

## **Comparison between Greek and Roman gods**

**Student,**

**Dragana Spasic**

**Mentor,**

**Biljana Pipovic**

**June, 2010.**

# COMPARISON BETWEEN ROMAN AND GREEK GODS

## Resume

**Author:** Dragana Spasic

**Mentor:** Biljana Pipovic

The word "myth" is defined as a story of forgotten or vague origin, basically religious or supernatural in nature, which seeks to explain or rationalize the universe and all that is in it. The word itself comes from the Greek "mythos" which originally meant "speech" or "discourse" but which later came to mean "fable" or "legend". Through these communal tales, explaining how the world and humankind came to be in their present form, we are connected to our ancestors, to the natural world surrounding us, and, through the myths which have universal themes, we are connected to other cultures.

When myths tell about the activities and attitudes of deities, we transcend our common life into a world in which deities interact with humans, and we can believe that our daily actions are part of the deities' grand schemes. In our difficulties, the pain is more bearable because we believe that the trials have meaning; we are suffering for a bigger cause rather than being battered randomly. And when we read that a particular deity experienced something which we are now enduring - perhaps a struggle against "evil forces" - we can feel that our own struggle might have a similar cosmic or archetypal significance, though on a smaller scale. They reveal our fate after death, and the reasons for crises or miracles, and other puzzles - and yet they retain and even encourage an aura of mystery. Myths also satisfy our need to understand the natural world.

**Key words:** god, goddess, heroes, believes, origin, worship, mythology, religion, ancestors, betrayal

## Rezime

Rec mit je definisana kao prica zaboravljenog i nedovoljno objasnjenog porekla, u osnovi religiozna ili natprirodna po prirodi, koja tezi da objasni ili racionalizuje univerzum i sve u njemu. Sama rec potice od grcke reci „mythos“ koja je u originalu znacila „govor“ ili „rasprava“, ali koja je kasnije postala „prica“ ili „legenda“. Kroz ove zajednicke price, koje objasnjavaju kako je svet i ljudska vrsta dospela do sadasnjeg oblika, povezani smo sa nasim precima, sa prirodnim svetom koji nas okruzuje, i kroz mitove koji imaju univerzalnu tematiku, povezani smo sa drugim kulturama.

Kada mit govori o aktivnostima i stavovima bogova, mi prenosimo nas zivot u svet u kome bogovi saradjuju sa ljudima, i mozemo verovati da su nase svakodnevne aktivnosti deo velikih bozanskih sema. U nasim poteskocama, bol je podnosljiviji zato sto verujemo da iskusenja imaju znacenje; patimo zbog veceg cilja a nedace nam se ne desavaju slucajno. I kad citamo da je odredjeni bog iskustio nesto sto mi trenutno podnosimo—mozda borba protiv „zlih sila“—mozemo osetiti da nasa sopstvena borba mozda ima slican kosmicki ili tipicni smisao, iako na manjoj skali. Oni otkrivaju nasu veru posle smrti, i razloge kriza ili cuda, i druge zagonetke—pa ipak one zadrzavaju i cak ohrabruju auru misterije. Mitovi takodje zadovoljavaju nasu potrebu da razumemo svet prirode.

**Kljucne reci:** bog, boginja, heroji, verovanja, poreklo, obozavanje, mitologija, religija, preci, izdaja

**Contents**

- 1. INTRODUCTION..... 3
- 2. GREEK AND ROMAN MYTHOLOGY ..... 3
  - 2.1. Greek mythology..... 5
  - 2.2. Olympian Gods ..... 6
- 3. TROJAN WAR ..... 10
  - 3.1. The Apple of Eris (the apple of discord)..... 10
- 4. EROS AND PSYCHE..... 11
- 5. MEDUSA ..... 14

## 1. INTRODUCTION

For thousand of years people have associated objects in the sky, the Earth, and aspects of their physical world with the gods and goddesses of their cultures. Myths are not stories about people who do habitual things in an ordinary world. Instead of that, they are mostly about magnificent characters in the world which is not our habitual reality; the world which is sometimes full of magic and somethimes full of gods and godesses. Myths remind of fairy tales which begin with *''Once upon a time...''*. The only difference is that great majority of fairy tales have a happy ending and myths end tragically. Myths are very important stories for the culture of nation and their importance is unbreakable even centuries after their original culture. Those are stories about inceptions of culture. Exploring the world of myths means finding the whole range of beliefs about the world, from tragical to comical-but never neutral. In the world full of fears, loneliness and alienation, myths can offer a consolation through the stories about the times of heroism and chivalry, when it was easier to make the difference between good and evil in our hearts, and the times when humans and animals were the same beings.

According to Carl Jung, myths are universal and necessary for the health of every man's phyce. People need these magnificent stories in order to elucidate confusion of our societe and our psyche. Myths are the expressions of the unconscious truth. He believes that gods, godesses and heroes describe creativity, wisdom, grief, joy and ecstasy. Monsters that appear in myths are actually the monsters of the mind. The Greek empire was vast, long lasting, and left many wonderful contributions to our society today. Homer contibuted extensively to literature, Pythagorus to math, Plato to philosophy, and Mesomides to musical composition. The Greek religion has also stood the test of time and still is an intriguing subject. Mythology is a wonderful insight to the complexities of Greek society and for that reason it is revered and studied today. Myths are not only ancient stories about the phenomens and glory. Creation myths also provide an explanation of the origin of the universe in all its complexity.

## 2. GREEK AND ROMAN MYTHOLOGY

Greek and Roman mythology represents the basis of mythology in its totality. Greek mythology explains the origins of the world and Greek mythology is the body of myths and legends belonging to the ancient Greeks, concerning their gods and heroes, the nature of the world, and the origins and significance of their own cult and ritual practices. Myths were a part of religion in ancient Greecee describing adventures of a wide variety of gods, goddesses, heroes, heroines, and other mythological creatures. The gods in Greek myths and Roman overtelling of Greek myths are closer to human beings than gods of any other mythology.

These gods were not moral beings. The gods of Greece and Rome were neither good nor evil. Gods and goddesses in Greek and Roman mythology have used their powers without any moral system.

*My children, gotten of a sinful father, if you  
will obey me, we should punish the vile outrage of your father;  
for he first thought of doing shameful things.'* (II, 164-166), Hesiod, *Theogony*

Greek mythology has changed over time to accommodate the evolution of their culture, of which mythology, both overtly and in its unspoken assumptions, is an index of the changes. Numerous ethiological myths offer explanations that science rejects. Science has their own rational explanations about comets and eclipses. However, these myths offer the truth of an imaginary world.

The oldest known Greek literary sources, the epic poems *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, focus on events surrounding the Trojan War. Two poems by Homer's near contemporary Hesiod, *the Theogony* and *the Works and Days*, contain accounts of the genesis of the world, the succession of divine rulers, the succession of human ages, the origin of human woes, and the origin of sacrificial practices. Hesiod offers in his *Theogony* the fullest account of the earliest Greek myths, dealing with the creation of the world; the origin of gods, Titans, and Giants; as well as elaborate genealogies, folktales, and etiological myths. Hesiod's *Works and Days*, a didactic poem about farming life, also includes the myths of Prometheus.

The original religion of the early Romans was modified by the addition of numerous and conflicting beliefs in later times, and by the assimilation of a vast amount of Greek mythology. The Roman mythology has two types of creation. Certain people believe it was created around the 12th century BC, after the war between Greece and Asia. The legend says that after the war, Aeneas, a very strong and popular soldier of the Greek royal army, won the battle against Asia but then decided to leave for Carthage. There, the Queen Dido fell in love with him but Aeneas left her to travel to Italy, where he found Rome. From there, Aeneas knowing the gods from his culture decided to create a new mythology with new gods. In contrast to the dearth of narrative material about the gods, the Romans had a rich panoply of legends about the foundation and early growth of their own city. In addition to these largely home-grown traditions, material from Greek heroic legend was grafted onto this native stock at an early date. For example, the Trojan prince Aeneas was cast as husband of Lavinia, the daughter of King Latinus, patronymical ancestor of the Latin tribe, and therefore as forebearer of Romulus and Remus, who were the sons of the God Mars and a mortal woman named Rhea Silvia. These two brothers lived with their uncle. When their parents died the uncle decided to kill the two brothers so he could receive the power of their father, the God Mars. In the conflict, Remus died but Romulus escaped to a new city named Rome, where he became its first king. "The date that Romulus founded Rome was 753 BC" (Varro). By extension, the Trojans were adopted as the mythical ancestors of the Roman people (which is why the Roman centurions took a uniform based on the Greeks' drawing of the Trojans). *The Aeneid* and the first few books of Livy are the best extant sources for this human mythology.

At the head of the earliest pantheon were the triad Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus (whose three priests, or flamens, were of the highest order), and Janus and Vesta. These gods in early

times had little individuality, and their personal histories lacked marriages and genealogies. Unlike the gods of the Greeks, they were not considered to function in the manner of mortals, and thus not many accounts of their activities exist. This older worship was associated with Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, who was believed to have had as his consort and adviser the Roman goddess of fountains and flowers, Egeria, who is often identified as a nymph in later literary sources. New deities were added at a relatively early date, such as Juno and Minerva, who both assumed prominent places in Roman religion. Other additions were the worship of Diana on the Aventine Hill and the introduction of the Sibylline books, prophecies of world history, which, according to legend, were purchased by Tarquin in the late 6th century BC from the Cumaean Sibyl.

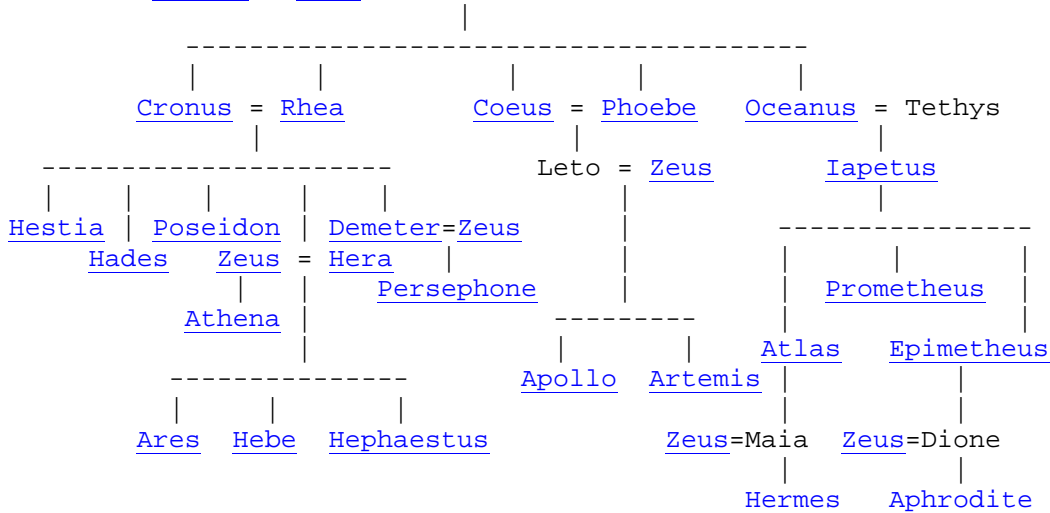
In Ancient Roman times, a new Roman mythology was born through syncretization of numerous Greek and other foreign gods. This occurred because the Romans had little mythology of their own and inheritance of the Greek mythological tradition caused the major Roman gods to adopt characteristics of their Greek equivalents. The gods Zeus and Jupiter are an example of this mythological overlap. In addition to the combination of the two mythological traditions, the association of the Romans with other Greek myths led to further syncretizations. For instance, great foundation of Rome. The myth about foundation of Rome has divining descent including god Mars(Arej). Rhea Silvia was the daughter of great king Numithor. Amulie has dethroned Numithor, killed his son and forced Rhea to bacome a vestal, in order not to have sons who could revenge for dethroning Numithor. Rhea has gone to bring the water from the Mars's saint spring, where this god came down from heaven and raped her. She couldn't hide her pregnancy and protect her children from Amulie. Amulie didn't believe in the story about the god and decided to throw her in the river. She was saved by the river god Tiberin who turned her into the goddesses.Amlie ordered to put the twins into the chest and throw it into the river Tibar(just like in the Greek myths, in order to avoid guilt). River brought them to the Palatin hill. A she –wolf found them and nurtured them under the fig tree. The royal servant found them and brought them home. This legend has a tight attachment with another Greek myth. Paris was born from the union of Prijam and Hecaba (Hecuba), the king and the queen of Troy. The night earlier Hecaba had dreamed she had beared torch which set the whole Troy on fire. Prophet Esak said this dream meant that Paris was going to destroy the kindom. The newborn infant was left on the Idi mountain where the bear found him and nurtured him. Paris was adopted by a shepherd.

### **2.1. Greek mythology**

It has never been entirely clear where the roots of Greek mithology are. Did it begin like a chaos assembled of water and mood, fire and air? Was Chaos the god, whose wife was Niks (Noks), the goddesses of night? In the begining there was only chaos. Then out of the void appeared Erebus, the unknowable place where death dwells, and Night. All else was empty, silent, endless, darkness. Then somehow Love was born bringing a start of order. From Love came Light and Day. Once there was Light and Day, Gaea, the earth appeared. Then Erebus slept with Night, who gave birth to Ether, the heavenly light, and to Day the earthly light. Then Night alone produced Doom, Fate, Death, Sleep, Dreams, Nemesis, and

others that come to man out of darkness. Meanwhile Gaea alone gave birth to Uranus, the heavens. Uranus became Gaea's mate covering her on all sides. Together they produced the three Cyclopes, the three Hecatoncheires, and twelve Titans.

(Heaven) Uranus = Gaea (Earth)



Thitan Hyperion was the first god of the Sun, and his wife-sister was Theia. Coeus and Phoebe, the goddess of the Moon, Cronus (Saturn in Roman mythology) and Rhea (goddess Kibela) who was the goddess of fertility, Temida (goddess of justice) and Mnemosyne (goddess of memory), the mother of nine musis. There are different theories. Without male assistance, Gaia gave birth to Oranos (the Sky) who then fertilized her. From that union were born first the Titans—six males: Coeus, Crius, Cronus, Hyperion, Iapetus, and Oceanus; and six females: Mnemosyne, Phoebe, Rhea, Theia, Themis, and Tethys. After Cronus was born, Gaia and Oranos decreed no more Titans were to be born. They were followed by the one-eyed Cyclopes and the Hecatonchires or Hundred-Handed Ones. Cronus, the wily, youngest and most terrible of Gaia's children, attacked and castrated his father, then threw his genitals into the ocean. It turned to foam and bestowed the life to one of the greatest goddesses—Afroditha, the goddess of sexual desire and love. He became the ruler of the gods with his sister-wife Rhea as his consort, and the other Titans became his court.

*And Heaven came, bringing on night and longing for love, and he lay about Earth spreading himself full upon her.* (II, 176-206), Hesiod, Theogony

## 2.2. Olympian Gods

The Olympians are a group of 12 gods who ruled after the overthrow of the Titans. All the Olympians are related in some way. They are named after their dwelling place Mount Olympus. The Twelve Olympians were the principal gods of the Greek pantheon, residing atop Mount Olympus. Zeus, Poseidon, Hades, Hestia, Hera, Aris, Athena, Apollo, Aphrodite, Hermes, Artemis, Hephaestus. The Twelve Olympians gained their supremacy in the world of gods after Zeus led his siblings to victory in war with the Titans. Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Hestia, and Hades were siblings. Ares, Hermes, Hephaestus, Aphrodite, Athena, Apollo, Artemis, the Charites, Heracles, Dionysus, Hebe, and Persephone were the children of

Zeus. Although some versions of the myths state that Hephaestus was born of Hera alone, and that Aphrodite was born of Ouranos.



A motif of a father-against-son conflict was repeated when Cronus was confronted by his son, Zeus. Because Cronus had betrayed his father, he feared that his offspring would do the same, and so each time Rhea gave birth, he snatched up the child and ate it. Rhea hated this and tricked him by hiding Zeus and wrapping a stone in a baby's blanket, which Cronus ate. When Zeus was grown, he fed his father a drugged drink which caused Cronus to vomit, throwing up Rhea's other children and the stone, which had been sitting in Cronus' stomach all along. Then Zeus challenged Cronus to war for the kingship of the gods. At last, with the help of the Cyclopes (whom Zeus freed from Tartarus), Zeus and his siblings were victorious, while Cronus and the Titans were hurled down to imprisonment in Tartarus. His breastplate was the aegis, his bird the eagle, his tree the oak. He is married to Hera but, is famous for his many affairs. He is also known to punish those that lie or break oaths.

As the sky god Zeus had easy access to the women of the world and took full advantage of it. Also, his power as a supreme god made him difficult to resist. Prior to his marriage to Hera he was married first to Metis, then Themis. He was interested in Demeter but she resisted him. His third wife was Mnemosyne. The list of lovers after his final marriage, to Hera, is considerable:

- Europa
- Io
- Semele

**Europa** was the daughter of the King Agenor of Sidon. She had the continent of Europe named after her. Somewhat miraculously Hera was distracted during her affair with Zeus and never punished her for it. One night Europa had a dream. In this dream two continents, which were in the forms of women were arguing over Europa. Asia maintained that since Europa had been born in Asia she belonged to it. The other continent, which was nameless, said that her birth was not important, that Zeus would give her to it. It was early morning, disturbed by the dream Europa did not go back to sleep. She summoned her companions, who were all daughters of nobility and of her age. It was a beautiful day and they went off gathering flowers by the sea. Zeus noticed this charming group, particularly Europa, who was the prettiest of the maidens. Some say that Eros, induced him into action with one of his darts. Although, Zeus often made due with self motivation. In any case, Zeus appeared to the group as a white bull. A white bull more beautiful than any other. A bull that smelled of flowers, and lowed musically. A bull so obviously gentle that all the maidens rushed to stroke and pet it. The bull laid down in front of Europa. She slid on to its back. Instantly, the bull charged off, plunging into the sea, and began to swim rapidly from the shore. Europa saw that



a procesion had joined them, Nereids riding dolphins, Triton blowing his horn, even Poseidon. From this she realized that the bull must be a god. She pleaded with him to pity her. Zeus spoke to her and explained his love. He took her to Create, where he had been raised. He promised that she would bear him many famous sons. Her sons included Minos I and Rhadamanthus.

Zeus fell in love with **Io** and seduced her. To try to keep Hera from noticing he covered the world with a thick blanket of clouds. This backfired, arousing Hera's suspicions. She came down from Mount Olympus and began dispersing the clouds. Zeus did some quick thinking and changed Io's form from being a lovely maiden. So as the clouds dispersed Hera found Zeus standing next to a white heifer. He then swore that he had never seen the cow before, it had just sprang right out of the earth. Seeing right through this Hera complimented the cow and asked to have it as a present. As turning such a reasonable request down would have given the whole thing away, Zeus presented her with the cow. She sent the cow away and arranged Argos to watch over it. Since Argos had a hundred eyes and could have some of them sleep while others were awake he made a fine watchman. Desperate, Zeus sent Hermes to fetch Io. Disguised as a shepherd, Hermes had to employ all his skill as a musician and story teller to gain Argos confidence and lull him to sleep. Once asleep Hermes killed Argos. As a memorial, Hera took his eyes and set them into the tail of her favorite bird, the peacock. While Io was now free Hera sent the mother of all gad-flies to sting the still bovine Io. This pushed her near madness, trying to escape she wandered the world. During her wanders she came across Prometheus while chained. He gave her hope. He predicted that she would have to wander for many years. But, she would eventually be changed back into human form and would bear a child. He predicted that a decendent of this child would become a great hero and set him free. His predictions came true. During her wanderings many geographical features were named after her including the Ionian Sea, and the Bosphorus (which means ford of the cow). She eventually reached the Nile where Zeus did restore her to human form. She bore Epaphus and eleven generations later her descendant Hercules would set Prometheus free.

**Semele** was a Thebian princess. She is the only mortal to be the parent of a god. She was one of Zeus many lovers and like most came to an unfortunate end due to Hera's jealous hatred. She is best known as the mother of Dionysus. While she was killed shortly before giving birth, the child was rescued by Zeus. Eventually Dionysus, who had never seen her, managed to rescue her from the underworld and arrange for her to live on Mount Olympus.

**Nine Musis** are the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne but also Apollo's accompaniment. They are known for the music of their song, which brings joy to any who hear it. Each Muse with her own specialty: Clio (History), Urania (Astronomy), Melpomene (Tragedy), Thalia (Comedy), Terpsichore (Dance), Calliope (Epic Poetry), Erato (Love Poetry), Polyhymnia (Songs to the Gods), Euterpe (Lyric Poetry). They lived on the spring of Castalia that takes its name from Castalia, a girl of Delphi, who threw herself into the spring to escape the unwelcome advances of Apollo. Apollo killed a monstrous snake, the Python (that gave the god his title Pythian). The name Delphi received an etymological explanation: Apollo appeared in the form of a dolphin (*delphi* is the Greek word for "dolphin") to sailors on a Cretan ship. Leaping on board, he brought the terrified sailors to Crisa, the coastal port

near Delphi, where he transformed himself into a handsome youth and appointed the sailors as priests of his temple.

*For nine nights did wise Zeus lie with her, entering her holy bed remote from the immortals. And when a year was passed and the seasons came round as the months waned, and many days were accomplished, she bare nine daughters, all of one mind, whose hearts are set upon song and their spirit free from care, a little way from the topmost peak of snowy Olympus.*

**Athena** is the Greek virgin goddess of reason, intelligent activity, arts and literature. Athena is the daughter of Zeus and Metis, the goddess of wise consideration. She sprang full grown in armour from his forehead, thus has no mother. She was Zeus's favorite child and was allowed to use his weapons including his thunderbolt. Her favorite city is Athens. Her tree is the olive. In order to avoid a prophecy made when that change occurred, that any offspring of his union with Metis would be greater than he, Zeus swallowed Metis to prevent her from having offspring, but she already was pregnant with Athena. Metis gave birth to Athena and nurtured her inside Zeus until Zeus complained of headaches and called for Hephaestus to split open his head with his smithing tools (this did not hurt Zeus, as he is immortal).

**Poseidon** was the God of the sea, protector of all waters. At one point he desired Demeter. To put him off Demeter asked him to make the most beautiful animal that the world had ever seen. So to impress her Poseidon created the first horse. In some accounts his first attempts were unsuccessful and created a variety of other animals in his quest. By the time the horse was created his passion for Demeter had cooled. His weapon is a trident, which can shake the earth, and shatter any object. He is second only to Zeus in power amongst the gods. Triton is the trumpeter of the sea. His trumpet is a great shell. He is the son of Poseidon and Amphitrite.



Roman Mythology - Hades & Cerberus



**Hades** had the worst draw and was made lord of the underworld, ruling over the dead. He is also the god of wealth, due to the precious metals mined from the earth. He has a helmet that makes him invisible. He rarely leaves the underworld. He is unpitying and terrible, but not capricious. His wife is Persephone whom Hades abducted. He is the King of the dead but, death itself is another god, Thanatos. He was also called Pluton. He is a greedy god who is greatly concerned with increasing his subjects. Those whose calling increase the number of dead are seen favorably. The Erinyes are welcomed guests. He is exceedingly disinclined to allow any of his subjects leave.

### 3. TROJAN WAR

The gods Apollo and Poseidon, during the time when they were being punished by having to work among men, built the city of Troy for Priam's father, Laomedon. They invited the mortal man Aeacus (the son of Zeus and Aegina and grandfather of Achilles) to help them, since destiny had decreed that Troy would one day be captured in a place built by human hands (so a human being had to help them). It is thought that all things begin in heaven, and accordingly they say that this war took place because such was the will of Zeus, who wished his daughter Helen to become famous for having caused a conflict between Europe and Asia. And yet others, also claiming to have penetrated the minds of the gods, affirm that this war was ordained by heaven in order to exalt the race of the demigods. Several among gods, prophesied that Thetis would become the mother of a child who, when grown to manhood, would be called greater than his father. That is why Poseidon and Zeus, who had been rivals for Thetis' hand, fearing what they heard, desisted, and Zeus bade mortal Peleus to marry her, as a safe measure against the threat posed by the Nereid. However, some have said that Zeus had wished to punish Thetis by marrying her to a mortal, because the Nereid, having been brought up by Hera, would not consort with her nurse's husband.

#### 3.1. The Apple of Eris (the apple of discord)

In any case Thetis was married to a mortal man; and for reasons unknown to mortals, although they may be supposed to derive from the very nature of things, Eris (Discord) was not invited to the wedding party. But since this goddess is difficult to get rid of, she managed anyway to appear at the banquet and throw among the guests a golden apple through the door with the inscription:

***"For the fairest"***

Hera, Athena and Aphrodite, so they say, started then disputing on that prize, being therefore sent by Zeus to Mount Ida near Troy to have their beauty compared and judged by the shepherd Paris. Three goddesses and Hermes, who was the herald of gods, have come down the mountain Id in order to tell Paris what Zeus want him to do. Whether he chose any of them, he will have two powerfull enemies. The goddesses appeared to him naked, and because he was unable to decide between them, they resorted to bribes, Hera said: "Choose me, shepherd, and i will make you the ruler of Asia and Europe and i will give you the treasure that you want" Athena added: "Chose me, and i will give you wisdom and common sense and you will win every battle". Aphrodite was waiting to be the last and said quiet: "Chose me, and I will give you the most beautiful woman in the world". Paris, who until then had lived as a shepherd but soon was to be recognized as prince and son of Priam and Hecabe, chose Aphrodite as the most beautiful, accepting Helen's hand for a bribe. Helen was one of the daughters of Tyndareus, King of Sparta. Her mother was Leda, who had been either raped or

seduced by Zeus in the form of a swan. Accounts differ over which of Leda's four children, two pairs of twins, were fathered by Zeus and which by Tyndareus. However, Helen is usually credited as Zeus' daughter, and sometimes Nemesis is credited as her mother. Some of the gods chose sides in this epic war. Poseidon supported the Greeks. After he helped build the walls of Troy (as a punishment set upon him by Zeus), Poseidon was not given wages from the Trojan King. Athena and Hera also sided with the Greeks since Paris had picked Aphrodite, not either of them, as "The Fairest." The Greeks also had Hermes and Hephaestus



on their side. Aphrodite sided with the Trojans to protect Paris who had chosen her as "The Fairest". Apollo, Artemis, and Ares also sided with the Trojans. Zeus, Hades, Demeter and Hestia stayed relatively neutral during the war.

In any case Paris, having chosen what he thought was Aphrodite's gift of love, came to Sparta, guided by the goddess, with the determination of deluding Menelaus and seducing Helen. And here again there are those who have said that if the story of the three goddesses in Mount Ida had any meaning, Aphrodite herself would have taken Helen to Troy. That is why they add that the goddess was in Paris' and Helen's minds, and nowhere else.

Peleus and Thetis gave birth to a son, whom they named Achilles. It was foretold that he would either die of old age after an uneventful life, or die young in a battlefield and gain immortality through poetry. A number of sources credit Thetis with attempting to make Achilles immortal when he was an infant. Some of these state that she held him over fire every night to burn away his mortal parts and rubbed him with ambrosia during the day, but that Peleus discovered her actions and stopped them. According to some versions of this story, Thetis had already destroyed several sons in this manner, and Peleus' action therefore saved his son's life. Other sources state that Thetis bathed Achilles in the River Styx, the river that runs to the under world, making him invulnerable wherever he had touched the water. Because she had held him by the heel, it was not immersed during the bathing and thus the heel remained mortal and vulnerable to injury. Hence the expressions "Achilles heel" for an isolated weakness. He grew up to be the greatest of all mortal warriors. In the tenth year of the war, Achilles was killed by Paris's arrow that was guided by Apollo.



## 4. EROS AND PSYCHE

The name "Psyche" means "Soul" and her union with Eros (aka Cupid) tells the story of how Love and Soul came to be together. In Greek and Roman mythology, Psyche was the personification of the passion of love. She was the youngest daughter of the king and queen of Sicily, and the most beautiful person on the island — suitors

flocked to ask for her hand. She eventually boasted that she was more beautiful than Aphrodite (Venus) herself

Envious and jealous of the beauty of a mortal girl named Psyche, Aphrodite asks her son Eros to use his golden arrows while Psyche sleeps, so that when she awakes, Aphrodite would have already placed a vile creature for her to fall in love with. Cupid finally agrees to her commands after a long (and losing) debate. He leans over Psyche while she is asleep and before he can scratch her shoulder with the arrow, she awakens, startling him, for she looks right into his eyes, despite his invisibility. This causes him to scratch himself with his arrow, falling deeply in love with her. Aphrodite places a curse on Psyche that keeps her from meeting a suitable husband, or any husband at that. As she does this, it upsets Cupid greatly, and he decides that as long as the curse stays on Psyche, he will no longer shoot arrows, which will cause Aphrodite's temple to fall. When all continue to admire and praise Psyche's beauty, but none desire her as a wife, Psyche's parents consult an oracle, which tells them to leave Psyche on the nearest mountain, for her beauty is so great that she is not meant for (mortal) man.

*"Psyche will never marry a mortal. She shall be given to one who waits for her on yonder mountain; he overcomes Gods and men."*

She accepted what the Fates had decreed and told her parents to take her to the mountain and leave her for the beast. But then Zephyrus, the west wind, carries Psyche away, to a fair valley and a magnificent palace where she is attended by invisible servants until nightfall, and in the darkness of night the promised bridegroom arrives and the marriage is consummated. Cupid visits her every night to sleep with her, but demands that she never light any lamps, since he does not want her to know who he is until the time is right. Cupid allows Zephyrus to take Psyche back to her sisters and bring all three down to the palace during the day, but warns that Psyche should not listen to any argument that she should try to discover his true form. The two jealous sisters tell Psyche, then pregnant with Cupid's child, that rumor is that she had married a great and terrible serpent who would devour her and her unborn child when the time came for it to be fed. Finally, one night Eros went to sleep as usual, but Psyche remained awake. She took the oil lamp and lit it looking onto his face. Immediately she recognized his godliness and realized what had been going on. She was filled once again with love and contrition and worship, finally knowing who her husband was. But in her shock her hands trembled and she spilled some of the oil onto her lover. Eros awoke and saw the lamp and Psyche's sorrow and realized what she had done. He gave a cry of grief and then flew out the window. She realized now that she was truly abandoned for as she looked around her the palace had disappeared and she was again in the middle of the wood. Psyche realized what she had done, but she was not about to give up her Love when she had just truly found it. She came upon a deserted hall filled with ears of corn and barley and wheat strewn all across the floor. Immediately she began picking up the mess and putting it together in a beautiful and decorative manner, making the deserted hall more like a temple. That is in fact what it was, and as she worked Demeter watched her, smiling at the goodness of her Soul. When Psyche had finished, Demeter appeared before her and said:



*Psyche, you are worthy of happiness, and you may yet have it. Go now to the temple of Aphrodite and pray for her forgiveness, perhaps she will reward your patience*

Psyche was astonished that such an important goddess would show her favour, and left at once to do her bidding. She went to the temple of Aphrodite and humbly offered her prayer. But the jealous Aphrodite would not look at Psyche and said that if she truly desired repentance for her sins there was work enough. Saying this she led her into a room full of mixed grain, beans and lentils (the food of doves, Aphrodite's sacred bird), and bade Psyche sort them all into piles before the night was over. There was too much for Psyche to do on her own, but she settled down to do it anyway. As she was working a long train of ants came out of the crack in the wall, and helped her separate the piles. With their help the piles were separated by morning. Aphrodite returned to find the work done, and was even more angry, realizing that her son Eros had helped the girl. But instead of just sending the girl away, Aphrodite gave her some black bread and bade her sleep, saying she would need her wit for her next task. The next morning Psyche awoke to Aphrodite's impatient waiting.

*Go now to yonder grove where the sheep with the golden fleece are wont to browse. Bring me a golden lock from every one of them, or you must go your ways and never come back again.*

Aphrodite was outraged at her success and tells her to go to a field where golden sheep graze and to retrieve some golden wool. A river-god told Psyche that the sheep were vicious and strong and would kill her, but if she waited until noontime, the sheep would go to the shade on the other side of the field and sleep; she could then pick the wool that stuck to the branches and barked of the trees. Aphrodite next asked for water flowing from a cleft that was impossible for a mortal to attain and was also guarded by great serpents. This time an eagle performed the task for Psyche.

Aphrodite was more enraged than ever, and cursed her son again for his help. This time she turned on Psyche, thrust a small box at her, and told her to descend to Persephone, the cold Queen of the Underworld, and bring back some of her beauty in the box - for Aphrodite was growing tired in tending her son. Psyche knew what Aphrodite knew, that no human could venture to the Underworld and return. Psyche has decided that the quickest way to the Underworld is to throw herself off some high place and die. So she climbed to the top of a tower. But the tower itself spoke to Psyche and told her the route that will allow her to enter the Underworld alive and return again, as well as telling her how to get past Cerberus (by giving the three-headed dog a small cake); how to avoid other dangers on the way there and back; and most importantly, to eat nothing but coarse bread in the underworld, as eating anything else would trap her there forever. Psyche followed the orders precisely, rejecting all but bread while beneath the Earth.

However, once Psyche has left the Underworld, she decides to open the box and take a little bit of the beauty for herself. Inside, she can see no beauty; instead an infernal sleep arises from the box and overcomes her. Eros, who had forgiven Psyche, flied to her, wiped the sleep from her face, put it back in the box, and sent her back on her way. Then Eros flied to Mount Olympus and begged Zeus to aid them. Zeus called a full and formal council of the gods and declared that it is his will that Eros marry Psyche. Zeus then has Psyche fetched to

Mount Olympus, and gave her a drink made from ambrosia, granting her immortality. Begrudgingly, Aphrodite and Psyche forgive each other.

Psyche and Cupid have a daughter, called Voluptas or Delight, the goddess of "sensual pleasures", whose Latin name means "pleasure" or "bliss".

## 5. MEDUSA



Medusa was the daughter of Phorkys and Keto, the children of Gaia (Earth) and Okeanos (Ocean). She was once very beautiful and lived far in the north where the sun didn't visit. Being very curious, she wanted to see the sun, and asked the Goddess Athena for the permission to visit the south. Athena refused to allow her to visit. The medusa got angry and dared to say that Athena hadn't given her the permission because she was jealous of her beauty. The others believe that Medusa began life as a girl so lovely she made Athena jealous. Such beauty turned Poseidon's head. He seduced the girl but, unfortunately for her did so in one of Athena's temples. Such an affront to Athena would not go unpunished particularly by one already in ill favour. So Medusa was turned by Athena into a gorgon. These are female monsters with snakes for hair. Their faces are so ugly that any man that see the face will turn to stone. She was one of the three sisters known as the Gorgons. The other two sisters were Sthenno and Euryale. Oddly the three gorgons have very different origins. Stheno and Euryale were born as gorgons from Phorcys and Ceto. They are immortal. Medusa was not. Since she started as human she remained mortal. As if this were not punishment enough, Athena later helped Perseus hunt her down and kill her.

When Medusa was beheaded, the other Gorgons woke up and pursued Perseus, but they could not see him because he was wearing the helmet of Hades. Others tell that Medusa was a queen who reigned in the land around Lake Tritonis in Libya, and that she was assassinated by night when she was encamped with an army against the forces of Perseus. Stygian nymphs gave Perseus a pouch, winged sandals, and Hades' cap of invisibility. Hermes gave him a sword. Athena provided a shield-mirror. Perseus needed the pouch to hold the head. He used the sword to cut while he looked into the mirror, which Athena may have held. He had to work backwards (mirror-image) to avoid accidentally meeting the death-ray eyes of Medusa. He then grabbed the head of Medusa by the hair, still averting his eyes.

Pegasus was a winged horse and good flyer. There are several versions of the birth of the winged stallion and his brother Chrysaor in the far distant place at the edge of Earth, which encircles the inhabited



earth, where Perseus found Medusa: One is that they sprang from the blood issuing from Medusa's neck as Perseus was beheading her, similar to the manner in which Athena was born from the head of Zeus. In another version, when Perseus beheaded Medusa, they were born of the Earth, fed by the Gorgon's blood. A variation of this story holds that they were formed from the mingling of Medusa's blood and sea foam, implying that Poseidon had involvement in their making. The last version bears resemblance to the birth of Aphrodite. Tamed by Bellerophon it served as his mount during his adventures including his slaying of the Chimaera. When Bellerophon attempted to fly Pegasus to Mount Olympus he was dismounted by Zeus. Pegasus continued on and made it to Mount Olympus. Here Pegasus spent his days carrying lightning bolts for Zeus. Pegasus was not immortal. Because of his faithful service, Zeus honored him with a constellation. On the last day of his life, Zeus transformed Pegasus into a constellation.

There are plenty of similarities between Greek gods and Roman gods. Compared to the Roman, the Greek gods were represented with gorgeous bodies, where muscles, eyes, faces and hair, which would give them the most beautiful appearance. Greek gods were named according to a place of living or non-living thing. The Roman religion was highly influenced by the Ancient Greek religion and The Romans simply had taken the Greek gods when they had conquered the Hellenistic world. Many of the beliefs and practices of the Greeks were adopted by the Romans. A similarity between the two mythologies is that the symbols and designations of powers are the same in the two. Honoring Greek gods was similar to Roman's way of worship. The Roman and the Greek gods seem to relate to each other. The Romans had borrowed many things from the Greeks. In short, there are not that many differences between the Greek and Roman gods. Each type has their own set of Gods and Goddesses, although they were worshiped for similar reasons. Furthermore, the differences are present in the date of creation. Also, for both mythologies we don't know where and how were they created because there is more than one story that describes their beginning. The psyche of our ancestors was composed of many meaningful gods and goddesses that all played a part in the everyday life of the average society.

Each god was given a personality, function, relationship to each other through family, and to be the subject of many myths and legends that were to be told for many of years to come. They were to become the basis for a religion that would last for hundreds of years.



## Sources:

1. MYTHOLOGY (myths, legends and fantasies) – Greg Bejli, Anton Minard, Dr Pol Rul
2. Ancient Greece – Martino Mengi
3. [http://www.desy.de/gna/interpedia/greek\\_myth/lessorgod.html#Fates](http://www.desy.de/gna/interpedia/greek_myth/lessorgod.html#Fates)
4. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek\\_mythology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_mythology)