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Edited by Esther Eidinow, Julia Kindt, Robin Osborne
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THEOLOGIES OF ANCIENT GREEK RELIGION

Studied for many years by scholars with Christianising assumptions, Greek religion has often been said to be quite unlike Christianity: a matter of particular actions (orthopraxy), rather than particular beliefs (orthodoxies). This volume dares to think that, both in and through religious practices and in and through religious thought and literature, the ancient Greeks engaged in a sustained conversation about the nature of the gods and how to represent and worship them. It excavates the attitudes towards the gods implicit in cult practice and analyses the beliefs about the gods embedded in such diverse texts and contexts as comedy, tragedy, rhetoric, philosophy, ancient Greek blood sacrifice, myth and other forms of storytelling. The result is a richer picture of the supernatural in ancient Greece, and a whole series of fresh questions about how views of and relations to the gods changed over time.

ESTHER EIDINOW is Associate Professor in Ancient Greek History at the University of Nottingham. She has a particular interest in ancient Greek religion and magic. Her publications include *Oracles, Curses, and Risk Among the Ancient Greeks* (2007, rev. edn 2013), *Luck, Fate and Fortune: Antiquity and its Legacy* (2011) and *Envy, Poison and Death: Women on Trial in Ancient Athens* (2015). She has co-edited (jointly with J. Kindt) *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Greek Religion* (2015).

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PREFACE

This volume arises out of a conference in Cambridge on 11–13 July 2012, which was itself a product of conversations that the three editors had enjoyed, both separately and as a group, about the need to discuss more openly the theological ideas implicit as well as explicit within ancient Greek writing and practice.

Greek religion, we are repeatedly reminded, knew no dogma, no creed and no holy literature. Because of such obvious differences between ancient Greek religion and modern religions, scholarly efforts to establish the nature of Greek theological speculation have in the past been largely restricted to students of philosophy and tragedy. The bounded and relatively self-contained universe of these two genres seems to be more in line with the kind of theological discourse familiar to us from other religious contexts, most notably, perhaps, that of Christianity. It has been common, and strongly encouraged in certain traditions of Christianity, for a line to be drawn between the activity of Christian theology, which goes on behind closed doors in faculties of Divinity, and the activity of worshipping God, which, it is sometimes suggested, should not be unduly complicated by theological considerations. Given the political and other turmoil caused by disputes over the nature of Christ in the early Church, it is perhaps not surprising that Christians should have desired to restrict the impact of theological argument, but the embedding of this idea that worship of god can occur without issues of the nature of that god being raised is implausible. In terms of keeping the peace and avoiding schism or heresy-hunting, there is certainly no need to keep discussions of theology apart from discussions of religious practice when studying the ancient Greek world.

This book seeks to ask how the kind of reflection that informed the representation of divinity in the various contexts

Preface

of day-to-day worship and other contacts with the gods relates to the more explicit discussions in epic, tragedy and philosophy. In separate chapters the contributors seek to identify some of the basic theological assumptions and issues that form the background to both literary and philosophical theorising and to the range of religious practices known from ancient Greece. Behind all these considerations looms the much larger question of how the modern conception of ‘theology’ relates to the religious cultures of ancient Greece.

One major reason why scholars have been content to leave theology on one side is that investigating theology raises a number of difficult methodological issues. This book sets out to identify not only the existence of religious beliefs that have informed the representations and manifestations of the religious in Greek antiquity, but also the strategies in which such beliefs can be recovered. We aim to understand the manifold ways in which these and other representations of the religious draw on and participate in a much broader conversation in ancient Greece about the nature of the divine and its availability to human knowledge.

The wide-ranging chapters do not constitute a systematic discussion of all possible relevant activities or types of evidence, but they do aim to explore Greek discourse(s) about the nature of the divine as manifested in a variety of locations and forms, encompassing both the literary and material evidence. By bringing together scholars with an interest in ancient Greek religion as it evolved throughout Greek literature, drama, philosophy and the material evidence, we hope to bridge the gap between those areas of Greek theological discourse that have been well-researched and new and unmapped territory.

We are grateful to all who took part in the Cambridge conference, to contributors to this volume who have joined the project since and to Helen Flitton, Marianna Prizio, Kim Richardson and Michael Sharp.

Esther Eidinow
Julia Kindt
Robin Osborne

NOTE ON SPELLINGS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The transliteration of Greek names is a notorious problem. Familiar names are here Latinised, but less familiar names are not. We have tried to be consistent about the treatment of individual names but have not aimed at overall consistency.

Abbreviations of the names of Greek authors follow *LSJ*.

Abbreviations of the titles of classical journals follow *L'Année philologique*.

Other abbreviations

- ANRW* *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, ed. H. Temporini, Berlin 1972–97.
- CEG* *Carmina epigraphica Graeca, saeculorum VIII–V a. Chr. n.*, ed. P. A. Hansen, Berlin 1983.
- DK* *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. H. Diels and W. Kranz, 6th edn, Berlin 1952.
- KRS* *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd edn, ed. G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven and M. Schofield, Cambridge 1983.
- KS* *Kleine Schriften*, W. Burkert, 8 vols, Göttingen, 2001–11.
- LIMC* *Lexicon iconographicum mythologiae classicae*, Zurich 1981–2009.
- PW* *The Delphic Oracle*, vol. 2: *The Oracular Responses*, ed. H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, Oxford 1956.
- RO* *Greek Historical Inscriptions 404–323 BC*, ed. P. J. Rhodes and R. Osborne, Oxford 2003.