



Historically Speaking

Volume 4, Number 3 March 2025

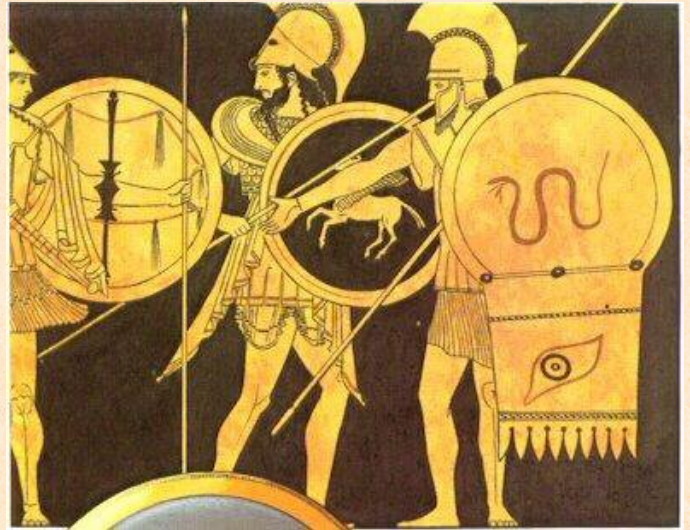
Ares

Ares, in Greek religion, god of war or, more properly, the spirit of battle. Unlike his Roman counterpart, Mars, he was never very popular, and his worship was not extensive in Greece. He represented the distasteful aspects of brutal warfare and slaughter. From at least the time of Homer—who established him as the son of the chief god, Zeus, and Hera, his consort—Ares was one of the Olympian deities; his fellow gods and even his parents, however, were not fond of him. Nonetheless, he was accompanied in battle, by his sister Eris (Strife) and his sons (by Aphrodite) Phobos and Deimos (Fear and Terror).

Also associated with Ares were two lesser war deities: Enyalios, who is virtually identical with Ares himself, and Enyo, a female counterpart.

Ares' worship was largely in the northern areas of Greece, and, although devoid of the social, moral, and theological associations usual with major deities, his cult had many interesting local features. At Sparta, in early

times, at least, human sacrifices were made to him from among the prisoners of war. In addition, a nocturnal offering of dogs—an unusual sacrificial victim made to him as Enyalios. During his festival at Geronthrae in Laconia, no women were allowed in the sacred grove, but at Tegea he was honoured in a special women's sacrifice as Gynaikothoinas (Entertainer of Women). At Athens he had a temple at the foot of the Areopagus (Ares' Hill).



Deimos and Phobos



What's happening?

I have been busy working on three projects simultaneously; Amon (a novel based in ancient Egypt), Marcion (a short story), and Ecstasy Through Agony; The Writers' Odyssey (a non-fiction book exploring the emotions writers go through in the process of writing).

In addition to that, I have been attending meetings with Spokane Authors, Inland Northwest Writers' Guild, and my critique group. I have also recently renewed my membership with Pacific Northwest Writers Association and Historical Novel Society. I am keeping busy.

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The mythology surrounding the figure of Ares is not extensive. He was associated with Aphrodite from earliest times; in fact, Aphrodite was known locally (e.g., at Sparta) as a war goddess, apparently an early facet of her character. Occasionally, Aphrodite was Ares' legitimate wife, and by her he fathered Deimos, Phobos (who accompanied him into battle), Harmonia, and—as first told by Simonides in the 6th century BCE—Eros, god of love. By Aglauros, the daughter of Cecrops, he was the father of Alcippe. He was the sire of at least three of Heracles' adversaries: Cycnus, Lycaon, and Diomedes of Thrace. On vases, Ares is usually the typical armed warrior. The Parthenon frieze contains a group of Olympians, among whom Ares, in unwarlike garb, has been tentatively identified. He also appears on the great frieze of the altar at Pergamum.

Britannica.com

Ares is well known as the lover of Aphrodite, who was married to Hephaestus, and though Ares plays a limited role in literature, when he does appear in myths it is typically facing humiliation. For example, one famous story of Ares and Aphrodite exposes them to ridicule by the gods when her husband Hephaestus trapped them both naked in a bed using a clever device he made.

greekgodsandgoddesses.net

Ares, Though an immortal deity, he was bested by Heracles in battle and was almost killed when stuffed into a jar by two giants. When another hero wounded him during the Trojan War, he received scant sympathy from his father Zeus. The throne of Ares on Mount Olympus was covered in human skin.

Encyclopedia of Greek Mythology

While Ares is traditionally seen as the primary Olympian god of war, that has been attributed to Athena and even in some locations to Aphrodite as well. More commonly, Athena is identified as the goddess of battle specifically. In my opinion, the Greeks saw Ares in a very negative way, including stories that made him look ridiculous. In comparison, Athena, was held in highest regard. She was the goddess of the city, justice, women's roles, and more, besides battle. I believe that the difference between the Greek views of Ares and Athena shows the attitude they had about war. It was a terrible thing to engage in war, but if you had to fight, you did so to win. Athena as patron of battle has to do with the Greeks aversion to war, but absolute commitment to keeping their freedom when they had to fight for it.

Stephen Lalonde

Statue of Ares



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