

VI. Plautus as a Source Book for Roman Religion

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Introduction

The analytic tendency in Plautine studies, which has made scholars wrestle endlessly to distinguish "Plautinisches" from "Attisches," has caused the comedies in part to be neglected as a source of information about intellectual, social, and linguistic phenomena in Rome in the late third and early second centuries B.C.* Previous work on religion in Plautus, surprisingly scarce, has largely shared this tendency.¹ Beyond the assembling of

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The Plautus citations are all given with Lindsay's text and numbering, unless otherwise indicated, but I have adopted the **v** in place of consonantal **u** and made a few other minor changes in spelling, punctuation and capitalization. The comic fragments are cited from Ribbeck. References from Plautus are included in the text for convenience, with only longer lists transferred to the notes.

¹ There are some exceptions. One is the article by P. R. Coleman-Norton, "Philosophical Aspects of Early Roman Drama," *CP* 36 (1936) 320-37, where the more discursive passages dealing with the gods (322-25) and the soul (325-29) are examined for their content, to show the extent to which Romans were introduced to Greek philosophical speculation about religion through the playwrights. George E. Duckworth (*The Nature of Roman Comedy* [Princeton 1952] 295-300) devotes five pages to the subject, in which his main purpose is to show another instance of the greater variety and vitality of Plautus as compared to Terence in the former's wider extent of allusion to the area of religion. Hazel M. Toliver ("Plautus and the State Gods of Rome," *CJ* 48 [1952] 49-57, 62, 77) in a hasty treatment tries to demonstrate that Plautus contributed to the growing cynicism in religious matters of the Romans of his time. This is the view of G. Colin in his *Rome et la Grèce* (Bibl. Éc. Franç., No. 94 [Paris 1905]) 344-45: "... ces plaisanteries... n'en habituent pas moins le peuple à se moquer couramment de ses dieux." A different viewpoint may be found in Georgia Williams Leffingwell, *Social and Private Life at Rome in the Time of Plautus and Terence* (New York 1918), but her treatment of religion (113-27) moves from a consideration of the period, drawn from other sources, to a consideration of Plautus, instead of consistently using Plautus to illuminate the period. The section (120-25) which does deal with Plautus' material on religion is short and selective. In it she argues against the view that Plautus reflected, if he did not actually contribute to, the "irreligious spirit of the time" (120). Paul Shaner Dunkin, *Post-Aristophanic*

material, in itself a valuable beginning, the investigator's energy has gone into the debate over the borrowed versus original character of the playwright's mythology, ritual and religious ideas.² The most valuable of several dissertations on this theme is G. Secknus' *Untersuchungen zu religiösen Formeln und sonstigen Stellen religiösen Inhalts in den Komödien des Terenz* (Erlangen 1927).³ In the most useful portion of the work, the author compares formulaic expressions of religious content in Menander with those in the "Menandrian" plays of Plautus and finds that, while some Plautine *loci* are possibly Greek borrowings, most have no demonstrable parallel in Menander and ought therefore to be Roman and Plautine.⁴ One may reasonably sum up the results of this debate by saying that the weight of authority has declared for the

Comedy (Ill. Studies in Lang. and Lit., Vol. 36, Nos. 3-4) 99-100, treats religion as simply one phase of the problem of social status, and his "Fabian" Plautus "assailed religion, which has ever been the stronghold of the man in power." The most thought-provoking discussion dealing with religious matters in Plautus is in Volker Niebergall, *Griechische Religion und Mythologie in der ältesten Literatur der Römer* (Diss. Giessen 1937), 21-37. Working largely through a detailed analysis of the prologue to the *Amphitryon*, the author develops the idea that Plautus shows a new and vital conception of the Olympian gods, especially Jupiter, that cannot have its origins in the cynical, *Tyché*-centered, religious milieu of Hellenistic Greece, but reflects Roman culture, which is at an earlier point of development than the contemporary Greek.

² Augustus Kieseberg, *Quaestiones Plautinae et Terentianae ad religionem spectantes* (Diss. Lipsiae 1884); Theodorus Hubrich, *De deis Plautinis Terentianisque* (Diss. Regimonti 1883); Achille Mazzoleni, *La mitologia greca nelle commedie plautine* (Acireale 1891). The last contains as an appendix a valuable index, including stock religious phrases. The work itself is far more cursory and subjective than this index would seem to indicate. Eduard Fraenkel's *Plautinisches im Plautus* (Philologische Untersuchungen 28 [Berlin 1922]) contains much material on passages with religious or mythological content (esp. 8-22, 59-100); but that content itself does not form part of his argument, and the recurrent religious formulae are not discussed. K. M. Westaway, *The Original Element in Plautus* (Cambridge 1917), contains a section (56-67) devoted to religion. The latest work on the subject, Ernst Riess, "Notes on Plautus," *CQ* 35 (1941) 150-62, contains valuable comments on points of detail, again mostly dealing with the Greek or Roman character of the passages. I have not been able to consult Max Schuster, *Quomodo Plautus Attica exemplaria transtulerit* (Diss. Gruph. 1884), cited by Riess (*op. cit.*, 150, note 1).

³ I have used his collection of material from Terence as a source for certain comparative observations and citations below.

⁴ "Man muss also nach alledem annehmen, dass Plautus gerade in den Formeln von seinen Originalen ziemlich unabhängig ist. . . Diese Ansicht legen ja auch die bei den Schwurpartikeln schon früher gemachten Beobachtungen nahe" (36). His process of argument on individual cases is, however, too strict: e.g., "Bei Menander findet sich kein Vorbild für diese Formel, demnach ist sie als lateinisch zu betrachten" (34); "Diese beiden letzten Arten. . . dürften griechischen Mustern nachgebildet sein; denn wir finden sie auch bei Menander" (*ibid.*).

Roman character of the majority of the religious material,⁵ although certain specific passages are seen to reflect borrowing from the Greeks or translation from Plautus' Greek sources.⁶ In addition it must be remembered that even if one proves the Greek character of a passage, one has assuredly not proved its non-Roman character, since many customs, ideas, and even modes of expression were equally Greek and Roman. Finally, for any historical period it is impossible to speak of *purely-Roman* religion, without any additions of Hellenic or Hellenistic ideas and attitudes. Roman religion in this sense—be it nuministic, or animistic, or anthropopsychic—exists only in textbooks, being created by a process of successive subtraction from the given data. By the end of Plautus' dramatic career, Roman religion, like Roman culture in general, was already a complex hybrid, far from the simple hearth-worship of a group of shepherds living on the Palatine. If we cut out everything that is possibly Greek in origin from a second century B.C. document, we are falsifying the picture of that century's society as truly as if we cut out everything Greek or Oriental from our conception of Rome in the second century A.D. Therefore, in using Plautus as a source book for Roman religion I am led to adopt the "uncritical" principle that everything in Plautus is to be considered Roman: even if it be demonstrably shown that a specific passage in Plautus is taken from a non-Roman source and does not reflect Roman thought previous to Plautus' time, that passage becomes Roman as soon as it is written down in Latin and subsequently performed before a Roman audience; that is, it becomes part of the milieu of ideas and expressions in the Rome of that age.⁷

Plautus impresses the student of Roman religion first by the

⁵ "Iam postquam quid Plautus Terentiusque de dis omnino senserint satis explicavisse exemplisque demonstrasse nobis videmur, qua in re maxime Plautum praeter locos nonnullos Romanorum sententiam retinere et proferre vidimus, age nunc singulos deos deasque quomodo descripserint percenseamus, qua in re id quod iam nunc praesumamus multa ex Graecis sumpta cum Romanis mixta sunt" (Keseberg [above, note 2] 19).

⁶ E.g., "quem di diligunt adulescens moritur" (Ba816-17), from Menander's *ὃν οἱ θεοὶ φιλοῦσιν, ἀποθνήσκει νέος* (frag. 111 Koerte). Here the fact of borrowing is quite certain, not only because of the extremely close translation, word for word, but also because the verb "diligō" is not otherwise used by Plautus in describing the activities of the gods. But the situation is seldom so neat.

⁷ This is the reverse of the methods of J. B. Greenough, who used almost exclusively material from Plautus and Terence in writing of "The Religious Condition of the Greeks at the Time of the New Comedy," *HSCP* 10 (1899) 141-80.

sheer quantity of material which he presents.⁸ No other Latin author, with the possible exception of St. Augustine, can match him in this respect. But more important is the fact that this material is almost entirely non-analytic, even accidental in quality, in contrast to the more organized but artificial reasoning of Cicero and Varro or the poetic remolding of Vergil and Ovid. The plays of Plautus present us with a multitude of short comments on the gods and their relation to man, comments which derive naturally for the most part from the situations depicted and intrude naturally into the conversation of the characters in the dramas. The references to divinity are part of the normal—dramatically normal—flow of talk and are couched in what we may consider the standard words and phrases of the time, insofar as these may be represented in an artistic medium.

Comedy, although it plays mercilessly with its objects, must use as a base for that play a thoroughly comprehensible, if not conventional, set of situations, characters and ideas. Even fantasy is no exception, for the characters in Aristophanes' *Birds* or *Gulliver's Travels* are completely conventional; and it is the incongruity of the conventional person in an unconventional setting that creates the humor. This seems to me to be equally valid for the language of comedy. The emotion of surprise, on which most definitions of the comic have been based, depends for its operation on two elements, the expected and the unexpected: without the former, the latter is meaningless. It is essentially this wealth of information about the expected which makes Plautus most valuable as a source for the ideas of his time.

To cite an example, Plautus makes his bombastic soldier in the *Miles Gloriosus* when discussing his prowess in love boast of his descent from a god:

nescio tu ex me hoc audiveris an non: nepos sum Veneris.

(*Mi*1265)

⁸ It is of course irrelevant as far as the value of this study is concerned whether or not Plautus himself took religion seriously. It is sufficient that it was continually in the mouths of his stage creations. However, I have become impressed by the importance of religion in the total structure and language of many of the plays, notably the *Amphitryon*, *Poenulus* and *Rudens*, as well as its significant occurrence in individual scenes in practically every comedy. In the course of writing this paper I have discarded the notion that this material is incidental either to the play or the playwright. This view is not widely held, but it is central to Paul Lejay's *Plaute*: "Quand on veut définir l'esprit du théâtre de Plaute, il faut tout d'abord considérer

and the other characters do not fail to take up this joke by calling him: "Venerius nepotulus" (*Mi*1413, *Mi*1421). In order for this stage dialogue to have any "point," the audience must be aware of the serious possibility that a great general might claim descent from a divine ancestor, and this notion must be part of the conventional mental equipment which they bring to the play.⁹ Only then will they laugh as Plautus has meant them to laugh at the pretensions of Pyrgopolynices. If this were the only occurrence of this idea in the plays, one might maintain that Plautus has here slipped (although his stagecraft is generally held to be excellent) and introduced something exotic and bookish which the audience would not "get." However, the idea of human identification with deity is met constantly in the plays,¹⁰ sometimes in a quite simple and incidental form, such as calling someone "mi Iuppiter terrestris" (*Pe*99–100), sometimes in a quite elaborate form which drives home the deification by references to cult acts:

sed iube

vasa tibi pura apparari ad rem divinam cito,
 atque agnum adferri proprium pinguem. ::cur? ::ut
 sacrifices.
 ::quoi deorum? ::mihi hercle; nam ego nunc tibi sum
 summus Iuppiter,
 idem ego sum Salus, Fortuna, Lux, Laetitia, Gaudium.
(*Cap*860–64)

It seems clear that all this should be important in determining the background for the later development of the Imperial cult in Rome, and that this Plautine material unmistakably demonstrates an early Roman familiarity with the concept of human identification with deity. Although this may seem too obvious to need defending here, such a sensitive and intelligent book as Fritz Taeger's recent *Charisma* specifically denies this interpretation of the evidence and maintains that these and other similar statements in Plautus were simply taken over from Plautus' Greek models

la religion . . . Elle est un des éléments de fond par lesquels il répondait à l'attente des spectateurs et avec des sujets grecs, retenait et satisfaisait un public romain" (177; cf. 177–202 *passim*).

⁹ The fact that the divine ancestor is Venus may specifically reflect, if not parody, the contemporary growth in popularity of the Aeneas legend. In any case it makes the passage an even more striking predecessor of Roman ruler-cult ideas.

¹⁰ See below, page 69.

and could not really be understood by his audience.¹¹ But one must, it seems to me, take the view that Plautine comedy was comprehensible, at least to a significant portion of its hearers.

On the basis of this view of Plautine comedy, then, the purpose of this study may be defined as follows: to acquire an insight into the range of ideas about divinity and man's relation to it current in Rome in the early second century B.C., through an examination of the conventional linguistic expression of these ideas.¹²

However, one runs almost immediately into a theoretical difficulty of major importance. A large part of the language about the gods that one collects from Plautus is in the form of the tritest possible colloquial formulae, so commonplace, in fact, that it is necessary to ask if they have any religious meaning and are of any importance to intellectual history. For example, the most frequent verb used of the gods is *amo*, but all but two of its occurrences are in such idiomatic formulae that one may legitimately doubt if the literal notion of either "gods" or "love" was ever present when they were uttered or heard. Their inclusion in a study which pretends to concern itself with religion needs justification, if the study is not to be regarded as a purely linguistic one.¹³

¹¹ "Auffällig ist, dass Plautus diese Motive übernommen hat, obwohl sie wenigstens in ihren letzten Hintergründen für seine Hörer *so gut wie unverständlich* (italics mine) sein mussten, so sehr diese bisweilen über die derbe Situationskomik gefreut haben werden" (*Charisma* 1 [Stuttgart 1957] 407).

¹² Certain aspects of religion in Plautus are either omitted or not subjected to detailed examination, as being external to the purpose here defined. Most of these have been well treated elsewhere, although new arguments about specific details are possible and a synthesis may in fact be desirable. The primary omissions are mythological detail, ritual acts, references to "Oriental" deities, auspices, omens and magic. In general, that which is a description of religion as cult or action has been rejected in favor of that which invokes or expresses a religious idea. Among linguistic phenomena the interjections *hercle*, *mehercle*, *ecastor*, *mecastor*, *pol* and *edepol* have been omitted: their conceptual content is minimal, and their use has been thoroughly studied twice, first by Frank W. Nicholson, "The Use of *Heracle* (*Mehercle*), *Edepol* (*Pol*), *Ecastor* (*Mecastor*) by Plautus and Terence," *HSCP* 4 (1893) 99-102 and tables; and then by Anders Gagner, *De Heracle Mehercle ceterisque id genus particulis priscae poesis Latinae scaenicae* (Diss. Gryph. 1920). Their statistics are roughly equivalent, although Gagner's figures are consistently slightly higher (about 2%) than Nicholson's.

¹³ Basic to this whole study is the assumption that language and thought are inter-related and mutually influence one another. Not to prove, but only to illustrate, one may cite the following from E. Sapir ("The Status of Linguistics as a Science," *Language* 5 [1929] 209):

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the

To illustrate the situation with regard to the colloquial formulae in Plautus, one may examine in detail the uses of *amo* with a divine subject, grouped below according to standard types of phrases:

I.

1. Ita me di ament (amabunt): *Am* 597, *Au*496, *Ba*111, *Mi*1403, *Mo*170, *Mo*520, *Pe*492, *Po* 439, *Po*504, *Po*827, *Po*1291, *Po*1413, *St*685, *St*754, *Tri*1024.
2. Ita me di bene ament: *Cas*452, *Pe*639.
3. Ita me di deaeque ament: *Mi*725.
4. Ita me di deaeque omnes ament: *Mi*501.
5. Ita me Iuppiter bene amet: *Po*1325–26.
6. Ita me amabit Iuppiter: *Tri*447.
7. Ita te amabit Iuppiter: *Au*761 (ms. *ambit*).
8. Ita me Venus amet: *Cu*208.
9. Ita me Venus amoena amet: *St*742.
10. Ita me bene amet Laverna: *Au*445.
11. Ita me amabit sancta Saturitas: *Cap*877.
12. Ita me Iuppiter, Iuno, Ceres,
Minerva, Lato, Spes, Opis, Virtus, Venus,
Castor, Polluces, Mars, Mercurius, Hercules,
Summanus, Sol, Saturnus dique omnes ament: *Ba*892–95.
13. Ita me volsellae, pecten, speculum, calamistrum meum
bene me amassint meaque axitia linteumque extersui:
*Cu*577–78.
14. Ita me di ament, ut illa me amet malim quam di, Milphio:
*Po*289.
- 14a. Te quoque iam, Thais, ita me di bene ament, amo.
(Ter. *Eun.* 882)
15. Ita me di bene ament measque mihi bene servassint filias:
*St*505.
16. Ita me di ament :: Ita non facient; mera iam mendacia
fundes: *Ps*943.

mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group.

If this is true of the "real world," it is certainly true of the "ideal world" of religious thought.

17. Diespiter me sic amabit . . . :: ut quidem edepol dignus es:
*Po*869.
18. Sophoclidisca, di me amabunt . . . :: quid me? :: utrum
hercle illis lubet;
sed si ut digna's faciant, odio hercle habeant et
faciant male: *Pe*205-6.

II.

19. Di te ament (amabunt): *Au*183, *Ba*457, *Cu*455, *Men*278,
*Mo*341, *Mo*806, *Mo*1130, *Po*751, *Ps*1294, *Ru*1303.
20. Di ament te: *Pe*16.
21. Di te bene ament: *Ca*138.
22. Di te ament plurimum: *Mo*717.
23. At te Iuppiter bene amet: *Mi*231-32.
24. Di te deaeque ament vel huius arbitratu vel meo,
vel, si dignu's alio pacto, neque ament nec faciant bene:
*Ps*271-72.
25. Di omnes deaeque ament . . . :: Quemnam hominum? :: nec
te nec me, Milphio;
neque erum meum adeo. :: Quem ament igitur? :: aliquem
id dignus qui siet;
nam nostrorum nemo dignust: *Po*859-61.

III.

26. Si te di ament (amant): *Ep*515, *Mi*293, *Mi*571, *Po*659.

IV.

*Di me amant.

27. Di hercle omnes me adiuvant, augent, amant: *Ep*192.
28. Di me quidem omnes adiuvant, augent, amant: *Men*551.
29. Di me servant atque amant: *Ps*613.
30. Vah! delicatu's, quae te tamquam oculos amet.
:: Venus me amat: *Mi*984-85.
31. Quom te di amant, voluptati est mihi: *Ru*1183.

V.

32. Hanc equidem Venerem venerabor me ut amet posthac
propitia: *Po*278.

VI.

33. Quem di diligunt
adulescens moritur, dum valet, sentit, sapit.

hunc si ullus deus amaret, plus annis decem,
 plus iam viginti mortuom esse oportuit:
 terrai iam odium ambulat, iam nil sapit
 nec sentit, tantist quantist fungus putidus: Ba816-21.

First, let it be admitted that the standard phrases in their normal form (I through IV) had practically no religious significance to the ordinary speaker and hearer, as may be suggested by the following English translations, which are approximate conversational equivalents:

- I. *ita me di ament*: "so help me!"
- II. *di te ament*: "good morning!"
- III. *si te di ament*: "so help you!"
- IV. *di me amant* (a theoretical form based on the more complex variants in the text): "oh boy!"

Even if this extreme view be true and the phrases have lost all literal significance, their importance to the student of religion must still be maintained for two reasons. First, these phrases must reflect a stage in the development of the language or the society when they were literally meaningful and expressed a vital concept. In fact, their very triteness and loss of meaning are, I think, best interpreted as the result of former vitality and over-frequent use. It is impossible to explain how *di te ament* can have arisen as a standard formula of greeting unless it was once meaningful and important to wish a man that the gods might love him, and unless it was not only conceivable but customary to describe the emotions of the gods by using the verb *amo*, otherwise used to characterize the human emotion of intense attraction toward a person or thing. One might compare the contemporary English expression "God only knows," which under normal circumstances today carries no religious connotation whatsoever, but which could not have arisen without the concept of an omniscient, or at least a superhumanly knowing, deity.

In the second place, even though these formulaic expressions have, so to speak, lost their meaning, they remain as an important substratum in the language out of which may arise literal meaning and speculation at any time when an individual analyzes the idiom and operates with the literal significance of the words in it.

This can happen in several different ways which are illustrated in the Plautus variants. The first is the simple operation of

substituting in a formula, a type of word-play of which Plautus is inordinately fond. Examples are seen in sentences 3 through 13. *Ita me di ament* becomes *ita me di deaeque ament*, *ita me di deaeque omnes ament*, etc. Even in this simplest substitution, *thought* is applied by the writer and forced on the hearer, who is made aware of the literal presence of divinity in the expression. A specific god may be substituted for the general *di* of the idiom: Jupiter appears in Nos. 5 through 7.¹⁴ The list follows with more and more colorful substitutions: Nos. 8 and 9 are spoken by hopeful lovers, No. 11 by a hungry parasite. The fullest comic development of the device occurs in Nos. 12 and 13. The former may well be satirizing the long list of gods in some contemporary ritual or the habits of some learned priest¹⁵; while the latter is spoken by a meretrix. By means of this comic word-play the original expression, "*ita me di ament*," is given a temporary literal vitality by forcing the meaning of *di* on the hearer.

The second sort of operation consists in catching up a specific word in a formulaic phrase and repeating it with its literal meaning: this is illustrated by No. 14:

ita me di ament, ut illa me amet malim quam di, Milphio.

Here one must even translate literally in order to get the point: "God love me, I'd rather *she* love me than the gods, Milphio." Appended as No. 14a is an even neater example from Terence. Or the literal meaning may come first and suggest the stock phrase, as in No. 30.

A third device is the addition of further religious formulaic words and phrases to the original formula, which tends to emphasize the literal and religious significance of the original by the sheer weight of repetition: No. 15 gives an example, and Nos.

¹⁴ No. 7 also illustrates an incidental advantage to be reaped from the study of such stock phrases, that of improving the text. One is immediately jarred by the unique presence here of *ita te* along with thirty-two examples of the normal *ita me*. *Me* is a necessary correction in terms of Plautine idiom, and a glance at the manuscript shows how the error arose. The manuscript reads *ita te ambit Iuppiter, ut tu nescis*. When *amabit* was originally corrupted to *ambit*, the reading *ita me ambit* then made no sense, so the *me* was "corrected" by a scribe to *te* for a slight improvement.

¹⁵ For the general effect one should compare Ennius' famous two hexameters listing the twelve Olympians:

Iuno, Vesta, Minerva, Ceres, Diana, Venus, Mars,
Mercurius, Iovis, Neptunus, Vulcanus, Apollo.

(Ann. 62-63 Vahl.)

27–29 are of approximately the same type. The verbs *adiuvo* and *servo* are both extensively used of the gods in formulae in Plautus, and in the combinations here each verb seems to add some weight to the religious meaning of the other.

The final device can best be named the “numquid vis?” operation, after perhaps the commonest joke in Latin, the literal interpretation of a polite phrase. The flavor is suggested by some such English exchange as, “Good morning! What’s good about it?” or, “How do you do? Not so well.” It is precisely because this joke is so trite in Latin that it is of serious importance in judging the potentialities of the language we are considering. The Roman propensity toward this sort of bad pun would lead them easily to take literally expressions of a sort that most linguistic groups would probably never be led to analyze. For example, in the *Asinaria*, Philaenium the *meretrix* greets Libanus and his friend with a standard cheerful greeting: “dabunt di quae velitis vobis,” which normally means no more than “Good morning!” Libanus answers her with a social, but not a linguistic, *non sequitur*: “noctem tuam et vini cadum velim, si optata fiant” (*As*623–24).

Among the *amo* phrases, No. 32 is an example of a completely literal interpretation combined with the notion of human deification to provide a humorous twist: the Venus addressed here in standard religious terminology is actually a *meretrix*. There are other cases cited of the literal interpretation of an entire idiomatic phrase (Nos. 16, 17, 18, 24, 25) and in these, even though we must regard them as essentially comic, the playfulness tends toward the statement of a fairly serious religious principle: the gods will reward you if you deserve it. The word *dignus* appears in each of the last four statements, so that the pun itself has become almost a standard formula.¹⁶

I do not mean to imply that Plautus is a philosopher, although I do think that he engages in some fairly serious discussion of religious questions in other contexts. The real interest of the plays as far as the history of religion is concerned does not lie in any serious speculation of the playwright, but rather in the immense supply of linguistic and conceptual raw material into which speculation once entered and out of which speculation might grow; and Plautus as a comic poet, particularly sensitive to

¹⁶ See below, page 88.

words, actually shows, in the way he utilizes stock phrases, some of the ways in which that conscious thought could arise.¹⁷ Even the most conventional and literally meaningless phrase in Plautus, therefore, is to be regarded as meaningful, both because of its historical significance and its conceptual potential.

The principles suggested above imply a kind of statistical method which must be constantly modified, of course, by an awareness of the possibilities and exigencies of the medium—comedy of manners and intrigue. This can best be shown by an example.

In contrast to the literally hundreds of passages which state the superior *power* of the gods, there are only four which state their superior *knowledge*; and in contrast to the approximately twenty verbs of action which appear with a divine subject in repeated formulae, no verb of perception or knowledge appears more than once, and there is no evidence for any stock phrase equivalent to the common English expressions "God knows" and "Heaven only knows." *Scio*, for example, occurs in a religious context only in this one passage:

di sciunt culpam meam istanc non esse ullam. (*Mer*626)

In such a case as this, an *argumentum ex silentio*, which is a form of statistical argument, is of great force because countless occasions do in fact arise in the dialogue of Plautus' comedies where it would be natural to refer to human and divine knowledge and ignorance; and strong assertions like "ita me di ament" would easily be replaced by equally strong formulae of some such form as "di sciunt," if the formulae were part of the colloquial apparatus of the age.

Of the three other passages where the omniscience of divinity is alluded to, one appears in the *Captivi*, when the slave-in-disguise Tyndarus is making a strong plea for just treatment at the hands of his captor Hegio:

est profecto deus, qui quae nos gerimus auditque et videt:
is, uti tu me hic habueris, proinde illum illic curaverit;
bene merenti bene profuerit, male merenti par erit.

(*Cap*313-15)

¹⁷ It is far beyond the scope of the present paper to trace the history of the idea of the love of divinity for humans in Roman thought, up to and beyond St. Augustine's *amor Dei*. But such a history cannot be written without using the Plautine material, or the result is an overemphasis on Eastern influence.

This is indeed the crucial point of the play, which hangs on the fact that Hegio actually has his own son captive without knowing it. The play has been called the most serious of Plautus' comedies: if one were looking for a moral, this passage would epigrammatically express it. The other two occur in the *Amphitryon*, a play which is intensely concerned with divinity and its qualities. In the prologue Mercury asks the audience if they want him to change the play from a tragedy to a comedy, and then adds: "quasi nesciam vos velle, qui divus siem" (*Am*57). Then, in the last lines of the play Jupiter, as introduction to his prophecy of the glories of Hercules, tells Amphitryon to get rid of all his seers and soothsayers: "Quae futura et quae facta eloquar multo adeo melius quam illi, quom sum Iuppiter" (*Am*1133-34). These three passages have a character which is discursive and speculative as opposed to standardized expressions like "di te ament," which simply grow out of the stage characters' Latin conversation.

The conclusion which one may legitimately draw, then, with regard to the idea of the omniscience or superior knowledge of divinity, is that it was indeed a comprehensible idea, available for speculation, but one that had not reached a level of commonness to make it part of the automatic vocabulary of everyday conversation. One might say that the attribution of knowledge to the gods is a part of the passive but not of the active vocabulary of the majority of Romans in the second century B.C.

Evidence

The evidence will be discussed under three main heads: (1) the nature of the gods, (2) the actions and attitudes of the gods toward men, and (3) the actions and attitudes of men toward the gods. The method of arrangement by particular gods, common to most general treatments of Roman religion, is rejected in favor of a phenomenological arrangement, which seems more fruitful for the present inquiry. An onomastic scheme, organizing the material under the names of individual gods, puts the emphasis on two kinds of "religious" information, mythology and metaphor. But mythology on the one hand is conspicuously infrequent in Plautus, if one excepts the plot of the *Amphitryon*. Only a handful of passages in the plays should be labelled "purely mythological," i.e., passages about anthropomorphic gods which are merely

illustrative and do not involve a religious expression natural to the context, as the following:

Thetis quoque etiam lamentando pausam fecit filio. (Tru731)

quos si Argus servet, qui oculus totus fuit,
quem quondam Ioni Iuno custodem addidit,
is numquam servet. (Au555-57)¹⁸

Similarly metaphor, which accounts for a fairly large portion of divine proper names in later poets, is almost non-existent except for a few mock-heroic phrases, e.g.,

salve, anime mi, Liberi lepos. (Cu98)

dum ego haec appono ad Volcani violentiam. (Men330)¹⁹

Certainly the gods are named in Plautus. Just how many different ones can be counted depends upon the editors' policy on capitalization in regard to the large group of abstract nouns, seriously and playfully deified at various points in the dialogue. A conservative estimate would put the number of individual gods named at about sixty. But frequently, however, their individualization is completely unimportant from a religious point of view, as can be seen in the *amo* passages cited above. The substitution of Venus or Laverna or Saturitas was made for comic effect, as a reflection on the situation or the occupation of the character speaking the line.

Both Hubrich and Keseberg have followed the "Olympian" scheme in their studies of Plautine religion, and a careful look at Mazzoleni's appendix²⁰ or even Lodge's *Lexicon* will show the reader both the variety of names of deities and their relative

¹⁸ The other instances are *Ba*155-57, *Ba*926, *Cas*398-99, *Ep*34-36, *Ep*604, *Men*143-44, *Men*200-201, *Mi*1082, *Mo*984, *Pol*219-20, *Ps*199-200, *Ru*160-61, *Ru*489-90, *Tru*515. My definition of the category is of course restrictive; but even some of the passages listed above are borderline cases since they involve the feeling of human identification with divinity, however jestingly, and thus go beyond what I have called the "purely mythological": e.g., "Mars peregre adveniēns salutāt Nerienem uxorem suam" (*Tru*515).

¹⁹ Other examples are *Am*341, *As*156, *Au*359, *Cas*640, *Ci*313-14, *Mo*163-64, *Pe*24-25, *Pol*196, *Ru*761 and *St*661. Obviously it is difficult to draw the line in many cases, particularly with Venus, who nearly always "represents" in some sense the passion of love or the beloved object. Nevertheless, such expressions as "Cupido, quantus es!" (*Mer*854) must not be regarded by modern scholars as *a priori* mere metaphor, at the risk of imposing our feelings and vocabulary on the Romans.

²⁰ See above, note 2.

frequency. The position of the top four—Jupiter, Venus, Hercules, Neptune—is undoubtedly significant as a reflection of Roman religious ideas and practices of the time, although the rank of Venus can be partly accounted for by the frequency of Venus-inspired plots and the setting of two of the comedies outside a temple of that goddess, and that of Neptune by the frequent portrayal of a return from a sea voyage. In any case the superiority of Jupiter is unequivocal, nor does the *Amphitryon* provide a significantly large number of instances. But far more frequent than all the references to individual gods combined is the undifferentiated *di* or *di omnes* or *di deaque*.

1. *The Nature of the Gods*

1. Immortality. The most common single adjective applied to the gods in general is *immortales*. This occurs in a stock phrase of fixed word order, *di immortales*, which may be used either as a simple exclamation or a vocative forming part of an address to the gods, or may even be inflected and form part of a discursive utterance.²¹ As an exclamation it occurs either simply as *di immortales* (e.g., *Au*265; there are 21 instances) or in the form *pro di immortales* (e.g., *Ba*182; there are 25 instances).²² Both are sometimes combined with *opseco vostram fidem* to form a single exclamation (*Am*455, *Mo*77, *Mo*530, *Po*967).²³ As a vocative accompanying a longer address it occurs three times (*Au*808, *Men*1081, *Po*275), and it is otherwise found as a syntactic part of full sentences eleven times (e.g., *Po*1255: “quom nostram pietatem adprobant decorantque di immortales.” Also *Am*1093, *Au*785, *Ba*905, *Cap*195, *Cap*242, *Ep*675, *Po*917, *Ps*905, *Ps*936, *Ru*499.)

In addition, extraordinary longevity, if not immortality, is postulated of Jupiter in two passages:

vel usque dum regnum optinebit Iuppiter. (*Men*728)

²¹ All are listed in Lodge's *Lexicon*, s.v. “Immortalis.” *Athanatos* is not found in Menander as a divine attribute. The parallel with Homeric usage led Secknus (above, page 49), page 35, to postulate an earlier Greek influence with Etruscans as mediators, but this could equally well be explained simply in terms of a common Indo-European (or human) heritage.

²² Opposed to these forty-six instances there is one occurrence in our texts, of “o di immortales” (*Ru*1360), and it would seem reasonable to conjecture a manuscript corruption of “pro” into “o” to explain this solecism.

²³ See below, page 96.

postriduo natus sum ego, mulier, quam Iuppiter ex Ope natust.
(*Mi*1082)

and suggested by contrast in a third:

quasi tu nescias repente ut emoriantur humani Ioves.
(*Cas*333–34)

2. Power. The imputation of power to divinity is of course implicit in the interaction between gods and men to be discussed below, but there are in addition specific characterizations of the gods as being by nature powerful. These are most frequent with reference to Jupiter but occur also with reference to other deities as well as the gods in general. Jupiter is called *summus* thirteen times (*Am*111, *Am*780, *Am*933, *Am*1121, *Am*1146, *As*414, *Cap*863, *Ci*516, *Men*811, *Mo*241, *Ps*265, *Ps*327, *Ru*783) and *supremus* eleven times (*Am*831, *Am*1127, *Cap*426, *Ci*513, *Mo*348, *Pe*252, *Pol*122, *Ps*628, *Cap*768, *Cap*976, *Men*1114).²⁴ He is also called *magnus* (*Au*776, *Pol*163), *validus* (*Pe*252) and *viripotens* (*Pe*252). The words of kingship are applied to him: *deorum regnator* (*Am*45), *rex deorum atque hominum* (*Cap*622), and *regnum* (*Am*831, *Cas*336, *Men*728, *Mi*1083, *Ps*15)²⁵; as well as those of secular magistrates: *imperator divum atque hominum* (*Ru*9, cf. *Am*1121), *iudicium* (*Ps*14), *iussus* (*Am*19, *Am*989; cf. *iussit* in *Cas*406–8). One should especially note the *double-entendre* when Jupiter-Amphitryon speaks of himself to Alcmena:

sed ubi summus imperator non adest ad exercitum,
citius quod non facto est usus fit quam quod facto est opus.
(*Am*504–5)

With this belongs also the use of *imperat* with Venus (*Cu*3) and perhaps the use of *praeesse* in Mercury's "nuntiis praesim et lucro" (*Am*12), as well as Arcturus' characterization of Jupiter in the opening lines of the *Rudens*, with its political metaphor:

qui gentis omnis mariaque et terras movet,
eius sum civis civitate caelitem. (Ru1–2)

Omnipotens is used of the gods only once, as an addition to the

²⁴ The last three listed occur in conjunction with the phrase *serva* or *servas me*, giving the appearance of a formulaic combination, perhaps actually from ritual language.

²⁵ *Ps*15 also applies *regnum* to Venus.

formulaic *di immortales* (*Po*275). Other power compounds are *multipotens*, used once of Venus (*Cas*841) and once of Neptune (*Tri*820: "salsipotenti et multipotenti Iovi' fratri"), *caelipotentes*, used once of all the gods (*Pe*755), and *vinipollens*, of Liber (*Cu*114). The exclamation *di magni* appears once (*Tru*701).

Absolute power as an attribute of divinity is expressed in two short statements of Mercury near the beginning of the Amphitryon:

facile meu' pater quod volt facit. (*Am*139)

deu' sum, commutavero. (*Am*53)

as well as in the collocation of will and action in such a passage as this:

deos credo voluisse; nam ni vellent, non fieret, scio.
(*Au*742)

Note the insistence on power as a gift of the gods in the following:

immo potes,
pater, et poteris et ego potero, et di eam potestatem dabunt.
(*Cap*933-34)

and the parallel of the Titans to suggest invincibility:

quid ego faciam? disne advorser? quasi Titani cum is
belligerem
quibu' sat esse non queam?
(*Pe*26-27)

The stock phrase *virtute deum* (*Au*166, *Cap*324, *Mi*676, *Mi*679, *Pe*390, *Tri*346, *Tri*355) provides further confirmation of the power motif, especially with its variant *vi deum* (*Mer*320: "id vi optingit deum"). Because of the parallel one must not be quick to discard as pure metaphor the phrase, "ita vi Veneris victus" (*Tri*658). A further indication of the power of the gods in Plautine language is the proverbial description of an impossible task as one which "not even the gods" can perform:

si undecim deos praeter sese secum adducat Iuppiter,
ita non omnes ex cruciatu poterunt eximere Epidicum.
(*Ep*610-11)

siquidem hercle nunc summum Iovem te dicas detinuisse
atque is precator adsiet, malam rem ecfugies numquam.
(*As*414-15)

pro di immortales! similiorem mulierem
 magi'que eandem, ut pote quae non sit eadem, non reor
 deos facere posse. (Mi528-31)²⁶

3. Moral qualities. The attributes of goodness, justice, mercy and the like are normally expressed indirectly in Plautus through the description of the interrelations between the gods and men. The direct expression or description of these qualities is largely concentrated in two plays, the *Amphitryon* and the *Rudens*. In the former, Jupiter insists on his moral responsibility toward Alcmena:

nam deum
 non par videtur facere, delictum suum
 suamque ut culpam expetere in mortalem ut sinat.
 (Am493-95)²⁷

nam mea sit culpa, quod egomet contraxerim,
 si id Alcumenae innocentem expetat. (Am871-72)

and he rights his wrong to her in a not unimportant way: "faciam ut . . . pariat sine doloribus" (Am878-79). The *Rudens* is peculiarly marked by the recurrent theme of the justice of the gods in rewarding the righteous and punishing the impious, which will be more closely analyzed below. In it also occurs the most "benign" description of any god to be found in Plautus:

bonam atque opsequentem deam atque hau gravatam
 patronam exsequuntur benignamque multum.
 (Ru261-62)

But otherwise the milder adjectives applied to gods are few in number. The exclamation *di boni* occurs only once (Ep539).²⁸ Venus is called *bona* (Ru305) and *alma* (Ru694), with which one may compare the characterization of Jupiter as "qui genu' colis

²⁶ Cf. also Cap529 and Mo351, cited below, page 75.

²⁷ Parallel to the "deum non par videtur facere" of this citation, *aequum* is used of the gods in Mi725 and Mi730, and again, addressing Neptune, in Tri830: "scis ordine ut aequomst tractare homines; hoc dis dignumst."

²⁸ It appears twice, however, in the fragments of Caecilius Statius (vv. 54 and 280); and Secknus (above, page 49), page 45, lists four occurrences in Terence (*Andr.* 338, *Haut.* 254, *Eun.* 225, *Ad.* 440). Marouzeau's contention that *bonus* in the religious sphere meant first "fruitful" and then "excellent," acquiring its moral significance only late in the Republic, does not seem valid for Plautus; Marouzeau himself admits a moral connotation for some Plautine occurrences ("Tuppiter Optimus' et 'Bona Dea'," *Eranos* 54 [1956] 227-31).

alisque hominum" (*Pol*187). *Bonus* also occurs with Mercury (*Cas*238) and Fortuna (*Aul*100). The latter is also characterized as *opsequens*:

quem te autem divom nominem? :: Fortunam, atque
opsequentem. (*As*716)²⁹

4. Other qualities. The qualities examined up to this point are familiar as characteristics of the standard modern philosophical definition of a supreme being: immortality, omnipotence, goodness. The fourth term frequently included in that definition, omniscience, is notable by its almost complete absence from Plautus.³⁰

The creative activity of a god as "master-builder" is perhaps implied once, in the metaphorical use of *architectus* in Mercury's characterization of Jupiter (*Am*45).³¹

More human qualities are sometimes added to the divine. Wealth is postulated of the gods in four passages (*Men*217, *Pe*251, *Ps*628, *Tri*490) and the colloquial adjective *lepidus* is occasionally joined to a divine name (*Po*849, *Po*850, Venus; *Ru*358, Neptune; *Cul*14, Liber; *Ru*489, Libertas). Normally, however, the distinction between man and god is insisted upon:

ain vero, verbero? deos esse tui similis putas? (*Am*284)
di divites sunt, deos decent opulentiae
et factiones; verum nos homunculi,
satillum animai qui quom extemplo emisimus,
aequo mendicus atque ille opulentissimus
censetur censu ad Accheruntem mortuos. (*Tri*490-94)³²

²⁹ This is certainly a use of the additive or explicative "atque," not the true conjunctive. Cf.: "credo edepol equidem dormire Solem atque adpotum probe" (*Am*282); "meretricem indigne deperit . . . atque acerrume aestuosam" (*Ba*470-71); *et alia similia*, *ThLL*, s.v. "Atque," I.A. Some have taken "Obsequens" as itself a deity (Keseberg [above, note 2] 49; Lodge, *Lexicon*, s.v.), but its attestation as an official cult title for both Fortuna and Venus argues against this.

³⁰ See the detailed discussion above, pages 59-60. It may be felt that a discussion of haruspicy, auspices and the like belongs under the head of the omniscience of the gods. These activities, however, imply not superior knowledge on the part of divinity but rather extraordinary knowledge on the part of man concerning the disposition—present, not future—of the divine will. Reference to the subject will be found below, page 79.

³¹ One may note that the expression has a later history in its perhaps more deliberate use by Cicero (*De nat. deorum* 1.8.19 and 2.35.90) and Apuleius (*De Platone* 1.11).

³² The "homunculus" theme appears elsewhere in Plautus and, although not

and this is reflected in the formulaic collocations *di atque homines* and *divinum humanum*.³³ The gods' dwelling place is apart, in the heavens, and this is sometimes expressed briefly, as in "caeli cultor" (*Am*1065) or "qui caelum colunt" (*Pe*581). In the *Amphitryon* Jupiter identifies himself as "ille Amphitruo . . . in superiore qui habito cenaculo" (861-63), and his exit line is "ego in caelum migro" (1143).³⁴

Finally, the divine epithet *sanctus* occurs three times, but in no case is it applied to a major deity, and it thus seems almost a mock-heroic device in Plautus, perhaps parodying epic style,³⁵ or drawn from the solemn language of ritual:

o Palaemo, sancte Neptuni comes. (*Ru*160)

ita me amabit sancta Saturitas,

Hegio, itaque suo me semper condecoret cognomine.

(*Cap*877-78)

Spes mihi sancta, subveni.

(*Ci*670)

5. Deified abstracts. The frequency of personified abstractions in Plautus is consistent with the general Roman literary and religious practice.³⁶ The most important and common of these are at the same time gods with attested cults and deifications of important concepts in the religious thought of the Romans: Fides,

strictly religious, is of interest here in the light of the stated comparison with the gods in the *Trinummus* passage. The following examples may be cited:

quasi solstitialis herba paullisper fui:

repente exortus sum, repentino occidi.

(*Ps*38-39)

vita quam sit brevis simul cogita.

(*Mo*725)

homunculi quanti sunt, quom recogito! (*Cap*51, cf. *Ru*155)

³³ *Di atque homines*: *Cap*727, *Cu*694, *Ep*580, *Men*990, *Men*1053, *Mi*541, *Po*823, *Ps*381, *Ps*600, *Ru*319, *Ru*407, *Tri*520, *Tri*912, *Ru*346 "et," *Ci*242 "neque." *Divinum humanum*: *Am*258, *As*854, *Po*466, *Tri*479.

³⁴ The exceptions are Hanno's entrance prayer to the gods "qui hanc urbem colunt" (*Po*950); the Lar in *Au*4: "hanc domum . . . possideo et colo"; and Neptune, "qui salsis locis incolit pisculentis" (*Ru*907). With the first two, *colo* is perhaps to be taken more as "protect" than "inhabit"; cf. *Po*1187, cited above. Beyond this there is nothing in Plautus which reflects the animists' and numinists' favorite "numen inest."

³⁵ One should note here the relative frequency of *sanctus* in the fragments of Ennius' *Annales* (see Vahlen, *Ennianae poesis reliquiae*, "Index sermonis," s.v.).

³⁶ See, e.g., Harold L. Axtell, *The Deification of Abstract Ideas in Roman Literature and Inscriptions* (Diss. Chicago 1907).

Fortuna, Pax, Pietas, Salus and Spes. They will be treated as concepts in the following sections. A few remain which, because of contemporary or later evidence of cult, may also be regarded as full-fledged divinities: Pudicitia (*Am*930), Libertas (*Ru*489), Victoria (*Am*42, *Mer*867), Virtus (*Am*42, *Ba*893, *Mo*144), Copia (*Ps*736). The rest, which L. Deubner calls "Augenblickspersonifikationen,"³⁷ occur in three contexts. The first category is one in which a situation or personal trait is magnified by the use of a personification in a comparison or a humorous statement of relationship; its two types are represented by the following:

ipsa Opportunitas non potuit mi opportunius advenire.
(*Ps*669–70; cf. *As*268, *Cas*225)

mulier profecto natast ex ipsa Mora.
(*Mi*1292; cf. *Ru*1284–85, *St*155)

The second category, which alone seems literary and artificial, is the moral allegory, of which one finds four extended examples: the short prologue to the *Trinummus* spoken by Luxuria and her daughter Inopia, the "housecleaning" monologue of Philolaches in the *Mostellaria* (135–45), the parade of vices in the *Persa* (555–58), and Eutychus' list of good and bad companions in the *Mercator* (845–71). The third is the identification of a human being with one or more such abstracts, as "mea Commoditas" (*Men*137, *Po*421), "mea Opportunitas," (*Cu*305, *Men*137), "Copia" (*Ps*736), or some more extended list (*Ba*114–15, *Cap*864, *Mer*867).³⁸ The fact that these abstractions are here used similarly to, and often in combination with, unquestionable gods makes it necessary to consider them seriously in any discussion of religious concepts and justifies their "capitalization." The following is the most striking example:

sed iube

vasa tibi pura apparari ad rem divinam cito,
atque agnum adferri proprium pinguem. :: qur? :: ut
sacrufices.

³⁷ Roscher, *Lexicon* 3.2107.

³⁸ Two occurrences of deified abstracts are not covered by the above classification. Both involve the humorous substitution of an "Augenblickspersonifikation" in a regular religious formula: "Perfidiae laudes gratiasque habemus merito magnas" (*As*545); "ita me amabit sancta Saturitas" (*Cap*877).

::quoi deorum? ::mihi hercle; nam ego nunc tibi sum
 summus Iuppiter,
 idem ego sum Salus, Fortuna, Lux, Laetitia, Gaudium.

(*Cap*860-64)

However playfully, Plautus' use of abstracts actually demonstrates various popular processes by which they are given vitality, human or superhuman.

6. Human deification. The above citation from the *Captivi* shows with what explicitness the identification of a person with deity may sometimes be made and should make the student of religion wary of too light a treatment of the phenomenon of identification as it occurs elsewhere in Plautus. It shows how easily a relatively playful and insignificant statement of the form "ego sum tibi deus" may be expanded and given a real religious context, linguistically at least. Such playful identifications are extremely common. They include the simple characterization of oneself as a deity, either actual (e.g., "Hercules ego fui," *Ep*178; cf. *As*712-27, *Cap*863-64, *Cu*167, *Tru*515), or potential (e.g., "si sim Iuppiter," *Pol*219; cf. *Mil*1043, *Po*276); referring to another person as a god (e.g., "mi Iuppiter terrestris," *Pe*99-100; "mea Spes," *Ru*247, *St*583; "hanc Venerem," *Po*278; cf. *Ba*217, *Ba*879-80, *Cas*230, *Cas*331, *Cas*406-8, *Cas*801, *Ci*644, *Cu*192, *Mer*689-90, *Po*421, *Ps*328, *Ps*709, *Ps*736, *Ru*680, frag. 66); referring to someone as descended from a god (*Mil*15, *Mil*1265, *Mil*1413, *Mil*1421); comparison with a god (*Ba*386-87, *Cu*168, *Mer*844, *Mil*1-12, *Mil*1082, *Pe*2, *St*274-75, *Tru*372); reference to an epiphany (*Pe*258: "ea nunc quasi decidit de caelo"). The total number of cases noted is forty, a substantial quantity and certainly a factor of importance in examining the Roman intellectual and emotional background for the later Imperial cult. The habit of language at such a date in Rome is highly significant, showing an early Roman familiarity with the concept of human deification.³⁹

II. *Actions and Attitudes of the Gods toward Men*

1. Di volunt. Only once is the "Epicurean" view that the gods live a life apart and are not concerned with human problems expressed in Plautus:

³⁹ See above, page 51.

aut Nocti aut Dii
aut Soli aut Lunae miserias narrant suas:
quos pol ego credo humanas querimonias
non tanti facere. (Mer4-7)

and here it is a question of the planetary deities, who seem to lie as yet out of the main stream of religious thought.⁴⁰

Common, on the other hand, is the expression of the complete and all-pervading control of the gods over human affairs:

quo eveniat, dis in manust. (Ba144)
enim vero di nos quasi pilas homines habent. (Cap22)
Iuppiter . . . per quem vivimu' vitalem aevom,
quem penes spes vitae sunt hominum omnium.
(Po1187-88)
qui gentis omnis mariaque et terras movet. (Ru1)

This absolute control is also implicit in the frequent formulaic use of the verbs *volo* and *sino* of the gods, where human action is presented as possible only if the gods "will" or "allow" it. The fullest expression occurs in a humorous exchange:

deos credo voluisse; nam ni vellent, non fieret, scio.
::at ego deos credo voluisse ut apud me te in nervo enicem.
(Au742-43)

In addition, *volo* is used of the gods seven times (*Mil*17: "fit quod di volunt"; also *Aml*051, *Ba*239, *Cap*195, *Men*371, *Mil*227, *Po*910), the phrase *cum dis volentibus* (*Pe*332) and *cum dis benevolentibus* (*Mil*351), and the adjective *invitus* (*Ru*783). Closely allied is *dis* (or *deo*) *placet* (or *complacet*), which occurs five times (*Am*635, *Cap*454, *Ru*187, *Ru*727, *Tru*647). *Sino* occurs four times (*Ba*468, *Cu*27, *Mer*613, *Po*953); two of these occurrences are in the formula *ne di sirint*, and a third in the closely related *nec me ille sirit Iuppiter*. Its opposite, *prohibeo*, occurs twice (*Aml*051, *Ps*14). Further evidence for the attitude of the complete dependence of men on divinity is found in the employment of the word *patronus*,

⁴⁰ The following are the Plautine instances: Luna (*Ba*255, *Mer*5), Sol (*Am*422, *Ba*255, *Mer*5, *Mi*803), Nocturnus (*Am*272), Nox (*Am*277, *Am*546, *Mer*4), Arcturus (*Ru*1-82), and Dies (*Am*546, *Ba*255, *Mer*4). In regard to the last, see Riess (above, note 2) page 125, who fails to mention, however, the valuable confirming evidence of *Am*546-47: "nunc te, Nox, quae me mansisti, mitto ut concedas Die, ut mortalis inlucescat luce clara et candida."

used twice to characterize a god (*Ru*262 of Venus; *Ru*906 of Neptune).

2. Propitius, iratus. The gods love and hate, preserve and destroy, do good or do ill to a man in proportion as they are well or ill disposed, friendly or unfriendly to him. These two sides of divinity's action and attitude toward man form the most frequent motif, except for the common exclamations, in the religious language of the Plautine plays. The favorable side, perhaps through the natural operation of euphemism, finds the more frequent and varied expression.

Propitius and *iratus* are by far the most common words used to imply the favorable or unfavorable attitude of a god at a given time. Their juxtaposition in Plautus is almost technical or ritual:

id ego si fallo, tum te, summe Iuppiter,
quaeso Amphitruoni ut semper iratus sies.
::a, propitius sit potius! ::confido fore.

(*Am*933-35)

quo agis? ::egone? in aedem Veneris. ::quid eo? ::ut
Venerem propitiem,
::eho, an iratast? ::propitia hercle est. ::vel ego pro
illa spondeo.

(*Po*333-34)

quoi homini di sunt propitii, ei non esse iratos puto.

(*Cu*557)

In addition, *propitius* occurs eighteen times, *iratus* ten times.⁴¹ A practical synonym for the latter is *inimicus*, used three times of the gods, twice in the same context:

quis magi' dis inimicis natus quam tu atque iratis?

(*Mi*314, cf. *Mo*563)

and once with its opposite *amicus*, which is used only here as a synonym for *propitius*:

esne tu huic amicus? ::tam quam di omnes qui caelum colunt.
::tum tu mihi es inimicus certus, nam generi lenonio
numquam ullus deu' tam benignus fuit qui fuerit propitius.

(*Pe*581-83)

⁴¹ *Propitius*: *Am*1065, *Am*1090, *As*781, *As*783, *Au*810, *Ba*452, *Cas*331, *Cu*531, *Mer*678, *Mer*680, *Mer*956, *Mi*701, *Pe*470, *Pe*583, *Po*278, *Po*454, *Po*1134, *Tri*837. *iratus*: *Am*392, *Am*1022, *Ep*673, *Mi*314, *Pe*666, *Po*452, *Po*465, *Po*645, *Ru*1146, *Tru*656.

Benignus (Pe583, above), *placidus* and *clemens* (used of Neptune in Tri827) occur only once, so they cannot be considered part of the formulaic vocabulary applied to the gods, although they serve in context as equivalents to *propitius*. *Placidus* is surely used of Neptune with a metaphorical idea of the sea.⁴²

3. Di amant. Although *propitius* is almost exclusively a divine word in Plautus, the emotions of the gods toward men are expressed with the same vocabulary as is applied to human feelings. The gods love (*amo*) and, to a much more limited extent, hate (*odio habeo*). The latter expression, in fact, occurs only once, where it is directly opposed to *amo*:

di me amabunt. ::quid me? ::utrum hercle illis lubet;
sed si ut digna's faciant, odio hercle habeant et faciant male.
(Pe205-6)

With this may also be mentioned the single occurrence in Plautus of the phrase *deorum odium atque hominum* (Ru319).

Amo, on the other hand, is the single most frequent verb to be used of the gods, with sixty occurrences. Its use in conversational formulae and the problems of interpreting these formulae have been discussed in detail in the *Introduction*.

4. Di faciunt. The gods are spoken of as directly causing or bringing about an action or state (*facio*). The standard formulae are (*Ita*) *di faciant/faxint* (*ut*), occurring fourteen times (*Am*380, *Au*149, *Au*257, *Au*545, *Au*788, *Au*789 twice, *Cap*172, *Mo*398, *Pe*652, *Pe*823, *Po*488-89, *Po*909, *Ps*923); *di melius* (*meliora*) *faciant/faxint*, occurring five times (*Ba*626a, *Cas*813, *Mer*285, *Po*1400, *Ps*315); *di bene* (*male*) *faciant alicui*, occurring ten times (*Am*184, *Ba*617, *Ci*242, *Cu*130, *Men*1021, *Mi*570, *Mi*1419, *Pe*488, *Ru*407, *Ru*1193); *di me faciant quod volunt*, as part of an oath, occurring twice (*Au*776, *Mo*222).⁴³

5. Di bene vertunt. Closely related is the gods' ability to make things "turn out" for the best (*bene vertere*). The formula

⁴² The verbs which suggest the human attempt to gain this favorable attitude are relatively rare in Plautus: *propitio* occurs three times (*Cu*124, *Po*333, *Po*848), as also *placo* (*Po*850, *Ps*329, *Ru*23).

⁴³ Seven other occurrences of *facio* with the gods as subject are all closely allied to the above formulae: *Am*43-44, *Am*461, *Am*632, *Cap*622, *Mo*464, *Po*1208, *Vi*86.

di bene vortant occurs unvaryingly six times (*Au*175, *Au*257, *Au*272, *Ps*646, *Tri*573, frag. 123), and twice in expanded form:

deos volo bene vortere
istam rem vobis. ::et ego nobis omnibus. (*Cu*658–59)
deos volo consilia vostra <vobis> recte vortere.
(*Tri*1155)

In *Tri*573 it is used as part of a formula for betrothal: “*di bene vortant; spondeo.*”

6. Di dant. Plautus’ Latin speaks frequently of the gods as personally giving (*do, dono, offero*) good, or occasionally evil to men. The commonest formula, often used as a greeting, is *di (tibi) dent/dabunt quae velis*. It occurs, with the variations of *optes* or *exoptes* for *velis* and *quaecumque* for *quae*, eleven times.⁴⁴ One may note the alliterative variation: “*di tibi omnes omnia optata offerant*” (*Cap*355). A similar wish is in the form *multa tibi di dent bona* (*Po*208, *Po*687) or *di deaque vobis multa bona dent* (*Po*667). The greeting is answered literally in *As*623–24, a favorite Plautine joke, and is interrupted and reversed in *Ru*107–8: “at *di dabunt::tibi quidem hercle, quisquis es, magnum malum.*” *Quod di dant boni* and similar relative clauses are common (eight occurrences: *Am*563, *Au*88, *Ba*1188, *Men*558, *Mo*655, *Po*1253, *Ps*1130, *Ru*1229); and the verb is used four times in an exclamation of gratitude for good fortune:

Venu’ multipotens, bona multa mihi
dedisti. (*Cas*841–42)

Venu’ mihi haec bona datat. (*Ps*1132)

bene mihi, bene vobis, bene meae amicae, optatus hic mi
dies datus hodiernus ab dis. (*Pe*773–74)

di immortales, quibus et quantis me donatis gaudiis.
(*Au*808)

It occurs once in a request: “date, di, quaeso” (*Mer*850).⁴⁵

Plautus, it is true, shows nothing corresponding to the short and alliterative “*di me divitant*” found in Sextus Turpilius (198).

⁴⁴ *As*45, *As*623, *Ep*6, *Mi*1038, *Pe*16, *Pe*483, *Po*1055, *Ps*936, *St*469, *Tri*436–37, *Tri*1152. *Po*1055 should probably be emended to “*di dent tibi omnia quae velis*” (mss. *omnes*) parallel in meaning to *quaecumque optes* in three of the phrases above.

⁴⁵ Three occurrences of *do* with gods as subject not listed above are *Po*1252, *Ps*767, *Cap*934.

It is rather in the context of the phrase *virtute deum* that the specific gift of wealth from the gods is normally expressed. That phrase⁴⁶ invariably appears as part of a sentence stating the sufficiency of riches of the speaker, e.g.:

ego virtute deum et maiorum nostrum dives sum satis.

(*Au*166, *Cap*324)

deum virtute est te unde hospitio accipiam apud me comiter:
es, bibe, animo opsequere mecum atque onera te hilaritudine.
liberae sunt aedes, liber sum autem ego; me volo vivere.
nam mihi, deum virtute dicam, propter divitias meas
licuit uxorem dotatam genere summo ducere.

(*Mi*676–80)

7. Di servant (Salus). The most significant action verb used of divinity in Plautus is *servo*. It serves as the standard, almost technical, antithesis to the commonest curse word, *perdo*:

servate di med, opseco! ::at me perditis. (*Ci*573)

di me servatum cupiunt. ::at me perditum. (*Ru*1164)

di me servant. ::tibi amicam esse nullam nuntio.

::di te perdant! (*Mer*966–67)

di immortales meum erum servatum volunt

et hunc disperditum lenonem. (*Po*917–18; cf. *Ep*644, *Ps*37)

Its context also reveals that, unlike the English “bless,” *servo* normally refers to a single action of rescue and may be best rendered by “save” as opposed to “preserve.” Characters say *di me servant* (*Am*1089, *Au*207, *Cap*768, *Mer*966, *Ps*613) or *di me servatum volunt/cupiunt* (*Au*677, *Cas*814, *Ep*644, *Men*1120, *Po*917, *Ps*906, *Ru*1164, *Tri*1076) when they have just escaped from a real or imagined danger to their life, their love, or their money. They say *serva me* (*Cap*976, *Ci*573, *Ci*663–64, *Cu*639–40, *Men*1114) when they are in such a danger. *Servo* normally describes an action, not a condition, a change from a state of imminent destruction.⁴⁷ In the more immediate context of the passages themselves, this is revealed most clearly in the following:

di me ex perditam servatam cupiunt. (*Ep*644)

⁴⁶ See above, page 64.

⁴⁷ The chief exception is the phrase *di te servassint (mihi)* (*As*654, *Cas*324, *Ps*37, *Tri*384; cf. *Ci*742, *Ps*934) which suggests a notion of continual preservation rather than momentary rescue.

Moreover, the verb *servo* has as a frequent companion in these religious passages the noun *Salus* and the adjective *salvus*:

di me servant, salva res est. (Au207)

di me salvum et servatum volunt.
(Au677, Tri1076)

at vos Salus servassit! ubi ea nunc est?
::salvam eccam. sed ego rem meam magnam confabulari
tecum volo: sociam te mihi adopto ad meam salutem.
(Ci742-44)

ah, Salus mea, servavisti me. (Ba879-80)

valetate atque adiuuate, ut vos servet Salus. (Po128)

There is no doubt of the closeness in range of meaning of the two roots, and their virtual synonymity is proved beyond reasonable doubt by the two alternate statements in Plautus of a proverb describing a hopeless situation:

neque iam Salus servare, si volt, me potest. (Cap529)

nec Salus nobis saluti iam esse, si cupiat, potest.
(Mo351)⁴⁸

Servare is here a translation equivalent of *saluti esse*, and in fact serves generally in Plautus as the verb for *Salus* and *salvus*.

The latter words are occasionally used in formulating petitions to the gods or in explaining the reasons for offering thanks to them:

equidem sana sum et deos quaeso ut salva pariam filium.
(Am720)

te pro filio
facturum dixit rem esse divinam domi,
quia Thebis salvus redierit. (Ep414-16)

ut quae apud legionem vota vovi si domum
rediissem salvus, ea ego exsolvam omnia. (Am947-48)

quom bene re gesta salvus convortor domum,
Neptuno gratis habeo et Tempestatibus. (St402-3)

di tibi illum faxint filium salvum tuum. (Vi86)

⁴⁸ Cf. Terence, *Adel.* 761-62: "ipsa si cupiat Salus, servare prorsus non potest hanc familiam." The expression is later used by Cicero (*Verr.* 3. 57.131): "te ulla Salus servare posset?"

Apollo, quaeso ut des pacem propitius,
salutem et sanitatem nostrae familiae. (*Mer*678–79) ⁴⁹

In the last citation, the proximity of *sanitas* may refer *salus* more specifically to the realm of good health, which it does frequently occupy in later Roman votive inscriptions in conjunction with Asclepius and Hygieia. It is noteworthy, however, that with the possible exception of *Am*720 (cited above), where *sana* refers to the accusation of insanity just leveled at Alcmena, this is the only instance in a religious context in Plautus where *salus* or *salvus* is related to the medical realm.

In the course of a comedy, an individual benefactor may be temporarily “deified” by his gratified admirer as *mea Salus* (*Ba*879–80, *Cas*801, *Ci*644, *Po*421, *Ru*680). In one instance an explicit text justifies insisting upon the association of the abstraction with cult, and thus regarding *Salus* in a full religious sense as god, not metaphor:

si quidem mihi statuam et aram statuis
atque ut deo mi hic immolas bovem: nam ego tibi Salus sum.
(*As*712–13)

Here two slaves are vying with one another for divine honors as *Salus* and *Fortuna*, and the whole passage (*As*712–27) deserves careful study. One further example of deification as *Salus* may be cited:

dic utrum Spemne an Salutem te salutem, Pseudole.
(*Ps*709) ⁵⁰

The frequency in Plautus of the religious use of *servo*, *Salus*, and *salvus* may be viewed in the light of the contemporary concern in other parts of the Greco-Roman world with the notions of rescue and salvation, expressed in Greek through the development in the use of the words *sôtēr* and *sôtéria*.⁵¹ Plautus provides important

⁴⁹ *Sospes* also occurs once, in one of Hanno's prayers in the *Poenulus*: “da diem hunc sospitem quaeso” (*Po*1188).

⁵⁰ Two things should be noted here. The first is the collocation of *Spes* and *Salus*, seen also in “o Salutis meae Spes” (*Ru*680; cf. *Mo*350–51). The second is the pun in “Salutem te salutem,” which is repeated at *Ps*968: “‘cho, an non priu’ salutas? :nulla est mihi salus dataria.”

⁵¹ It would seem one is justified in regarding the Plautine custom of addressing a benefactor as *Salus mea* as the contemporary Roman equivalent for the Greek title *sôtēr*, which has no other Latin translation except the late and infrequent *salvator*.

evidence for the existence of well-developed Roman raw material which is part of the total product of the Greco-Roman concept of *sôtêria*. The goddess Salus in Plautus cannot be regarded as a simple translation from a Greek play, since she had already received a temple and cult in Rome at the end of the fourth century B.C.⁵² Furthermore, the use of *servo* is already frozen into a group of repetitive colloquial formulae by the time Plautus is writing and so, as in the case of *amo*, must reflect an older Roman concept.

8. Di tutantur. The notion of steady preservation and care, revealed by the verb *tutor* and its synonyms, is applied occasionally to the gods' actions towards men. But the occurrence of the idea seems to be specialized, since all examples include references to the Lares or to Venus:

di Penates meum parentum, familiai Lar pater,
vobis mando, meum parentum rem bene ut tutemini.
(Mer834-35)

invoco
vos, Lares viales, ut me bene tutetis. (Mer864-65)

Venus alma, ambae te opsecramus,
aram amplexantes hanc tuam lacrumantes, genibus nixae,
in custodelam nos tuam ut recipias et tutere. (Ru694-96)

Veneris causa adplaudite; eius haec in tutelast fabula.
(Tru967)

Cererem te meliust quam Venerem sectarier:
amori haec curat; tritico curat Ceres. (Ru145-46)

praeter ceteros
duo di quem curant. ::qui duo? ::Mars et Venus.
(Mil383-84)

In addition, the phrase "praesidio Veneris" occurs at Ru693, and fragment 25 (line 144) quoted by Pliny refers to the "tutela hortorum" of Venus.

9. Di perdunt. The destructive and punitive activity of the gods is almost exclusively expressed by the verb *perdo* (forty-eight times) in certain stock formulae. The other verbs which are used in these colloquial curses are *infelico* (six times: Cas246, Ep13, Mer436, Po449, Ru885, Ru1225), *interficio* (Mo192), *excrucio* (Pe831), *male facio* (Cu130), *malum do* (Mo655), *adigo ad suspendium* (Au50).

⁵² See Thulin in *RE*, s.v., col. 2057; Wissowa in Roscher's *Lexicon*, s.v., col. 296.

Di me perdant is given twice in the euphemistic form: *di me faciant quod volunt* (*Au*776, *Mo*222). The particular agent of destruction is usually quoted as "all the gods" (*di, di omnes, di deaque*), Jupiter (twice called Diespiter), or Jupiter plus the rest of the gods. It is once Mercury, appropriate to the *myropola* who is being cursed (*Cas*238); and twice Hercules (*Cas*275, *Ru*1225).

10. Di iuvant (Auxilium). The concept of the gods as helping men is also common in Plautine Latin, expressed through the verb *iuvo* and its synonyms, and the noun *auxilium*.

di me quidem omnes adiuvant, augent, amant.

(*Men*551, cf. *Ep*192)

quisquis est deu', veneror ut nos ex hac aerumna eximat,
miseras, inopes, aerumnosas ut aliquo auxilio adiuvet.

(*Ru*257-58)

Apollo, quaeso, subveni mi atque adiuva,
confige sagittis fures thensaurarios,
qui in re tali iam subvenisti antidhac.

(*Au*394-96)

duodecim dis plus quam in caelo deorumst immortalium
mihi nunc auxilio adiutores sunt et mecum militant.

(*Ep*675-76)

Mercurio, qui me in mercimoniis
iuvit lucrisque quadruplicavit rem meam.

(*St*404-5)

nisi quid me opi' di dant, disperii, neque unde auxilium
expetam habeo.

(*Ci*671)

aliqua Fortuna fuerit adiutrix tibi.

(*Po*973)

In addition to the above examples, *adiuvo*, the most common and perhaps the ritual term, is used ten times (*As*15, *Cap*587, *Cap*859, *Ep*396, *Mer*401, *Mi*871, *Mi*1134, *Ps*905, *Ru*12, *Ru*305), *iuvo* twice (*Cas*417, *Pe*755), *auxilium* five times (*Am*92, *Am*1064, *Am*1093, *Am*1131, *Ps*905), *subvenio* twice (*Ci*670, *Ru*1298), *subvento* once (*Ru*231a), and *suppetiae* once (*Am*1106). In the light of the high frequency of such words in religious contexts in the plays, *Auxilium* as divine prologue to the *Cistellaria* (*Ci*149-202) is not as gratuitous religiously as most commentators would lead us to believe.

11. Di augent. The second term in the alliterative series cited above, "adiuvant, augent, amant" (*Ep*192, *Men*551), deserves also to be classed among the stock religious words for which Plautus gives evidence, but its use is relatively infrequent. In

addition to this triplet, there are only two occurrences of the verb with divine subject:

atque adorna, ut rem divinam faciam, cum intro advenero,
Laribus familiaribus, quom auxerunt nostram familiam.

(*Ru*1206-7)

Iuppiter supreme, servas me measque auges opes,
maximas opimitates opiparasque offers mihi. (*Cap*768-69)

12. Di respiciunt. *Respicio* occurs in its specialized religious sense of "favor" or "help" four times, twice for the sake of a pun on the physical meaning "look back."

deu' respiciet nos aliquis. (*Ba*638)

di homines respiciunt: bene ego hinc praedatus ibo.
(*Ru*1316)

respice. ::Fortuna quod tibi nec facit nec faciet, me iubes.
(*Cap*834)

paucis verbis rem divinam facito. atque audin? respice.
respexit. idem edepol Venerem credo facturam tibi.
(*Po*408-9)

The gods are very rarely spoken of as pitying or forgiving man, in accordance with the milder virtues. *Ignosco* is used once of Venus (*Ru*703: "ignoscere his te convenit"), and *venia* appears once in a religious context, which may have been suggested largely by word play (*Ru*27: "inveniet veniam sibi"). It is significant that the only two instances of this area of religious vocabulary occur in the *Rudens*.

13. Di animum ostendunt suum. In addition to their other actions toward humans, the gods frequently demonstrate their will to them:

nobis di immortales animum ostenderunt suum. (*Cap*242)

Although this feature of divine action is directly alluded to only here in Plautus' descriptions of divinity,⁵³ on it depends a whole area of Roman religious activity: the interpretation of dreams, the taking of auspices, the science of haruspicy. The number of Plautine references to these activities is immense; and the words,

⁵³ Unless one include the repeated couplet referring to divinely sent dreams: "miris modis di ludos faciunt hominibus, mirisque exemplis somnia in somnis danunt" (*Mer*225-26, *Ru*593-94).

haruspex, *hariolus*, *conector*, *auspicium*, with related words, are frequent at every level of conversation.⁵⁴ Closely related are the phenomena of *omen* and *prodigium*.⁵⁵

14. Di dant pacem. Having dealt with the expression of the direct action of the gods on men, one must examine three religious concepts which are, similarly to *Salus* above, in part to be considered as gifts of divinity to man, in part as aspects of divinity itself, and finally as individual abstract deities with their own cult. These are *Pax*, *Spes*, and *Fortuna*.

Pax is normally spoken of as a possession (or condition) of the gods or a particular god which an individual attempts to gain for himself:

abi domum, iube vasa pura actutum adornari mihi,
ut Iovis supremi multis hostiis pacem expetam. (Am1126–27)

pacem ab Aesculapio petas. (Cu270–71)

pacisque potentes, soror, fuimus. (Po1182)

sunt hic omnia

quae ad deum pacem oportet adesse? (Po253–54)

Apollo, quaeso te ut des pacem propitius,
salutem et sanitatem nostrae familiae,
meoque ut parcas gnato pace propitius. (Mer678–80)

propterea pace advenio et pacem ad vos fero. (Am32)

In the last two quotations above, *pace* is used in addition to describe an attitude of good will, or at least permissiveness, on the part of the god, as also in the following:

fac . . . nosque ut hanc tua pace aram opsidere
patiare. (Ru698–99)

⁵⁴ The material has been quite thoroughly collected and analyzed by Charles Burton Gulick, "Omens and Augury in Plautus," *HSCP* 7 (1896) 235–47. Some other bibliography and a few additional comments may be found in Riess (above, note 2) 150–51, 153.

⁵⁵ The latter word occurs only once: "prodigium hoc quidemst; humana nos voce appellant oves" (Ba1141). Jupiter occurs with the cult epithet *prodigialis* in Am739; see Riess' discussion of this (above, note 2) 158–59. Riess (161) also sees a reference to the expiation of a *prodigium* in *Vidularia*, frag. 12. For omens, see Gulick (above, note 54), and Samuel Grant Oliphant, "The Use of Omen in Plautus and Terence," *CJ* 7 (1911–12) 165–73. In the latter, discussion is restricted to the spoken word as omen; *Pe*736 is not included.

Again it may seem to describe a condition between two parties, similar to its secular meaning, i.e., a cessation of hostilities:

nihil ego formido, pax mihi est cum mortuis.

(*Mo*514, *Mo*524)

habui expurigationem; facta pax est.

(*Am*965)

The last citation is, it is true, a humorous description by Jupiter as Amphitryon of making peace with his wife; but the choice of speaker and the use of *expurigatio* brings the religious context to the fore and provides the humor. Finally, *pax* may be the quality of the god spoken of as if it were the god itself:

ni tua pax propitia foret praesto.

(*Tri*837)

The close relation in concept between *pax* and *propitius* is indicated by their conjunction here and twice in the passages quoted above (*Mer*678, *Mer*680). In general, one might characterize *pax* as the noun which best represents the attitude of the gods more often described by the adjective *propitius*.

15. Di dant spem. *Spes* may also be spoken of as a possession or gift of the gods:

Iuppiter, qui genu' colis alisque hominum, per quem vivimu'
vitalem aevom,

quem penes spes vitae sunt hominum omnium, da diem hunc
sospitem, quaeso. (*Pol*187-88; cf. *Pe*251-54)

di immortales, spem insperatam date mihi quam suspico.

(*Men*1081)

divom atque hominum quae speratrix atque era eadem es
hominibus,

spem speratam quom optulisti hanc mihi gratis ago.

(*Mer*842-43)

But she may also be represented as a goddess in her own right (*Ci*670, *Ru*231), if sometimes a human one (*Ps*709, *Ru*246-47, *Ru*680, *St*583).

16. Di fortunant (Fortuna). The verb *fortuno* is used only three times in connection with divine action:

haec imponentur in foco nostro Lari,
ut fortunatas faciat gnatae nuptias.

(*Au*386-87)

di fortunabunt vostra consilia.

(*Tri*576)

uxor, venerare ut nobis haec habitatio
bona, fausta, felix fortunataque evenat. (*Tri*40–41) ⁵⁶

Otherwise the concept of fortune seems to be kept relatively separate from the religious sphere. The number of times that *Fortuna* appears as deified is significantly small (eight times: *As*716–27, *Au*100, *Cap*864, *Pe*515–16, *Po*623–24, *Po*973, *Ps*678–80, *Ru*501), when one considers that there are six instances in the text of Terence, approximately one-third the length, and when one notes the frequency of *Tychē* in the remains of New Comedy.

III. *The Actions and Attitudes of Men toward the Gods*

1. Fear and love. Agorastocles in the *Poenulus*, when chided by his slave for loving a girl he had never touched, replied:

nihil id quidemst:
deos quoque edepol et amo et metuo, quibu' tamen apstineo
manus. (*Po*281–82)

This is the sole example in Plautus, though not an insignificant one, of the use of *amo* to describe man's feelings towards the gods. The verb is here used deliberately, and its meaning is insisted upon by means of the close collocation with the same verb in a human context. The other half of the fear-love dichotomy is explicitly stated in four other places in the plays:

deos quidem, quos maxume aequom est metuere, eos minimi
facit. (*Ps*269)

quippe qui intellexerat [*sc.* Iuppiter]
vereri vos se et metuere, ita ut aequom est Iovem. (*Am*22–23)

Iunonem, quam me vereri et metuere est par maxume.
(*Am*832)

non ego illam mi dotem duco esse quae dos dicitur
sed pudicitiam et pudorem et sedatum cupidinem,
deum metum, parentum amorem et cognatum concordiam.
(*Am*839–41)

⁵⁶ Although this alliterative triad suggests a stock formula, and the other two members do have a later history as religious words, this is the only occurrence in Plautus of either *faustus* or *felix* in a religious context. *Feliciter* occurs once in a wish: "nunc quae res tibi et gnatae tuae bene feliciterque vortat—ita di faxint, inquit" (*Au*787–88), and *di te infelicient* is a possible synonym for *di te perdant* (see above, page 77).

2. Prayer. Man comes into specific contact with divinity either by word or act, through prayer or sacrifice. Prayer may perhaps be conveniently divided into three categories: prayer of request, prayer of thanks, prayer of adoration. The first is by far the most common form reflected in Plautus, especially if one include the countless examples which have already been cited of casual prayers, usually defined grammatically by a third person subjunctive (*di te servassint mihi, di te perdant*, etc.) and thus perhaps not strictly to be regarded as a direct address to divinity, but frequently employing vocative and imperative: e.g., "Iuppiter supreme, serva me" (*Men*1114). There is in addition, however, a vocabulary of formal verbs of address to a god or gods: *veneror, opsecro, invoco, quaeso, oro, saluto*.⁵⁷ All of these, with the exception of *saluto*, may be followed immediately by a request that is syntactically bound to the verb, expressed either by an *ut*-clause or an imperative. It is interesting that in Plautus this usage is almost invariable. The apparent exceptions (six in number) are cases in which the content of the request is obvious either from the situation or the immediately surrounding text; e.g.:

Iovem invocarunt, venit, auxilio is fuit. (*Am*92)

nam ubi parturit, deos invocat. (*Am*1061)

In addition, Plautine usage implies a virtual synonymy of all these terms. One may compare, for example, the following instances:

. . . ores ut sit propitius. (*As*783)

. . . quaeso te ut des pacem propitius. (*Mer*678)

. . . venerabor, me ut amet posthac propitia. (*Po*278)

invoco vos . . . ut me bene tutetis. (*Mer*864-65)

. . . opsecramus . . . in custodelam nos tuam ut recipias et
tutere. (*Ru*694-96)

Nor does there seem to be any observable difference in emotion,

⁵⁷ *Spero* and *mando* also occur once each as verbs of "request": "di penates meum parentum, familiai Lar pater, vobis mando meum parentum rem bene ut tutemini" (*Mer*834-35); "deos teque spero. ::eosdem ego—uti abeas domum" (*Gi*596). "Deos sperabo teque," also occurs at *Mil*209, with no stated request and "deos sperabimus" at *Cas*346. A formula is suggested, with a further occurrence of the idea of *Spes* in standard religious expressions (see above, page 81). *Prex* with its derivatives is very infrequent in religious contexts, limited to *conprecatum* (*Am*740), *preces* (*Ru*259), and *precantum* (*Ru*260).

as might be seen in terms of differences of intensity in the situation which calls forth the prayer. The only particularities that one may note in the individual words are two: *opsecro* occurs in the phrase *opsecro vostram fidem*,⁵⁸ and Plautus finds it difficult to resist the word play *Venerem veneror*:

nunc Venerem hanc veneremur bonam, ut nos lepide adiuverit hodie.

(*Ru*305. Cf. *Po*278, *Ru*1348–49, *Po*950–51 with “venio.”)

Saluto (*salutem dico*, *Po*406–7) is used nine times of addressing the gods. Four instances occur when an individual has just returned from a long absence (*Ba*172, *Ba*347, *St*534, *St*623) and one at a departure (*Mi*1339). That it involves a ritual address, and not just a colloquial “Hello,” is sufficiently shown by the joke at *Cu*389–90: “quis hic est operto capite qui Aesculapium salutat?” It is never expressly connected with a request, except at *Ba*172, where it is followed by *venero* and a petition. One may perhaps call this divine *salutatio* a prayer of adoration, in terms of the three categories suggested above.

The expression of gratitude to the gods, *gratias* (*gratis*) *ago* (*habeo*), is not uncommon in Plautus (sixteen occurrences⁵⁹). When examined together, these prayers show several recurrent words and phrases, which are obviously part of the standard religious vocabulary of thanksgiving, and which are strikingly parallel to the later usages of votive inscriptions. In the first place, the concept that the gods have merited man’s gratitude is usually made explicit not only through a description of the favors received but also through the use of the words *merito* or *pro meritis*:

numero mihi in mentem fuit
dis advenientem gratias pro meritis agere atque adloqui.
(*Am*180–81)

Iovi disque ago gratias merito magnas. (*Cap*922)

perfidiae laudes gratiasque habemus merito magnas.
(*As*545)

di deaeque omnes, vobis habeo merito magnas gratias.
(*Po*1274)

⁵⁸ Six times, see below, page 96.

⁵⁹ *Am*181, *As*143, *As*545, *Cap*922, *Ci*624, *Cu*699, *Mer*843, *Mi*411–12, *Mo*431, *Pe*251–54, *Pe*756, *Po*1254, *Po*1274, *Ru*906, *St*402–5, *Tri*820–24.

In addition, the state of mind of the worshipper is often characterized by *laetus* or *lubens* or both:

laetus lubens laudis ago et gratis gratiasque habeo.
(*Tri*821)

laeta laudes gratisque agam. (*Mi*411-12)

and the latter word—votive inscriptions show how stereotyped it became—is even made the subject of a joke:

Venus, de paullo paullulum hic tibi dabo hau lubenter.
(*Cu*123)

The combination of *lubens* and *merito*—the common *L.M.* of Imperial inscriptions—occurs once, in a prayer in the *Persa*:

Iovi opulento, incluto, Ope gnato,
supremo, valido, viripotentī,
opes, spes bonas, copias commodanti,
lubens vitulorūque merito. (*Pe*251-54)

Many of these prayers of thanks in Plautus are delivered on the occasion of a return from the perils of a voyage, and here we find a recurrent and apparently formulaic use of the word *reddux*:

quom te reducem tuo patri reddiderunt. (*Cap*923)

quom me ex suis locis pulchre ornatum expedit, vixit,
templis reducem. (*Ru*908-9)

quom suis med ex locis in patriam urbis † cummam † reducem
faciunt. (*Tri*823)

This adjective, used passively in this religious context in Plautus, has a considerable history later as a cult title appended to the name of Iuppiter or Fortuna, in the active sense of "The Returner."

3. Deservingness. Two passages in the *Amphitryon* elaborate the notion of the deservingness of the gods as expressed in the prayers of gratitude above, and speak of the relationship as a two-sided one, where *merito* can be applied equally to men or gods. The first is in Mercury's prologue, where the god explains that he has come to ask a favor of the audience:

debetis velle quae velimus: meruimus
et ego et pater de vobis et re publica;

nam quid ego memorem (ut alios in tragoediis
 vidi, Neptunum, Virtutem, Victoriam,
 Martem, Bellonam commemorare quae bona
 vobis fecissent) quis benefactis meu' pater,
 deorum regnator, architectust omnibus?
 sed mos numquam ille fuit patri meo,
 ut exprobaret quod bonis faceret boni;
 gratum arbitratur esse id a vobis sibi
 meritoque vobis bona se facere quae facit. (Am39-49)

The other occurs in Sosia's first speech:

sum vero verna verbero: numero mihi in mentem fuit
 dis advenientem gratias pro meritis agere atque adloqui?
 ne illi edepol si merito meo referre studeant gratiam,
 aliquem hominem adlegent, qui mihi advenienti os occillet
 probe,
 quoniam bene quae in me fecerunt ingrata ea habui atque
 inrita. (Am180-84)

In the *Captivi*, when the slave disguised as master, Tyndarus, tries to impress upon the old man Hegio the "golden rule" in reference to his own captive son, the word *mereo* occurs again in a religious context, this time referring only to the human side of the relationship and epigrammatically characterizing man's worthiness for divine favor:

est profecto deu', qui quae nos gerimus auditque et videt:
 is, uti tu me hic habueris, proinde illum illic curaverit;
 bene merenti bene profuerit, male merenti par erit.
 (Cap313-15)

The problem of the mutual relationship that exists between man's actions—and character—and the favorable or unfavorable action of the gods toward that man is a complex one. Much has been written of the "contractual" or "legalistic" nature of Roman religion, and one must investigate the Plautine material to see if it supports such a generalization.

The *do ut des* formulation in its most patently materialistic form can be found in Plautus:

et quod in divinis rebus sumas sumpti, sapienti lucrost.
 (Mi675)

quoi homini di sunt propitii, lucrum ei profecto obiciunt.
nunc rei divinae operam dabo. certumst bene me curare.
(Cu531-32; cf. Pe470)

di homines respiciunt; bene ego hinc praedatus ibo.
(Ru1316)

quoi homini di sunt propitii, ei non esse iratos puto.
postquam rem divinam feci, venit in mentem mihi,
ne tarpezita exulatum abierit, argentum ut petam,
ut ego potius comedim quam ille. (Cu557-60)

edepol, si summo Iovi bono argento sacrificassem,
pro illius capite quod dedi, numquam aequae id bene locassem.
(Mo241-42)

nam ego hodie infelix dis meis iratissumis
sex immolavi agnos nec potui tamen
propitiam Venerem facere uti esset mihi.
(Po452-54)

But four of these statements are made by the stock villain in the play, the *leno*, with whom the audience would have little sympathy, and one by the shaggy fisherman Gripus. Of the remaining two, one (*Mi*675) is textually suspect. The last citation should be used rather as evidence against the simple *do ut des* concept because it is introduced to point up the contrast between the *leno*'s six lambs and no favor from the gods and the maid's immediate favor at the expense of only one:

lepidam Venerem! ::nam meretrices nostrae primis hostiis
Venerem placavere extemplo. ::o lepidam Venerem denuo!
(Po849-50)

In the prologue to the *Rudens*, Plautus states a view explicitly contradicting the contractual attitude toward religion, which becomes one of the principal themes of the play. Arcturus moralizes as follows:

atque hoc scelesti in animum inducunt suum,
Iovem se placare posse donis, hostiis:
et operam et sumptum perdunt; id eo fit quia
nihil ei acceptumst a peiuris supplici;
facilius si qui pius est a dis supplicans
quam qui scelestust inveniet veniam sibi. (Ru22-27)

The alternative to the venality of the contractual view—if the

gods are not to be thought of as exercising their wills in a purely arbitrary manner⁶⁰—is the notion of a morally just divinity rewarding virtue and punishing vice. The relation between human virtue and divine reward is not infrequently stated in epigrammatic fashion in the comedies:

satin si quoui homini di esse bene factum volunt,
aliquo illud pacto optingit optatum piis?
(*Ru*1193–94)

quod bonum atque fortunatum sit mihi—::magnum malum
tibi quidem edepol credo eveniet; novi pietatem tuam.
(*Cas*382–83)

quom nos di iuvere, Olympio,
gaudeo. ::pietate factum est mea atque maiorum meum.
(*Cas*417–18)

tua pietas nobis plane auxilio fuit.
(*Pol*137; cf. *Pol*1277)

redde is libertatem, invictae praemium ut esse sciam pietati.
(*Pol*190)

quom nostram pietatem adprobant decorantque di immortales.
(*Pol*1255)

volup est quom istuc ex pietate vostra vobis contigit.
(*Ru*1176)

In addition, the word *dignus* (or *indignus*) is used several times to characterize man's position with regard to divine favor:

ne indigna indignis di darent. (*Pol*1252)

Diespiter me sic amabit . . . ::ut quidem edepol dignus es.
(*Pol*869)⁶¹

The relationship between virtue and reward also plays an important part at the end of the *Amphitryon*: in the dialogue between Bromia and Amphitryon the latter accuses Alcmena of *foeda facta* (1085). Bromia replies that she will prove the contrary, “*piam et pudicam esse tuam uxorem*” (1086); the proof is her description of the miraculous intervention of Jupiter, the painless birth and the thundering apparition.

⁶⁰ This does find occasional expression in the mouth of a Plautine character: “*enim vero di nos quasi pilas homines habent*” (*Cap*22); “*miris modis di ludos faciunt hominibus*” (*Mer*225, *Ru*593).

⁶¹ See also *Pe*205–6, *Ps*271–72, *Pol*859–61, cited in the Introduction, p. 55; and *Ru*406–7.

4. Pietas. The importance of the word *pietas* (and *pius*) in this context is immediately observable, and one is forcibly reminded of Catullus' outburst: "o di reddite mi hoc pro pietate mea." The later vitality of *pietas* both in cult and literature, and modern attempts to delimit its meaning,⁶² make it imperative to try to define, at least in some measure, its connotation within the Plautine plays.

It is commonly stated that *pietas* may refer to an individual's relations with his parents (or, *in loco parentis*, one's husband). Five instances in Plautus are to be related by context definitely to this sphere, and may be translated roughly as "sense of filial (conjugal) duty":

egon patri surrupere possim quicquam, tam cauto seni?
atque adeo, si facere possem, pietas prohibet.

(Ps290-91)

si neminem alium potero, tuom tangam patrem.

::di te mihi semper servant! verum, si potest,

pietatis causa—vel etiam matrem quoque. (Ps120-22)

numquidnam tibi molestumst, gnate mi, si haec nunc mecum
accubat?

::pietas, pater, oculis dolorem prohibet. quamquam ego
istanc amo,

possum equidem inducere animum ne aegre patiar quia tecum
accubat.

::deceat verecundum esse adulescentem, Argyrippe.

(As830-33)

feceris par tuis ceteris factis,

patrem tuom si percoles per pietatem. (Tri280-81)

nostrum officium

nos facere aequomst

neque id magi' facimus

quam nos monet pietas.

(St7-8a)

The last quotation concerns the loyalty of two sisters toward their absent husbands. However, a bit of dialogue from the *Asinaria* specifically contrasts this conception of *pietas*—more accurately, this portion or realm of the total meaning of *pietas*—with a different, more inclusive, concept, which is regarded as having a prior claim

⁶² E.g., C. Koch in *RE*, s.v., cols. 1221-23; Theodor Ulrich, *Pietas (pius) als politischer Begriff im römischen Staate bis zum Tode des Kaisers Commodus* (Breslau 1930) 1-10; Wissowa in Roscher's *Lexicon* 3.2499-2502.

on the decision of the individual. The *lena* Cleareta wishes her daughter Philaenium to stop seeing her young lover who can no longer afford to pay enough, and to behave as a more business-like courtesan should:

nequeone ego ted interdictis facere mansuetem meis?
 an ita tu es animata, ut qui matris expers imperio sies?
 :: ubi piem Pietatem, si istoc more moratam tibi
 postulem placere, mater, mihi quo pacto praecipis? . . .
 :: hocine est pietatem colere, matris imperium minuere?
 :: neque quae recte faciunt culpo neque quae delinquent amo.
 (As504-10)

In one case *pietas* refers specifically to the formal worship of the gods. The *leno* in the *Pseudolus* characterized his desire for gain as follows:

nam si sacrificem summo Iovi
 atque in manibus exta teneam ut poriciam, interea loci
 si lucri quid detur, potius rem divinam deseram.
 non potest pietati opsisti huic, utut res ceterae.
 :: deos quidem quos maxume aequom est metuere, eos minimi
 facit. (Ps265-69)

"Pietati huic" refers of course to seizing the opportunity for gain, implicitly contrasted to the *pietas* of performing a sacrifice to Jupiter. The combination of parent and gods as the possible objects of *pietas* is given formal statement in Palaestra's philosophic monologue on being cast ashore in the *Rudens*:

hancine ego partem capio ob pietatem praecipuam?
 nam hoc mi sat laborist laborem hunc potiri,
 si erga parentem aut deos me impiavi . . .
 nam me si sciam in vos [the gods] fecisse aut parentis
 sceleste, minus me miserer. (Ru190-97) ⁶³

The extension of *pietas* to still another sphere of action is explicitly stated near the end of the *Rudens*, when the fisherman Gripus approaches the old man Daemones to try to convince him to keep the chest which Gripus has fished out of the sea. The dialogue, beginning with Daemones' reply, is as follows:

aequom videtur tibi, ut ego alienum quod est
 meum esse dicam? :: quodne ego inveni in mari?

⁶³ Text of Havet, after Leo.

::tanto illi melius optigit qui perdidit;
 tuom esse nihilo magis oportet vidulum.
 ::isto tu pauper es, quom nimi' sancte piu's.
 ::o Gripe, Gripe, in aetate hominum plurumae
 fiunt trasennae, ubi decipiuntur dolis. (Ru1230-36)

Daemones continues with a long moral essay in Polonius fashion. But from this instance, and from Philaenium's argument in the *Asinaria* (cited above), it is seen that *pietas* in Plautus may be used to denote general moral rectitude, as well as filial respect and religious observance.

The same conclusion results if we examine the contexts of *pius* and *pietas* with regard to their opposites, i.e., the word with which they are set in antithetical correlation.

ego scelestus nunc argentum promere potis sum domo:
 tu qui pius, istoc es genere gnatus, nummum non habes.
 (Ps355-56)

facilius si qui pius est a dis supplicans,
 quam qui scelestust, inveniet veniam sibi. (Ru26-27)
 abin a me, scelu' ? ::sine, mea pietas, te exorem.
 (Ba1176)

In the last citation, *pietas* is used as a pet name. This is its only such occurrence in Plautus, and it seems probable that it is selected here as a deliberate contrast to the preceding "scelus!" In these three passages, the only ones where an antithesis is neatly stated, *scelestus* and *scelus* serve as opposites to *pius* and *pietas*. This observation is further strengthened by the coupling of the *scelus* root with the negative of the *pius* root:

scelestae hae sunt aedes, impia est habitatio. (Mo504)
 sed erile scelus me sollicitat, eiinus me impietas male habet.
 (Ru198)

vindicate, ne impiorum potior sit pollutia
 quam innocentum, qui se scelere fieri nolunt nobilis.
 (Ru618-19)

Scelestus and *scelus* are general terms of moral disapprobation, not restricted to any particular sphere of activity, and thus the antithesis *scelus-pietas* gives further weight to the hypothesis that regards *pietas* as an inclusive moral term.

To illustrate further, one may examine briefly the three persons in the plays who are most consistently and strongly characterized as *pious*, and whose *pietas* is in each case essential to the development of the plot and the intellectual or moral content of the play as a whole: Alcmena, Hanno and Palaestra.

Alcmena in the *Amphitryon* is perhaps first to be regarded in the light of her conjugal fidelity and affection, like the two sisters in the *Stichus*. She is even willing to sacrifice her own comfort for her husband's glory (633–53). Her *pietas* is closely related to *castitas* and her maid says of her that she is *pia et pudica* (1086). In addition she is charitable (she stands up for Mercury-Sosia when Jupiter-Amphitryon is about to strike him [520, 540]), but proud in her virtue (e.g., 820–21). She has some tendency toward general moralizing, as may be seen in her monologues (633–53, 839–42). The key motif in Hanno's character in the *Poenulus*—in addition to his continued affection for and diligent searching for his nephew and two daughters, which is a stock characteristic necessary to the skeleton of the plot—is his piety toward the gods. He prays more consistently and more sincerely than any other Plautine character, and this note is struck immediately at his entrance (950–53):

deos deasque veneror qui hanc urbem colunt
ut quod de mea re huc veni rite venerim,
measque hic ut gnatas et mei fratris filium
reperire me siritis, di vostram fidem!

and is repeated at 1187–90, 1251–55, and 1274–76. The combination of this feature with the continued mention of the festival of Venus, and the description of the relative success of the *leno* and the two girls in their religious rites (see above), makes the realm of Hanno's *pietas* seem to lie largely in the religious sphere, though he too is charitable (he does not take vengeance on the *leno* and he sees that his nephew is installed with two patrimonies) and generally a sympathetic character. The character of Palaestra in the *Rudens* is harder to define. She is, it is true, loyal to her missing parents and keeps the trinkets with which to identify them, but this is largely a matter of self interest and is demanded by the plot. She prays, but her opening prayer is an impassioned questioning of the ways of the gods. What she herself tells of her character is mostly negative, that she has not committed any

crimes against her father or the gods. She seems simply to be one of the most convincing of the "virtuous prostitutes" so common in Plautus and Terence. She is shown in strong contrast to her friend Ampelisca, who is permitted a humorous and somewhat obscene flirtation with the slave Trachalio, and the audience's sympathies for her are of course aroused by the forlorn circumstances of her shipwreck. Her *pietas*, vital to the play, must be regarded as more general in contrast to that of the two characters analyzed above. Within the *Rudens*, the *pietas* of two other characters is almost equally of interest to the outcome. That of the father Daemones was discussed above and seen to be explicitly stated as within the realm of general moral rectitude. The third character is the priestess of Venus, whose outstanding moral quality is self-denying charity. She is never explicitly called *pia*, but her relation to the major characters and to the prologue theme of the correspondence between human virtue and divine reward is unmistakably stated in the words of Ampelisca:

neque digniorem censeo vidisse anum me quemquam
 quoi deos atque homines censeam bene facere magi' decere.
 ut lepide, ut liberaliter, ut honeste atque hau gravate
 timidas, egentis, uvidas, eictas, exanimatas
 accepit ad sese, hau secus quam si ex se simus natae!

(Ru406-10)

Pietas is once personalized and addressed as a semi-divine abstraction: Planesium in the *Curculio*, thinking that she recognizes her brother, apostrophizes:

o Pietas mea,
 serva me, quando ego te servavi sedulo. (Cu639-40)

Because of the personal pronoun, and because of the uniqueness of the occurrence, Plautus cannot be cited as evidence for a real cult.⁶⁴ Planesium here is best regarded as simply apostrophizing one of her own virtues, which is now about to effect her reward.

One more specification of *pietas* must be noticed, although the conclusions to be drawn from it are rather more subjective in character. The phrase *pietas et fides* appears twice in the prologue

⁶⁴ Compare this passage with the humorous retort of the *leno* Ballio cited above: "pietatem erga istam amplexator noctu pro Phoenicio" (Ps292). Cf. also Ba1176.

to the *Rudens* (11 and 29). The words are used to define further the concept of the "good" man:

idcirco moneo vos ego haec, qui estis boni
quique aetatem agitis cum pietate et cum fide.

(Ru28-29)

If one regards *fides* as the fulfilling of one's obligations in a contractual sense—loyalty to an oath, admitting a *depositum*, fulfilling a *votum*—*pietas* may be taken to denote the fulfilling of one's obligations in a more general moral sense, but not a contractual or legalistic sense—obeying one's parents normally because it is the "right" thing to do but not obeying them when they recommend a course that is morally wrong; worshiping the gods because of an intrinsic obligation to worship them, not in fulfilment of a specific bargain; avoiding unjust action because it is unjust, not because of any legal claim. If this is the case, then *pietas* in Plautus, while indeed denoting a certain "sense of obligation," refers specifically to a non-contractual sort of obligation, and thus not only lies outside but is opposed to the *do ut des* interpretation of Roman religion.

The converse of the attitude that moral rectitude brings reward is that lack of *pietas* brings punishment from the gods. The usual example in Plautus is the *leno* and the strongest statement is again in the *Rudens*. On climbing ashore, Labrax's merchant companion succinctly bemoans this divine justice:

pol minime miror, navis si fractast tibi,
scelu' te et sceleste parta quae vexit bona. (Ru505-6)

Labrax is repeatedly referred to throughout the play as *scelestus*, *impurus*, *legirupa*, *peiiurus*:

fraudis, sceleris, parricidi, peiuri plenissimus,
legirupa impudens, impurus, invericundissimus,
uno verbo apsolvam, lenost: quid illum porro praedicem?
(Ru651-53)

This is of course standard Plautine language for a *leno*, but it acquires more pointed meaning here, viewed as an example to support the generalization of the prologue:

qui falsas litis falsis testimoniis
petunt quique in iure abiurant pecuniam,

eorum referimus nomina exscripta ad Iovem;
 cottidie ille scit quis hic quaerat malum:
 qui hic litem apisci postulant peiurio
 mali, res falsas qui impetrant apud iudicem,
 iterum ille eam rem iudicatam iudicat;
 maiore multa multat quam litem auferunt. (Ru13-20)

The judicial metaphor in this passage and the emphasis on perjury among the *leno*'s crimes are indicative of a more "legalistic" view of the negative aspects of divine justice. This may in part be due to the fact that the breaking of an oath and Labrax's subsequent failure to honor the sacrosanctity of the temple and altar of Venus represent the depths of moral degradation, the extreme of *impietas*.

5. Fides. The above analysis of *pietas* is not meant to imply that the concepts lying within the sphere of *fides* are absent from religion as reflected in Plautus. Among these should be included references to undertaking (*suscipere*) or paying (*solvere, exsolvere*) a *votum* (Am229-30, Am947-48, Am966, Cu72, Men196, Ru60, St386).

The taking of an oath "by" the gods is a part of the colloquial apparatus of the comedies. The standard formula, *per deos iuro* (*adiuro, dico, obtestor*), occurs twelve times (Am435, Am436, Am831-32, Ba777, Cap727, Cas670, Men616, Men655, Men990, Men1025, Mi1414, Tri520), with the frequent substitution of a specific god for the general *deos*, usually Jupiter. Once a soldier swears *per Iovem et Mavortem* (Mi1414). The other oath formula which occurs is *deos testis do*, with minor variations (Cap426, Men811-12, Mer627, Ps514, Ru1338). The normal context of these passages can hardly be called seriously religious, but four cases deserve special attention. Two of the oaths are solemn and serious, expanded from the simple asseverative formula. Alcmena, accused of infidelity by her husband, takes the following appropriate oath, which, despite its irony, must be regarded by her as serious:

per supremi regis regnum iuro et matrem familias
 Iunonem, quam me vereri et metuere est par maxume,
 ut mi extra unum te mortalis nemo corpus corpore
 contigit, quo me inpubicam faceret. (Am831-34)

In the *Rudens* Gripus makes the *leno* Labrax swear a solemn and

complete oath to give him a talent if he gets his trunk back. The oath is sworn in full form and with full apparatus. Labrax touches the altar of Venus, repeats the terms of the oath after Gripus, touching him as interested party at the moment when he promises to give him the money, and ends with the required penalty for perjury:

si fraudassis, dic ut te in quaestu tuo
 Venus eradicet, caput atque aetatem tuam.
 tecum hoc habeto tamen, ubi iuraveris.
 :: illaec advorsum si quid peccasso, Venus,
 veneror te ut omnes miseri lenones sient.
 :: tamen fiet, etsi tu fidem servaveris. (1345–50)

The dialogue between Sosia and Sosia-Mercury early in the *Amphitryon* provides the opportunity for the following humorous exchange of oaths:

SOS. per Iovem iuro med esse neque me falsum dicere.
 MERC. at ego per Mercurium iuro tibi Iovem non credere;
 nam iniurato, scio, plus credet mihi quam iurato tibi.
 (Am435–37)

Finally, one may note the use of *Dius Fidius*, best regarded as a form of Jupiter whose particular competency is the preservation of *fides* in oaths:

per Dium Fidium quaeris: iurato mihi
 video necesse esse eloqui quidquid roges. (As23–24)⁶⁵

The *fides* of the gods, or of a particular god, is frequently invoked by a character, usually at a moment of obvious emotional stress. The formula *pro di immortales obsecro vostram fidem*, or a shortened form, notably *di vostram fidem*, occurs fifteen times (Am455, Am1130, Cap418, Ci663, Men873, Mo77, Mo530, Po830, Po900, Po953, Po967, Tri591, Tri1070, Tru29, Tru580). Another form of the expression is *pro deum atque hominum fidem* (Cu694, Ep580; cf. Au300 and Men1053).⁶⁶ Although these expressions seem to have little literal significance, the frequency of occurrence of the

⁶⁵ See Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* 129.

⁶⁶ Cf. Caecilius' amplification of the formula (vss. 211–12):
 pro deum, popularium omnium, omnium adulescentum,
 clamo postulo obsecro oro ploro atque imploro fidem."

word in connection with the gods is important in evaluating the importance of the concept of *fides*.

As a deified abstract, Fides plays an important part in one play and receives a passing reference in another. The latter is in the prologue to the *Casina* and is in fact a pun on *fides* as human virtue and/or god:

salvere iubeo spectatores optumos,
fidem qui facitis maxumi,—et vos Fides. (Cas1-2)

The reality of Fides in regard to actual cult is assured in the *Aulularia*, where Euclio takes his pot of gold for safe keeping “in Fidei fanum” (583), a fact which Plautus uses as an excuse for repeated and perhaps not insignificant word play:

Fides, novisti me et ego te: cave sis tibi
ne tu immutassis nomen, si hoc concredudo.
ibo ad te fretus tua, Fides, fiducia. (584-86)

vide, Fides, etiam atque etiam nunc, salvam ut aulam aps te
auferam:

tuae fide concredidi aurum, in tuo luco et fano est situm.
(614-15)

sed si repperero, o Fides,
mulsi congialem plenam faciam tibi fideliam. (621-22)

Fide censebam maxumam multo fidem
esse, ea sublevit os mihi paenissume. (667-68)

certumst, Silvano potius credam quam Fide. (676)

6. Ritual. References to sacrifices and details of ritual are extremely numerous in Plautus. These have been fairly widely investigated, mostly with a view to determining their originality, and for the most part they will be excluded from the present study, since it deals with the verbalization of religious concepts rather than acts. One must only underline their frequency here (I have listed seventy-seven passages) and note the ease with which the technical language of ritual enters into Plautine dramatic conversation, e.g.:

men piacularem oportet fieri ob stultitiam tuam,
ut meum tergum tuae stultitiae subdas succidaneum?
(Ep139-40)

ipsus escae maxumae,
 Cerialis cenas dat, ita mensas exstruit
 tantas struices concinnat patinarias. (Men100-102) ⁶⁷

An over-emphasis by scholars on these passages tends to support the notion that Roman religion is entirely formalistic. One should at least cite in opposition the words of Astaphium in the *Truculentus*, which gain in significance from the fact that their speaker is a *meretrix*, a class usually noted for thinking in terms of hard cash:

piaculumst miserere nos hominum rei male gerentum.
 (Tru223)

7. Opposition. Among possible human attitudes toward divinity one must of course include opposition: a man may criticize, ridicule or ignore the gods. That Plautus promotes adverse criticism of religion is a surface judgment, based probably on a knowledge of the plot of the *Amphitryon* ⁶⁸ and a few citations like the following:

quid si sors aliter quam voles evenerit?
 :: benedice. dis sum fretus, deos sperabimus.
 :: non ego istuc verbum empsim tittibilicio;
 nam omnes mortales dis sunt freti, sed tamen
 vidi ego dis fretos saepe multos decipi. (Cas345-49)
 eo pacto avarae Veneri pulchre adii manum.
 quando id quod sat erat satis habere noluit,
 ego pausam feci. sic ago, sic me decet.
 ego faxo posthac di deaeque ceteri
 contentiores mage erunt atque avidi minus,
 quom scibunt, Veneri ut adierit leno manum.
 (Po457-62)

⁶⁷ A case not, I think, previously noted, involves the *culter*, or sacrificial knife, mentioned in the priestess' list of sacrificial paraphernalia at *Ru*134. It is used metaphorically in Epidicus' colorful promise to "disembowel" his old master's purse on behalf of his young love-stricken son:

acutum cultum habeo, senis qui exenterem marsuppium. (Ep185)

Further weight is in fact given to the religious area of the metaphor by the immediately preceding mention of "liquido auspicio, avi sinistra" (*Ep*183). Apparently the metaphor stuck strongly in Plautus' consciousness, for he uses the word *exenteror* three more times in the same play (320, 511, 672), but in none of the other plays (Lodge, *Lexicon Plautinum*, s.v.).

⁶⁸ But in fact the *Amphitryon* can be interpreted as presenting a sophisticated and moral picture of Jupiter in opposition to the simple gigolo suggested by the plot. See especially Niebergall (above, note 1).

omnia faciet Iuppiter faxo, nam mihi est obnoxius et me metuit.
(*Po*1191)

The first of these three statements is made by Olympio, the bailiff in the *Casina*, with whom the sympathies of the audience do not lie, and who is made a fool of in the end. The second is spoken by the *leno* Lycus in the *Poenulus*, whose character is best described in terms of his counterparts, Labrax in the *Rudens* and Ballio in the *Pseudolus*:

quis istic est qui deo tam parvi pendit? (*Ru*650)
si deos decepit et homines, lenonum more fecit. (*Ru*346)
deos quidem quos maxume aequom est metuere, eos minimi facit.
(*Ps*269)

The third comes immediately after one of Hanno's serious prayers in the *Poenulus*, and is obviously meant to characterize the folly of the younger generation in the person of his nephew.

Occasionally, it is true, the gods are ridiculed in being over-humanized; but this is ridicule of mythology, not of the common religious concepts represented in the plays in general:

eum odorem cenat Iuppiter cottidie . . .
::si nusquam is coctum, quidnam cenat Iuppiter?
::it incenatus cubitum. (*Ps*842-46)
sciunt quod Iuno fabulatast cum Iove. (*Tri*208)
eho, an tu etiam vidisti Iovem?
::alii di isse ad villam aiebant servis depromptum cibum.
(*Tri*943-44)

Here one must note again the relative unimportance of mythology in the text (see above) and Mercury's retort to Sosia's wisecrack about the drunkenness of the Sun:

ain vero, verbero? deos esse tui similis putas?
(*Am*284)

The more common moral tone is given by such statements as the following:

qui deorum consilia culpet stultus inscitique sit,
quique eos vituperet. nunc istis rebus desisti decet.
(*Mi*736-37)
nil erit quod deorum nullum accusites. (*Mo*712)

Even stronger is the formula of acceptance in the following:

quod di dant, fero. (Au88)

si di immortales id voluerunt vos hanc aerumnam exsequi,
decet id pati animo aequo. (Cap195-96)

patiar, quando ita Venus volt. (Mi1227)

Of course this is not to say that language about divinity is exempt from the humorous word play that characterizes all of Plautine comedy, as can be sufficiently seen from the examples cited throughout this study.

Certainly "nothing is sacred" to a comic playwright of Plautus' vitality and imagination. But the verbal play of a poet is not to be taken as an indication of the frivolity of his audience.

The third way of opposing the gods is to ignore them, and neither Plautus nor his hearers can be called guilty of this.

Epilogue

The religious vocabulary available to the Romans of Plautus' time was large and varied. A wide range of ideas about divinity, from whatever source they may have originated, had already become part of the idiom of the day; and other ideas, less common, could still be introduced easily onto the popular stage.

The relative importance of individual elements of this vocabulary can only be measured in a larger historical context: phenomena which are statistically insignificant in Plautus may be vitally significant in terms of later developments in the history of religion in the Roman world; consider, for example, the one occurrence in Plautus of the concept of man loving the gods.

The stock epithets of the gods postulate their immortality and their power, but seldom their justice and never their omniscience. The concept of a moral divinity, however, underlies the conventional ways of speaking about the interrelations of gods and men. Plautus offers little evidence to support the "contractual" view of Roman religion, and much that implies a more refined notion of the relationship between human virtue and divine favor. This favor—or disfavor—of the gods is expressed as a state of mind (*propitius*, *iratus*), an emotion (*di amant*), or an action (*di faciunt*, *servant*, *perdunt*, *dant*, *iuvant*). The frequent occurrence of *servo*, together with *Salus* and *salvus*, expresses a Roman parallel to the

contemporary Greek development of the concept of *sôteria*, just as Plautus' language demonstrates a complete Roman familiarity with the so-called "Hellenistic" notions of human identification with divinity. The often noted Roman tendency to deify abstract concepts is well represented by Plautus, and other generalizations about the nature of Roman religion are confirmed by the high frequency of references to ritual and the scarcity of allusions to mythology.

Thus the religious atmosphere of the plays of Plautus is neither that of the nuministic "religion of Numa" nor that of the gently cynical philosophy of Greek New Comedy; but it is something more sophisticated than the former and more worshipful than the latter.