Greek male culture. Apollo let the Greeks catch a glimpse of this, but did so in a friendly manner that did not undermine the normative order. In this regard, the punishments and purifications he went through in myths, and required humans to repeat in their rites, on the most general level perhaps actually were designed to keep the Greek miracle going despite all the strains that it generated.

Bibliography

Beaulieu, M.-C. 2016, *The Sea in the Greek Imagination*, Philadelphia.

Bierl, A. 1994, "Apollo in Greek Tragedy: Orestes and the God of Initiation", in: J. Solomon (ed.), *Apollo: Origins and Influence*, Tucson, pp. 81–96.

Bremmer, J. 1983, "Scapegoat Rituals in Ancient Greece", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 87, pp. 299–320.

Burkert, W. 1975, "Apellai und Apollon", *Rheinisches Museum*, 118, pp. 1–21.

Burkert, W. 1985, *Greek Religion*, Trans. by J. Raffan, Cambridge (Mass.).

Burkert, W. 2000, "Private Needs and Polis Acceptance: Purification at Selinous", in: P. Flensted-Jensen – Th. Heine Nielsen – L. Rubinstein (eds.), *Polis & Politics: Studies in Ancient Greek History*, Copenhagen, pp. 207–216.

Buxton, R. 1990, "Wolves and Werewolves in Greek Thought", in: J. Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology*, London, pp. 60–79.

Calame, C. 1997, *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece*, Trans. D. Collins – J. Orion, Lanham.

Caldwell, R. 1990, "The Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Greek Myth", in: L. Edmunds (ed.), *Approaches to Greek Myth*, Baltimore, pp. 344–390.

Chantraine, P. 1980, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, IV/2, Paris.

Chlup, R. 2008, "*Illud Tempus* in Greek Myth and Ritual", *Religion*, 38, pp. 355 to 365.

Chlup, R. 2018, "On the Nature of the Gods: Methodological Suggestions for the Study of Greek Divinities", *History of Religions*, 58, pp. 101–127.

Clay, J. S. 1994, "Tendenz and Olympian Propaganda in the Homeric Hymn to Apollo", in: J. Solomon (ed.), *Apollo: Origins and Influence*, Tucson, pp. 23–36.

Clay, J. S. 2006, *The Politics of Olympus: Form and Meaning in the Major Homeric Hymns*, London.

Cole, S. G. 2004, *Landscapes, Gender, and Ritual Space: The Ancient Greek Experience*, Berkeley (Ca.).

Čechvala, J. 2013, *Dramatické uchopení mýtu: tradice, manipulace, interpretace* [The Dramatic Shaping of Myth: Tradition, Manipulation, Interpretation], Ph.D. Thesis, Charles University, Prague. Available at: https://dspace.cuni.cz/handle/20.500.11956/53244?locale-attribute=en.

Davies, J. K. 1997, "The Moral Dimension of Pythian Apollo", in: A. B. Lloyd (ed.), *What Is a God: Studies in the Nature of Greek Divinity*, London – Swansea, pp. 43–64.

de Polignac, F. 1995, *Cults, Territory, and the Origins of the Greek City-State*, Trans. by J. Lloyd, Chicago.

Detienne, M. 1986, "Apollo's Slaughterhouse", Trans. by A. Doueihi, *Diacritics*, 16, pp. 46–53.

Detienne, M. 1998, *Apollon le couteau à la main: une approche expérimentale du polythéisme grec*, Paris.

Detienne, M. 1999, "Experimenting in the Field of Polytheisms", *Arion*, 7, pp. 127–149.

Detienne, M. – Vernant, J.-P. 1981, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, Trans. by J. Lloyd, Chicago.

Dodds, E. R. 1957, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, Boston.

Dougherty, C. 1993, *The Poetics of Colonization: From City to Text in Archaic Greece*, New York – Oxford.

Farnell, L. R. 1907, *The Cults of the Greek States*, IV, Oxford.

Faulkner, A. 2011, "Introduction", in: Idem (ed.), *The Homeric Hymns: Interpretative Essays*, Oxford, pp. 1–25.

Fontenrose, J. 1959, *Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins*, Berkeley (Ca.).

Gantz, T. 1993, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to the Literary and Artistic Sources*, I–II, Baltimore.

Gershenson, D. E. 1991, *Apollo the Wolf-God*, McLean (VA) [Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph, 8].

Graf, F. 1979, "Apollon Delphinios", *Museum Helveticum*, 36, pp. 2–22.

Graf, F. 2009, *Apollo*, London – New York.

Hard, R. 2004, *The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology: Based on H. J. Rose's Handbook of Greek Mythology*, London – New York.

HERINGTON, C. J. 1969, "Review of L. SÉCHAN – P. LÉVÊQUE, *Les grandes divinités de la Grèce*, Paris 1966", *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 89, pp. 168–170.
HUGHES, D. D. 1991, *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece*, London.
JIM, TH. S. F. 2014, *Sharing with the Gods: "Aparchai" and "Dekatai" in Ancient Greece*, Oxford – New York.
KITTO, H. D. F. 1961, *Greek Tragedy*, New York.
KURKE, L. 2011, *Aesopic Conversations: Popular Tradition, Cultural Dialogue, and the Invention of Greek Prose*, Princeton.
KYRIAKOU, P. 2006, *A Commentary on Euripides' Iphigenia in Tauris*, Berlin – New York.
LORAUX, N. 1992, "What Is a Goddess", in: P. S. PANTEL (ed.), *A History of Women: From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, Cambridge (Mass.), pp. 11–45.
MALKIN, I. 1994, *Myth and Territory in the Spartan Mediterranean*, Cambridge.
MARTIN, R. P. 2003, "The Pipes Are Brawling: Conceptualizing Musical Performance in Athens", in: C. DOUGHERTY – L. KURKE (eds.), *The Cultures within Ancient Greek Culture: Contact, Conflict, Collaboration*, Cambridge, pp. 153–180.
MCINERNEY, J. J. 1997, "Parnassus, Delphi, and the Thyiades", *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 38, pp. 263–283.
MILI, M. 2015, *Religion and Society in Ancient Thessaly*, Oxford.
MILLER, A. M. 1986, *From Delos to Delphi. A Literary Study of the Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, Leiden.
NAGY, G. 1979, *The Best of the Achaeans: Concepts of the Hero in Archaic Greek Poetry*, Baltimore.
NILSSON, M. P. 1955, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, I: *Die Religion Griechenlands bis auf die griechische Weltherrschaft*, Zweite, durchgesehene und ergänzte Auflage, München.
OSBORNE, R. 1998, "Early Greek Colonization? The Nature of Greek Settlement in the West", in: N. FISHER – H. VAN WEES (eds.), *Archaic Greece: New Approaches and New Evidence*, London, pp. 251–269.
OTTO, W. 1954 [1929], *The Homeric Gods: The Spiritual Significance of Greek Religion*, New York.
PARKE, H. W. – WORMELL, D. E. W. 1956, *The Delphic Oracle*, I, Oxford.
PARKER, R. 1983, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion*, Oxford.
PARKER, R. 2005, *Polytheism and Society at Athens*, Oxford – New York.
PETTERSSON, M. 1992, *Cults of Apollo at Sparta: The Hyakinthia, the Gymnopaidiai and the Karneia*, Stockholm.
PIRENNE-DELFORGE, V. 1994, *L'Aphrodite grecque: contribution à l'étude de ses cultes et de sa personnalité dans le panthéon archaïque et classique*, Athènes – Liège.
PIRENNE-DELFORGE, V. – PIRONTI, G. 2015, "Many vs. One", in: E. EIDINOW – J. KINDT (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion*, Oxford, pp. 39–47.

Pirenne-Delforge, V. – Pironti, G. 2016, *L'Héra de Zeus: Ennemie intime, épouse définitive*, Paris.

Race, W. H. 1997, *Pindar: Olympian Odes, Pythian Odes, Edited and Translated*, Cambridge (Mass.).

Rayor, D. 2004, *The Homeric Hymns, Translated*, Berkeley (Ca.).

Redfield, J. 2003, *The Locrian Maidens: Love and Death in Greek Italy*, Princeton.

Rees, E. 2005, *Homer, The Iliad, Translated*, New York.

Rutherford, I. 2001, *Pindar's Paeans: A Reading of the Fragments with a Survey of the Genre*, Oxford.

Scafuro, A. C. 2013, "Keeping Record, Making Public: The Epigraphy of Government", in: H. Beck (ed.), *A Companion to Ancient Greek Government*, Oxford, pp. 400–416.

Slater, P. 1968, *The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and the Greek Family*, Boston.

Sourvinou-Inwood, C. 1978, "Persephone and Aphrodite at Locri: A Model for Personality Definitions in Greek Religion", *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 98, pp. 101–121.

Sourvinou-Inwood, C. 1990, "Myth as History: The Previous Owners of the Delphic Oracle", in: J. Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology*, London, pp. 215–241.

Stewart, A. 1997, *Art, Desire, and the Body in Ancient Greece*, Cambridge.

Suárez de la Torre, E. 2013, "Apollo and Dionysos: Intersections", in: A. Bernabé et alii (eds.), *Redefining Dionysos*, Berlin, pp. 58–81.

Vernant, J.-P. 1982, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, Trans. by J. Lloyd, London.

Vernant, J.-P. 1991a, "The Figure and Functions of Artemis in Myth and Cult", in: Idem, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, Edited by F. I. Zeitlin, Princeton, pp. 195–206.

Vernant, J.-P. 1991b, "Artemis and Preliminary Sacrifice in Combat", in: Idem, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, Edited by F. I. Zeitlin, Princeton, pp. 244–257.

Vernant, J.-P. 1995, "Introduction", in: J.-P. Vernant (ed.), *The Greeks*, Trans. by C. Lambert – T. Lavender Fagan, Chicago – London, pp. 1–22.

Versnel, H. S. 1994, "Apollo and Mars", in: Idem, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion*, II: *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual*, Leiden, pp. 296–317.

Versnel, H. S. 2011, *Coping with the Gods: Wayward Readings in Greek Theology*, Leiden.

Winnington-Ingram, R. P. 1933, "The Role of Apollo in the *Oresteia*", *The Classical Review*, 47, pp. 97–104.

ZEITLIN, F. 1978, "The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the *Oresteia*", *Arethusa*, 11, pp. 149–184.
ZEITLIN, F. 2002, "Apollo and Dionysos: Starting from Birth", in: H. F. J. HORSTMANSHOFF ET ALII (eds.), *Kykeon: Studies in Honor of H. S. Versnel*, Leiden, pp. 193–218.

Summary

This paper tries to shed light on the "symbolic core" of the god Apollo, in the sense of a dynamic complex of structural themes loosely guiding the logic of local and historical developments of the god's myths and cults. Starting from three 20th-century accounts of Apollo by Otto, Detienne, and Versnel, I try to show that it is precisely by taking them into account all together that the symbolic structural core of Apollo may be grasped in an interesting manner which account for both his brighter and his darker aspects. I further relate this pattern to a general theory which sees polytheistic gods as the symbolic focal points that embody the basic norms of a given sociocultural system but at the same time transgress these categories themselves, expressing the various tensions any ordering of reality is bound to generate and offering a cultural mechanism that allows these tensions to be turned into a source of power with which the norms may be supported in turn.

Keywords: Apollo; polytheism; structuralism; transgressivity

RADEK CHLUP
Charles University
Faculty of Arts
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Jan Palach Square 1/2
116 38 Prague 1
Czech Republic
radek.chlup@ff.cuni.cz

EIRENE
STUDIA GRAECA ET LATINA

ISSN 0046-1628
Founded 1960

Eirene. Studia Graeca et Latina is an international refereed scholarly journal of classics which is published by the Centre for Classical Studies at the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague. It welcomes and publishes original research on classics, reception of Antiquity and classical traditions. It also brings up-to-date reviews of scholarly literature on these subjects. ■ The journal accepts submissions in English, German, French and Italian. All contributions (except for reviews) are sent anonymously for peer-review. ■ *Eirene. Studia Graeca et Latina* is abstracted / indexed in following scientific databases: L'Année philologique; The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (CEJSH); European Reference Index for Humanities (ERIH PLUS); Modern Language Association International Bibliography; Scopus; Web of Science; EBSCO. ■ For manuscript submission guidelines, contents of previously published issues and more, please visit the journal's homepage: http://www.ics.cas.cz/en/journals/eirene. ■ All article submissions are to be sent by e-mail to: eirene@ics.cas.cz; all subscription / exchange orders (back issues are also available for purchase) are to be sent by e-mail to: sales.eirene@ics.cas.cz. Books for review and other correspondence should be mailed to:

Eirene. Studia Graeca et Latina
Centre for Classical Studies at the Institute of Philosophy
of the Czech Academy of Sciences
Na Florenci 3
110 00 Prague 1
Czech Republic
tel.: +420 234 612 330
fax: +420 222 828 305

EIRENE
STUDIA GRAECA ET LATINA

LVIII / 2022 / I–II

Prague 2022
ISSN 0046-1628