

GREEK AND ROMAN GODDESSES OF PEACE

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INTRODUCTION

Lady Peace has many faces. Pinning down her attributes is no simple enterprise. The simplistic rendition is that Peace is the absence of War. But this definition does not outline how to end on-going war or how to prevent the start of war. The International Community set up peace-based global institutions, the League of Nations and United Nations, to prevent future war. Although both proved irresolute to prevent all wars, they were able to moderate some looming conflicts through the practices of peace-keeping and judicial mediation. There is a growing consensus among spirituality-oriented peace practitioners that the peace institutions that humanity needs will not be developed until humans establish a global system in which all peoples accept or submit to global authority. Until then nations are left to find their way through grievances and possible annihilation given the massive destruction of some of the existing weapon systems.

What marks the Homo sapiens species special is its level of consciousness and its analytic thinking. But they are still insufficiently developed to coral the surge toward war (As this paragraph is being written war has broken out in Ethiopia's Northern border.) Fortunately, humanity carries an archetypal template that points to how to address life issues such as peace. Dreams and mythology are places where the archetypal template projects itself. What follows is a brief review of Greek and Roman Peace Goddesses and their main companions.

GODDESSES OF PEACE IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY

What is both different and curious regarding Eirene (the Greek Goddess of Peace and Wealth) is that she needs to be addressed through a triad of sisters. The other two sisters are Dike (Goddess of

Moral Justice) and Eunomia (Goddess of Right Law). The sisters are generally considered to be the second triad of the Horae (those assigned to provide order in particular segments of society). In short, the sisters are entrusted to oversee “Righteous Civil Order.” The sisters obtained their avocations from their mother, Themis, Goddess of Divine Justice.

Eirene is usually depicted holding Demeter’s son, Plutus (Plenty). Plutus represents the wealth achieved with peace and advances the community’s wellbeing. While linkage of peace with community wellness is still valid, the arms sector today brings riches to quite a few. Such was the concern that President Eisenhower, on his departure, warned against the linkage of arms policy with arms production and the Industrial Complex.

Eirene had her “heyday” after Athens defeated Sparta in 375BC when various temples were built to honor her. One may well ask what role did Eirene play in the victory? Eirene is not a battle Goddess; she did not visit the camp fires. In this scenario, the Peace Goddess is passive. More so, her role is to preserve the peace that was achieved. The peace that Eirene upholds, in brief, is not a peace forged out of war but a continuation of existing peace. As a member of the civic order triad, Eirene is equally involved with domestic peace. In this regard she awaits to base her peace on good laws and right justice in order to forge lasting peace and order.

Eirene cannot fulfill her domestic peace-making unless her sister, Eunomia, provides the right or good laws. For example, segregation laws were not good law-making. At times, good law is that which benefits the many, but not always. An example of good law is that connected to the Social Security system. The same may be said of the third sister, Dike, unless she provides the right sense of justice neither peace nor order is the result. Particularly troublesome is when judges and law makers take (consciously or unconsciously) their personal biases as the basis for rendering judgement or making law.

Taken together the three sisters are the basis for the rule of Law and Order. Order (Peace) is the result of law-making and unfettered justice working together. Without good law and unbiased justice there can be no sustainable peace or civil order. Those who rant “Law and Order” are doomed to failure unless justice is part of the order.

While the message of the three sisters is clear, the message of Harmonia (Good Composition), seems simple and direct, but it is not so. First of all, her parentage is of two Gods of the Olympian Twelve: Aphrodite (Goddess of Love) and Ares (God of War). To forge harmony between joyfulness (love-making) and war-making (killing) begins with the acceptance that war-making still remains an intrinsic element of human behavior; war may be set to act as a component of an off-on switch. The search for harmony which would lessen the pressing of the war-switch, is an on-going labor that often falters when the conditions on which harmony is based evaporate. Yet right tuning-in may allow the reasons for peace to out shine the recourse for war. Eventually the quest for harmony is re-energized and achieved (at least for a while.) Such is more likely to occur when discord begins to mount. At best, harmony implies that war can be periodically controlled but probably never eliminated, that is, humanity can expect conflict between parties to continue to exist. A successful example of harmony that worked was the Cold War between NATO nations and the Soviet Union. While not necessarily harmonic, the Cold War prevented the causes for conflict from erupting into a killing stage between the two sides. Harmonia is the balance between her mother and father, and set to balance the surge for war by participating civil encounters. But harmony also touches upon not letting joyful encounters “weaken the spine.”

In substance, Harmonia stands for arms control and militant posture to fight a war when necessary (such would be a harmonic balance between the God of War and Goddess of Love). Rather than spew a language of fiery destruction Harmonia would opt for a language of diplomacy. It could even be bolstered that the bumper sticker “Make Love Not War” is rooted in her parents’ behaviors

to fashion harmony between themselves. At best, Harmonia frames the possibilities implicit in harmony. But here myth fades out in regards to the elimination of war: the end of war is left to the Gods to finish and set up of right balance.

For the most part Harmonia's story is attached to that of her human husband, Cadmus, an early Greek hero and founder of the city of Thebes. Her accounts are tame for a goddess of high status. (In acknowledgement of this status, all the Gods, for the first time, came to a human's wedding and brought exquisite gifts for the Goddess bride, Harmonia.) At the same time, it can be said that she herself lived a harmonic life which can be seen in how she ended her life. Both she and Cadmus were turned into loving dragons on the Blessed Isle. (The dragon plays a separate role in the myth. Cadmus kills one of Ares' dragon guardian of a spring. In turn, Cadmus has to serve Ares for nine years. On ending his servitude, Athena is able to join Cadmus with Harmonia in marriage. Earlier Athena had advised Cadmus to 'sow' the dragon teeth which he did. Up sprung armed warriors who served Ares. They eventually killed each other except for four who helped built Thebes.)

## ROMAN GODDESSES OF PEACE AND CONCORDANCE

Pax is the Roman Goddess of peace. She had her 'heyday' during the reign of Emperor Caesar Augustus (27BC-14AC) when a flood of temples were built. This period was called Pax Romana due to the relatively peaceful reign that Roman legions produced. (It is reported that the Imperial family was partial toward Concordia, a Goddess close to Pax.) Similar to the Greek Goddess of Peace, celebrations to honor Pax did not stress peace itself or that war had ended but rather to celebrate Rome's military prowess and accumulated spoils. Obviously, some citizens were not pro-war and voiced the benefits of perpetual peace. The pro-peace accentuated the superiority of peace by depicting children around the Goddess and highlighting the wealth to be gained during peace.

For what may be said of Pax there is little more to narrate. However, there is a connection between the state of peace when Jesus was born (so called Pax Romana) and Jesus being called Prince of Peace, roughly 700 years before his birth, (in Isaiah's prophesy: "for unto us a child is born and he shall be called Prince of Peace"). Later, the Roman Empire's disintegration allowed Christianity to become the Empire's official religion. During the reign of Theodisus (378-395) Christianity was named the official religion of the Roman State. In 431A.D., at the Council of Ephesus, Mary was proclaimed "Mother of God." Implicit in this decree, Mary, besides being Mother of God became Queen of Peace to the Prince of Peace. Whereas Pax glorified the peace brought by arms Mary would glorify the end of killings. A Goddess of Peace once again projected itself in Rome but in a different manner than Pax.

The Goddess Concordia was linked to the Greek Goddess Harmonia and shared the same parents (the Love Goddess and the War God/). Concordia's enterprise was to bring about concordance between parties by increasing that upon which they agreed. A subtle feeling is registered when both are compared namely, existing harmony is always on the edge of bending out of harmony while with concordance, things agreed upon are a bit less likely to change.

## CLOSING COMENTS

This curtailed review of the mythic Goddesses of Peace brings out two salient points. First, there can be no viable Law and Order without a principled regime of Justice. Period! Second, seeking concordance may be the more apt approach to build up a sustained peace process.