



THE ATHENS GREEK RELIGION SEMINAR, Tuesday April 4, 2023,

Saskia Peels-Matthey, University of Groningen

***Understanding Gods as Networks of Meaning:
Some Case Studies Considered***

ABSTRACT

All major gods in Ancient Greece were polysemous, intervening in various domains in the lives of worshippers. Sometimes their complex identities were the result of processes of evolution, association and coalescence, sometimes not obviously so. Understanding gods in ancient Greek pantheons was a challenge to ancient worshippers, as it is to scholars today.

In this paper, I will further develop my hypothesis that we can better understand ancient Greek gods by seeing them as ‘networks’ of meanings by exploiting cognitive linguistic work on lexical semantics (Peels 2021; on gods as networks of meaning, cf. also e.g. Pirenne-Delforge & Pironti 2015, 2016). I will explain how precisely we may model gods as inventories of usages and what the nodes and connections in such networks may consist of, through an extended example. Moreover, I will focus on ways in which connections in a network are sometimes suggested, negotiated, established by poets, the performance of whose work perhaps led to new understandings of individual gods and perceptions of more coherent divine identities. My main point is that Greek gods are not more ‘polysemous’ than other words in natural language.

The seminar takes place **Tuesday April 4, 2023, 17.00 (Athens time)** with live presence at the Swedish Institute or via zoom link.

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