Taken from Book XVI of Richmond Lattimore’s translation of the *Odyssey*

*This is the scene when Odysseus and his son Telemachus are reunited. Athena comes to Odysseus to change his appearance from that of a beggar to that of a young and handsome man. At first Telemachus believes that Odysseus is a god, but after Odysseus convinces his son of his true identity, the two have an emotional reunion.*

Then Athene spoke to him, saying:

‘ Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus,

it is time now to tell your son the story; no longer

hide it, so that, contriving death and doom for the suitors,

you two may go to the glorious city. I myself shall not

be long absent from you in my eagerness for the fighting.’

So spoke Athene, and with her golden wand she tapped him.

First she made the mantle and the tunic that covered

his chest turn bright and clean; she increased his strength and stature.

His dark color came back to him again, his jaws firmed,

and the beard that grew about his chin turned black. Athene

went away once more, having done her work, but Odysseus

went back into the shelter. His beloved son was astonished

and turned his eyes in the other direction, fearing this must be

a god, and spoke aloud to him and addressed him in winged words:

‘ Suddenly you have changed, my friend, from what you were formerly;

your skin is no longer as it was, you have other clothing.

Surely you are one of the gods who hold the high heaven.

Be gracious, then: so we shall give you favored offerings

and golden gifts that have been well wrought. Only be merciful.’

Then in turn long-suffering great Odysseus answered him:

‘ No, I am not a god. Why liken me to the immortals?

But I am your father, for whose sake you are always grieving

as you look for violence from others, and endure hardships.’

So he spoke, and kissed his son, and the tears running down his

cheeks splashed on the ground. Until now, he was always unyielding.

But Telemachos, for he did not yet believe that this was

his father, spoke to him once again in answer, saying:

‘ No, you are not Odysseus my father, but some divinity

beguiles me, so that I must grieve the more, and be sorry.

For no man who was mortal could ever have so contrived it

by his own mind alone, not unless some immortal, descending

on him in person, were lightly to make him a young or an old man.

For even now you were an old man in unseemly clothing,

but now you resemble one of the gods who hold wide heaven.’

Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him:

‘ Telemachos, it does not become you to wonder too much

at your own father when he is here, nor doubt him. No other

Odysseus than I will ever come back to you. But here I am,

and I am as you see me, and after hardships and suffering

much I have come, in the twentieth year, back to my own country.

But here you see the work of Athene, the giver of plunder,

who turns me into whatever she pleases, since she can do this;

and now she will make me look like a beggar, but then the next time

like a young man, and wearing splendid clothes on my body;

and it is a light thing for the gods who hold wide heaven

to glorify any mortal man, or else to degrade him.’

So he spoke, and sat down again, but now Telemachos

folded his great father in his arms and lamented,

shedding tears, and desire for mourning rose in both of them;

and they cried shrill in a pulsing voice, even more than the outcry

of birds, ospreys or vultures with hooked claws, whose children

were stolen away by the men of the fields, before their wings grew

strong; such was their pitiful cry and the tears their eyes wept.

*Question: What does the passage reveal about the ancient Greeks’ view of the gods?*

The Greeks, similar to any other people of the world, has a various views of their Gods. The Greeks, similar to any other ancient tribes, has Gods as an explanation to happening events, as spiritual ideas, or probably an excuse towards several reasons. The excerpt from *Book XVI* gave readers of *The Odyssey* a wider perspective of Ancient Greek’s view of the Gods.

Throughout Line 9 to Line 18, Homer’s views of the Gods, especially Athena, are expressed explicitly. Homer saw Athena as a responsible Gods, who helps the reunion of Odysseus and Telemachus to take place. Throughout his words, he expressed evidences to prove of Athena’s responsibility, such as transforming Odysseus back to his original form, in order for Odysseus and Telemachus to reunite, together “go to the glorious city”.

From Line 38 to Line 40 isn’t Homer’s perspective anymore, instead, it is Telemachus’. Telemachus understanding about Gods is that they are immortal and can control of their appearance, of their mind and thoughts; transform it within a click. Probably, that is the explanation for the misunderstanding of Telemachus, thought that his Dad became a God.

Though from Line 49 to Line 54, the common view of Gods changed critically; and that is Odysseus’ perception. Odysseus no longer found God as responsible as what Homer might have claimed earlier. To successfully explain the instant change of appearance to his stubborn child, Telemachus, Odysseus accused Athena of her power. He mentioned that Athena’s power is simply incredible, which she can use it to change a person with a tap, then reform a person again with another tap. This may probably be the best explanation of Odysseus’ appearance; however, when readers read through this, they may misunderstand that Gods are power-abusive and do whatever they favor.

To wrap up, the Greek society share some similarities with the nowadays world. Each people has different perspectives upon the holy, spiritual being represent their cultural values; though, we cannot critical the view is right or wrong.