

The female divinities were Hera the proud and rightly jealous queen of Zeus; Athena or Pallas, who sprang from the forehead of Zeus—the goddess of wisdom and patroness of domestic arts; Artemis, the goddess of the chase; Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, born of the sea-foam. Hestia, the goddess of the hearth; Demeter the earth-mother, the goddess of grains and harvests. Besides the great gods and goddesses that constituted the Olympian Council, there was an indefinite number of other deities and monsters neither human nor divine.

Hades ruled over the lower realms; Dionysus was god of wine; Eros of love; Iris was the goddess of the rainbow; and special messenger of Zeus; Hebe was the cupbearer of the celestials; the goddess Nemesis was the punisher of crime and particularly the queller of the proud and arrogant; Aeolus was the ruler of the winds, which he confined in a cave secured by mighty gates.

There were nine Muses, inspirers of art and song. The nymphs were beautiful maidens, who peopled the woods, the fields, the rivers, the lakes and the ocean. Three Fates allotted life and death, and three Furies avenged crime. The Harpies were terrible monsters with female faces and bodies and claws of birds. They were three in number and tore and devoured their prey with greedy voracity. The Gorgons were three sisters with hair entwined with serpents; a single gaze upon them chilled the beholder to stone.

Besides these there were a number of others, but many of the monsters at least were simply personifications of the human passions or of the malign and destructive power of nature, which was not understood by the common people. In the early ages, it was believed that the gods visited the earth and mingled with men. But even in Homer's time this familiar intercourse was a thing of the past—a tradition of a golden age passed away. Their forms were no longer seen, their voices no longer heard. In later and more degenerate times the recognized mode of divine communication to men was by oracles, by thunder and lightning, eclipses and the flight of birds.

But though the gods often revealed their will and intention through signs and portents, still they granted more certain communication through oracles. It was believed that these communications were made by Zeus, and especially by Apollo who was the god of prophecy.

Only in chosen places, did these gods manifest their presence and communicate the divine will. These favourite spots were