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REVIEW ARTICLE: BEYOND THE *POLIS*? NEW APPROACHES TO GREEK RELIGION

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Abstract: This article reviews a range of important recent work on Greek religion. It looks first at the critique (common to a number of the books under review) of the *polis*-religion model associated with Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood and then attempts to draw out a number of emerging themes: a comparative approach, a focus on the gods or on individual worshippers and a cognitive perspective. It then examines in more detail the application of the terms 'belief' or 'theology' to the field of Greek religion and the extent to which any picture of Greek religious experience may be said to be logically coherent, before looking forward to possible future directions of study.

Keywords: *polis*-religion, belief, theology, ritual, inconsistency

BEERDEN (K.) **Worlds Full of Signs: Ancient Greek Divination in Context** (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 176). Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013. Pp. xi + 248. €109. 9004252398.

JIM (T.S.F.) **Sharing with the Gods. Aparchai and Dekatai in Ancient Greece** (Oxford Classical Monographs). Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2014. Pp. xv + 373. £80. 9708198706823.

KINDT (J.) **Rethinking Greek Religion**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xiii + 235. £20.99. 9780521127738.

NAIDEN (F.S.) **Smoke Signals for the Gods. Ancient Greek Sacrifice from the Archaic through Roman Periods**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xiii + 421. £45. 9780199916405.

PARKER (R.) **On Greek Religion** (Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 60). Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011. Pp. xv + 309. £49.50 (hbk); £19.95 (pbk). 9780801449482 (hbk); 9780801477355 (pbk).

POLINSKAYA (I.) **A Local History of Greek Polytheism: Gods, People and the Land of Aigina, 800–400 BCE** (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 178). Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013. Pp. xxviii + 690. €207. 9004234047.

RICHER (N.) **La religion des Spartiates: croyances et cultes dans l'Antiquité**. Paris: Belles lettres, 2012. Pp. 806. €55. 2251381139.

ROSENBERGER (V.) **Religion in der Antike**. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012. Pp. vii + 136. €14.90. 9783534238262.

— *Ed*. **Divination in the Ancient World. Religious Options and the Individual** (Potsdamer Altertumswissenschaftliche Beiträge 46). Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013. Pp. 177. €48. 9783515106290.

SALZMAN (M.R), SWEENEY (M.A.) and ADLER (W.) *Eds*. **The Cambridge History of Religions in the Ancient World**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. 2 vols: pp. xiii + 450; xviii + 589. £194.99. 9781107019997.

VERSNEL (H.S.) **Coping with the Gods. Wayward Readings in Greek Theology**. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011. Pp. xiii + 593. €215. 9789004204904.

In a striking passage of his *Practice of Everyday Life* Michel de Certeau envisages belief in the modern world as a diminishing resource. Where people had once assumed that the 'reserves of belief were limitless', and the challenge was to '[capture] the energy of belief by moving it about',

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transferring it and investing it in 'campaigns and crusades', 'there are now too many things to believe and not enough credibility to go around'.[1]

de Certeau's vision of the erosion of belief might perhaps raise questions for us about the causes of shifts in scholarly trends: whether our earlier focus on the psychological well-springs beneath the institution of sacrifice, our conviction in the eminently social nature of Greek religion or our rationalizing away of ancient authors' apparently pious protestations may reflect our own inability to give credence to the theological commitments of the Greeks. (We might contrast E.R. Dodds's conviction that we should credit the apparent commitments of 'literary religion', rather than dismiss them as 'agreeable interlude[s] of lighthearted buffoonery'.[2]) For de Certeau, however, this erosion of belief is a phenomenon that refers to a much broader range of phenomena than simply religion: in the modern world, in which the wells of belief have been polluted, we have turned instead to producing belief artificially through political or commercial marketing. Certainly, to judge from the range of hugely stimulating books under review – themselves only a sample of a wider body of work that makes up a remarkable, if uncertain, renaissance in the study of Greek religion[3] – belief has drained likewise out of the main tenets in the study of our subject. The traditional approaches to sacrifice of the twin giants Walter Burkert and Jean-Pierre Vernant suffer a relentless assault, as Fred Naiden seeks to put the gods back into sacrifice in his *Smoke Signals to the Gods*.[4] Irene Polinskaya offers an alternative to the microcosmic or macrocosmic analyses of Greek religion – both, as she envisages, cul-de-sacs[5] – in her detailed account of what she terms the Aeginetan 'mesocosm'.[6] Belief itself – long an uncomfortable term – swaggers back in as a category in Greek religion through the final appendix of Henk Versnel's monumental *Coping with the Gods.*[7] And finally, but not least, the centrality of the *polis* is questioned, in respect of Greek religion and more broadly, not least in Julia Kindt's richly thought-provoking *Rethinking Greek Religion*.[8]

It is now a quarter-century since the publication of the most sophisticated formulation of the model of '*polis*-religion'. Similar ideas may have been expressed before, but it was with Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood's 1990 paper 'What is *polis* religion?' that the term became, in her friend and colleague Robert Parker's words, a 'term of art, the summation of an approach and a theory'.[9] The model of *polis*-religion now stands besieged on all sides. On the one hand – for example in Kindt's opening chapter – it is argued that there are aspects of religious experience that the model cannot or does not reach: personal religion, magic or religious discourse.[10] On the other hand, in her weighty account of the 'local [Aeginetan] history of Greek polytheism', Irene Polinskaya critiques the model for being *underdeveloped.*

There is a danger here – as always when we seek to mark out a new direction by reference to older positions – of misrepresenting or misremembering the tenor of the argument we are critiquing or of overstating our reaction. (Naiden, the 'Burkert-slayer', indeed undermines the force of his own argument by a wearying insistence on the omissions of Burkert, Vernant and Detienne.[11])

[1] de Certeau (1984) 177–89 at 178–79.

[2] Dodds (1951) 18; *cf.* 9–11, 43, 105, 117.

[3] In addition to those under review, see especially Gagné (2013) or the ongoing work of Eidinow, e.g. (2007); (2011).

[4] Naiden (2013); see also the explorations of the historiography of sacrifice in Faraone and Naiden (2012).

[5] Polinskaya (2013) 33.

[6] A term (coined by the anthropologist Robert Levy) that could cover a range of types and sizes of political organizations, from the Attic deme through the small *poleis* of 'multi-*polis* islands' to an 'island-state' like Aegina: Polinskaya (2013) 3, 35.

[7] Building on the work of Wiebe (1979); Naerebout (1997); Feeney (1998); Harrison (2000); King (2003).

[8] Kindt (2012), reviewed by Emily Kearns in *JHS* 134 (2014) 217–18; see also Kindt (2015) for personal religion; for questioning of the *polis*' centrality more broadly, see Vlassopoulos (2007).

[9] Parker (2011) 57–58.

[10] *Cf.* Georgoudi (2010) 92 for the criticism that sacrifice was insufficiently central.

[11] I say this in full acknowledgement of my own past excesses. For a balanced and sophisticated assessment of their contrasting theories, see Parker (2011) chapter 5.

There is a danger likewise of taking that argument out of its own polemical context. As Julia Kindt lays out sympathetically and in detail, the *polis*-religion model, in its Oxford and Paris variations,[12] was a salutary rejoinder to previous approaches, a statement of the centrality of the *polis* to the organization of religion and vice versa, which has prompted a host of new insights, not least into the relationship of religion and power,[13] and which has invited detailed analyses of the religious histories of individual *poleis* – Sparta and Aegina now, as well as Athens.[14] Importantly also, even if the model overstates the extent to which *all* religious activity is 'encompassed' by the *polis*[15] ('There is religion without the polis, even if there is no polis without religion', in the words of no less a figure than Burkert[16]), it has always in fact given some place both to the individual and to religious discourse – at least in so far as each was 'anchored in' or mediated by the *polis*.[17] So, for example, Sourvinou-Inwood relies on a passage of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, in which the Pythia advises enquirers that the way to act piously is to follow the *nomos* of the *polis*, in arguing that even private manifestations of religiosity were dependent on the *polis.*[18]

Polis-religion was never designed, as Robert Parker insists (in part responding to Kindt's first publication of her critique), to constitute a 'new paradigm in the sense of replacing existing ones', as a denial of private sacrifices or that 'individuals went outside the confines of their city for religious purposes'.[19] An alternative criticism of the *polis*-religion model, as articulated by Sourvinou-Inwood, would be not so much that it excludes as that it *marginalizes* certain aspects of religious experience, prioritizing one possible organizing framework over and above all others; or that by bundling everything within a single 'supreme category', it does not do justice to the texture and variety of religious activity.[20] As Kindt argues compellingly, there is a danger of seeing things that do not fit the *polis* model as 'not religion proper' (how easy is it for any of us to perform the same manoeuvre unwittingly?), and so – in circular fashion – 'marginalis[ing] exactly those areas of religious activity that the model cannot sufficiently explain'.[21] Or, to put the same point in more extreme terms, it is possible – as Greg Woolf suggests in the context of the extension of the model of *polis*-religion to a Roman provincial context – that there is a 'risk of collusion with just one view of ancient religion, that of those who controlled the polis'.[22] What other perspectives are being occluded (to extend Woolf's argument) if our vantage-point is the Capitol or the Acropolis? If, as Simon Price once speculated,[23] we were able to survey the views of individual Athenians or Aeginetans, how important would questions of control or authority in fact have seemed on a day-to-day basis? Would the supervisory role exercised by the Athenian *polis* over the Eleusinian mysteries have been a central issue for the initiate,[24] or would he or she have looked at the mysteries from the other end of the telescope, with personal anxieties or experience as central? Versnel puts it bluntly. Whereas there is evidence from across the Mediterranean of 'thousands of votive gifts and inscriptions ..., generally dedicated by one or few persons … testimonies of, in the most explicit

[12] Kindt (2012) 16–17: the Oxford model putting less emphasis on the control of religious practices, seeing religion instead as 'merely mapped on to the institutional landscape of the polis'.

[13] Woolf (1997) 73–74; *cf.* Kearns' observations in Salzman et al. (2013) 1.285, that the *polis* model 'at least draws attention to the intimate relationship between religion and the state – and also expresses what many Greeks, including Plato, felt was the ideal', or Bremmer's characterization of Wilamowitz's assimilation of Greek religion with Christianity: (2010b) 9-10.

[14] Zunino (1997); Richer (2012) (a fine work of synthesis, without any sustained engagement with larger theoretical issues of the definition of Greek religion); Polinskaya (2013); for Athens, pre-eminently Parker (1996); (2005).

[15] Sourvinou-Inwood (2000b) 51.

[16] Burkert (1995) 203, cited by Kindt (2012) 19; *cf.* Polinskaya's rejoinder to Kindt: (2013) 499–500, n.24.

[17] For Sourvinou-Inwood's narrow definition of religious discourse, see (2000a) 20–21; for the role of the individual, Sourvinou-Inwood (2000b) 44.

[18] Xen. *Mem.* 1.3.1 (ἥ τε γὰρ Πυθία νόμῳ πόλεως ἀναιρεῖ ποιοῦντας εὐσεβῶς ἂν ποιεῖν); *cf.* 4.3.16.

[19] Parker (2011) 58; endorsed by Jim (2014) 130; and substantiated in Parker (2005), for example chapters 2, 4.

[20] Eidinow (2011) 32.

[21] Kindt (2012) 22.

[22] Woolf (1997) 72.

[23] Price (1984) 5.

[24] *Cf.* Sourvinou-Inwood (2000b) 54.

sense, private and personal religiosity', in textbooks on Greek religion, we find instead the 'mantra-like repetition … of the assertion that in terms of religion the individual Greek functions only as part of the *polis* or as part of a group within that *polis*'.[25]

Whether this marginalizing of other themes was an aspect of Sourvinou-Inwood's exuberant original formulation, or of its reception and elaboration by others, is perhaps unimportant. What matters more perhaps is simply that a thesis which focused on a particular range of questions – 'about organisation, policing, control'[26] – came to be presented as something significantly more all-encompassing, that one set of questions crowded out others. For, in seeking to distinguish Greek religion from assumed (Christianizing) models of religion – a prime concern in the study of Greek religion in the 1980s and 1990s – these were the questions that were important; it was the *polis* that stood in for the institutional paraphernalia of a Christian church.[27] The dominance of the *polis* went hand-in-hand also with the primacy of ritual (and the exclusion of belief); each reinforced the other. It is tempting now with hindsight to pour oil over troubled waters, to over-emphasize the actual inclusiveness of the *polis*-religion model or to forget the zeal with which it was sometimes asserted. Versnel again calls a spade a spade here, referring in passing to Price's 'first crusade' against the term 'belief' and citing a whole plethora of doctrinaire quotations on the primacy of ritual.[28] In our exaggerated anxiety to differentiate ancient and modern, it now seems as if we over-privileged the role of Christianity and mistook (as Kindt argues in another context) a religion's own concepts for external, descriptive categories.[29] (Certainly, new generations of students, without the same familiarity with organized religion as a point of reference, can seem perplexed now by modern scholars' repetition of the 'negative catechism'.[30])

Through the starting assumption of a fundamental divide between ancient and modern, we also arguably closed ourselves off from one possibly fruitful field for comparison, paralysed with fear of importing associations alien to the object of study.[31] Here there is clear evidence of a change in climate across a range of the books under review. The editors of the *Cambridge History* make valiant efforts, on the one hand, to ensure a sufficient uniformity of approach to allow for comparison while, on the other, not imposing similarities through inadvertent Procrusteanism.[32] For the most part, they achieve that – even if, in so doing, the plural 'religions' in which their subject is parcelled out are inevitably artificial entities.[33] Kim Beerden's *Worlds Full of Signs* picks out the distinctive elements of Greek divination through a structured comparison with two ancient contexts

[25] Versnel (2011) 122–23: *cf*. the observations of Rüpke (2013) 6.

[26] Parker (2011) 58; *cf*. Rüpke (2013) 3.

[27] Sourvinou-Inwood (2000a) 19–20; reformulated by Kindt (2012) 16 (Greek religion 'differed from Christianity in that it had no dogma, no official creed, no Bible, no priesthood in the form of a specially trained and entitled group of people, and no church. In the absence of such powerful organising principles, religion was structured alongside the socio-political structures of the polis').

[28] Versnel (2011) 5, 544–45; *cf*. Naiden's concluding observations on the exclusion of 'implicit beliefs': Naiden (2013) 330.

[29] Harrison (2000) 20; Versnel (2011) 553–54; *cf*. Kindt (2012) 108, 113.

[30] The phrase of Garland to describe the reiteration of all the aspects of modern Christianity absent in Greek religion: (1994) ix. The reason for this gulf might be sought in the specific religious backgrounds and commitments of modern scholars, for an assessment of which, see Gough-Olaya (2014). For speculations here, see also Parker (2011) vii; Versnel (2011) 552–54; see also Bremmer (2010a) 24 on the influence of Sourvinou-Inwood's distinctively Orthodox background.

[31] *Cf*. Versnel (2011) 541; for Price's 'obsessive fear for Christianising projections', see 554 n.31, citing reviews of Price 1999.

[32] Salzman et al. (2013) 9.

[33] See the observations of Rüpke (2014) 8, 22–25. Skjaervo's account of Zoroastrianism (Salzman et al. (2013) 1.102–28), for example, is fundamentally a survey of the religion of the Avesta, with a very short annexe on Achaemenid religion (Henkelman (2008) is a fundamental omission here) and on the history of scholarship. Only the last line of his account (1.127) acknowledges in straightforward fashion that the '*Gâthâs* obviously did not "mean" the same in Achaemenid times as they did when they were composed'; contrast the approach to later Iranian religion by de Jong in Salzman et al. (2013) 2.25–27.

(Republican Rome and Mesopotamia),[34] drawing a number of measured conclusions: that in Greece the client or 'divinans' (her term) tended to be lower down the social scale than in her more institutionalized comparator cultures, that Greek divinatory culture was predominantly an oral one, and – most strikingly – that it presented a different temporal perspective.[35] Greek divination presented a plurality of futures, like 'various roads going off in different directions [with] the client as the person standing at a crossroads, attempting to pick the best path to take'; divination offered 'a tool for revealing and exploring future possibilities'. In Mesopotamia, by contrast, the future was 'one ongoing road which, bit by bit, was made known to the individual'; divination operated, in her term, as a telescope, 'used to consider a relatively distant specific point in time', and so to reduce uncertainty.[36]

Divination has long, in fact, been one aspect of Greek religion more susceptible to comparative approaches.[37] The range of points of comparison in Beerden's monograph is however relatively restricted. Other authors – Theodora Jim in her discussion of first fruits[38] or Versnel in his *Coping with the Gods* – are freer, less guarded, in their comparative perspective. In particular, Versnel's range of comparative reference, the harvest of an extraordinary career,[39] is dizzying: from ancient Egyptian, medieval or modern Christian piety, to the insights of cognitive science or (charmingly) the hungry robin 'who thinks he owns our garden'.[40] Religion, for Versnel, is fundamentally cognitive ('Religion … is in the mind', as he quotes from Richard Gordon).[41] And, except in so far as the Greeks 'never lost an awareness of living in a dissonant, pluralistic, diverse reality' (implicitly, unlike us), they are, very far from being 'desperately foreign', like us.[42] Notwithstanding, however, Versnel's concern to uncover Greek patterns of thinking, his wariness of making explicit what was for ancient authors only 'implicit and opaque',[43] he also has no qualms about using etic terminology to describe Greek culture[44] or in deploying terminology that others would consider too hot to handle. Where Parker eschews the term 'miracle' in a Greek context, for example ('There is no Greek word for "miracle", and the word is absent because the concept is absent'),[45] Versnel is unembarrassed in drawing out parallels and differences: 'Greek gods can work miracles'.[46] Likewise, in a fine discussion of the complexity of different cultural expressions of gratitude, Jim moves beyond a narrowly lexical focus: 'the ancient Greeks did not lack terms with which to denote "thank-offerings" explicitly. At the same time a community's pervasive use of the English phrase "thank you" (or its variants) need not imply that its people are more prone to *feeling* grateful, or vice versa.'[47] Laudable as is the desire to examine the Greeks (or any other historical context) 'in its own terms', purifying our language of terms for which there is no tidy equivalent in the culture under study provides no magic shortcut;[48] arguably indeed it has the effect of obscuring inadvertent associations.

[34] On the former, see now especially Santangelo (2013).

[35] Beerden (2013) 224–26, quote at 226.

[36] Beerden (2013) 226–27.

[37] For example Whittaker (1965); Parker (1985); Maurizio (1995); Eidinow (2007).

[38] Jim (2014) for example 23, 90 n.12 (on Chinese mooncakes).

[39] In which he was no less open to a wide range of comparison: see, for example, Versnel (1990).

[40] Versnel (2011) 379.

[41] Versnel (2011) 471 (continuing: 'It consists not so much in religious acts as in schemes of perceptions and thoughts whose meaningfulness is repeatedly reinforced by the performance of symbolic acts').

[42] Versnel (2011) 149.

[43] Versnel (2011) 167 of E.R. Dodds.

[44] Versnel (2011) 548. *Cf.* Salzman et al. (2013) 1.1, arguing that 'any effort to define religion in the ancient Mediterranean is constrained from the very outset by the absence of a single-word equivalent in the ancient languages'; Polinskaya (2013) 9.

[45] Parker (2011) 9 (continuing: 'Instead of miracles, we have a range of unusual occurrences that may have a divine origin').

[46] Versnel (2011) 400–21, quote at 400.

[47] Jim (2014) 76–81 at 81.

[48] See, for example, the rationale of Salzman et al. (2013) 1.3, to seek to 'analyse ancient religions on their own terms', 'aware of how ancient religions might depart from modern presuppositions' (the example used is that ancient '"religious" practitioners' might not be considered 'particularly "religious"' today).

Another new focus in the study of Greek religion might seem surprising: a focus on the gods themselves. 'Sharing with the gods', 'coping with the Gods'…; the gods have moved centre-stage, offering (and necessitating) help, receiving 'not just [a] reciprocal exchange of goods and service' but 'goodwill, delight, and gratitude'.[49] The stated ambition of Jan Bremmer and Andrew Erskine's 2010 collection is to 'put the gods back into Greek religion',[50] whereas for Naiden, conversely, the effect of the insights of Burkert, Vernant and others was to reduce the god to a 'visitor at a human occasion'.[51] The central argument of Naiden's monograph is that the gods might say no, rejecting a given sacrifice – a possibility that then in turn requires determined human effort to address.[52] The gods are not just ciphers or blank screens, moreover, but personalities, a 'real and potent presence'.[53] 'It is my unfashionable impression', according to Versnel, 'that in everyday religious practice individual Greek gods were practically never conceived as powers, let alone as cultural products, but were in the first place envisaged as *persons* with individual characters and personalities'.[54] To describe the shift in another way, an emic perspective is now displacing the old 'quests for origin, function or meaning'.[55] 'A broadly defined interest in the theology and religious world-view of antiquity', as Renaud Gagné remarks in his fine 2013 book on the concept of inherited guilt,[56] 'is replacing the earlier insistence on ritual, function and social practice in the study of Greek religion, and the research programmes based on the promises of a cognitive grid could easily generate a shared enthusiasm not seen since the heady days of structuralism'. Where once 'belief' was a dirty word in the study of Greek religion,[57] dismissed as 'epiphenomenological noise'[58] or shrunk to a small sample of texts,[59] there now seems no lack of books forthcoming on belief, theology, even faith.[60] 'It used to be said that Greek religion was about doing rather than believing', Jim remarks almost casually; if we fail to accommodate religious mentalities within our overall picture indeed, she adds more trenchantly, 'much of Greek religion is incomprehensible'.[61] The very directness of her manner, treading so lightly over such fought-over terrain (by contrast, say, to Versnel's splendidly fiery rebuttal of the denial of 'belief') suggests that for a new generation a shift has already taken place. 'First offerings' – the giving of a portion of 'each harvest, each meal or each military victory' to the gods – had, in the argument of her compelling, consummately researched monograph, both worldly purposes (competition, display) and unworldly (honouring the gods, averting evil).[62]

Where *polis*-centred approaches had a tendency to '[work] on the assumption that all members of ancient societies were in principle equally religious',[63] there is a new-found emphasis on the possibility of individual variation within a religious repertoire. This is indeed the explicit focus of two edited collections, both emerging from the Erfurt powerhouse in the study of ancient religion: Veit Rosenberger's on divination, subtitled *Options and the Individual*, and Jörg Rüpke's on the individual in Mediterranean religion more broadly.[64] In two of the most stimulating pieces in these

[49] Jim (2014) 22; *cf*. Pulleyn (1997); Parker (1998).

[50] Erskine (2010) 505.

[51] Naiden (2013) 14. Contrast Beerden (2013) 3 (divination is 'essentially a human act which tells us about human society'); Beckman in Salzman et al. (2013) 1.97 in the context of the Hittites ('it *was* all about them [men and women], and in practice the gods received attention only because of their putative potential influence upon the human level of the cosmos').

[52] See, however, Pirenne-Delforge and Prescendi (2011) for parallel insights.

[53] Erskine (2010) 510; for a rich and balanced account, see especially Parker (2011) chapter 3.

[54] Versnel (2011) 317.

[55] Versnel (2011) 317.

[56] Gagné (2013) 6.

[57] Or so it was claimed (by me) on the jacket of Harrison 2000.

[58] Gagné (2013) 6.

[59] Price (1999) 6, 126; see here Bremmer's refreshing observation (2010a) 33: 'Although the major handbooks do pay attention to the religious role of poets and philosophers, one never gets the feeling that this is seen as an important part of the history of Greek religion'.

[60] Anderson (forthcoming); Eidinow et al. (forthcoming); a further book on faith planned by Teresa Morgan and Barbara Kowalzig has now stalled.

[61] Jim (2014) 21–22, *cf*. 58.

[62] Jim (2014) 274, 276–27.

[63] Rüpke (2013) 3; *cf*. Price (1999) 108, minimizing individual choice ('Religious involvement … generally resulted not from individual choices but from social expectations').

[64] See, for example, Rüpke's observations, in Rosen-

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volumes, Esther Eidinow examines the different Greek conception of the self (one defined in relational terms); while Lisa Maurizio envisages the individual client in divination as possessing an authority 'to suture the divine word and human world in a way that comported with his desires and needs', questioning whether religious individualism was absent in the Greek world.[65]

There are also suggestions of a similar, loosely cognitive (or, more broadly, experiential)[66] perspective across many of the books under review, even if all the authors are not yet giddy with 'shared enthusiasm'. Where the examination of an individual's state of mind was once thought inappropriate,[67] individual perspectives are now speculatively reconstructed. Kindt tiptoes around the potential value of cognitive approaches (certainly still only partially proven within the study of ancient religion),[68] concerned that 'while they may explain the neurological foundations of all religions rather well, what they can contribute to our understanding of a particular religious culture … is much more difficult to assess'.[69] In one of the finest passages of her book, however, she imagines the experience of a hypothetical individual wending his or her way through the sanctuary at Olympia. As the statuary gazes back on you, 'any walk through the sanctuary' has the potential to turn into 'an ongoing engagement with a multitude of stories, identities and events, linked up in ever-new combinations and associations'; the dedications 'enacted the possible ways in which the Games could change an athlete's life', your life, as well as allowing you to look back across time at the 'the materialised image of a commonly inhabited past'.[70] Polinskaya likewise, despite an approach that is in general much more functionalist in flavour, finds herself – in parallel to Versnel[71] – speculating on the mental processes of an individual worshipper in asking whether:

> a person choosing to use a particular ritual or to approach one particular deity out of the available multitude, could ever do so while closing one's eyes to the existence of other deities. Would a worshipper need only keep in mind a proper course of interaction with a deity of his choice, or also worry about negotiating his attention to other deities at that moment?[72]

In a number of areas, however, the implications of this shift in interests, from the 'traditional focus on ritual practice to the mental and psychological',[73] have inevitably not been fully realized. Our hesitancy over terminology, first, reveals a broader uncertainty about the object of study. What do we mean, for example, by 'theology'? Kindt suggests we should move beyond envisaging theology

berger (2013) 14. The emphasis on the individual is one carried over into both Rüpke's (2014) and Rosenberger's (2012) introductory volumes (very different in character); see also Rüpke and Spickermann (2012), focusing on texts.

[65] In Rosenberger (2013) 21–39 (this develops a strong theme of Eidinow (2007), especially chapter 3), 75–76.

[66] See, for example, Rüpke's observations: (2013) 20–22.

[67] See, for example, Osborne (1994) 144 ('What mattered was the performance of cult acts, not the state of mind of the actor').

[68] Studies that have used cognitive approaches fruitfully include Ustinova 2009 and a number of contributions to Anderson (forthcoming).

[69] Kindt (2012) 44. Generalizing conclusions might in fact be usefully tested on the basis of evidence from a wider range of cultures and contexts, but the innate factors in human culture, as Dan Sperber pointed out long ago, 'do not determine cultural *variations* but only cultural *variability*': 1975: x, *cf.* 136–7. *Cf.* very slight touching on cognitive approaches in Rüpke's survey of approaches to divination in Rosenberger (2013) 12.

[70] Kindt (2012) 134, 130, 153.

[71] But with different outcome: *cf.* Versnel (2011) 434 ('A Greek who is in dire trouble – desires the restoration of an eye, wishes to be rescued from a seething sea, is starving and craves food, cries out to save a child that is mortally ill – may and usually does pray to a god of his or her preference. To a large extent that choice is arbitrary and the addressee may just as well be a great *soter*-god as the unpretentious hero round the corner. However, from now on the adorant's full attention is focused on this god in whom he puts all his hopes and upon whom he makes himself entirely dependent. At this moment that god is the only one who can help while other gods temporarily disappear from sight. Such a prayer of a high grade of intensity, then, is a henotheistic moment in a polytheistic religion'); see also Versnel (2011) 59 on the identity of gods, citing Pl. *Phlb.* 12c ('in the matter of names of gods, my fear is beyond human measure, nothing indeed makes me so afraid').

[72] Polinskaya (2013) 88.

[73] Jim (2014) 3.

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as a 'systematic and explicitly formulated body of knowledge', questioning whether this conception is 'too narrowly grounded in Christianity to allow us to conceive of other forms of theological reflection in other religious traditions'. We should think of theology not 'of course, … in the form of a definite and binding formula as in revealed religions …, but as a form of theological speculation that evolved in narrative and episodic form, and was descriptive rather than prescriptive'.[74] In practice, however, we might identify a range of types or levels of Greek theology: the self-conscious development of a free-standing system of religious thought (notably, for example, by some Presocratics);[75] narratives with at least implicitly *prescriptive* morals – miracle stories, for example, with the implicit recommendation that one should be mindful of the gods;[76] the 'usable stories' or 'negotiable project-narratives' of divination which helped the individual to model the uncertain choices he or she faced;[77] as well as a chaotic accumulation of other implicit or 'intuitive' beliefs. How, we might wonder, can we meaningfully bracket all these phenomena under any single heading, theology *or* belief?

Conversely, in contrasting a loose (Greek) narrative theology with the 'definite and binding formula' of Christianity and other prophetic or revealed religions, are we again giving too much weight to these religions' distinct (internal) perspective? It is in this harder sense of 'theology', it seems, that Parker, on the basis of the prevalent Greek principle of divine unknowability,[78] describes Greek religion precisely as *untheological*: 'One needed to know how to worship the gods in ways pleasing to them; one did not need to know precisely what these gods were like. The ability to carry on without such knowledge was a defining characteristic of this untheological religion'.[79] Clearly, Greek religion is without the developed, systematic theological exploration of medieval Europe, and yet Christian theology also, by its very essence, is predicated on an uncertainty about the object of its study. In the apophatic tradition in Christian thought, for example, 'the impossibility of the worshipper's task' was reflected in what has been described as a 'liturgical stammer'.[80] In drawing a distinction between the (weak) hopes that Greek religion offered of the afterlife and the 'firm beliefs' imposed by Christianity,[81] are we reading protestations of orthodoxy too literally? A strong emphasis in recent cognitive studies of religion has been on the gulf that exists in 'credal' religions between, on the one hand, formal doctrinal positions and, on the other, the beliefs manifested in everyday 'online' contexts. Pascal Boyer and others have written of the 'tragedy of the theologian', that 'there always seem to be some nonstandard beliefs and practices left sticking out', and the inability of those charged with doctrinal consistency to assert any meaningful control.[82] (Can any religion ever hope to *impose* firm beliefs?) In this broader context, issues of authority and control are arguably less important, and the need for the *polis* as a make-weight for the absence of the structures of modern institutionalized religion, as an 'alternative concept of religious administration and signification',[83] less pressing.

When it comes to the question-marks over the term 'belief', there seem to be three prevailing options. The first, following Versnel and others, is to distinguish between a high-intensity 'credal' belief and a low-intensity definition, an everyday sense devoid of Christian overtones.[84] (We may wonder further whether Christianity is in practice as devotional or 'high-intensity' as even this

[74] Kindt (2012) 188, 193.

[75] See here the work of Tor, for example forthcoming a and forthcoming b.

[76] Harrison (2000); see also Kindt (2012) chapter 2 for the story of Parmeniscus.

[77] Gordon in Rosenberger (2013) 119–20 (in the context of astrology).

[78] For which see, for example (with different formulations and emphases): Gould (1985); Rudhardt (1992) 88, 103–06; Harrison (2000) 178–81, 189–92; Sourvinou-Inwood (2000a) 20; Versnel (2011) 49–51.

[79] Parker (2011) 15.

[80] Pickstock (1997) 61.

[81] Parker (2005) 368.

[82] Boyer (2001) 281; *cf.* Tremlin (2006) 92, 96, 161, 163, 171; and, in Roman context, King (2003) 282.

[83] Kindt (2012) 34.

[84] Versnel (2011) 547–48. *Cf.* the (tangled) formulation of Larson (2013) 150: '"belief," understood as intellectual assent to the proposition that the gods exist and take an interest in human affairs, was taken for granted as part of the worldview, just as we take for granted that people know the world is not flat'.

contrast supposes, or whether 'reciting the Apostle's Creed' is not 'rather an act of ritual than of conscious belief'?[85]) A second response is to deem the term irredeemably Christian in its associations, and so to prefer another. So, for example, Gagné prefers to discuss ancestral fault as a cultural concept: 'The vast semantic range of the word "belief", its fundamental ties to conviction and devotion and so many other heirs of the Christian credo in the Western imagination make it difficult to limit the connotations of the term…'.[86] The third (overlapping) option is, in effect, to evade issues of terminology. So, for example, Jim sets out straightforwardly to ask 'what their [the Greeks'] behaviour [in dedicating first fruits to the gods] tells us about their religious beliefs, mentalities and presuppositions'.[87]

The existence of some such psychological domain within Greek religion – call it belief for shorthand – is now arguably so widely acknowledged that it is tempting to imagine that it is a non-issue. *Of course* there was such a thing as belief. 'One worships the gods', according to Parker, 'because, experience shows, benefit derives from doing so. The gods are there. At this very basic level there is indeed belief, a belief very generally shared, or at least feigned.'[88] Belief, however, in such formulations, often seems to be envisaged in restricted terms as a kind of penumbra to ritual action (ritual, by contrast, operates as a kind of trump card, in Denis Feeney's image).[89] There is a temptation, moreover, to envisage belief as secondary, as somehow less substantial than ritual action. Is Greek religion, Parker wonders, 'a matter of things done at or near an altar' or 'the sum of the stories, speculations, and appeals'? 'One way of mediating' between these two views 'is to argue that, though beliefs were held, only acts were subject to appeal'.[90] But why should we be concerned with primacy? Parker's work must stand both as the richest, most nuanced elaboration of the *polis*-religion model (in his two great volumes on Athenian religion) and (through his series of essays on 'literary religion') as amongst the very subtlest explorations of Greek theology. It also, however, reveals a certain awkwardness on the boundaries between 'literary' and 'real' religion;[91] it is striking, in particular, that these two strands of his work rarely coincide in the same piece of writing.[92] So, in his *On Greek Religion*, he allows that 'there is no reason to exclude' topics such as fate or theodicy from the study of Greek religion – indeed he goes further in saying that to omit such issues from consideration is to trivialize the Greeks – and yet finds it impossible to 'bring the two things together within a single field of argument'.[93]

Works such as those of Jim, Versnel and Kindt point the way here, towards *realizing* a more inclusive definition of religion, one which integrates these two facets. They also point the way towards moving from debating the existence of 'belief' or theology in the Greek world, whether as a Greek concept or as an object of study (a sterile debate now, in the light of Versnel's fourth

[85] Versnel (2011) 552; for the performativity of the Creed, see (from a different perspective) Pickstock (1994).

[86] Gagné (2013) 6–8; *cf*. Parker (2011) 2 ('what we might be tempted to term "beliefs" about the gods').

[87] Jim (2014) 2.

[88] Parker (2011) 32, then questioning whether this 'foundational belief' should be seen instead as certainty or knowledge; *cf*. Parker (2011) 2 ('Yet surely even a ritual is performed in the belief that there was some purpose in doing it'); his similar formulation at (1996) 1; and his sensible cautions on instrumental views of ritual at (2005) 157–58; for Roman religion, see Linder and Scheid (1993) 53–54.

[89] Feeney (1998) 10.

[90] Parker (2011) 2, *cf*. 33–34.

[91] See, for example, his cautious breaking down of the distinction: Parker (1997) 148; with my comments, Harrison (2007) 374.

[92] Athenian religion: Parker (1996). 'Literary religion': Parker (1997); (1999); (2004). 'Theological' passages in Parker (2005) 101, 104, 146–47, 363–65.

[93] Parker (2011) xii: 'it is implausible to deny that "ordinary Greeks" were interested in the problems of divine justice and fate and the rest, even if such concern is mostly revealed to us through literature. Nor does the comparative fixity of cult rules, as opposed to the ebb and flow of competing opinion about abstract topics, make the former more real than the latter. We trivialize the Greeks if we do not engage with their thought on these issues. But it is not easy to bring the two things together within a single field of argument. The concentration in this book on cult practice is based not on a judgement about what might constitute "real" religion, but more mundanely on the wish to do one thing at a time.' *Cf*. his similar remarks on the exclusion of comparativism: (2005) 2 ('one must do one thing at a time').

appendix), to detailing *plural* beliefs, from the systematically developed explorations of philosophers to more passing, intuitive beliefs, in more detail. The reason that terminology still matters is that we need to differentiate between different forms of belief – between 'database' or 'intuitive' beliefs, on the one hand, and 'reflective' beliefs, on the other – or between the different possible meanings of theology, in order effectively to *chart* Greeks beliefs and their interrelationships.[94]

There is a new-found desire, moreover – reflected across the books under review – to explore the *manner* in which religious beliefs are articulated: through language, cult and image. For Kindt, for example (whose projected book on religious storytelling promises much), stories are interesting for their narrative shaping, not in spite of it. Likewise, Versnel focuses closely on the ambiguities and intricacies of religious language, the slippage between literal and figurative usages, seeing the phrase 'as if', for example ('Don't try to find out if he [god] *is* or not, but worship him *as if* he is'), as offering 'perhaps the most productive and promising strategy in religion'.[95] Emily Kearns, in her consummate account of Greek religion in the *Cambridge History*, writes of a 'grammar of sacrifice',[96] all the non-verbal ways through which men and women approach the divine. And Kindt builds thought-provokingly on the work of Jaś Elsner and others on religious visuality to show how the journey of Parmeniscus to Delos (recounted by Athenaeus) reveals the alternation of a religious (but not ritual-centred) visuality with a more worldly way of viewing, how the story in effect models both superficial and more deeply intuitive ways of viewing the same image.[97] Implicit here is a recommendation of the necessary frame of mind for approaching the divinity – and also of divinity's inaccessibility. By contrast to gleaming cult statues with their 'surplus of splendour' and 'bodily perfection', other semi-iconic or aniconic images reflect, no less than literary texts, the uncertainty principle (or the principle of unknowability) which underpins much of Greek religion.[98]

Another central concern of a number of books under review is the relationship of local and panhellenic, microsmic and macrocosmic, aspects in Greek religion: in other words, the character of Greek polytheism. Polinskaya's history of Aeginetan religion seeks to find a middle path, '[steering] away both from the pitfalls of the panhellenic model and from the limitations of the *polis*-centred model'.[99] Previous studies, Polinskaya maintains, either focused 'on isolated specific deities or divine personalities, or on the correlation of deities either in a poetic (e.g., Homeric) world or in an abstract composite pantheon'. In particular the *polis*-model was underdeveloped both in failing to accommodate other forms of (more ad hoc) organization – so Polinskaya prefers the term community to *polis*, with Michael Jameson[100] – and for failing to extend its picture of the 'systemic' nature of local religion. It is not clear how clearly different is the alternative course proposed. Polinskaya's declared intention to focus on 'the work of "many gods" within a local cultic system'[101] is one with which Sourvinou-Inwood, for example, would surely have been intensely sympathetic. Polinskaya arguably also de-emphasizes the 'macrocosmic' level in Greek religion by supposing that it is dependent upon some single federal or centralized form of political and social organization.[102] In addition to the value of her detailed exploration of the Aeginetan

[94] See further Harrison (forthcoming); see also the forthcoming work of Petrovic and Petrovic on inner purity.

[95] Versnel (2011) 279, quote (from the New comedian Philemon) at 473; *cf.* 471 for 'honest pretence' or his remark (18) that the academic author likewise is 'bound to "do as if" he believes in (the results of) what he is doing'. For the slippage between literal and figurative, see further Harrison (forthcoming); contrast the emphasis of Parker, for example (2005) 363; (2011) 32.

[96] In Salzman et al. (2013) 1.293.

[97] For example Elsner 2007.

[98] Kindt (2012) 46; for unknowability, see above n.78.

[99] Polinskaya (2013) 23.

[100] Citing Jameson (1997) 172–73.

[101] Polinskaya (2013) 23.

[102] Polinskaya (2013) 33 ('The macrocosmic level, which often relies upon the view of ancient Greeks as a social unity has no basis in social reality, as Greece never achieved the status of a federal or any kind of centralized political state, and hence the Greeks in practical terms never constituted a single political community'), 42 ('a system at the panhellenic level can only be envisioned as a virtual reality, a construct, as it will always lack a corresponding social structure') .

evidence, however, she usefully warns against assuming stark polarities between local and panhellenic, envisaging rather a continuum within an individual's religious experience, 'in which there was also room for regional, ethnic, amphictyonic, and other forms of involvement'.[103]

How, though, are we to understand the relationship between different local cults of the same god (a problem that again goes back to a classic discussion of Sourvinou-Inwood),[104] between the Pan worshipped in one community and in another? Cult epithets have been seen traditionally as representing different local 'manifestations' of a single divinity, so assuming an underpinning structure.[105] As Parker explores, there has been a tendency in general handbooks to offer 'unifying account[s] of a particular god's functions', eliding overlaps and confusions.[106] In place of such systematizing approaches, or of a structuralist model postulated on a 'large database of theological knowledge in the mind of every Greek, … a willingness to be bound by its implicit rules',[107] newer formulations try in different ways to encapsulate the inconsistent complexity of the Greeks' religious world, 'the incredible, yet undeniable potentials of living religion'.[108] For Kearns, in a nicely overarching formulation, Greek religion combines two tendencies, which hold each other in check: the centripetal and centrifugal.[109] For Parker, the gods are 'like a concertina, that can be expanded or contracted'.[110] At the same time, however, he acknowledges that the 'attempt to confer logical coherence on polytheism is a hopeless enterprise'.[111]

Versnel takes this position further, rooting the logical incoherence of Greek representations of the divine in the nature of human cognition. 'The gods who were worshipped in the different *poleis* were', for Sourvinou-Inwood, 'of course, perceived to be the same gods.'[112] But were they? Just as the Virgin Mary might be addressed by the same set of names everywhere and yet locals be convinced that 'the Maria of this particular church or parish, with her particular surname is a special local Maria with very special qualities, and as such different from other Marias',[113] so for the Greeks also, as Versnel highlights through exhaustive presentation of evidence, 'Gods bearing the same name with different epithets *were* and *were not* one and the same, depending on their momentary registrations in the believer's various layers of perception'.[114] This seeming contradiction is only one, moreover, of a series of paradoxes inherent in Greek religious experience. A god may be both omnipotent and limited in scope, with Hermes the 'least godly' of them all.[115] And the Greeks were capable of tolerating several diverse explanations of the same event, for example of the death of the Lydian Croesus.[116] If we find difficulty with this level of inconsistency, that is our problem, not the Greeks'. The villains of Versnel's magnificent, sprawling book, are those modern scholars, the hermeneuticians with their 'strain towards congruence',[117] who in their desire to save their author from imagined charges of obscurantism or incoherence, to tidy up their authors' thought, have elided the evidence of such complexity.

Chaos or system, then?[118] For Polinskaya, the interconnections in Greek polytheism pull it back from the precipice. For Versnel, as for Parker, chaos has its uses. 'Incoherence made it all the more flexible a tool for coping with the diversity of experience'.[119] 'One might value', writes Versnel,

[103] Polinskaya (2013) 492–93; *cf.* Eidinow's critique of binary categorizations in *polis*-religion, (2011) 32, or the emphasis on a range of levels of religious activity in Jim (2014) 276.

[104] Sourvinou-Inwood (1978).

[105] Versnel (2011) 62.

[106] Parker (2011) 86; *cf.* Kindt's discussion of Burkert's approach, 'driven by the overall aim of bringing single local aspects of the Greek pantheon together into one more or less coherent narrative …': (2012) 25–26.

[107] Parker (2011) 94; see also (2005) 387–95.

[108] Versnel (2011) 523.

[109] Kearns in Salzman et al. (2013) 1.284.

[110] Parker (2011) 87.

[111] Parker (2011) 98.

[112] Sourvinou-Inwood (2000a) 18.

[113] Versnel (2011) 523.

[114] Versnel (2011) 82, *cf.* 100, 517; Polinskaya (2013) 492, 497; Kearns in Salzman et al. (2013) 1.281–83.

[115] Versnel (2011) 436.

[116] Explanations classified at Versnel (2011) 187, *cf.* 213.

[117] Versnel (2011) 190.

[118] Polinskaya (2013) 537.

[119] Parker (2011) 98; *cf.* (2005) 444–45.

'this versatile, multifaceted and multiple concatenation of explanatory devices in matters of theology and philosophy of life as an honest, challenging and perhaps even aesthetically satisfying device to live by'.[120] Inevitably, however, there will always be scholars uncomfortable at the failure to find an underlying order. Kindt advocates that we give space to 'the fault-lines between contradictory religious beliefs and practices, and the internal frictions, inconsistencies and tensions springing from them', warns against explaining away inconsistencies and yet declares that the study of inconsistency

> is fruitful only when it is itself 'embedded' … in a wider framework of perspectives exploring the nature of different – even divergent – belief systems within the wider, general culture. The simple presentation of inconsistencies cannot be heuristically satisfying, as we cannot be sure that what we are dealing with is more than just our failure to see coherence. The only way to distinguish, to some extent at least, our own failure to understand from true plurality of belief is to place such dissonances within a larger framework of cultural contestation.[121]

'So maybe nothing makes sense' as Frits Naerebout has remarked (half hopefully, half in lament?), 'but anyhow, everything is made sense of'.[122]

What next in Greek religion then? Though the critique of *polis* religion may be 'symptomatic of a possible paradigm shift in studies of Greek religion', as Polinskaya observes, 'it is not clear where it will take us'. Just as others have endorsed cognitive approaches as one fruitful route (in many cases uneasily), so Polinskaya points to the network model (proposed by Eidinow) or to (Kindt's adoption of) 'thin coherence' as possible directions, but in neither case one that would supplant the *polis* as focus.[123] Where there is apparent consensus at least is in the need for a diversity of approach. Polinskaya reviews a whole range of paradigms – the city-countryside dichotomy or chthonian-Olympian, biological, psychoanalytic – before concluding, soundly but underwhelmingly, that we should stay alert to the pervasiveness of all existing paradigms and 'not allow the pressure of paradigms to obscure or distort and over-ride the concreteness and peculiarity of local data'.[124] For Kindt, likewise, 'there is no single approach that either can or should supersede the polis model'.[125] The *polis*-religion model explains some aspects of Greek religious experience and not others. The *polis* may be besieged, but there is no appetite to sack it and build anything else in its place.

We need then to take a catholic approach to the kaleidoscopic[126] reality of Greek religion. If 'magic differs from religion as weeds differ from flowers, merely by negative social evaluation',[127] then both should be envisaged as falling within the messy borders of Greek religion. As Kindt argues, rather than our confusing evaluative concepts within a religion with external, descriptive categories, any discourse on the legitimacy of a particular practice should be seen instead as part of a wider civic 'theology'.[128] Arguably also, we need to be less concerned with labelling and categorizing (so, in the neat illustration of Gagné: 'this is Orphic; this is Bacchic; that is clearly Sabaziac; this, on the other hand, is Orphico-Dionysiac'), move beyond the paralysing fixation on the Christianizing association of particular terminology[129] and develop the renewed focus on

[120] Versnel (2011) 213, *cf.* 162.

[121] Kindt (2012) 25.

[122] Naerebout (1997) 396, n.946; *cf.* Needham 1972: 244: 'I am not saying that human life is senseless, but that we cannot make sense of it'.

[123] Polinskaya (2013) 25, n.84.

[124] Polinskaya (2013) 69.

[125] Kindt (2012) 34.

[126] The analogy is Versnel's, (2011) 10: 'One-sided or universalist theories in the field of Greek theology by their very nature tend to be misleading since they illuminate only part of a complex and kaleidoscopic reality, which is neither fully transparent/structured nor entirely chaotic'.

[127] Parker (2005) 122, with the critique of Eidinow (2011) 21–22 for his merging of ancient and modern associations.

[128] Kindt (2012) 108, 113; *cf.* the observations of Rüpke (2013) 6.

[129] See also now Naiden's suggestion of 'offering' instead of 'sacrifice': (2013) 330; with the response of Carbon (2013) 388.

the history of scholarship[130] – in awareness that there are no neutral explanatory models and that our own attempts to impose order say as much about our own preconceptions and anxieties.[131] (What does it say indeed that we are now reinstating the gods, or seeing disorder and dissonance where before we found structure?)

Above all, perhaps, we need to avoid the dogmatism that has sometimes beset the subject, and to avoid seeing any single aspect as primary or exclusive.[132] Summary accounts tend to throw up crisp formulations of the nature of Greek religion – or of religion in general: that it is above all, for example, a medium of communication between men and gods or that it forms a means for the explanation of events, the construction of identity or to cope with life's vicissitudes – for the individual in dire trouble, who 'wishes to be rescued from a seething sea, is starving and craves food, cries out to save a child that is mortally ill'.[133] It is all these things and more: Parker, for example, has put a healthy emphasis also on the worldly pleasures of Greek religion, its 'relaxed blend of piety with evident relish for the simpler good things of this world'.[134] It can also be seen, with equal legitimacy, from different vantage points: as abstracted and as physically grounded in specific locations, in city and countryside;[135] as personal and public (in practice, hard to disentangle);[136] individual, local, panhellenic, universal and everything in between. As the books under review illustrate, religion is central, for example, to the construction of a range of different identities:[137] to articulating what it means to be Aeginetan,[138] but equally to expressing, through a dedication, the pride of a fuller or a washerwoman in their trade.[139]

Indeed, as Jim observes sensitively in this last context, this everyday work is transformed, its value 'redefined in a dedicatory context'. Here, in this confident dedication of one's own trade, as if it were in its own right an act of piety,[140] or elsewhere, for example in the anxious open-ended individual perspective towards worship offered up by so much recent work, we are perhaps fulfilling Jean Rudhardt's ambition to go beyond the structures of religion and to enter into the mind of the devotee, 'to gain access to the subjective experience which is at least partially conditioned by the structures and expresses itself through these'.[141] This was a conception of Greek religion that might seem to have been long marooned.[142] By contrast, it has been too easy perhaps – especially when working within a framework which envisages religion as a matter of social realities – to envisage the Greeks as, at some base level, seeing the world in the same terms, making decisions on the same 'rational' basis, as ourselves.[143] For Parker's Greeks, rain was just rain – unless it declined to fall:

[130] For example Bremmer (2010b); Parker (2011); Konaris (2010); Faraone and Naiden (2012); Gagné (2013); Naiden (2013).

[131] *Cf.* Woolf (1997) 71–72.

[132] See, for example, Veyne (2000) for the impossibility of any single interpretation of sacrifice.

[133] Versnel (2011) 434.

[134] Parker (2011) 201; *cf.* (2005) 45.

[135] See, for example, Buxton (1994); Parker (2005) chapter 3; (2011) x–xi; Ustinova (2009).

[136] See the observations of Parker (2005) 44; Jim (2014) 276; and now the thoughtful analysis of Kindt (2015).

[137] Kindt (2012) 125.

[138] Polinskaya (2013) 549; *cf.* Parker (2005) 444 on Athena.

[139] Jim (2014) 174–75.

[140] *Cf.* du Boulay (2009) 418 ('times of labour are enfolded in the timeless'); and (more broadly) for a Christian theology of work, Hughes (2007).

[141] Rudhardt (1981) 10. In addition to the books under review, see especially Eidinow (2007), revealing (on the basis of curse tablets and oracles) 'ordinary Greek men and women from every walk of life, dealing with everyday fears and uncertainty, in an atmosphere that was sometimes gripped by gossip, prickling with accusations' (237). It is perhaps significant that the work of E.R. Dodds, especially (1951), is at this point being honoured in a forthcoming OUP collection.

[142] For Rudhardt's intellectual formation and the unusually detached context (in a sanatorium) in which his most substantial work (1992, originally published 1958) was completed, see the introductory material, by Philippe Borgeaud and Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, to Rudhardt (2006).

[143] See, for example, Price's discussion, (1999) 74, of the wooden wall oracle; for the difficult concept of rationality, *cf.* (appropriately obscure) Harrison (2006).

> if every shower of rain comes from Zeus … then direct contact with divine power is an everyday experience. It surely will not have felt like that, even for the pious: rain for them was rain, part of normality, as it is for us, not an epiphany. But when rain declined to fall, it could be prayed for; thunderbolts were embodiments of 'Zeus who descends', storms could be caused by human pollution, winds could be summoned or averted by sacrifice.[144]

Some of the new emphases in the study of (Greek) religion – for example the focus on visuality, on language or narrative – open up the possibility that 'religion' for the Greeks was embedded not just in society but in the cognitive construction of reality: 'the underpinning, the emotional and cognitive foundation, of the whole of communal life'.[145]

This could be seen in a relatively passive, background sense – 'easy to live with, like a comfortable old coat'; 'in the background of awareness'[146] – or it could be transformational. For Versnel, in a lauded article, the individual Greek had to reckon with the possibility that anyone they met might be a god in disguise.[147] If work can be more than *just* work and if the continuation of agricultural plenty (or any other aspect of good fortune) were indeed seen as depending on a proper pattern of propitiation of divinity, then rain too could surely have been more than just rain and divine intervention – far from being a rarity[148] – might have been constant and patent. 'Water from a tap is a convenience', as Juliet du Boulay expresses it in her extraordinary account of the religious world-view of a Greek Orthodox village, 'but drunk from a hillside or carried from the spring to the table it is a miracle'. 'At the same time as they are relating to the world about them they [the people of the village of Ambeli] are walking through a sacred drama'.[149] For the ordinary Greek of our period, the everyday may not have mapped in the same way onto a single overarching cosmic liturgy, but it may nonetheless have been richly embroidered with the potential, the threat and the hope, of the divine.

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[144] Parker (2011) 3.
[145] Parker (2005) 452.
[146] Parker (2005) 453, 104.
[147] Versnel (1987).
[148] *Cf.* Price (1999) 133: 'though the gods existed, only in exceptional circumstances would an individual be sure that one of them had intervened in his or her life'; we might choose to underline the emphasis here on certainty (surely anyway elusive).
[149] Du Boulay (2009) 79, 101.

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