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THE DEVELOPMENT
OF
THE CONCEPT OF THE DIVINE
IN GREEK PHILOSOPHY
(From Thales to Plato)

by

Indira Kamani Jayasekera

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ABSTRACT

My research on the development of the concept of the divinity in Greek Philosophy covers the period from Thales to Plato (6th cent. BC to 5th cent. BC). During this period, the only systematic work available is that of Plato. Only fragments of the philosophical literature of the earlier Greek thinkers are available to modern scholars. The purpose of my study is to see patterns in the development of the concept of the divine. In order to highlight the development, one needs to focus on the essential elements of the process. Hence I present the frame of my research briefly as follows:

1) Introduction

The Greek, the Avesta and the Vedic cultures having a common origin in central Asia. Though separated and spread in different directions, these were the foundation of great civilizations.

2) Pre-Indo European religion in Greece

- a) Feeling of awe and power
- b) Symbol-localization
- c) Introduction of ritual

- d) Personification
- e) Catering to basic needs
- f) Collective emotions

3) The Olympian Religion

- a) Synthesis of the Indo-European religion and the pre-Greek religion
- b) Religion reflecting the nature and the needs of the worshipper.
- c) Relationship between Gods and mortals echoing the spirit of the religion; communication with the divine.

4) Origin of Philosophy: Conflict between religion and philosophy

- a) Thales
- b) Anaximander: Rejection of myth, Rational thought,
Natural process, Language problem
- c) Anaxemenes
- d) Psychological needs of people= elements as Gods.

5) The One: Concentration on its nature

- a) Xenophanes
- b) Parmenides
- c) Anaxagoras

6) Soul and rebirth: Concentration on the relationship with the divine.

a) The Pythagoreans,

b) Heraclitus,

c) Empedocles

7) Both trends combined

PLATO: UNUM, BONUM, et VERUM

a) Criticism of popular religious notions

b) Against rationalization of myths

c) Problems of piety

d) Correct notion of God

e) God =the Good

f) God and categories of gods

g) Relationship between man and God

h) Rebirth and life after death,

i) Emotional approach

j) A religious God, catering to the psychological needs of man.

8) Conclusion and Observations.